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Healing Trauma through Literature and Nature: A Case Study of Annie Barrows and Mary Ann Shaffer's *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2008)

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Dedication

I sincerely dedicate this work to

Allah, My creator and Master.

My dearest mother, **BENDJERIOU Basma,**

Your love is a radiant light that has guided me through every step of my life. From the very beginning, you embraced me with open arms, providing unwavering support and nurturing care. Your selflessness and sacrifice have shown me the depths of a mother's love.

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You have been my guiding light and a pillar of strength throughout my journey. Your unwavering love, support, and wisdom have taught me invaluable life lessons. Your dedication to providing for our family and your commitment to our well-being have shown me the true meaning of responsibility and resilience.

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Nihed, Marwa, Sara, Aicha, Amani, Rawan, Meriem and Rayane

The chosen family that I am blessed to call my own. In you, I have found companionship, laughter, and an unbreakable bond of friendship. Your presence has filled my life with joy and taught me the true meaning of love.

To my partner, **MEDJDOUB Khaled,**

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Narimane

In humble reverence to Allah, the guiding light of my journey, this thesis is dedicated as a testament to His grace that have led me to its completion.

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Abstract

This study examines the process of healing from war-related trauma through reading, writing, discussing, and interacting with literature and nature. The research will be conducted through a close reading of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Annie Barrows and Mary Ann Shaffer as a case study. Following Juliet Ashton's staggering journey, the present work seeks to examine how literature and nature can be regarded as an escape for traumatized individuals who have endured horrifying and shocking war experiences. This study will therefore utilize 'Contemporary Trauma Theory' to cast light on the effects of war on ordinary people. In addition, this study seeks to interpret the novel through an "ecocritical" prism in an effort to determine how nature can play a pivotal role in the healing process. Finally, this study will investigate how literature, through reading and writing, helps traumatized individuals to first express and then heal their psychological wounds, using the "bibliotherapy" theory to critically interpret the selected case study. Hence, this study highlights the transformative journey of Juliet and the members of the Guernsey Club through their interactions with the natural surroundings, with each other, and with literature, and how they are able to live through and overcome their past traumas. Through their shared experiences, they find solace, strength, and love, ultimately emerging as resilient individuals who have triumphed over their past and embraced their brighter future.

Key Words: Trauma, healing, World War II, Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows' *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, ecocriticism, bibliotherapy, trauma theory.

Table of Contents

Dedications	I
Acknowledgments	III
Abstract	IV
Table of contents	V
Introduction	1
Chapter One: World War II and its Consequences: Trauma Writing	6
I.1. World War II: A Brief Historical Overview.....	6
I.2. The Relationship between Trauma and Literature.....	11
I.3. Theoretical Framework.....	18
Chapter Two: Psychological Wounds of War: Exploring the Impact of Trauma on Individuals and Communities in Barrows and Shaffer’s <i>The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society</i> (2008)	27
II.1. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society: An Overview.....	27
II.2. Impact of War Trauma on Individuals: An Analysis of the Effects of War Trauma on Juliet Ashton's Identity and Creativity.....	30
II.3. Impact of War Trauma on Communities: An Analysis of the Effects of War Trauma on the members of the Guernsey’s Literary Society.....	35
Chapter Three: The Healing Power of Nature and Literature from War Trauma	42
III.1. Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Nature from War Trauma: A Case Study of Juliet Ashton’s Journey in the Isle of Guernsey.....	42
III. 2. Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Literature on Juliet Ashton.....	48
III. 3. Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Literature on The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society’s Members.....	52

Conclusion.....	61
Work Cited.....	65
French / Arabic abstract	

Introduction

War trauma is a devastating consequence of armed conflicts that leaves indelible scars on individuals and communities. Throughout history, literature has served as a medium to explore the psychological and emotional wounds inflicted by war, shedding light on their enduring effects and the possibility of healing. During World War II, countless individuals and communities experienced the profound and long-lasting effects of war trauma. The extreme horror, the loss of loved ones, and the disruption of daily life left survivors with significant psychological and emotional scars. In the context of Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows's *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2008), the lives of characters who endured the traumas of World War II during the German occupation of Guernsey are examined. The narrative examines the profound impact of war trauma on personal identity, interpersonal relationships, and the collective memory of a community attempting to rebuild amidst the ruins of war.

Literature has long served as a medium for capturing the human experience and mirroring society, providing insights into the profound effects of war on the human psyche. By examining the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of war trauma and its potential resolution through nature and literature. The importance of this topic lies in its ability to shed light on the long-lasting effects of war trauma and potential avenues for healing. By analyzing the characters' experiences in *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, readers can gain insights into the multifaceted nature of war trauma and the potential of nature and literature as therapeutic tools.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the themes of war trauma, nature, and literature as depicted in *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. Through a close analysis of the characters' experiences, it seeks to understand the impact of war trauma on

individuals' identities and creativity, as well as the effects on the community as a whole. The research also aims to evaluate the authenticity and effectiveness of the novel in portraying the war trauma experience. To accomplish these objectives, the study will address and try to answer the following questions: How is war trauma depicted within the narrative? How can nature and literature contribute to the healing process for individuals and communities affected by war trauma? To what extent does *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* succeed in authentically capturing the war trauma experience? By analyzing these questions, this study aims to enhance the understanding of war trauma, its portrayal in literature, and the therapeutic possibilities offered by nature and literature in the healing journey.

The study will build upon influential works in the field of trauma studies, such as Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). Caruth's work is highly influential in the field of trauma studies and offers a profound understanding of the psychological impact of traumatic experiences. Her exploration of trauma as an inherent part of memory and its effects on individual and collective identities is particularly relevant to the present study. Additionally, Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) delves into the complex nature of personal trauma, shedding light on how narratives of trauma can deepen one's comprehension of this experience.

Another significant book is *Ecopsychology: Harmony of Communication with Nature* (2008), by Antonov Vladimir. This book explores the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, highlighting the therapeutic potential of nature in promoting well-being and healing. The concepts and principles of Ecopsychology are highly relevant to the study, as it will examine the role of nature in the healing process for individuals affected by war trauma.

Vladimir's book offers valuable perspectives on how human connections with nature can facilitate healing and resilience.

Furthermore, *Bibliotherapy* (2019), by Sarah McNicol and Liz Brewster, is a relevant book for the study. This book explores the therapeutic benefits of reading and literature as a means of healing and personal growth. It provides insights into the practice of bibliotherapy, which involves using literature as a tool for understanding, empathy, and self-reflection. In the analysis of "*The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*," the study will consider the healing potential of literature and the ways in which the characters engage with books and storytelling to navigate their war trauma.

This study follows the analytical method, utilizing a range of approaches to examine the research questions. Firstly, contemporary trauma theory would serve as a guiding framework, providing insights into the psychological and emotional dimensions of trauma and its effects on individuals and communities. In addition to the trauma theory, this study will incorporate ecocriticism and bibliotherapy as the analyzing approaches. Ecocriticism would offer a lens through which to explore the relationship between nature and healing in the context of war trauma, examining how the natural environment is depicted and utilized within the novel. In addition, bibliotherapy would offer a means to investigate the therapeutic potential of literature in the healing process. By analyzing the ways in which literature is employed within the novel to address and alleviate trauma, this study aims to shed light on the transformative power of storytelling and reading. To enhance the analysis and contextualize the findings, the research will also draw upon previous studies and critical analyses of literary representations of war trauma. This would help to situate the study within existing scholarly conversations and build upon the insights and knowledge generated by prior research.

This dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter focuses on World War II, its consequences, and trauma writing, providing a historical overview of World War II and exploring its far-reaching impact and consequences. Within this context, the chapter delves into the portrayal of war trauma in literature, analyzing how it has been depicted and understood. Additionally, it establishes the theoretical framework by incorporating contemporary war trauma theory, ecocriticism, and bibliotherapy, which serve as lenses through which the subsequent analysis is conducted.

The second chapter addresses the psychological wounds of war in exploring the impact of trauma on individuals and communities in Shaffer and Barrows's *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2008), offering an overview of the novel, including a brief introduction of the authors, plot, and narration style. It analyzes the effects of war trauma on Juliet Ashton's identity and creativity as a writer and investigates the broader impact on the members of the Guernsey Literary Society.

The final chapter is mostly concerned with the healing power of nature and literature from war trauma. It examines the therapeutic potential of nature and literature by exploring Juliet Ashton's journey on the Isle of Guernsey as a case study for the healing potential of nature. Additionally, this chapter delves into the positive influence of literature on both Juliet Ashton and the members of 'The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society'.

This thesis seeks to deepen understanding of war trauma, its lasting consequences, and the potential for healing through nature and literature. By incorporating contemporary war trauma theory, ecocriticism, and bibliotherapy, this study endeavors to shed light on the complexities of war trauma and provide insights into the power of nature and literature as catalysts for recovery. Through the analysis of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, this research aims to

contribute to the broader discourse on war trauma and inspire further exploration of innovative approaches to healing in the face of immense adversity.

Chapter One: World War II and its Consequences: Trauma Writing

The first chapter is a theoretical chapter comprised of three sections. The first section is dedicated to providing a brief overview about the historical background of World War II and its physical and psychological symptoms on different veterans, and its long lasting effects. The second section discusses how war trauma is portrayed and represented in literature by providing different case studies about war novels. The final section provides a historical overview about the different theories that will be utilized to analyze this research; Contemporary Trauma Theory, Ecocriticism, and Bibliotherapy and how these theories will help us analyze our case study.

I.1 World War II: a Brief Historical Overview

A global struggle known as World War II raged from 1939 until 1945. With a cumulative death toll of more than 70 million (World War II: Causes and Timeline), it was both the biggest and bloodiest war in human history. The majority of the world's nations, including all the great powers, took part in the conflict, which was fought in numerous theatres. With over 100 million individuals enlisting in armed organizations (“Top Infantry Weapons of WWII”), it was the largest war in history. For the complexity and diversity of the causes of World War II, the rise of Nazi Germany in Europe served as the main impetus. This sparked a series of events that included Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, France and the United Kingdom declaring war, and ultimately the involvement of the United States.

The war began in 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. This sparked a global conflict that would last until 1945 (HISTORY). The destruction done by the Great War and its brutality left Europe in pieces, and what mostly led to the Second World War was the political and economic unrest in Germany. After assigning himself as the supreme leader of Germany,

Adolf Hitler began his attack on many European countries, leaving them unable to recover from the devastation of the Great War.

The bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima during World War II resulted in immense casualties, with the death toll exceeding 100,000. Nuclear weapons have advanced significantly, amplifying their destructive potential, and emerged into becoming a threat capable of rendering an area temporarily uninhabitable. Chemical weapons, which are another type of dangerous weapons, are actually derived from pesticides and are specifically designed to harm people. The two most common types are called "nerve" and "mustard" gases. Nerve gas, when breathed in, can damage the central nervous system and cause it to stop working properly. Mustard gas, on the other hand, can create blisters on the skin, and if these blisters reach the respiratory system, they can be deadly (Greenberg 1544). Additionally, massive innovations in machine guns, tanks, artillery, and firearms contributed to the destruction that prevailed during that time.

These events resulted in more than half a million service members suffering some sort of psychiatric collapse due to combat. Harmfully, 40 percent of medical discharges at the time of war were for psychological conditions. The majority of those can be attributed to combat stress (The National WWII Museum). The psychological effects of World War II were far-reaching and long-lasting. Those who experienced the war first-hand were often left with feelings of guilt, grief, and fear. Many survivors had to cope with the loss of family members, friends, and homes. The trauma of the war left many feeling helpless and unable to deal with life's daily difficulties.

