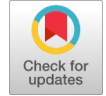# A Veteran-Poet Trauma: US – Iraq War in Brian Turner's Poems *Ashbah* and *Illumination Rounds*

Haider Jabr Mihsin

Abstract: The present study investigates the notion of trauma as a result of the US-Iraqi War in Brian Turner's poems "Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds". As a soldier-poet, Turner's poems portray an exceptional standpoint on the mental and emotional outcome of war owing to the examination of such themes as memory, language, and identity in his poetic verses. This article aims to discover the intricacies of trauma representation and the procedure of bearing witness to traumatic experiences in time of war. The study employs Cathy Caruth's theories of trauma and witnessing, as theorized in her two books Trauma: Explorations in Memory (1995) and Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (1996), to be the methodological tools for examining Brian Turner's poetry. In light of Cathy Caruth's theories of trauma and witnessing, and by thoroughly inspecting in Turner's usage of language, imagery, and narrative structure in his two poems, the findings demonstrate Turner's mental sufferings as a survivor of political violence. The two poems show the traumatic experiences he has lived with his friends through the US-Iraqi war enduring the effects of war. To conclude, depending on Caruth's notion of trauma, Turner's poetry depicts the lingering, vague nature of war experiences and the weighty impression they have on the mind. In addition, this article contextualizes Turner's poetic expressions in the wider socio-political setting of the US-Iraqi War, underscoring the durable heritage of war on both individual and shared memory.

Keywords: *Brian Turner, Cathy Caruth, Trauma*

I. INTRODUCTION

Traumatic happenings include a lot of damage as a result of the prompt and direct harm that they lead to, and also the tenacious requirement to reevaluate one's valuation of oneself and the world (Spalletta et al., 2020:4) [16]. One way to make this assessment possible is through literature which has impacted the life of all human beings with its powerful language in signifying the interior features of any person. Postmodern literature plays an imperative role in this respect. Yet, attention to trauma is not a novel issue and goes back to the Romantic epoch, when writers and the most leading psychoanalysts impressed each other's inspections of the suffering mind (Schonfelder, 2013:7) [15].

The association between war and poetry has been a touching and prevailing subject in literature for a long time

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due to offering a platform for soldiers to express their feelings and experiences of battles. As stated by Mariani [11]:

The US-led war in Afghanistan, and to a greater extent the second Iraq War, have by now both yielded a substantial literary output in the form of essays, poems, autobiographical narratives, short stories, and novels. Written for the most part by those who served in the conflict, many of these accounts are certainly interesting on a documentary as well as on a sociocultural level, but often may leave a bit to be desired as literature. (2020)

In the case of the US-Iraq War, the poet-soldier Brian Turner is considered as a momentous voice, mixing his roles as a soldier and poet in order to deliver an exclusive standpoint on the trauma and difficulties of war. Turner's poems, chiefly "Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds," revolve around the complexities of the human soul amongst the viciousness and confusion of conflict, and also emphasize the responsive toll and ethical uncertainties undergone by those in the war zone.

Via intense images, reminiscent language, and personal thoughts, Turner shows the melancholy realities of war and its permanent effect on both soldiers and noncombatants. This article seeks to investigate how Turner deals with the tempestuous landscape of the US-Iraqi War in his poetry so as to depict the psychological weights and deep humanity entwined within the unrestrained dominion of armed war.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study analyzes the relationship between war experiences, memory, and language. Explicitly, it seeks to explore how Turner, as a soldier-poet, deals with the matter of trauma happening due to the US-Iraqi War and how his poetic expression echoes the fragmentary and melancholy nature of trauma as defined by Caruth. In fact, the present article is going to address the following problems:

1. How does Turner's poetry depict the impression of traumatic happenings undergone throughout the US-Iraqi War on individual and collective memory? How does he portray the disjointed and recursive nature of memory, as hypothesized by Caruth, in his poems?

2. In what ways does Turner benefit from language and poetic tools in order to show the indescribable facets of trauma resulting from war? How does his poetic expression reflect Caruth's idea of the characteristic difficulty in expressing traumatic experiences?

3. How does Turner's examination of trauma in his poems affect his development of identity and subjectivity as a soldier-poet? How do his personal experiences as a veteran form his viewpoint on war trauma and notify his poetic illustration of it?

4. How are Turner's poems

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"Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds" in dialogue with the larger historical and political framework of the US-Iraqi War? How do these poems lead to bigger conversations about the human cost of war and the long-lasting impressions of war on human beings and societies?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. On Cathy Caruth

Cathy Caruth is a very important literary critic and scholar who is famous for her revolutionary studies in the realm of trauma studies. Her research has suggestively affected the way thinkers and experts comprehend the mental and emotional outcomes of trauma in literature, culture, and society. Caruth's work is identified by its interdisciplinary approach, drawing on psychoanalytic theory, literary analysis, and trauma studies to investigate the multifarious diminishing of trauma and its representation.

Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (1996), by Cathy Caruth, is about the fact that in the rampant and impenetrable experience of trauma in the present age, we can identify the probability of history, which is no longer grounded on unassertive representations of sincere experience. Throughout the notion of trauma, Caruth states that we come to a new realization that permits history to rise where immediate realization is implausible. In her all-embracing clarification, Caruth also benefits from Freud's theory of trauma. Caruth writes that Freud would benefit from literature to talk about traumatic experiences since literature, akin to psychoanalysis, is fascinated with the multi-layered relationship between knowing and not knowing.

Trauma: Explorations in Memory (1995) is another significant book by Caruth, which revolves around how literature and the new methods of clinical and hypothetical disciplines bring about the understanding of traumatic experiences. In this book, Caruth presents new opinions about the traumatic experience as it shows us the significance of listening to what can be told in unintentional and unexpected ways. Caruth seeks to demonstrate that literature can offer new ways of seeing and responding to the experience of trauma.

B. On Brian Turner's Poems

Brink (2012) analyzes the framework of transversality and imperial affect in Brian Turner's poetry collection *Phantom Noise*. The article discusses the way in which Turner's poems pass through different borders, such as personal and cooperative memory, individual and social experiences, or the past and the present. It also discusses how Turner's poetry links these divisions, and establishes networks that go beyond traditional classifications [1].

Moreover, the notion of imperial affect alludes to the demonstrative and mental influences of imperialism, war, and conflict in Turner's *Phantom Noise*. The article then examines how Turner's poetry induces and questions the emotional facets of imperialism, inspecting how these broader political and historical forces form individual experiences and responsive reactions. The article also places Turner's poetry collection within the greater context of contemporary poetry, war literature, or the discourse on imperialism, and explores how *Phantom Noise* leads to and deviates from the current literary conducts and critical discussions.

Higbee (2015) as another researcher chiefly writes about the analysis of Turner's celebrated poetry collection *Here, Bullet* within the context of the soldier-poet tradition [6]. The article inspects how Turner's work in *Here, Bullet* fits within the historical tradition of soldier-poets due to drawing parallels to well-known poets who have also written about their experiences in war. Higbee has actually discussed how Turner's poetry is in line with or departs from the themes, styles, and worries of other soldier-poets in literary history.

This research paper probes how Turner's poetry in *Here, Bullet* depicts the realities of war, trauma, and conflict via the perspective of personal experience. It analyzes Turner's exclusive viewpoint as a soldier-poet and how his writing echoes the intricacies, ethical quandaries, and mental toll of war. Higbee's article similarly discusses how Turner shows themes of identity, memory, and self-reflection in *Here, Bullet* by examining how Turner deals with the production of individual and shared identity after war, in addition to the ways in which memory and experience determine one's realization of war.

Jasim (2024) eventually investigates themes, styles, and outlooks regarding war as expressed by the two poets, Saadi Youssef and Brian Turner [7]. The article analyzes how both poets address common themes associated with war, such as trauma, loss, identity, memory, and the human experience in conflict. It inspects how each poet's cultural upbringing affects their portrayal of war.

Saadi Youssef, an Iraqi poet, mostly talks about the experiences of the Iraqi War, whereas Brian Turner, a veteran of the Iraq War, delivers a personal interpretation of war from an American standpoint. The article investigates the literary tools and techniques practiced by both poets, including imagery, symbolism, and tone, and how these lead to their general messages about war.