The conflict caused numerous physical and psychological hardships upon both military personnel and civilians. War survivors, including soldiers and non-combatants, endured profound traumatic experiences, including combat engagements, injuries, bombings, forced displacement, starvation, and sexual assault (Hauber and Zank 2). These effects were not only limited to those

who experienced the war first-hand. Many who lived through the war had to cope with the fear of the unknown, the anxiety of potential danger, and the feeling of being powerless in the face of a powerful enemy. The long-term effects of the war can still be felt today, with many survivors suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and other mental health issues.

There are many other symptoms that the war has left behind such as; anxiety, the withdrawal from social activities resulting in isolation and depression, nightmares, reoccurring flashbacks, suicide thoughts and difficulty in maintaining relationships. Veterans are usually scarred by the events of the war, so they often end up having such symptoms for the rest of their lives. In the paper, "Clinical Presentation of PTSD in World War II Combat Veterans," Robert Hierholzer et. al. found that veterans have been suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms even decades after the end of the WWII. Most of them had sleep disturbance, war-related nightmares and chronic anxiety.

In the article titled "Clinical Presentation of PTSD in World War II Combat Veterans," the authors examine recent research on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in elderly veterans. Their aim is to illustrate different clinical manifestations of PTSD by presenting specific cases. One of the cases involved a 70-year-old retired veteran who had previously been a prisoner of war (POW). This individual experienced symptoms such as a persistent low mood, difficulty sleeping with frequent awakenings, decreased appetite, frequent crying, and suicidal thoughts. Additionally, they suffered from intense anxiety and fear. Further examinations revealed other indications of chronic PTSD, including intrusive thoughts related to combat, feelings of guilt for surviving, and guilt associated with causing harm to German soldiers. These symptoms worsened on the anniversary day of the traumatic event. However, there was some

optimism regarding the potential improvement of certain symptoms. The veteran demonstrated partial recovery from PTSD symptoms after attending psychiatric sessions and receiving treatment for major depression. (Hierholzer et al. 817).

In another case study, the veteran relied mostly on alcohol and suffered from major depression. Besides, he also struggled with anger issues in which he could not control his temper over the simplest problems. He also felt extremely guilty and frightened because he kept remembering the event where his combat friends were all captured but him. In the article, the veteran explained that he felt ashamed for only hiding and watching while his comrades were being captured and admitting that he mistakenly killed a friend. The veteran showed some recovery after being a part of psychiatric sessions in addition to anti-depression treatment (Hierholzer et al. 818).

According to Hauber Daniel, and Susanne Zank, in their article “WWII Trauma Impacts Physical and Mental Health in the Oldest Old: Results from a German Population-Based Study,” when it comes to the physical impact of the traumatic events of WWII, the effects are, in most cases, deadly. Germans who were still suffering from the effects of traumatic events were more likely to be diagnosed with heart failure, blood diseases, bladder problems, back pain, and respiratory or lung diseases. Additionally, their overall health was poorer, and they experienced a greater degree of pain. All of this can be resulted from psychological trauma and chronic stress experienced during that time (2).

Matthew J. Friedman and others, in his paper “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Military Veteran,” argue that many veterans might overcome some of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder but not fully. Recovery may occur but only partially. Even over time

individuals will still suffer from at least six PTSD symptoms. In many cases, however, these existing symptoms will somehow affect the lives of the victims (270).

The issue of PTSD or Trauma was never raised before in a situation related to women. At times where women were said not to have an opinion or problems to be handled, any crisis was to be called paranoia or by simply saying that women were “exaggerating” or “pretending”, “Traditional accounts of war by soldiers and male civilians have mostly portrayed women as unscathed and untouched by war” (Addei and Osei 6). However, after the Vietnam War, things changed because now it became a man related problem, so people started to care. Many studies were done, theories were raised, and terms such as PTSD and War Trauma were established to help doctors comprehend the condition of men who were in military service and those who were exposed to traumatic experiences. And to eventually help patients recover from such experiences. According to Friedman and others, women veterans are more likely to be exposed to sexual abuse, harassment, and assault when they are in the war-zone (Friedman et al. 274).

During this time, literature flourished. Authors like Ernest Hemingway and Anna Frank wrote about the horrors of war and the courage of those who fought it. Their works inspired generations of readers and writers alike. In the years following the war, literature continued to be a powerful tool for understanding the conflict. Novels like *The Guns of August* by Barbara Tuchman and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell provided insight into the lives of those affected by the war. These works remain some of the most powerful and influential pieces of literature ever written.

I.2. The Relationship between Trauma and Literature

As understood by the American Psychiatric Association, people who have been exposed to traumatic events particularly related to war, whether they were civilians, soldiers, veterans, or even children, may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), also known as combat trauma (“Talking about Veteran’s Mental Health”). Meaning that this war trauma does not just influence the victim’s behavior and daily functioning but also their psychological state of mind, where different symptoms of such occur intensively over time, whether it is intrusive memories, nightmares about the traumatic incident, avoiding triggers that remind the victim of the trauma, or insomnia. Furthermore, war trauma may also possibly lead to anxiety and depression, along with other mental health issues.

It is normal for someone to have such symptoms from time to time, but as the National Center for PTSD asserts, “If it's been longer than a few months and you're still having symptoms, you may have PTSD” (“What is PTSD?”). In addition to the National Center of PTSD and the National Institute of Mental Health Information about PTSD, plenty of other studies and scholars have laid their focus as well on the psychological impact of traumatic experiences especially events related to warfare, whereas the later mentioned symptoms affect the individual's daily functioning and self-representation (“How War Affects Our Mental Health”).

In the same vein, the book by Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, explains how the disruptive and overwhelming nature of trauma deeply affects the individuals’ associations with reality and immensely influences their worldview. Caruth argues that the experience of trauma disregards one's ability to coherently narrate and decisively interpret. Thus, one struggles to relate to their entourages and their ordinary past lives (33).

Expanding upon the previous notion, in the period of the post war, specifically in postmodern times after World War Two that had a major effect on people, which is reflected in literature and writings. It is inevitable to not mention the fundamental literary genre that tells the experience of soldiers and civilians during the war time, whether via direct referencing or not. The “war novel”, as most literary scholars and encyclopedias tend to define it, is a genre in which the physical or the emotional impact of war is depicted and where the main themes found are those related to war, such as trauma, loss and recovery.

Addei Cecilia and Osei Cynthia Elizabeth, Ph.D. holders, explore in their article "Writing War, Wronging the Person: Representation of Human Insecurity in War Literature"(2020) how war novels are literary works that vividly portray the harsh realities of armed conflicts. These novels, as they explain, serve the purpose of preserving the historical record of societal conflicts and offering narratives that strengthen the shared memory of communities (1256). Addei and Osei argue that veterans sought recovery by writing about the horrors of the battlefields as they state, “traditionally, war literature was written by veterans and a few male civilians who wrote such literature to celebrate heroism, to overcome the trauma of their wartime experiences and to justify war” (1256).

In *Narratives of War Remembering and Chronicling Battle in Twentieth-Century Europe* (2019), the editors, Nanci Adler, Remco Ensel, and Michael Wintle refer to war narratives as “archives”. The authors define war novels as, the “representations of stories of war. Their contents, consisting of distinctive persons and events, are linked by a specific narrator's voice in a series of time and causality”(207). War novels possess distinct characteristics that differentiate them from other literary genres. These novels are primarily written during periods of war or immediately following it. In his book titled *The American Novel of War: A Critical Analysis and*

Classification System (2012), Wallis R. Sanborn III provides a comprehensive examination of war novels and points out that “in times of war and in times directly after war, war literature is written, published, sold, consumed, and critically analyzed” (1).

‘War novels’ play a significant role in helping us comprehend the profound impact of war and trauma. Through these novels, we gain insight into the horrors of war, including violence, death, and the profound disruption it causes. They provide us with perspectives not only from soldiers and veterans who witnessed these events but also from refugees and civilians caught in the crossfire. An example of a war novel is *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut. *Slaughterhouse Five* is a novel that belongs to the genre of war novels and addresses the traumatic effects of war. The novel tells about the experiences of soldiers during World War II and delves deeper through the protagonist’s Billy Pilgrim journey, who served as a soldier and survived the firebombing of Dresden. The story portrays the struggles and experiences from pre-, during- and post-war times.

Another prominent example of a war novel that does not just tell a story of war, but also transmits the emotion of soldiers and portrays the characteristics of trauma through narrative and content is Tim O’Brien collection of short stories, *The Things They Carried* (1990), specifically "The Things They Carried" an included short story with the same title . O’Brien’s book is a collection of interconnected short stories that depicts the journey of soldiers and how the Vietnam War has affected them both physically and psychologically, both during and after the war. O’Brien, in his masterpiece, incorporates a fictional narration that is interrupted at times by factual experiences, which makes this combination of autobiographical narration -of his own experience in Vietnam as a soldier- and the fictional narration a sincere literary piece. That does

not just make it unique and distinctive, but also evidences the war trauma effect in literature (Pietrzyk).

Characteristics such as the non-linear narration and the fragmented stories told in his book demonstrate the chaotic and violent nature of war and the complexities of trauma linked to it. One notable characteristic of the book is its allowance for open and free interpretation of a profound incident; for instance, “they carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried” (7). This quote does not just prove the fragmented narration ; it also appears multiple times throughout the novel, and what is more emotionally powerful is its ambiguity and vagueness, which give the readers an open sphere to interpret the meaning of it, which defers from one reader to another.

The title of the book and the specified short story entitled with same book title, *The Things They Carried*, have a profound symbolic significance when exploring the theme of war trauma and its impact on the human psyche. The title conveys both a literal and metaphorical meaning, depicting the act of carrying weapons, clothing, food, and photographs as a tangible representation of what soldiers bore during war, while also symbolizing the weight of war trauma they carry within themselves. In regard to this point, Heather Mueller asserts, “the title refers to the literal inventory of the items the men were responsible for carrying as soldiers. It is also a metaphor for the emotional and psychological "baggage" the soldiers carried after the war ended” (Mueller).

Furthermore, the connection between ‘the war novel’ and ‘war trauma’ reflected in literature is undeniable. For that, both of them serve as means for exploring and comprehending the impact of war on humans. War novels vividly depict the experiences of soldiers and victims of wars, while the study of war trauma theory focuses on their psychological impact. This

interconnection becomes even more pronounced through the writing techniques employed in war novels, often referred to as "war literature" by María Alonso, a respected writer and holder of a PhD in Galician and English literature.

The complex relationship between literature and reality differs from one view to another. All the views considered, the overall idea appears to be that real experiences and situations are definitely put into literature in one way or another. For instance, Jonathan Culler in his book, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (1997), views literature as a reflection of reality rather than an active force that resembles possible change. Whereas Meyer H. Abrams, in his book entitled *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1977), which is a classic work that tells about literary criticism, focuses much on the romantic period yet still covers the wider sphere of all times literature. Abrams analytically states, "a work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling" (22). Abrams emphasizes how literature does not just preserve traces and evidence of cultures and history but also represents people and their ideologies and worldviews for themselves and others to view, which allows readers to gain understanding of others and comprehend how cultures, times, and even individuals are both similar and different.

In a different vein, every writer brings their baggage when producing literature and the baggage differs in shape and weight from one to another. In postmodern and post war terms, one of the most pressing concerns of contemporary literature is trauma, particularly war trauma, and how it is represented in works. Modern psychology has made significant progress in defining and categorizing symptoms of war trauma. As a result, analysts and critics have noticed that trauma plays a role in producing, reading, and interpreting literature. For example, symptoms of war trauma victims such as flashbacks and nightmares are evidenced in literature as well, where

characters may have such symptoms themselves. A good example is *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) by Amy Tan where most of the characters have reoccurring flashbacks to the violent times of the second Sino-Japanese war. In addition to the narration techniques embraced by postmodernists in contemporary times, varying from using flashbacks and forwards to fragmentation and plenty of themes were supporting evidence of war trauma in literature.