A significant part of the article is in fact devoted to comparing and contrasting among particular poems by concentrating on how each poet expresses the realities and mental influences of war in their works.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Cathy Caruth (born 1955) is regarded as one of the pioneering intellectuals in relation to what is called trauma, and asserts that "trauma is locatable in the way its very unassimilated nature returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth, 1996:4) [3].

The matter of trauma has become extremely grand, still it leads us to the boundaries of our realization; if sociology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry and even literature are beginning to pay attention to each other again in the inspection of trauma, it is because of the fact they are listening throughout the fundamental commotion and slits of traumatic experience (Caruth, 1995:4) [2]. On the word of Pederson, Caruth refers to trauma as an experience which is so piercingly agonizing that the mind does not have enough power to deal with it in the normal way. Consequently, the victim might entirely fail

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to recall the incident. And in case reminiscences of the trauma reappear later, they are regularly "nonverbal", and the victim may be powerless to use words in order to express them. However, Caruth declares that creative literature, or metaphorical, instead of factual language can "speak" trauma while usual, conversational language cannot; in other words, literature helps the distressed people to talk about their experiences more comfortably. Therefore, Caruth's theory of trauma is a clear verification of the "testimonial" influence of literature (Pederson, 2014) [12].

Willbern alludes to Caruth who believes that the state of trauma unites psychology and history, or at least blurs the borders among them. The event is exterior while the reply is interior. Historically, it can be claimed that our deferred social consciousness of trauma in the 1970s and 1980s started somewhat from Vietnam War veterans who could not stop thinking about war even at home. Trauma then entered other zones of mental damage (Willbern, 2017) [22]. In fact, Trauma indicates an emotional reaction to any frightful happening [23]. It shapes one of the most significant themes of many literary works [24]. Trauma, as Reisberg and Hertel state, implies a mental wound, particularly one that is instigated by emotional tremor the memory of which is suppressed and stays untreated (2004:78) [13]. Similarly, Vasile has presented some definitions for this notion, including a vehement feeling which influences a human being so much that she becomes unusual (Vasile, 2014) [21].

V. DISCUSSION

A. Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Trauma is a serious emotional shock and distress resulting from horrible circumstances. Trauma is a serious injury that adversely affects the human mind, often resulting from violent assaults or accidents. Also, Trauma is an affecting shock that results in a prolonged negative effect from an unpleasant event, leading to persistent anguish or anxiety in certain psychiatric conditions. An individual's trauma comes from an incident, a series of events, or a set of circumstances seen as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, leading to enduring adverse impacts on the psychological functioning of the affected individual, as well as on their mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual state (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).

The term "trauma," now often used, originates from the Greek word meaning "wound" and first referred to a physical harm inflicted by an external force. However, word subsequently came to denote psychological traumas in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Luckhurst, 2008:3) [9]. During the 1990s, there has been an increasing volume of writings about trauma and its representations across several academic disciplines, as well as in both fictional and non-fictional narratives. There is a rising concern in trauma studies and a need to reconsider the notion of reception. The early 1990s signified the emergence of modern trauma theory, often known as literary theory of trauma, articulated by literary academics such as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman (Rodi-Risberg, 2010:10-11) [14].

A suitable beginning point, however, may be identified in Sigmund Freud's first investigations of trauma. In medical and psychiatric literature, particularly in Freud's works, the word trauma is linked to accident victims and combat veterans. In his 1920 essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud defined trauma as a psychological injury rather than a physical one, noting that this mental wound is not instantaneously integrated like a bodily one (Rodi-Risberg, 2010:103) [20]. Freud maintains that humans respond to traumatic experiences belatedly, after a period of incubation. They often exhibit amnesia about their experiences; nevertheless, during the incubation period, memories of the horrific events reemerge uncontrollably. Traumatised persons may first forget the incident, but then experience it via recurrent intrusions (Freud, 1939:110) [4].

Cathy Caruth asserts that an accurate definition of trauma has not been established yet. Caruth illustrates trauma as the reaction to an unforeseen or excessively violent occurrence or occurrences that are not fully comprehended at the moment, but reemerge subsequently in recurrent flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive representations (Mahmoud, 2016) [10]. The notion of "belatedness" proposed by Freud is fundamental to trauma theory [17]. Freud claimed that traumatic happenings may only be comprehended by the person who suffers in retrospect, making trauma very hard to cure. Caruth elaborates on Freud's concept of belatedness, asserting that trauma is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (1996:4).