Most of the literary works that have a link to war and portray war trauma, embrace themes that convey and mirror the dreadful experience of war, whether it is physical, psychological, individual, or even social and collective. Such themes of war trauma can be war and the horror of war, where a work portrays the horrific violence, death, and suffering that happened, influencing the characters and how the course of the narrative goes. Moreover, coping and seeking recovery are vibrant themes in most works that touch upon the war and its aftermath, especially if the characters are first-hand witnesses to the war.

In the scope of understanding war trauma when delving into literature, one of the pioneers and literary scholars whom has extensively written and talked about the topic of trauma till today is Cathy Caruth. She explores in her book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History*, how trauma has a heavy influence on one's psychological state. She argues that traumatic experiences are defined by a fundamental gap between the event itself and the person's capacity to live those moments in particular and to process and interpret them as well. Moreover, and because of that, the book suggests that the experiencer (the victim) may experience psychological paralysis because they are unable to perceive the traumatic events, i.e. the ones mostly related to war. For this reason, trauma here represses and disrupts the ordinary functions of perception and also the memory (11).

Caruth also notes that trauma often takes over at unanticipated times in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, and other intrusive thoughts. As she puts it "...the very experience of a flashback-The sudden intrusion of an overwhelming sensory image or memory- is the experience of a delayed return of the past that one cannot place or name" (4). That is to say, such activity is triggered by a stimulus that unconsciously reminds the person of the traumatic events. What is more fascinating is that Caruth, in her book on the context of war trauma, explains how soldiers and veterans may find it extremely hard to recover and readjust to civilian life. For that reason, the experience of combat and war can be overwhelming to the point where soldiers may feel guilt and shame for just surviving when others of their companions have not (7). Despite this misery, Caruth still sheds hope on the possibility of healing, as she draws a comparison between the psychological trauma and the physical wound, prompting the question of consciousness enduring saying, "what does it mean for consciousness to survive?"(61).

Another book by the same scholar, Cathy Caruth, entitled *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995), is considered a seminal work in the field of studying and analyzing trauma and its effect on individuals and societies. Similarly, the book analyzes the complex nature of trauma and its effects on memory; Caruth draws on a variety of disciplines such as psychoanalysis, philosophy, and literary theory as well. In this book, Caruth holds the claim that the influence of trauma is beyond the ordinary, as it destructs consciousness and memory, and it is observed through narrative (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 16-7).

Nevertheless, *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* is a magnificent piece of work that gives analysis to different literary texts for the purpose of showing how trauma is represented through literature. Caruth addresses this point when she asserts, "literature has become for me the site of my own stammering. Literature, as that which can sensitively bear witness" (58). In her book, she

also considers the clinical diagnoses of trauma survivors and explores the idea of healing, which she refers to as "self-healing application." This process involves acknowledging and accepting the pain, eventually leading to a state of mental comfort. She adds that, "The successful completion of mourning, and/or the successful integration of ones life bring one to the position of being able to own up to all of ones living as his own" (87).

I.3. Theoretical Framework

Though it did not receive much attention till the beginning of the 20th century, Contemporary Trauma Theory has gone through many developments due to the effects of traumatic experiences that soldiers, women, and children had to go through, especially during wars. It was not until after the Vietnam War that scholars really started to pay attention to trauma and to its massive impact on the psychology of people. Contemporary Trauma Theory is a discipline that seeks to understand the effects of traumatic experiences on individuals and communities. Traumatic experiences, such as abuse, violence, or war, can have profound and long-lasting effects on people's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. Trauma theory emerged as a distinct field of study in the late 20th century, drawing on the work of psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts.

The origins of trauma theory can be traced back to Jean Charcot, who first introduced the word "hysteria" when he used to treat traumatized women. Charcot was the first to understand that hysteria is considered a psychological problem rather than a physical one (Ringel 1). Later on, Sigmund Freud, who introduced the concept of trauma in his book, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), believed that traumatic experiences could lead to psychological disorders, such as hysteria, and that these disorders could be treated through the use of psychoanalysis (Ringel 2). However, Freud was heavily criticized for only focusing on the individual psyche and his reliance

on the concept `repression`, which led to a narrow understanding of trauma that ignored the social and cultural dimensions of traumatic experiences like war, poverty, and abuse (Ringel 2). It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that trauma theory began to emerge as a distinct field of study.

The work of psychologist, Robert Lifton, on the effects of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked a turning point in the field. Lifton's research highlighted the long-lasting effects of trauma on survivors and the need for a more comprehensive approach to understanding and treating traumatic experiences. Lifton's work also drew attention to the role of social and cultural factors in shaping the experience and effects of trauma (10).

In the 1980s and 1990s, trauma theory continued to develop and expand, drawing on a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Scholars such as Judith Herman, Cathy Caruth, and Shoshana Felman made significant contributions to the field by exploring the ways in which trauma is experienced and represented in different contexts.

Judith Herman's book, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), is widely regarded as a landmark in the field of trauma theory. Herman's work emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and cultural dimensions of trauma and the need for a comprehensive approach to treatment. Herman argues that traumatic experiences are not just individual events but are shaped by social and cultural factors such as gender, race, and class. She also emphasizes the role of memory in the experience of and recovery from trauma (2).

In her book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth argues that traumatic experiences disrupt our ability to make sense of the world and that narratives can play a crucial role in the recovery process. Caruth's work also explores the

relationship between trauma and history. She argues that traumatic events can have a profound impact on the way we understand and remember history, especially when certain traumatic events are repressed in the unconscious, where the trauma survivor is unable to remember their own past or the events leading up to the traumatic event (17). Caruth argues that “For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence” (18). When we look at history from the perspective of trauma, it means that we can only understand it partially because we cannot fully grasp or access what actually happened at the time.

Trauma theory is extensively utilized to interpret numerous literary works that delve into the impact of war on individuals. This theoretical framework provides a lens through which the psychological and emotional repercussions of war can be understood and analyzed in literature (Mambrol). By applying Contemporary Trauma Theory, literary scholars and critics explore how war-related experiences and their aftermath shape characters' behaviour, perceptions, and overall mental well-being. Through Contemporary Trauma Theory, literary works often depict characters who exhibit symptoms of trauma, such as flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety. These symptoms reflect the psychological wounds caused by war and help readers empathize with the characters' struggles (Heidarizadeh 789-790).

Contemporary Trauma theory allows for a deeper exploration of the internal struggles experienced by those affected by war. Furthermore, it helps shed light on the ways in which literature represents the complexities of post-war life, including survivor guilt, and the challenges of reintegrating into society. By employing Contemporary Trauma Theory, literary analysis goes beyond a surface-level examination of war narratives and delves into the detailed psychological

and emotional dimensions of these experiences. It provides a framework for understanding the human response to traumatic circumstances and facilitates the interpretations of the effects of war on individuals depicted in literature.

Another literary approach which is important to the examination of the selected case study of this work is 'Ecocriticism'. Ecocriticism is a literary theory that explores the relationship between literature and the environment. Most of the pioneers and scholars that have dealt with the topic such as William Rueckert, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Lawrence Buell agree that literary criticism, through an environmental eye, examines literature in a way that draws attention to nature's representation (Buell 52).

The terminology of the approach appeared most recently in the 1970s. The first use of the term "Ecocriticism" is credited to William Rueckert in his essay entitled "Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Ecocriticism". In his essay, Rueckert refers to Ecocriticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world (107). However, some scholars argue that older works such as Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) can also be regarded as examples of Ecocriticism. The approach had its prominent emergence apparently in the 1990s, evidently as a response to the environmental issues and crises worldwide caused by deforestation, global warming, and excessive manufacturing. Mirroring this issue in literature and various academic discourses was inevitable.

Lawrence Buell, a very prominent pioneer in Ecocriticism, argues that the aim of the approach, or as he prefers to call it "nature writing," is shape our understanding of nature (27). His book, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of*

American Culture (1995), highlights the importance of nature writing and how even a seemingly symbolic portrayal of nature can appear different when we become more knowledgeable about the environment (129). Thus, Ecocriticism can be classified as not just a literary theory but also a practice.

This interdisciplinary field with the key aspect of ecological consciousness tries to improve cultural behavior and awareness towards nature, which is noted by another prominent ecocritic, Cheryll Glotfelty, in her book entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), that is a unique collection that brings together traditional and modern writings in the growing field of literary ecology. The book examines how literature reflects and shapes our connection with the natural environment. Glotfelty emphasizes the significance of realizing that the current environmental problems are mostly caused by human activities and are essentially a result of our culture. And If we're not helping to solve the problem, we're contributing to it, "as environmental problems compound, work as usual seems unconscionably frivolous. If we're not part of the solution, we're part of the problem" (XXI), also "the answer lies in recognizing that current, environmental problems are largely of our own making, are, in other words, a by-product of culture" (XXI).

Another fundamental work in the field of Ecocriticism that has enlightened environmental representation in literature include Timothy Clark's *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (2012). The book explores Environmental criticism as a new field that focuses on the environmental crisis in literature and culture. His introduction explains eco-criticism and gives students tools to analyze texts differently.

Overall, Ecocriticism as an approach that delves into and portrays the relationship between humans and nature can be considered more than just an awareness raising tool for the

critical environmental issues the globe is facing in contemporary times, but also a healing tool for all to embrace, individuals and societies. To critically think of our ecological surroundings leads to fostering a sense of connection and belonging, belonging to something that is bigger than ourselves, which invites us to feel the connection to other living beings and appreciating the beauty and diversity of the natural world, which helps us feel more grounded and rooted in it.

An interesting work by Linda Buzzel and Craig Chalquist, entitled *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind* (2009), consider the theme of healing through nature as they address the impact nature contact on people's mental and physical health, "It can reduce levels of stress, enhance people's state of mind, and improve parasympathetic nervous system functioning. Being in contact with nature increases physical health, promotes more health-oriented behavior" (79). In their same book, they denote that Ecopsychology, an established field pioneered in the early 1990s by scholars like Theodore Roszak, who coined the term "Ecopsychology" in his book *The Voice of the Earth* (1992), is a foundational concept that underlies ecotherapy. Ecotherapy is recognized as a fundamental tool for addressing psychological issues by utilizing the healing power of nature. (14).

The next approach to be used in the reading of the case study is 'Bibliotherapy'. It is a therapeutic approach that utilizes books and reading as a mean to promote emotional well-being and facilitate personal growth. In her paper intitled "Literature Review: Bibliotherapy", Mary L. Pukenis explores bibliotherapy as a supportive process that helps individuals address their therapeutic needs "the guided reading of written materials in gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to a person's therapeutic needs"(qtd.in Pukenis 3)

The practice of therapy through literature gained more attention and use throughout the ages, until reaching the 19th and 20th centuries when it gained more acknowledgment and

emergence. In addition, Samuel Crothers, an American essayist and clergyman who is credited with coining the term "bibliotherapy" in a 1916 article published in the Atlantic monthly, also stresses the value of literature for both mental and personal development ("A Literary Clinic" Crothers). Moreover, the field of bibliotherapy has gained even more recognition during World War II, where mental health professionals prescribed books as a form of therapy to soldiers that have experienced mental issues and what is nowadays referred to as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (King et al.).

More and more years have passed and the approach has continued to evolve, with bibliotherapy being used as a source of healing for a variety of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, addiction... etc. Dustin Grinnell is a fiction, journalism, and essay writer. In his article titled "The Anatomy of Bibliotherapy: How Fiction Heals, Part I," he, as a creative writer who has dealt with the topic of bibliotherapy, makes the following statement about literature:

Like psychotherapy, literature can help resolve conflicts, navigate traumatic experiences, integrate disowned aspects of ourselves, and perhaps even achieve inner wholeness or self-actualization. Books and the experience of reading can promote psychological change, heal trauma, and offer spiritual fulfillment. Fictional narratives indeed are medicine for the soul. (par. 2)

In other words, Grinnell emphasizes the capacity of literature to heal psychological wounds because it represents solace to those who have none. For this reason, literature—through reading, writing, and even discussion—offers a source of knowledge about the experiences and perspectives of others. This aids the process of giving significance to one's own experiences and accepting one's own mental perception.