Caruth emphasises that Freud, although being a neurologist, developed an interest in literary depictions of trauma, contending that "literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (1996:3). To clarify, Literature and psychoanalysis both tackle the issue of representation.

The American Psychiatric Association describes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as follows: "the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others" and "the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (Rodi-Risberg, 2010:1). The year 1980 marked a significant milestone in current studies of trauma, when the American Psychiatric Association identified PTSD in its official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. This resulted from the advocacy of Vietnam War veterans. Then, Trauma was investigated primarily via the study of the suffering experienced by war veterans, particularly adult men (Koivisto, 2020:11) [8]. The term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first used by Vietnam War veterans. The phrase "traumatic" associated with war has persisted for an extended period and is known by several names, including war fatigue, soldier's shell shock, and war stress. The term PTSD may refer to any psychological issues arising from a stressful incident (Herman, 1992:19-26) [5].

Judith Lewis Herman (1992) has written an important study for those interested in trauma studies. While not specifically

focused on literature, Herman's influential book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* revolves around how trauma can be understood and treated in a clinical context. This book provides an in-depth exploration of the psychological impact of trauma on human beings, and how it can be addressed and treated. Herman has divided the book into three parts. The first part discusses the clinical presentation of trauma, specifically post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and how it manifests in individuals. Herman describes the common symptoms of PTSD, including flashbacks, hyperarousal, numbing, and avoidance.

According to Herman, trauma can be defined as an emotional reaction to an occurrence or experience that is intensely upsetting or worrying. It often leads to feelings of vulnerability, misperception, and terror. Trauma can be instigated by an extensive variety of experiences, including war, violence, manipulation, accidents, natural disasters, and other dangerous events. The development of the term "trauma" in the context of psychology and mental health has evolved over time. Originally, trauma was chiefly linked with physical damages. Nevertheless, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, psychologists and psychiatrists began to identify the psychological effect of traumatic experiences. This led to the formation of the concept of psychological trauma and the realization of such disorders as post-traumatic stress disorder (1992:7).

In Brian Turner's selected poems, the themes of trauma and PTSD are seen clearly. Turner, a veteran of the Iraq War, undoubtedly depicts what happened to combatants during the war and describes the everlasting impacts of trauma on human beings. In "Ashbah," which implies "ghosts" in Arabic, Turner refers to the remarkable reminiscences and experiences that still influence soldiers long after they have left the war. The poem offers a sense of bafflement and conceptual commotion, underlining the collective nature of trauma and its capability to stay in the minds of those who have undergone it. "Illumination Rounds" also represents the effect of trauma, mostly on the spirit of soldiers who have been exposed to the apprehensions of war. The poem mirrors the shocking effect of violence and the struggle to make sense of one's experiences after the war. Turner's influential imagery and moving language convey the complications of PTSD and the deep challenges undergone by individuals who are attempting hard in order to deal with trauma.

B. Trauma as Unclaimed Experience

Trauma as an unclaimed experience, as speculated by Cathy Caruth, is about how trauma can be realized and handled in literary works like Brian Turner's poems "Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds" that describe the US-Iraqi War. Caruth claims that trauma functions on an irreplaceable sequential and sentimental aspect, one that interrupts the ordinary courses of recollection and conception. Unclaimed experience alludes to the feature of trauma that stays unintegrated into one's cognizant comprehension and memory. Traumatic experiences often surpass the human being's capability to recognize or handle them at the time they happen, which results in a sort of "split" in the mind where the experience remains unclaimed, unassimilated, and unintegrated.

In the case of Turner's poems, the portrayal of the US-Iraqi War echoes this unclaimed experience. Soldiers like Turner defy ferocity, loss, and sorrow that go beyond the confines of typical human experience, and generate a break in their perception that cannot be simply resigned or expressed. The language of trauma in the poems thus turns into a tool through which this unclaimed experience can be uttered and examined. Caruth's theory also highlights the deferred and repetitive characteristic of trauma, where the unclaimed experience reemerges in fragmented and incoherent ways, often prompted by ostensibly unconnected happenings or reminiscences. This is reproduced in Turner's poems, where the memories of war arise unpredictably and invasively, unsettling the undeviating current of time and story.