In a similar vein, it can be argued that literature, in its broad and specific senses, has the power to transform lives. As the literary scholar Louise De Salvo, who is an American author best known for her memoir titled *Vertigo: A Memoir* (2002), describes her coping mechanism against the misery and the vertigo condition that causes disorientation and dizziness. She affirms, referring to her own life experience, “whatever causes my pain, of reading about it in works of literature, and of trying to find the words to describe it, helps me modulate the feeling that I am in the middle of a vortex of events that is sucking me under and threatening to overwhelm me” (7).

Bibliotherapy is found to be such a great tool for advancing the healing journey, offering support for mental health challenges and psychological distress, particularly related to trauma and war trauma. The latter quote by Louise De Salvo could be incorporated to explain how ‘bibliotherapy’ positively affects war survivors who suffer post-traumatic stress disorders and dilemmas in accepting reality.

Through the previous sections, it becomes evident that fragmentation is a prominent issue when it comes to victims of war trauma. For they cannot make meaning to the momentary tasks of their lives, and by reference to Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995), they struggle to find order in their lives, becoming fragmented psychologically, which could be evidenced through narrative. Nevertheless, bibliotherapy can provide a model to follow in perceiving and telling one’s own story from the beginning, middle, and end, making peace with the past events, and eventually healing and moving on.

This chapter introduced the historical context surrounding World War II, emphasizing the physical and psychological manifestations experienced by veterans, as well as its enduring consequences. It also delved into the depiction and portrayal of war trauma in literature, presenting various instances from war novels as case studies. Lastly, the chapter offered a

historical perspective on the theories employed in this study, namely Contemporary Trauma Theory, Ecocriticism, and Bibliotherapy, clarifying their roles in analyzing the selected case study. In the upcoming chapters, this study will offer a deep understanding of the various dimensions and manifestations of trauma experienced by individuals and communities during the war and will highlight the impact of nature and the effect of books on both Juliet and the Guernsey's Society.

Chapter Two: Psychological Wounds of War: Exploring the Impact of Trauma on Individuals and Communities in Barrows and Shaffer's *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2008)

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society (2008) by Annie Barrows and Mary Ann Shaffer is a novel that tells the story of a group of islanders in the aftermath of the German occupation of Guernsey during World War II. The following chapter will explore the impact of war trauma on both individuals and communities in the novel. Section one will briefly discuss the novel's plot and the circumstances leading up to its publication. Section two will focus on the character of Juliet Ashton and her struggles with identity and creativity as a writer in the aftermath of the war. Finally, Section three will examine the impact of war on the Guernsey Literary Society, a community of readers and writers whose experiences are shaped by the trauma of war. Through this exploration, the chapter aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which war trauma shapes individuals and communities.

II.1. *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*: An Overview

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society is considered to be a historical novel written by Mary Ann Shaffer and completed by Annie Barrows. The first publication of the book was in 2008 by the Dial Press in the United States while in the UK it was by Bloomsbury publishing. As mentioned, the co-authors Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows have collaborated on penning the novel mainly because Shaffer, who initially started writing the novel as a solo project had health issues that drove her to ask the help of her niece, Annie Barrows, in finishing it. Barrows was a writer herself, she had experience working with her aunt in the past, and their close and thorough relationship is evident in their collaboration on the book. In February 2008, Mary Ann Shaffer passed away, unable to complete the book. Barrows assumed

responsibility for completing her aunt's vision and publishing the book in July of the same year (Good Reads.com).

The inspiration of writing the book dates back to 1976, when Mary Ann Shaffer's fascination with Guernsey led her to the island. Stranded there due to bad weather, she read books about the German occupation, including *Jersey Under the Jack-Boot*. Years later, when her actual book club encouraged her to write her own novel, Shaffer drew inspiration from this subject and created the vibrant world of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (Bookclubbing.com).

Moreover, the fact that Mary Ann Shaffer was a former librarian and had an enormous love for books and literature can be viewed as one of the factors that motivated her to produce such a work filled with literary themes. Annie Barrows was also a writer and editor, indicating that both authors share a passion for literature and a love of storytelling (Book Browse.com).

In *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows tell the story of Juliet Ashton, the young writer who, in 1946, receives a letter from a man who lives in the English Channel, particularly the island of Guernsey. Through his letters, she discovers a unique literary society that was founded on the island during the German occupation in World War II. Juliet discovers members of the literary society and their experiences during the war through a series of letters, and eventually she forms close bonds with them.

A memorable cast of characters populates the book, including Juliet, Dawsey Adams, a passionate and kindhearted farmer who started the correspondences with Juliet; Elizabeth McKinna, a member of the literary society who is portrayed as intelligent and brave; and Isola

Pribby, another member of the society who is eccentric yet extremely loyal. Amongst other members as well, each of whom has a unique personality and, most importantly, a story to tell. In the same vein, the novel is a celebration of literature and the resiliency of people, even in the most challenging times, through themes such as friendship, love, sacrifice, and community. The characters also provide the readers with a glimpse of how solidarity during hard times, such as the war and its aftermath, is crucial for healing one's psychological wounds.

The language and narrative style in *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* are mostly epistolary, meaning that they are composed of a series of letters that are written by various characters. This narrative form creates a sense of connection and intimacy between the reader and the character because the reader has direct access to the character's thoughts and emotions. The novel's authors emphasize this point through Juliet's character who writes, "I think it will tell you more about him than any biography ever could" (10). This is in reference to the letters Juliet sent to Mr. Adams. The letters sometimes have an aspect of informality and humor; even Juliet, a well-learned writer, changes her tone depending on whom she is writing to.

Although the work is co-authored, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the authors' writing styles, which implies that they collaborated effectively to ensure cohesion. Moreover, even if some lines are found to be written differently, the richness and vividness of the novel's narrative cover any differences in writing.

During an interview at the University of Berkeley, California (2009), Annie Barrows explained the rationale behind incorporating multiple correspondences in the novel. She mentioned that having different voices was crucial for credibility since her aunt, Mary Ann Shaffer, and herself possessed extensive information about the German occupation in the island. By presenting various perspectives, the narrative could effectively convey the episodic nature of

the events. Barrows also revealed that when her aunt handed her the book to work on, it was considerably shorter. Her role involved making additions, reordering specific events, and implementing some structural changes while conducting extensive research about the island.

II.2. Impact of War Trauma on Individuals: An Analysis of the Effects of War Trauma on Juliet Ashton's Identity and Creativity

As delved into in the previous chapter, war trauma does not just affect people as an incident of a temporary scar but it affects people's long-term perception of themselves and others, building a new sense of identity and the way to function in real life. The effects of trauma can be witnessed and investigated at the communal as well as individual level. This section aims at shedding light on how Juliet struggle with trauma as a result of war.

Juliet Ashton is ideally suited to the study of the effects of war trauma on individuals. She is a unique character in the novel because she has a combination of complexity and simplicity. As a writer and journalist, she possesses excellent observational skills and pays close attention to detail. She also has a remarkable ability to interpret simple things in a profound and insightful manner. These qualities make her stand out as a protagonist in the book.

At the beginning of the novel, she tackles the trauma of war in a powerful and unique way by using humor. This is evident in one of her letters to Mrs. Maugery, a Guernsey islander and member of the literary society. In the letter, she explains, "I did make fun of many wartime situations; the *Spectator* felt a light approach to the bad news would serve as an antidote and that humour would help to raise London's low morale. I am very glad Izzy served that purpose" (35).

Nevertheless, with further reading, readers become aware of the heavyweight of war that burdens her, "At the war's end, I, too, promised myself that I wouldn't talk about it anymore. I

had talked and lived war for six years, and I was longing to pay attention to something—anything—else. But that is like wishing I were someone else. The war is now the story of our lives, and there's no denying it" (62). This quote illustrates how Juliet's identity has taken a new path after the war, which is inescapable in the novel. The war has become an integral part of their lives, shaping their perspectives and experiences in profound ways.

Juliet Ashton before the war and the burden of war trauma is portrayed as a full-of-life, passionate individual, and through many letters exchanged, readers are given much insight on her identity when she was a child; for instance, a reference letter about Juliet's character was written to Amelia, one of the society members, stating,

when she was ten years old. Juliet, while singing the fourth verse of 'His Eye Is on the Sparrow', slammed her hymnal shut and refused to sing another note. She told our choir master that the words cast a slur on God's character. We should not be singing it. He (the choir master, not God) didn't know what to do, so he escorted Juliet to my study for me to reason with her. I did not fare very well. Juliet said, 'Well, he shouldn't have written, "His eye is on the sparrow"—what good was that? Did He stop the bird dying? Did He just say, "Oops"? It makes God sound like He's off bird-watching when real people need Him. (41)

The incident illustrates her unwavering faith and desire to question without fear from a very young age, which is continuous in her adulthood, highlighting the courage and confidence she has in expressing her ideas and holding to what she believes in, which lasted till the very end of the novel. The incident of stopping and asking questions is also considered one of her main character traits. Although she was 10 years old at the time of the incident, mature Juliet also sees things similarly. This is evidenced in Juliet's letter to Sydney when she criticizes the man from

her past relationship for taking off her books from the shelf and replacing them with his athletic trophies, “Every single shelf—where my books had stood—was filled with athletic trophies: silver cups, gold cups, blue rosettes...All I could do was scream, ‘How dare you! What have you DONE?! Put my books back!’”(22). Making it clear that she stands by what she believes in and values most, with much focus on her personal fulfillment in the early stages of her identity formation.

In the novel, Juliet Ashton's identity undergoes a complex and dynamic transformation, particularly due to the war period that disrupts people's mental processes. However, it is important to note that individuals are not necessarily bound to be defined solely by their war trauma. As Steven L. Berman states in his article "Identity and Trauma" (2016), “not only can traumatic exposure be disruptive to identity development, but in the reverse, identity can shape the manner in which trauma is perceived and understood. It is further noted that identity can both exacerbate posttraumatic stress disorder symptom severity, and/or promote positive posttraumatic growth.” (par. 2). Juliet’s identity incorporates her war trauma, but she actively transforms it into psychological growth and healing instead of passively becoming a "helpless victim," as Steven L. Berman refer to it. Moreover, despite all the terrible events she endured, including the deaths of her parents as a result of the war, she has continued to seek hope in life and the promise of moving on.

Juliet’s psychological development becomes further apparent when she interacts with the islanders, who allow her to gain more information about their lives and their sorrows. Indeed, Juliet’s encounter with the Islanders causes her to recall her own unresolved emotions, confront them, and confront her unacknowledged insecurities by addressing her trauma. Moreover, readers

realize that her identity has evolved to become mature and decisive, which can be interpreted by her development as a person who has moved on from past traumas and suffering.

Juliet's identity is not the only aspect of her character that has been altered by the war trauma, her creativity as a writer has also been affected. She was a journalist who wrote several columns during the war under a pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, Prior to that, readers discover her passion for writing, which she confesses by saying, "at night I wrote and threw away stories" (105).

Her passion in adulthood appears to be disenchanted with what she is experiencing, having her association with reality like a burden that has to be beard, as she puts it, "the war is now the story of our lives , and there's no denying it" (62) . Yet, her disillusionment seems to shift when she further knows and interacts with the islanders who have also had horrible experiences in the war period. Reading about their prior misfortunes opens her eyes to her own trauma and makes her apathetic toward others. Engaging with the islanders proved to be advantageous for Juliet, as it allowed her to establish connections with them and facilitated her acknowledgment of trauma. This interaction with the islanders aligns with the ideas presented by Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). Caruth emphasizes that trauma can hinder an individual's ability to construct a coherent narrative, as it profoundly impacts personal experiences and memories (114-5). As Juliet engages with the islanders and delves into the profound impact of trauma, her personal story starts mirroring the unsettling aftermath of trauma, as emphasized by Caruth. By acknowledging this, Juliet gradually embraces her creative spirit and begins to embrace her writing.

Caruth states in the book notes part in *Introduction: The Wound And The Voice* -note number 7- "the return of flashback as an interruption – as something with a disruptive force or

impact- suggests that it cannot be thought simply as a representation”(115). Accordingly, Cathy Caruth suggests in her book that trauma can cause flashbacks and other symptoms that could hinder the person's mental processes. In relation to the case of Juliet Ashton, her skill of writing is one of the areas that was effected by the war trauma. Juliet's creativity as a writer appeared to be moving towards a state of disillusionment. Her literary output had come to a halt, and when she did write, it mostly revolved around the war tragedy, conveying a sense of emptiness and a lack of purpose.

The contrast between the protagonist's initial struggles with creativity as a writer and her subsequent growth and development serves as a powerful illustration of the impact of war trauma on Juliet's sense of creativity. In a letter from Juliet to Sidney, she expresses her difficulty in writing, stating, "I no longer want to write this book, my head and my heart just aren't in it... I can't seem to dredge up any sense of proportion or balance these days, and God knows one can't write humor without them" (03). This passage stresses the idea that war trauma did indeed affect her ability to write. This aspect further highlights the significance of her journey as a writer.

Cathy Caruth in her book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, highlights this issue as a consequence of trauma on individuals stating, "In the testimony, language is in process and in trial, it does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the constation of averdict or the self-transparency of knowledge"(16-7). This idea strongly explains Juliet's writing journey because it shows that trauma can disrupt language, making it difficult to express things clearly or with certainty.

By demonstrating the protagonist's evolution over the course of the book, Shaffer and Barrows highlights the transformative power of personal experience and the way in which it can help enhancing one's creative expression. This emphasis on the protagonist's journey adds more

enlightenment on that the process of creating can be as much about self-discovery and personal growth as it is about the end result.

As quoted before “identity can shape the manner in which trauma is perceived and understood” (L.Berman), Juliet Ashton's identity remained resilient despite the impact of the war, and her circle of friends played a significant role in helping her rediscover hope in her writing by encouraging self-reflection and discovery. As it is mentioned in a letter from Isola, a society member and later on a close friend of her, to Juliet, “You have had such sadness with your mum and dad and your home by the river, for which I am sorry”(111). This quote highlights the devastating experiences that Juliet went through, having lost her parents. Despite the immense tragedy, Juliet displays remarkable strength, demonstrating her resilience in the face of such trauma.

II.3. Impact of War Trauma on Communities: An Analysis of the Effects of War Trauma on the Members of the Guernsey’s Literary Society

Shaffer and Barrows in the book, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, examine the effects of war on the island of Guernsey from the islander’s perspective. The second largest island in the Channel Islands, Guernsey, as mentioned in the book's introductory pages for educational purposes, was occupied by the German forces during the World War II.

Guernsey, an island located in the English Channel, with its capital, Saint Peter Port, has a rich history that dates back centuries. Inhabited since Neolithic times, Guernsey has witnessed significant events throughout the years (Guernsey Museums.com). However, one of the most transformative periods occurred during World War II, when German forces occupied the island, leading to significant changes and challenges for its inhabitants. The island was heavily fortified

and subjected to strict military control. The German forces established a military government and imposed various restrictions on the local population. Civilian life was greatly affected, with rationing of food and resources, curfews, and limitations on travel. The islanders endured harsh living conditions, including scarcity of essential supplies. Nevertheless, despite the hardships, the community showed resilience and solidarity. The occupation ended when Allied forces liberated Guernsey in May 1945(GuernseyTravel.com).

In reality, the islanders have suffered enormously, which is faithfully expressed in the novel; they faced severe hardships, both physically and mentally. According to an article titled "The Channel Islands' victims and survivors of Nazi persecution" by Emma Shaw and Gilly Carr on the University of Cambridge website (2019), the war had a profound impact on the daily life of the inhabitant of Guernsey, "from 1940 to 1945, many innocent islanders were arrested, put in jail, and sent away from their homeland because they opposed the Nazi regime. These people referred to themselves as "political prisoners" and were part of the group of people persecuted by the Nazis in the Channel Islands, alongside Jewish people and slave laborers" (Shaw and Carr). In *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, Annie Barrows and Mary Ann Shaffer narrate the stories of many characters who experienced and witnessed the misery of the occupation, and through their words, particularly their letters to Juliet, readers come to explore the dreadful experiences they went through alongside others, which was done through references and storytelling.

In a similar vein, it is necessary to mention Collective Trauma, which refers to the psychological and emotional impact experienced by a group or community as a result of a shared traumatic period or incident. It encompasses the profound and lasting effects that trauma can have on individuals within a community, as well as the collective memory and identity of the group as

a whole (Camille Hawkins). According to Gilad Hirschberger, an experimental social and political psychologist specializing in the study of collective threats and their implications for group survival, in his paper entitled, "Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning", collective trauma has far-reaching effects on groups as well, causing significant disruption and distress within the affected community. He states, "The collective memory of traumatic events is a dynamic social psychological process that is primarily dedicated to the construction of meaning" (2).

Drawing from this perspective, the novel, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, explores the theme of collective trauma through the characters whom Juliet meets when she visits the island. The characters in the story grapple with the enduring effects of the occupation on their lives, relationships, and sense of identity as Guernsey residents, vividly illustrating the complexities of collective trauma and its impact on both individuals and the community as a whole.

Early on during the German occupation, the Islanders had glimmers of hope for a return to a decent life after the Germans' departure, which they believed would occur soon. In a letter to Juliet, Eben Ramsey, a Guernsey man, shares, "we started out hopeful, sure they'd be gone in six months but it stretched on and on"(57), but things did not go as expected. The occupation had a major impact on people physically, but its psychological impact was far more profound. Numerous islanders who corresponded with Juliet about the topic qualify as witnesses of the war's suffering and trauma.

The community on the island was deeply affected by the constant fear and insecurity of living under occupation. They had to cope with shortages of basic necessities like food, fuel, and clothing, which made them feel powerless and desperate. The islanders also suffered from the

violence of the German forces, including arrests, torture, and executions. Many people lost loved ones during the war, which increased their feelings of sorrow and mourning, which are reflected in the novel by various characters' statements about their hatred for the occupiers. Expressing his sentiments in a letter to Sydney, in which Juliet narrates, Sam Withers, an islander, confides, "I hated the Occupation, too. Makes me angry to think of it. Some of those blighters was purely mean—they'd come into your house without knocking and push you to the ground" (180), and "I tell you, I hated those Germans with all my heart" (188).

The war caused the community a great deal of emotional suffering. The book shows how many people on the island have problems with mental health, like PTSD, depression, anxiety, and even horrifying flashbacks, as quoted from a letter to Sidney about a character named, Remy, in which Juliet narrates, "a deep gagging that went on and on. I can't describe it. I turned and saw that it was Remy; she was bent over almost double and vomiting. Dawsey had caught her and was holding her as she went on vomiting, deep spasms of it, over both of them. It was terrible to see and hear. Dawsey shouted, 'Get that dog away'" (222). This incident shows how severe flashbacks affect the people and that their traumas still influence their ordinary functioning in life. The incident of the dog that Remy, a young French woman in the novel who endured a horrible experience during the occupation, is explained to be a memory from her past, as it is stated in the same letter, "Dawsey was standing by the window, looking out. Without turning he said, 'She told me once that those guards used big dogs. Riled them up and deliberately let them loose on the lines of women standing for roll call—just to watch the fun'" (222).

In the novel, Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows also highlight how people have trouble trusting each other and working together, as some islanders spied on each other in exchange for treats and acknowledgments from the Germans, during the occupation. As it is

stated in one of the letters, "People told on their neighbours, you know trying to curry favour, or food, from the Germans." (189). As a result, islanders' already difficult lives became much more difficult.

The war has affected how people in the community interact with each other. Shaffer and Barrows highlight that the war and occupation caused disagreements and conflicts among the islanders, with some people collaborated with the German forces while others opposed them. These tensions still affect how characters relate to each other in the story, as the war has left lasting damage to the community's social relationships, such as those between Dawsey Adams and Eddie Meares, who was a trader of information to the German authorities (202).

The physical environment of Guernsey also reflects the effects of the war. The island still bears the scars of the conflict, with demolished structures and homes and debris scattered across the landscape. The damage is a constant reminder of the trauma endured by the community during the occupation. As Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows describe in novel, the shortage of essential resources such as food and firewood further worsened the challenges faced by the islanders. The quote, "Food grew hard to come by, and soon there was no firewood left. Days were grey with hard work and evenings were black with boredom. Everyone was sickly from so little nourishment and bleak from wondering if it would ever end" (57), captures the harsh reality faced by the people of Guernsey. The description of "grey" and "black" days, along with the physical and emotional strain from limited nourishment, highlights how difficult their lives were. This firsthand account reveals the significant physical and psychological impact of the war on the island community.

Despite the hardships they faced during the war, the people of Guernsey have supported one another and found ways to overcome adversity, as evidenced by the authors' description of

the affection between community members. The Literary Society, which serves as the plot's focal point, has provided a way for them to unite and work towards a shared goal, shaping an escapism for them from their war trauma. In a letter from Eben Ramsey to Juliet, he writes, "We clung to books and to our friends; they reminded us that we had another part to us" (57). This quote highlights how the literary society and their shared love for books and companionship help them cope with the challenges they face. The novel here demonstrates more than a simple description of war and its traumatic effects on people; it also depicts the progression of events that reveal how people can recover from difficult situations by working together and having a sense of purpose.

In another vein, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* shows how important it is to have a community when dealing with the trauma of war. The characters in the book are all deeply affected by their experiences during the German occupation; they also show dependency on their community for support and comfort. The novel also demonstrates how being a part of a group can help with healing and recovery. By creating the Literary Society, the characters are able to come together and share their stories, which makes them feel less isolated. It also illustrates how connecting with others can be a source of strength and resilience when dealing with trauma.

To sum up, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* shows how war affects individuals like Juliet Ashton and the communities as represented by the literary society on Guernsey. The book is sad because war has hurt individuals and groups. However, it also shows how important it is to have an outlet, escapism, friends, or family during tough times. The characters felt better after sharing their stories with one another. Ultimately, the book provides a

clear and vivid portrayal of the significant and lasting effects of war on both individuals and communities.

Chapter Three: The Healing Power of Nature and Literature from War Trauma

The third chapter is an analytical chapter comprised of three sections. The first section is dedicated to discussing and analysing the effect of nature on the protagonist, Juliet Ashton, and how visiting the island of Guernsey and interacting with the environment around her would help her overcome her past war trauma. The second section discusses the effect of writing and reading books and their healing powers on the protagonist, Juliet. The final section tackles the therapeutic value of literature for the members of ‘The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society’ and how reading and discussing books helped them endure the hardships of being under the German Occupation.