Additionally, trauma as unclaimed experience defies conservative concepts of agency and subjectivity, as the traumatic occasion employs a type of estranging force on human beings, making them inert and destitute while facing devastating vehemence and grief. The soldier-poet in Turner's works struggles with this loss of agency, trying to express the inarticulable and retrieve a sense of self in the confusion and obliteration of war. In fact, trauma as unclaimed experience, as discussed by Cathy Caruth, helps us comprehend the multifarious and durable impression of war experiences portrayed in works like Brian Turner's poems.

In his 2005 collection *Here, Bullet*, his poem with Arabic name "Ashbah", which translates to "ghosts" in English, Turner records a traumatic experience of the grief and estrangement experienced by American soldiers. A remarkable feature of this poem is its ability to focus solely on the profound anguish and spiritual ruin caused by war, regardless of one's views on war in general or the Iraq invasion in particular. It directs attention towards the suffering experienced by soldiers and citizens, rather than concerning itself with the actions of generals and presidents, who are merely driven along by bigger powers. He says:

"The ghosts of American soldiers
wander the streets of Balad by night,
unsure of their way home, exhausted,
the desert wind blowing trash
down the narrow alleys as a voice
sounds from the minaret, a soulful call
reminding them how alone they are,
how lost. And the Iraqi dead,
they watch in silence from rooftops
as date palms line the shore in silhouette,
leaning toward Mecca when the dawn wind blows".
(Turner, 2005:28) [19]

Turner's use of the word "Ashbah," meaning ghosts, demonstrates his knowledge of Arabic words. Turner employs symbols derived from the Iraqi culture. As an example, he uses elements such as "date palms", "the desert wind", and the "city of Balad", together with Islamic symbols like the "minaret, "the soulful cry" and "Mecca". Turner used symbols to help the reader's understanding of life in Iraq, a subject that may be unfamiliar to many readers.

The poem starts with an appealing line, "The ghosts of American soldiers". In this

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poem, the notion of trauma as unclaimed experience is brightly portrayed through the haunting imagery of the ghosts of American soldiers who are roving the streets of Balad at night. The word "ghosts" refers to the American soldiers who fell victim of the conflict in Iraq.

To exemplify the bewilderment and estrangement that often typify traumatic experiences, Turner depicts two distinct types of ghosts that haunt the streets of the city of Balad in Iraq at night. The first is the ghosts of American soldiers who wander aimlessly, and uncertain of their path back home. "unsure of their way home, exhausted". The second is dead Iraqis who silently observe from the roofs. "watch in silence from rooftops". The image of the Iraqi dead, silently watching from rooftops, also accentuates the theme of unclaimed experience in trauma. The stare of the Iraqi dead signifies the disturbed past, the persistent danger of brutality and loss that remains unobserved and untouched. Their silent surveillance serves as a lingering signal of the human cost of war and the complications of gloom that go beyond nationwide boundaries.

The poem's natural background, shown by the desert view and the sound of wind passing through "narrow alleys," alludes to both Turner's daily life experience and his imaginative reality. It acts as a metaphor for the muddled and disjointed nature of trauma, where reminiscences and atmospheres twirl erratically, and generate a sense of nervousness and slipup. Turner's use of the words "desert," "trash," and "narrow alleys" suggests the drought, disintegration, and destruction of Iraq due to colonization. Once again, the depiction of darkness is intricately woven throughout the image to highlight the desolation and sorrowfulness of the devastated landscape. The disturbing image depicts the torment endured by US soldiers as a consequence of their involvement in the war.

Turner portrays the minaret and the Islamic call to prayer, being part of Islamic religion and typical token of faithful Moslems to turn to Mecca and pray, as "expressing deep emotion or spirituality." He interprets it creatively as an auditory expression of condemnation and reproach towards the soldiers, serving as a reminder of their terrible circumstances and their loneliness in this land far from home. The voice from the minaret echoing through the night intensifies the atmosphere of segregation and seclusion undergone by the soldiers. This soulful call also functions as a token of their deep sense of being by themselves in a foreign country, detached from their acquainted surrounds and trying hard to find a sense of fitting in or determination.