III.1. Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Nature from War Trauma: A Case Study of Juliet Ashton’s Journey in the Isle of Guernsey

Nature serves an important role in the life of Juliet Ashton. As a writer struggling to find inspiration for her next novel, Juliet finds solace and inspiration in the natural beauty of Guernsey, an island in the English Channel where the society is located. Whether she is taking long walks along the beach, exploring the islands’ lush countryside, or simply observing the changing seasons, Juliet finds that nature has a calming and rejuvenating effect on her mind and spirit. Through her experiences in nature, she is able to connect with the island’s history and culture, as well as with the members of Guernsey community who share her appreciation for the beauty and wonder of the natural world. Ultimately, nature becomes a source of healing and inspiration for Juliet, assisting her in finding her voice as a writer and a greater connection to the world around her.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows is a novel in which nature is portrayed as a source of comfort and healing for several characters, especially Juliet. At the beginning of the novel, Juliet finds herself in a state of melancholy and lacking inspiration in the bustling city of London. However, circumstances demand her presence in another town, Bath, for a meeting regarding her book, *Izzy Bickerstaff: Goes to War*. Determined to find solace, she embarks on a walk to clear her mind. As she immerses herself in the refreshing air and captivating scenery, a renewed sense of vitality gradually uplifts her spirits. In a heartfelt letter to her friend Sydney, Juliet vividly depicts the contrasting ambiance between the enchanting city of Bath and the vibrant metropolis of London:

Bath is a glorious town: lovely crescents of white, upstanding houses instead of London's black, gloomy buildings or-worse still-piles of rubble that were once buildings. It is a bliss to breath in clean, fresh air with no coal smoke and no dust. The weather is cold, but it isn't London's dank chill. Even the people on the street look different-upstanding, like their houses, not grey and hunched like Londoners. (11)

London in 1946 did not feel like home to Juliet; she experienced a great deal of frustration and disappointment in living there, and her visit to Bath brought her some form of solace due to its beautiful nature and cleanliness. World War II had a profound and lasting impact on the residents of London, both during the conflict and in the post-war period. The city experienced significant physical destruction, loss of life, and widespread disruption to daily life. Especially due to the "Blitz" 1941, the city endured relentless aerial attacks, resulting in widespread destruction of buildings, infrastructure, and homes, thousands of Londoners lost their lives, and many more were injured or displaced and suffered from immense fear, stress, and trauma (Imperial War Museum).

Later in the novel, when Juliet visits Guernsey for the first time, she is captivated by the natural beauty of the island. She writes in a letter to her publisher, “there is so much to tell you. I’ve been in Guernsey only twenty hours, but each one has been so full of new faces and ideas that I’ve got reams to write. You see how conducive to writing island life is” (139). It is evident that Juliet is pleased to be in Guernsey and that her spirits have been elevated by this trip. In her letter, she tells Sydney that she has “reams to write,” which signifies that she is inspired and that she has so many ideas to write and share, and proceeds to tell him that being in Guernsey even for only twenty hours encouraged and inspired her to write.

In his book, *Ecopsychology: Harmony of Communication with Nature*, Antonov Vladimir argues that the exposure to nature is crucial for the spiritual development of individuals. He explains that living in a rural area would benefit one’s life; it would be a place where a person could be conscious of their thoughts. Vladimir adds that exposure to nature can purify and cure individuals. He states that: “contacts with living nature are essential for spiritual growth” (48). Juliet finds that interacting with Guernsey and being exposed to the sun, sea, and farm life is more refreshing than living in London and being exposed to various types of destruction. She starts regaining her innocence and processing her traumatic past experiences and past.

In a letter from Juliet to her best friend Sophie, Juliet starts to complain about how her lover, Markham V. Reynolds, rejected the idea of her visiting Guernsey and her attachment to the new friends she made on the island. Then she proceeds to describe the beauty of Guernsey and how her new friends has embraced her. She recounts how the natural beauty of Guernsey has enabled her to forget about her worries and comfort her:

Guernsey is beautiful and my new friends have welcomed me so generously, so warmly, that I hadn’t doubted that I was right to come here... I’m going to run through the mild-

flower meadow outside my door and up to the cliff as fast as I can. Then I'm going to lie down and look at the sky, which is shimmering like a pearl this afternoon, and breathe in the warm scent of grass and pretend that Markham V .Reynolds doesn't exist. (143)

In her letter, Juliet acknowledges the effectiveness of meditation in the island's natural beauty and how it has enabled her to overlook the burdensome stress that weighted her down, "I'm back indoors. It's hours later—the setting has rimmed the clouds in blazing gold and the sea is moaning below the cliffs. Mark Reynolds? Who's he?" (143).

Juliet finds solace in Guernsey's natural beauty after experiencing the trauma and emotional exhaustion of World War II. The island's tranquil environment and picturesque landscapes has offered her with a retreat from the chaos of her former life in London. Throughout the novel, Juliet's interactions with nature serve as a metaphor for her personal development and emotional rehabilitation. For instance, she regains a new found appreciation for the beauty of flowers and the simplicity of farm life. In their article, "Ecotherapy – A Forgotten Ecosystem Service: A Review," James K. Summers and Deborah N. Vivian argue that the therapeutic effect of the natural elements of nature, such as flowers and trees, was not tested until the 1970s, when R.S. Ulrich conducted a study to explore the psychological impact of nature scenes on stress levels experienced by students. Summers and Vivian state that the results indicated that "his testing showed changes in mental states and conditions after students observed "natural" scenes associated with the environment. These scenes increased positive feelings of friendliness, affection, joy and playfulness" (2). This signifies that Juliet's interaction with the natural elements promoted a sense of tranquillity and serenity that aided her forget about her past trauma.

Staying indoors for Juliet serves as a constant reminder of the trauma she has experienced, keeping her locked in a cycle of distress and emotional pain. Juliet could not any longer tolerate

the feeling of imprisonment she felt when she is indoor. Even though she places her desk in front of the largest window in the cottage, she expresses concern to her friend and publisher, Sydney, that if she remains indoors for too long, she will miss some of the most breathtaking views outside. She states, “the only flaw arrangement is the constant temptation to go outside and walk over to the cliff edge. The sea and the clouds don’t stay the same for five minutes running and I’m frightened I’ll miss something if I stay inside” (144). The confined spaces intensify Juliet’s feelings of entrapment, making it difficult for her to process and come to terms with what has happened, further hindering her progress towards healing and recovery. However, as Juliet takes steps to venture outside and engage with nature, a transformative shift begins to occur. The natural world is significantly different from the environment that triggers her traumatic memories. The open spaces, fresh air, and serene beauty of the nature gradually help Juliet to loosen the grip of her traumatic experiences. As a result, Juliet develops a fondness for her new surrounding and finds complete pleasure and comfort in walking around the island.

Juliet emphasizes the distinction between city life and country life in terms of the purity and cleanliness of each setting, as well as its influence on her. Summers and Vivian argue that “viewing urban scenes also had a tendency to increase feelings of aggression and anger while viewing nature tended to reduce those feelings. Scenes of nature and natural ecosystems fostered positive thoughts and lowered anger and aggression” (2). Even though Guernsey has gone through war and destruction, it is able to quickly restore its beauty than London could ever does. In her letter to Sydney, she describes the contrast between the two cities: “St. Peter Port may be essentially drab at the moment-so many buildings need restoring-but it does not give off the dead tired air poor London does” (146). According to Juliet, London is a broken city inhabited by broken individuals. She no longer wishes to experience or witness more suffering than she has

already endured. Juliet finds comfort in being a part of Guernsey, despite the fact that it is also broken. In a letter to her friend, she shares her profound admiration for the beauty of Guernsey: “It must be because of the bright light that flows down on everything and the clean, clean air and the flowers growing everywhere—in fields, in verges, in crannies between paving stones” (146).

When Sydney visits Guernsey, he is astonished by the obvious transformation of Juliet’s state of mind. He writes to his sister, Sophie, to reassure her about Juliet’s well-being:

I know you think Juliet seemed tired, worn, frazzled and pale when you saw her last winter.... She looks as healthy as horse now and is full of her old zest. So full, Sophie, I think she may never want to live in London again—though she doesn’t know it yet. Sea air, sunshine, green fields, flowers, the ever-changing sky and sea, and most of all the people, seem to have seduced her away from city life. (168)

Sydney’s visit helps him observe Juliet and how she has changed to the better, he realizes that Guernsey’s environment suits her better than London’s. He also notices Juliet’s admiration to the island and figures out her desire to continue living there. Summers and Vivian argue that outdoor adventure, wilderness therapy, outdoor experience and green space-based ecotherapy have been shown to be effective therapeutic media for veterans coping with PTSD” (4). Juliet, who is both a victim of war and a traumatized individual, finds great solace and healing through her exposure to nature.

At the end of the book, realization hits Juliet when she finally decides to live in Guernsey after announcing her desire to adopt Kit, Elizabeth’s daughter, and marrying Dawsey. “I don’t care about living in London—I love Guernsey and I want to stay here” (226), with this line, Juliet acknowledges her love for Guernsey. The exposure to nature and the beautiful environment

surrounding helped her in overcoming her prior trauma. Overall, the natural world serves as a source of inspiration, solace, and healing for Juliet and plays a significant role in her emotional journey throughout the novel.

III.2. Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Literature on Juliet Ashton

Juliet, a thirty-two year-old writer traumatized after suffering from the deaths of both parents, went rogue. She did not feel like she belonged anywhere and kept running away from her uncle's house. After being forced to go to a boarding school, she met Sophie, her only friend, who later became her best friend. At a certain point, both girls left school to experience "real life", as Juliet describes their journey. They both worked at a bookshop, where they fell in love with reading books. Juliet then discovered her passion for writing, not only reading. During World War Two, Juliet wrote humorous columns for the *Spectator* under the name *Izzy Bickerstaff Goes to War*.

Her first encounter with books was in boarding school, where her teacher assigned her the book, *Wuthering Heights*. At first, Juliet did not really want to read the book, but as soon as she started it, she could not put it down. After completing that novel, Juliet spent the rest of the holiday reading several books, as she comments in one of her letters, "that's what I love about reading: one tiny thing will interest you in a book, and that tiny thing will lead you to another book, and another bit there will lead you on to a third book. It's geometrically progressive—all with no end in sight, and for no other reason than sheer enjoyment" (Shaffer and Barrows 10). Juliet's encounter with books helped her survive through the years of trauma. Juliet experienced the joy of discovery that comes with reading. For her, reading was a form of escape or a way to unwind her worries. It was also a way to explore new ideas, challenge her assumptions, and

discover new passions. In this way, literature has had the power to broaden her horizons and helped her grow as an individual.

Literature can have a great positive impact on individuals who have experienced trauma. It offers a unique avenue for healing, self-reflection, and emotional growth. Sarah McNicol and Liz Brewster contend that “associated with reading imaginative literature are the phenomena of the enjoyment of getting swept up in a story and being distracted from life events as a form of escapism” (42). Literature offers a temporary respite from the challenges and pressures of everyday life, providing a space for relaxation, entertainment, and emotional release. They add that “group bibliotherapy has a number of potential advantages. Perhaps the most significant is that important experiences or insights may be possible through interaction not just with the facilitator, but with other group members too... participants become aware that their feelings are shared by others in the group” (33). Such interactions between traumatized individuals can gain insights into different perspectives, expand their understanding of human experiences, and develop greater empathy for themselves and others. Hussain Dilwar in his paper, *Healing through Writing: Insights from Research*, argues that disclosing emotions and feelings about a specific event can alter the way it is perceived, he states, “expressive writing converts emotions and images into words and consequently changes the thinking about and perception of emotional experience” (21). Literature provides a safe outlet for the expression of emotions. Individuals can release their emotions, process their own trauma, and reduce the emotional tension that promotes sentimental healing

During her lifetime, Juliet developed this massive passion for books, which eventually led her to become a writer. At the beginning of the novel Juliet expresses her love for books to her friend Sophie: “you know how I love talking about books and you know I love receiving

compliments” (Shaffer and Barrows 6). The delightful company of different people enjoying talking about books makes Juliet admire the feeling of having such company. Juliet is also pleased that her humorous columns were well-liked and that they helped lift people’s spirits during the war.

Juliet Ashton’s column *Izzy Bickerstaff Goes to War*, was a way for her to use humour to comment on the war and its impact on everyday life. Although Juliet no longer writes the column, as it was a product of the war era, its influence and the way it used humour to navigate through difficult times remain noteworthy. By employing a humorous tone, she was able to distract her readers from the war and make them laugh in the process. Juliet’s writings comforted many people; she also created a sort of bond between individuals who shared the same traumatic experience and wound, including herself. More importantly, by shedding light on difficult situations, people were able to reframe them in a way that felt more manageable and less overwhelming. This helped them feel more resilient and better able to cope with the challenges they faced. As it is shown in the article, “*Healing through Writing: Insights from Research*,” Hussain Dilwar argues that “confrontation and cognitive processing of the subjective emotional experience related to trauma are beneficial for health” (19). He continues to explain that addressing current problems help people cope with the issues they are facing. It is also beneficial to their emotional health and raises their awareness about their personal feelings and emotions (20). Juliet was happiest when she wrote because she was able to address sensitive topics that everyone understood.

Writing holds significant advantages for individuals who have experienced trauma. It serves as a powerful tool for processing emotions, expressing thoughts, and finding healing in the aftermath of traumatic experiences. Through writing, traumatized individuals can delve into their

emotions, gain insights into their own narratives, and develop a sense of empowerment and control over their own stories (Dilwar 21). Dilwar further elaborates, “expressive writing provides the opportunity for more cognitive processing and integration of traumatic experience in memory. It leads to higher emotional awareness and fosters better regulation of emotion and coping with stress” (20). Ultimately, writing provides a valuable outlet for the traumatized, enabling them to explore and make sense of their experiences. Humour and satire, when employed thoughtfully and sensitively, can serve as a tool for resilience, offering a release valve for emotional tension and fostering a sense of connection with others who have shared similar experiences. In *Humour as a form of therapy: Introduction to symposium*, Levine et al. argue that “the humorous attitude is then a state of mind. In that state, man re-asserts his invulnerability and refuses to submit to threat or fear” (127). Juliet uses humour as a defensive mechanism to protect herself and the community surrounding her from the difficult circumstances occurring at the time.

Although Juliet was not a fan of her humorous column, she was able to comfort many people with them. What she really aimed for was to write something serious, and she wanted it to be under her real name. Consequently, she eventually wrote an autobiography about Anne Bronte. Later on, she is offered to write about a serious subject, and under her real name, her correspondence with the members of the literary society eventually has inspired her to write about them and about Guernsey’s inhabitants and how they survived those times. The joy of writing has given Juliet an overwhelming and exciting feeling.

According to Judith Harris in her book, *Signifying Pain: Constructing and Healing the Self through Writing*, Harris advocates that “writing through pain is an exigent process, which more often than not, offers profound relief for the writer as well as the larger community”(xi). In essence, writing is a way of finding relief through expressing one’s deepest pain. It is also a way

of gathering people together. Juliet's writings gave the entire community a sense of collective relief. Juliet felt and understood what the majority of people were going through and she can actually relate to them because they were all experiencing the same conditions.

The members of 'the Guernsey literary society' played a significant role in boosting Juliet's self-perception and influencing her as a creative writer. Amelia, in a letter to Juliet, highlights their mental and physical support and encouragement for her to write a book about their experiences and their literary society. Amelia writes, "the members instantly offered to provide you with anything you might need: bed, board, introductions, and a supply of electric clothes pegs. Isola is ecstatic that you are coming and is already at work on behalf of your book. Though I warned her that it was only an idea so far, she is determined to find material for you" (119-20). For Juliet, the act of writing such a book becomes a form of escape, not from the war and its impact, but rather an immersion into it. It allows her to delve into how the war affected others and explore their coping mechanisms. Through this exploration, Juliet discovers her creative spirit as a writer.

III.3. Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Literature on The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society's Members

In the lives of the members of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, literature plays a significant role. For these characters, literature serves not only as a means of escape from the harsh realities of war but also as a source of solace, healing, and connection. Through their shared love for books and storytelling, the members of 'the Guernsey society' are able to come together, support one another, and explore their own emotions and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Whether it is through discussing their favourite books, writing their own stories and poems, or sharing their personal histories and hopes for the future, the

members of the society find solace, inspiration, and a sense of belonging through the power of literature.

When Juliet begins corresponding with Dawsey Adams, a member of ‘the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society’, she discovers that literature and books saved not only her but many other people—people who lived under the German Occupation for five years. Dawsey, in his letters about how they suffered during those years, describes how one night of breaking curfew resulted in the formation of the ‘Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society’, a literary club where a group of neighbours come together, support one another, and escape the mere misery of living under the German Occupation. Juliet, a book lover that she is, falls in love with the idea of the club and asks if she can write about them to demonstrate how books can bring people together during difficult times. As a result, she begins to correspond with every member of ‘the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society’ in order to learn more about how each member survived the occupation and how the literary society provided and escape.

Jean A, Pardeck and Monica L, Seifert, in their book, *Using Books in Clinical Social Work Practice; A Guide to Bibliotherapy*, argue that when it comes to bibliotherapy, it is essential that the selected book aligns with the readers' personal interests and preferences (17). Engaging with a book that resonates with the individuals' tastes and passions can create a deeper connection and increase motivation to explore its contents. By choosing a book that captures their curiosity, readers are more likely to fully immerse themselves in the therapeutic process (17). In other words, the selection of a book is a crucial aspect of bibliotherapy, influencing the healing process. By choosing books that capture the readers' interests, align with their intellectual development, and address their specific needs, bibliotherapy can provide a powerful and transformative experience, facilitating personal growth, resilience, and healing.

The first club member to correspond with Juliet, Dawsey, tells her about the first book he ever read and how much he relished it. Dawsey writes in his letter that “Charles Lamb made me laugh during the German Occupation, especially when he wrote about the roast pig” (Shaffer and Barrows 8). During World War II, people in the Guernsey Island did not really have much to talk or laugh about since all means of communicating with the rest of the world were cut off for five years, so a source of joy was only to be found in books. In the book, *Literature Composition: Reading, Writing, Thinking*, Carol Jago et al. contend that “as individuals, we sometimes turn to literary texts to escape, to take a break from our current life or situation, to be entertained for a while” (4). This signifies that people use literature to escape or take a break from their severe realities. Dawsey explains that reading Lamb’s book actually helped him escape the harsh reality of living in Guernsey during the period of the occupation, he reveals, “Lamb’s writing make me feel more at home in his London than I do here and now in St. Peter Port” (99). Discussing the book with the other members and sharing different opinions about each idea served as a distraction from the pain and trauma occurring at that time.

In the letters Dawsey sends to Juliet, he expresses his enormous admiration for the author, Charles Lamb, and his book, *The Selected Essays of Elia*. Dawsey develops a sense of kinship with Lamb because they both shared a narrative about a roasted pig and he is interested in learning more about Lamb's life and history. According to Pardeck and Seifert, reading a book that captures your interest is advantageous, “the therapist must consider the client’s interest” (17). To achieve the therapeutic purpose of bibliotherapy one must select a book that would trigger the reader’s interests and needs. Indeed, Dawsey acknowledges the impact of reading had on his life and the enjoyment he experienced as a result: “perhaps I’ve written over-long about him, but I wanted you and Mr Hastings to know how much the books have given me to think about, and

what pleasure I find in them” (100). Dawsey, the introverted person that he is, did not have many friends, the books and the society’s members were the only two things that helped him overcome his loneliness during the German Occupation.

After Juliet requests permission to write about the society, the rest of the members begin to correspond with her, sharing their experiences during the German Occupation and how their encounter with books helped during that period. The majority of them readily admit that reading has a positive effect on their mental state. The members have developed an aptitude for debating and discussing various topics and themes. Juliet receives a letter stating that:

Once two men read the same book, they could argue, which was our great delight. We read books, talked books, argued over books, and became dearer and dearer to one another. Other islanders asked to join us, and our evenings together became bright, lively times—we could almost forget, now and then, the darkness outside. We still meet every fortnight. (45)

The readers can tell that literature drew these individuals together and fostered a sense of community. It is evident that the two members mentioned in the quote who are arguing share a passion for books, and their shared passion for reading leads to lively discussions and debates that the rest of the members appreciate. In the book *Bibliotherapy*, the second chapter *Read to Connect: Reading to Combat Loneliness and Promote Resilience*, by Natalia Tikhareli describes that objective of the ‘The read to Connect’ program is to foster resilience and alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness among individuals facing diverse life difficulties. She states, “the name ‘Read to Connect’ reflected the view of bibliotherapy as an effective tool in helping individuals living through difficult times to reinforce or restore meaningful connections with themselves and with the world around” (82). As the members of the society continue to read and discuss books,

their friendship grows stronger, and other people become interested in joining such evenings. The members are capable of forgetting even for short moments what their real lives are actually like and the hardships, fear, and insecurity that affect their daily lives.

Juliet also understands from the letters the joy and comfort books gave to these people and how they saved them from surrendering to the misery of being under occupation. Isola expresses in her letter that “I could tell you more about reading and how it perked up our spirits while the Germans were here” (48). Isola, another founding member of the literary society, attempts to convey to Juliet that reading books has had a positive impact on the spirits of the society’s members, who endured a difficult time when the Germans were present. Annie Barrows in an interview talking about the book, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, states that “inside the house where ‘the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie society’ is meeting to talk about Chaucer, it’s a place of hope and warmth, and really that does save these people during this terrible time, it really does give them something to live for” (Annie Barrows – “The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society”). Reading plays a major role in boosting morale and having an uplifting effect on the members, even in the most challenging circumstances.

Eben, another founding member of the literary society, who lost his daughter and her new-born and was forced to give away his only grandchild to save him from the German Occupation, suffered greatly during the first years of the oppression. However, the literary society provided him with a sense of hope and belonging. In his letter to Juliet, Eben states, “We cling to books and to our friends; they reminded us that we had another part of us” (57). Cynthia A. Briggs, and Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson in their article, *Use of Bibliotherapy in the Treatment of Grief and Loss: A Guide to Current Counseling Practices*, indicate that “practitioners comparing bibliotherapy with grief therapy can draw links that suggest that bibliotherapy can be effective in

meeting the needs of grieving clients” (37). In other words, Eben found comfort in books; he relied heavily on reading books because, to him, they were a source of distraction, comfort and knowledge. To Eben, discussing and arguing about books with his friends provided emotional support and a sense of belonging and stability in difficult times. Annie Barrows, in reference to the characters of her book, states, “it’s about the books that they read and how they grew to love one another and save one another” (Annie Barrows – “The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society”).

John Booker, also a founding member, finds comfort in only one book that he kept reading on and on; he admits that *The Letters of Seneca* saved him from “the direful life of a drunk” (Shaffer and Barrows 78). The other members attempted to persuade him to read something else, but he refused, “I came to love our book meetings—they helped to make the occupation more bearable” (Shaffer and Barrows 81). He acknowledges the powerful impact of their literary meetings and the ease it brought upon him, “some of their books sounded all right, but I stayed true to Seneca. I came to feel that he was always talking to me—in his funny, biting way—but talking only to me. His letters helped to keep me alive in what was to come later” (81). John Booker, who was exposed to various books, discovered a special connection with the writing of *Seneca* that helped him to endure any hardships that were to come. *The Letters of Seneca* to him is a source of solace and inspiration.

Clovis Fossey desired to gain the affections of a widowed woman that he was in love with. The book club meetings introduced him to his favourite writer, William Wordsworth, “I began to go to meetings, and I’m glad I did, else how would I have read the works of William Wordsworth—he could have stayed unknown to me. I learnt many of his poems by heart” (64). He

states that poems were the keys to his beloved Hubert; books did not only provide him with comfort but also presented him with unconditional love from the woman he admired.