When depicting dead Iraqis, Brian Turner places them in a noticeably contrasting setting compared to where he places the American soldiers. The Iraqis are close to "date palms in the shore, in a silhouette, / leaning towards Mecca when the dawn wind blows". Date palms, which are plants that provide fruit known as dates, are now in bloom along the beaches of Iraq. The trees are inclined towards Mecca due to its position as the most sacred place in the Muslim faith. Muslims either go on a pilgrimage to Mecca or position themselves towards the direction of Mecca and pray. These details enable the audience to comprehend that the Iraqi soldiers are home which is their rightful place. The date palm trees incline towards Mecca due to the influence of a prevailing "dawn wind" that blows them in that specific direction. Without a

doubt, the Iraqi soldiers are fighting on their land, motivated by their utmost priorities: their religion and their country. The combination of the soldiers' bewilderment with the emblematic movement of the date palms towards Mecca accentuates the reflective exploration of direction and determination while going through trauma and loss.

Therefore, the poem "Ashbah" is a testimony that echoes unclaimed experience and symbolizes the feeling of hopelessness that encompasses American soldiers even in after death. Their souls become restless and tormented due to being trapped in Iraq, desperately looking for a means to return home among the desert wind that blowing trash.

Also in his poem "Illumination Rounds," from his second 2010 collection *Phantom Noise*, Turner presents another testimony of an unclaimed trauma in a form of a scene of an amalgamation of guilt, discomfort, and desire to reconcile with the continuing effects of war that haunt the poet's dreams. He writes:

"Parachute Flares drift in the burn time
of dream, their canopies deployed
in the sky above our bed. My lover
sleeps as Iraqi translators shuffle
in through the doorway—visiting
as loved ones might visit a hospital room,
ill at ease, each of them holding
their sawn-off heads in hand". (Line 1-8, 2010:29)

In the above lines (1-8), Turner likens his unpleasant dreams with flares flutter with their canopies spread out in the sky above his bed. his lover is now sleeping as Iraqi interpreters enter the room, like visitors in a hospital ward. They seem uncomfortable, each clutching their severed heads in their hands. Even during sleep, or maybe even more so in that condition when images emerge from the unconscious mind, the psychologically damaged or introspective individuals in Turner's poems are unable to avoid the painful recollections and intense emotional experiences they endured during battle. The introduction of "Illumination Rounds" presents evidence of enduring wound.

Caruth states that traumatic experiences interrupt the usual process of memory and understanding because of making people re-experience the event rather than recall it. In the poem, the imagery of "parachute flares drift in the burn time of dream" denotes a mixture of past and present, where the narrator is troubled by memories of war that interfere with his current life.

The reference of Iraqi translators shuffling in through the doorway also highlights the disturbance of the past into the present moment. The translators, usually functioning as intermediaries between different cultures and languages, now appear in a bewildering light, holding their sawn off heads in hand. This image stands for the loss of identity, power, or humanity that originates from experience of extreme vehemence and trauma.

The depiction of the lover sleeping while these haunting images manifest around them emphasizes the detaching characteristic of trauma, in addition to the incapability of others to completely realize or share in the survivor's experiences. Likewise, the comparison of the translators visiting like loved ones in a hospital room

Retrieval Number:100.1/ijssl.C115704030325
DOI: 10.54105/ijssl.C1157.04030325
Journal Website: www.ijssl.latticescipub.com

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Lattice Science Publication (LSP)
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implies a feeling of weakness and agitation while going through grief. Turner then continues:

"She finds me at 3am shoveling
the grassy turf in our backyard, digging
three feet by six, determined to dig deep.
We need to help them, if only with a coffin.
I say, and if she could love me enough
to trust me, to not cover her mouth
in shock or recognition, her hair lit up
in moonlight; if she could shovel
beside me, straining with the weight
each blade lifts in its gunmetal sheen,
then she'd begin to see them - the war dead -
how they stand under the lime trees and ash,
papyrus and stone in their hands". (Line 14-26)