“Did I find solace in reading? Yes, but not at first” (88-9), this is what Thisbee shares with Juliet in his letter. Will Thisbee initially did not find solace not because he did not like it, but because he did not find the book that would feed him the correct emotion and knowledge. Thomas Carlyle's book, *Past and Present*, revealed to him the profound influence that a good book can wield. In this regard, Pardeck and Seifert argue that “bibliotherapy can be useful for helping clients deal with emotional problems or minor adjustment problems or as a tool for helping clients meet developmental needs” (17). Will Thisbee was not a religious man, though the book completely changed his perspective on God and religion. It triggered his critical thinking, in which he started to develop new notions about ones-soul, he states, “I gave my talk on Mr Carlyle to the society, and it stirred up a great argument about the soul.”(89). Books can be both a source for pleasure and enjoyment as well as a source for knowledge and science. To Will Thisbee, it was both.

Lucia Opreanu in her article, *Word Havens: Reading One's Way Out of Trauma in Contemporary Fiction*, asserts, “notwithstanding their general lack of literary expertise, some of the more diligent readers in the group reach conclusions uncannily similar to Bloom's regarding Shakespeare's insight and impact, albeit expressed in a less academic and considerably more subjective discourse” (99). In other words, certain individuals within the society displayed strong criticism when it came to reading books. Despite their lack of literary knowledge, they surprisingly achieved profound observations and developed new perspectives; Eben Ramsey and Will Thisbee are excellent examples. These two members had a way of thinking that

distinguished them from other members; their discussions were always enlightening, amusing, and full of different opinions and views.

Others enjoyed not only reading but also writing and producing literature. A member of the society expresses to Juliet her love for writing and how it has helped her during the occupation, "...I am writing now because I like to write letters. I like to write anything, really" (125). Sally Ann Frobisher found refuge in painting words on paper. Sarah McNicol and Liz Brewster believe that "that writing about traumatic or emotional events can lead to improved health" (35). Sally used writing not only as a means of communication but also to express her feelings and alleviate the stress of the occupation. It is argued in Sarah McNicol and Liz Brewster's book, *Bibliotherapy*, that writing during difficult times helps individuals cope with everything happening in their lives, it is viewed as a means of documenting their feelings, and is a means of recognizing one's own thoughts and feelings regarding their trauma (35).

Elizabeth, the woman who fabricated the story of the literary society, gathered, and introduced the members to each other, is a prominent character who appears in nearly every member's letter throughout the novel. She was caught helping one of the Todt workers, and as a result, she was taken to a concentration camp, where she met Remy. Remy's initial correspondence with the literary society was to inform them of Elizabeth's death and how she spent her years in the camp. She emphasized Elizabeth's citing of poetry and recounting of society meetings and discussions. This entails that the literary society kept Elizabeth alive even when she was in prison; the memories she kept holding on to preserved her sanity and humanity in a place of "filth".

Sarah McNicol and Liz Brewster emphasize in their book, *Bibliotherapy*, that the most essential function of bibliotherapy is to provide guidance and solace to those in need. They state

that “The basic premise of bibliotherapy is that information, guidance and solace can be found through reading” (xiii). Juliet’s discussions with the members of ‘the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society’ about their experiences during the German occupation of the island lead her to a great understanding of the resilience and strength of the human spirit and how reading books helped them live through those hardships.

‘The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society,’ which was created due to the islanders’ love for books and reading, allowed them to form a strong bond of friendship (Gale). Through these meetings, the members were able to endure the hardships and survive the five years of the German Occupation. Literature united these individuals and created a community.

As a conclusion to the chapter, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* is a novel that explores the healing power of nature and literature. Through the characters’ experiences, the book demonstrates how immersing oneself in the natural world and engaging with literature can help heal emotional wounds and connect people to a sense of community. The natural beauty of Guernsey is a source of comfort and inspiration for the characters. The protagonist, Juliet Ashton, finds solace in the island’s rugged coastline and wildflowers after suffering trauma during World War II.

Conclusion

Individuals and communities were profoundly affected by World War II, leaving behind significant psychological wounds known as war trauma. The German bombardment of London and occupation of the island of Guernsey are examples of the devastating effects of war on the human psyche. Under the weight of occupation, people endured fear, loss, and the destruction of their homes and loved ones, resulting in profound trauma that lingered long after the war's end. Indeed, war trauma can profoundly affect an individual's state of mind, leaving lasting effects on their psychological well-being. The experiences of war, such as witnessing violence, enduring loss, and living in constant fear, can lead to a range of mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and survivor's guilt, as discussed in the chapters.

These emotional and psychological wounds have not only affected individuals but also shaped the literature that emerged from such experiences. War novels often serve as a powerful reaction to the trauma inflicted by war, providing a medium for authors to process and convey the complexities of their own experiences or those of others. It becomes a mean of emotional release, allowing authors to explore the impact of war trauma on the human psyche, depict the horrors and struggles faced by individuals, and articulate the profound emotional and psychological impact of war.

In this light, nature and literature play significant roles in the healing of war trauma victims. Nature offers a therapeutic space where individuals can reconnect with themselves and their surroundings, providing solace, serenity, and a sense of perspective. Similarly, literature serves as a form of catharsis and escapism, enabling individuals to explore their emotions, find solace in relatable narratives, and gain new insights and perspectives. Through literature, war

trauma victims can access a range of experiences, emotions, and perspectives, which can help validate their own struggles and provide a framework for understanding and healing.

Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, the co-authors of the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, offered a compelling case study that perfectly served the aim of portraying the experiences of war-traumatized individuals and communities. Through their narrative, they vividly depicted the impact of war trauma on characters such as Juliet Ashton, the protagonist, and the members of the Guernsey Literary Society. Their novel beautifully intertwines the themes of war trauma, nature, and literature, making it an ideal lens through which to explore the possibilities of healing. As the characters navigate their post-war lives, the natural environment of the Isle of Guernsey becomes a refuge, offering solace, renewal, and a connection to the healing power of nature. Simultaneously, literature serves as a catalyst for personal growth and collective healing as the characters find solace and support in the shared reading experiences of the literary society.

Moreover, as the present work is divided into three chapters, the first chapter focused on exploring World War II and its consequences in relation to trauma writing, providing an overview of the impact of World War II on literature. It consists of three sections: a historical overview of the war, an exploration of the portrayal of war trauma in literature with a focus on war novels, and the establishment of a theoretical framework drawing from contemporary trauma theory, ecocriticism, and bibliotherapy. This framework serves as a lens through which to analyze and understand the healing process for those affected by war trauma. Overall, this chapter sets the foundation for understanding the context of war trauma, its representation in literature, and the theoretical lenses that have been incorporated into the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter investigated different aspects of war trauma in the selected novel. Barrows and Shaffer's *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* discusses the impact of World War II on Juliet Ashton and certain inhabitants of Guernsey Island. Through the exchange of letters between Juliet and the members of the literary society. As Dawsey Adams, who was deeply affected by the war, for that he tragically lost his best friend, Elizabeth McKenna to the Germans. This devastating loss left him heartbroken and deprived of his only true companion. Through these discussions, the chapter delved into the profound consequences of war trauma on individuals and communities within the context of the novel.

In the third chapter, the therapeutic potential of nature was explored through Juliet Ashton's journey on the Isle of Guernsey, while the therapeutic potential of literature was examined both for Juliet Ashton individually and for the members of the Guernsey Literary Society as a community. Nature provided solace and renewal, while literature served as a catalyst for personal growth, community-building, and collective healing. As for Juliet, she unlocked her authentic voice in writing, allowing her to finally express herself genuinely. The islanders, on the other hand, discovered a shared love for literature, which provided a common ground for socializing and connecting, bridging the gaps that were previously hindered by the war's aftermath.

Hence, this research emphasized the enduring effects of war trauma and highlighted the transformative role of nature and literature in the healing process. By deepening understanding of the experiences of individuals and communities affected by war trauma, this study emphasized the therapeutic potential of nature and literature in fostering resilience and well-being. These findings call for further exploration and practical application of these insights to develop effective support systems for individuals and communities coping with war trauma. Ultimately, this

research aims to enhance the quality of life and promote healing on both personal and collective levels.

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف عملية التعافي من الصدمات الناتجة عن الحروب، من خلال القراءة والكتابة والمناقشة والتفاعل مع الأدب والطبيعة. سيتم إجراء البحث من خلال قراءة دقيقة لرواية "نادي جيرنزي الأدبي وفطيرة قشر البطاطس" للكاتبين آني باروز وماري آن شافر كدراسة حالة. وباستكشاف رحلة جوليت أشتون المذهلة، يسعى العمل الحالي لفحص كيف يمكن اعتبار الأدب والطبيعة ملاذًا للأفراد الذين تعرضوا لتجارب حربية مروعة وصادمة. ستستخدم هذه الدراسة بالتالي "نظرية الصدمة المعاصرة" لتسليط الضوء على تأثيرات الحروب على الأشخاص العاديين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تفسير الرواية من خلال منظور "النقد البيئي" في محاولة لتحديد دور الطبيعة الحيوي في عملية التعافي. وأخيرًا، ستستقصي هذه الدراسة كيف يساعد الأدب، من خلال القراءة والكتابة، الأفراد المصابين بالصدمات على التعبير عن جروحهم النفسية ثم التعافي منها، باستخدام نظرية "العلاج بالكتب" لتفسير دراسة الحالة المختارة بشكل نقدي. وبالتالي، تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على رحلة التحول لجوليت وأعضاء نادي جزيرة جيرنزي من خلال تفاعلهم مع البيئة الطبيعية وبعضهم البعض ومع الأدب، ويتجاوزهم لصدمات ماضيهم من خلال تجاربهم المشتركة، ومنه يجدون الراحة والقوة والحب، وفي النهاية، يظهرون كأفراد أكثر قوة وقد تغلبوا على ماضيهم واعتنقوا مستقبلًا أكثر إشراقًا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صدمة، شفاء، الحرب العالمية الثانية، "مجتمع جيرنزي الأدبي وفطيرة قشر البطاطس" لماري آن شافر وآن باروس، النقد البيئي، العلاج بالكتب، نظرية الصدمة.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à examiner le processus de guérison des traumatismes liés à la guerre par le biais de la lecture, de l'écriture, de la discussion et de l'interaction avec la littérature et la nature. La recherche sera menée à travers une lecture approfondie de "The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society" d'Annie Barrows et Mary Ann Shaffer en tant qu'étude de cas. En suivant le parcours stupéfiant de Juliet Ashton, ce travail cherche à examiner comment la littérature et la nature peuvent être considérées comme une échappatoire pour les individus traumatisés qui ont vécu des expériences de guerre horribles et choquantes. Cette étude utilisera donc la "Théorie contemporaine du traumatisme" pour éclairer les effets de la guerre sur les gens ordinaires. De plus, cette étude cherche à interpréter le roman à travers un prisme "écocritique" afin de déterminer comment la nature peut jouer un rôle central dans le processus de guérison. Enfin, cette étude examinera comment la littérature, par le biais de la lecture et de l'écriture, aide les individus traumatisés à exprimer d'abord puis à guérir leurs blessures psychologiques, en utilisant la théorie de la "bibliothérapie" pour interpréter de manière critique l'étude de cas sélectionnée. Ainsi, cette étude met en lumière le voyage transformateur de Juliet et des membres du Club de Guernsey à travers leurs interactions avec leur environnement naturel, entre eux et avec la littérature, et comment ils parviennent à vivre et à surmonter leurs traumatismes passés. À travers leurs expériences partagées, ils trouvent réconfort, force et amour, émergeant finalement en tant qu'individus résilients qui ont triomphé de leur passé et embrassé un avenir plus radieux.

Mots clés : Traumatisme, guérison, Seconde Guerre mondiale, "Le Cercle littéraire des amateurs d'épluchures de patates" de Mary Ann Shaffer et Annie Barrows, écocritique, bibliothérapie, théorie du traumatisme.