Later in the poem in the preceding lines (14-26), the consequences of traumatic experiences he passed by in Iraq still affecting him. The dream continues. Turner's lover finds him shoveling at 3 A.M. in their backyard and he determined to dig deep. He tells his lover "We need to help them, if only with a coffin," He tries to convince his lover that "the war dead" are still present, and he attempts to get her to see them, "how they stand under lime trees and ash, / papyrus and stone in their hands." (Koivisto, 2020). Turner continues:

"She stares at these blurry figures
in silhouette, the very young and very old
among them, and with a gentle hand
stays the shovel I hold, to say -
We should invite them into our home.
We should learn their names, their history.
We should know these people
we bury in the earth". (Line 27-34)

However, after staring at the war dead "blurry figures," Instead, she persuades him to stop his shoveling and tells him "We should invite them into our home. / We should learn their names, their history. / We should know these people / we bury in the earth." "Illumination Rounds" depicts images seen in a dream as a consequence of Turner's unpleasant memories of Iraq war which never leaves his imagination. It describes a dream sequence that affirms the role of the poet as witness. Turner then continues:

"I'm out on patrol again, driving
Blackstone to Divisidero, Route Tampa
to Bridge Number Four, California
to the neighborhoods of Mosul, each stoplight
an increment, a block away from home
and a block closer to the August night
replaying in my head". (Line 35-41)

In this part, the narrator refers to the physical and mental problems caused by war and trauma. Turner means to show how the past continues to affect the present by obscuring the borders between memory and lived experience. The speaker's explanation of being "out on patrol again" denotes a return to an accustomed but haunting routine, which emphasizes the repeated nature of trauma and the ways in which past occasions can reappear unpredictably. As the speaker drives from Blackstone to Divisidero, referencing particular locations such as Route Tampa and Bridge Number Four, there is a tangible feeling of dislocation and suspension, as if they are instantaneously present in various places and times.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of California and the neighborhoods of Mosul accentuates the clash between the speaker's physical surroundings and his reminiscences of conflict and violence. Each stoplight becomes a sign of distance from home and intimacy to the traumatic happenings of the past, highlighting the inevitable nature of memory and its interference with the present moment. The image of the August night rerunning in the speaker's head also condenses the idea of trauma as a recurrent, troublesome force that interrupts undeviating narratives of time and space.

The speaker is stuck in a circle of memory and experience, powerless to entirely break free from the control of the past. Finally, Turner adds:

"gunshots echoing years later, the incoherent
screaming I've translated a thousand times over
driving until I finally understand
who it is I'm supposed to kill. (Line 42-45)

In this part, the speaker still struggles with the durable effects of trauma and violence on his mind. The imagery of "gunshots echoing years later" signifies the tenacity of traumatic memoirs long after the happenings themselves have happened. The speaker is followed by the aftershocks of past vehemence, which emphasizes the troublesome and invasive nature of trauma on one's perception.

Additionally, the allusion to "incoherent screaming I've translated a thousand times over" underlines the challenges of making sense of traumatic experiences and the emotional effort included in handling and uttering such upsetting memories. The act of translating violent imagery and sounds can be both a handling mechanism and a problem, as the speaker deals with the devastating influence of his past experiences. Ultimately, the line "driving until I finally understand who it is I'm supposed to kill" is about the confusing and morally tense nature of war. The speaker's search for rationality and value in the middle of disorder and confusion shows the internal anarchy and clash that often take place with traumatic events.

C. The Ethical Call of Trauma

When discussing the ethical call of trauma in some poems like "Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds," it is certainly vital to pay attention to the excessive influence of war on both people and the world. Trauma, predominantly as the consequence of war, results in ethical questions and brawls. One facet of the ethical call of trauma that we notice in Turner's poetry is the matter of bearing witness. In his poetry, Turner detects the horrors of war along with the anguish of combatants and non-fighters. By giving voice to the experiences of those who have been either bodily or emotionally hurt by war, Turner aims to provoke the ethical contentions of ferocity and desolation.

This act of witnessing is regarded as a mark of the ethical role that we have so as to identify and utter the realities of war, even if they are severe to defy. On the word of Sychterz, "Just as one would expect from an art form that has been increasingly associated with testimony and witness, poetry seems particularly apt for expressing the pain of psychological trauma" (Sychterz, 2018) [18]. Furthermore, Turner's poems refer to the multilayered interface

between individual trauma and collective apprehension.

The experiences of soldiers in war, as revealed in "Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds," underline the ways in which trauma can mirror through societies and generations. The ethical call of trauma in this context makes us think about how we as human beings and as a society respond to the unhappiness and trauma of others. It rouses us to think through our duties to look after those who have been insulted by war.

Additionally, the ethical call of trauma in Turner's poetry leads to some questions concerning culpability and uprightness. War often brings with it lots of moral insignificances, leaving individuals grappling with questions of right and wrong, guilt, and responsibility. Turner's poems challenge these ethical difficulties openly, and ask the readers to face the ugly outcomes of war.

In the poem "Ashbah", the ethical call of trauma is affectingly observed in the lingering descriptions of American soldiers and Iraqi non-fighters after the war. The ghosts of American soldiers roving the streets at night stand for the ceaseless incidence of trauma. One key point about the ethical call of trauma in this poem is the sense of separation experienced by the soldiers. They are shown as lost and horrified, indeterminate which way leads to their home. The desert scenery and the blowing wind prompt a sense of anguish and desolateness in order to underline the great psychological outcome of war on those who have attended it. The poem also concentrates on the lookouts of the Iraqi dead, who watch in silence from the roofs as the soldiers roam below. This comparison of the American soldiers and the Iraqi dead highlights the collective humanity of all those damaged by war.

Correspondingly, in "Illumination Rounds," the ethical call of trauma is robustly explained via rich imagery and evocative wording. One feature of the ethical call of trauma in "Illumination Rounds" is the demonstration of the soldiers' perceptual and expressive struggles in the middle of war. Turner represents the disorder and muddle of the war since he seeks to reveal an unadorned depiction of the terror. Through this interpretation, the poem raises ethical questions about the consequence of war on the mental well-being of those who have to attend.

As well, "Illumination Rounds" displays the ruthless nature of war and the ethical difficulties undergone by soldiers in combat. The poem also validates the strain between duty and ethics, as the soldiers grapple with the vehemence they have observed and instigated. The poem also mentions the social consequences of war and the ethical culpabilities that take place with perceiving it.

VI. CONCLUSION

The examination of the US-Iraqi War via soldier-poet Brian Turner's poems "Ashbah" and "Illumination Rounds," using Cathy Caruth's ideas, substantiates the profound impact of trauma on those involved in warfare. By integrating Caruth's perspectives on trauma, memory, and narrative with Turner's evocative poetry, we attain a greater understanding of the complexities embedded in the experiences of soldiers going through the disappointments of war.

Caruth's concept of traumatic realism aids to inspect how Turner's poems depart from expected narratives, and mirror the disorganized nature of trauma itself.

The poems show the lingering impressions of war, the aftershocks of ferocity and loss that remain in the minds and souls of those who have observed its outrages. Through Turner's imagery and language, we are taken to the intuitive dominion of war, where the margins between past and present, memory and reality fade in upsetting ways.

Likewise, Caruth's emphasis on the bond amongst trauma, memory, and history goes in line with Turner's deliberation of the sturdy injuries caused by the US-Iraqi War. The poems serve as indications of the expressive damages gone through by soldiers long after the clashes are over, emphasizing the longstanding impact of war on people. Turner's rhythmical investigation of identity, morality, and human connection in the face of trauma supports Caruth's discussion of how trauma distracts and changes the narratives we form about ourselves and the world around us.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- **Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests:** Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- **Funding Support:** This article has not been funded by any organizations or agencies. This independence ensures that the research is conducted with objectivity and without any external influence.
- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** The content of this article does not necessitate ethical approval or consent to participate with supporting documentation.
- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- **Authors Contributions:** The authorship of this article is contributed solely.

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Retrieval Number:100.1/ijssl.C115704030325
DOI: 10.54105/ijssl.C1157.04030325
Journal Website: www.ijssl.latticescipub.com

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Lattice Science Publication (LSP)
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