

**American Soldiers Against "the War on Terror": War Trauma in  
Selected Poems by Brian Turner**

جنود أمريكيون ضد الحرب علي الإرهاب: فجيعة الحرب في قصائد مختاره لبرايان تيرنر

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The U.S.-led war against Iraq, commonly labeled as the “war on terror,” was assumed to uproot terrorism in some targeted countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Described by some as “the most reckless war in modern times,”<sup>1</sup> the war on Iraq has unfolded the reality of the American double-standard democracy and questioned the prevailing American ideology that “US power is basically benign and altruistic.”<sup>2</sup> It has been

<sup>1</sup>Said “The Academy” (n.pag.)

<sup>2</sup> Said “The Academy” (n.pag.)

argued that the attacks of September 11 functioned as the pretext, which the U.S. administration has created to keep itself in an “exceptional” moment of crisis which is used “to legitimize government abuses of power”<sup>3</sup> and to conceal its well-planned war against Arab and Islamic countries.

Some believe that the United States, as a relatively-new imperial power, hides its imperial ambitions behind a reverberating discourse about being the advocate of freedom and democracy. But the aim of the U.S.-led military mission in Iraq, which allegedly was stated as “the rise of a free and self-governing Iraq,”<sup>4</sup> proved to be completely the opposite. “The occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan,” Chris Hedges states, “haven’t promoted U.S. security or stability in the Middle East; instead, they have furthered the spread of failed states, increased authoritarianism, and unleashed savage violence... These occupations have scuttled the art of diplomacy and mocked the rule of law.”<sup>5</sup> The devastation, mayhem and state of lawlessness which have inflicted Iraq at all levels, the scandal of Abu Ghraib prison tortures, the massacre of Fallujah and the high rate of Iraqi casualties, estimated at about half a million Iraqi<sup>6</sup>, injured and war traumatized civilians and soldiers are clear evidence of the American destructive, imperial ideology, which is far from being “benign” or “altruistic” as it is claimed to be. Edward Said maintains,

Every single empire in its official discourses has said that it is not like all the other, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force as a last resort.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, sectarianism, which has been fueled by American occupation, has been an agent for deepening the state of chaos and lawlessness, which has plagued Iraq, especially after the withdrawal of the American military forces. This sectarianism has been a catalyst for spreading “savage violence” as embodied in ISIS. Noam Chomsky argues, “[f]rom the beginning of the military occupation, US policy has encouraged sectarianism. And it goes

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<sup>3</sup>Alsultany 207

<sup>4</sup> Bush “5 Step” (n.pag.)

<sup>5</sup> “Foreword” 14

<sup>6</sup> BBC News “Iraq Study” (n.pag.)

<sup>7</sup> *Orientalism* xxi

beyond that....”<sup>8</sup>Graham Fuller, former CIA officer, comments on the rise of ISIS in Iraq saying:

I think the United States is one of the key creators of [ISIS]. The United States did not plan the formation of ISIS, but its destructive interventions in the Middle East and the war in Iraq were the basic causes of the birth of ISIS.<sup>9</sup>

### ***The Blowback***

Ironically, the U.S. led war on Iraq has not only inflicted heavy losses on Iraq but also on America. Hedges draws attention to the fact that “[w]ar is a poison. It is a poison that nations and groups must at times ingest to ensure their survival. But, like any poison, it can kill you just as surely as the disease it is meant to eradicate.”<sup>10</sup> Distorting the image of America as the advocate of democracy and freedom, as well as the heavy financial losses, which have shaken American economy, are some of the repercussions of such illegitimate war. The U.S.-led war against Iraq has generated around the world vehement waves of opposition and “unmatched distrust and hostility toward the United States” and its biased policies; “[i]n Arab and Muslim countries it has fueled intense hatred of the US, and has brought many new recruits to the ranks of anti-American terrorists.”<sup>11</sup> Much more important is that a considerable number of American soldiers were killed or wounded during their mission in Iraq. According to the latest statistics of the U.S. Department of Defense about 4,424 American soldiers were killed and about 31,951 injured in Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, the war has not only scarred the bodies of its victims, but it has also traumatized their minds and their psyches because “[w]hat spills blood, spills spirit.”<sup>13</sup> A large number of American soldiers have become psychologically traumatized. According to RAND Corporation, one in five Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depression. According to Damien McElroy, American soldiers and veterans were resorting to antidepressants in record numbers. America was, therefore, accused of

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<sup>8</sup> “More of the Same” *Al-Ahram Weekly* P.6

<sup>9</sup> qtd in Chomsky “More of the Same” *Al-Ahram Weekly* P.6

<sup>10</sup> “Foreword” P.9

<sup>11</sup> Weber “The Israel Lobby’s Campaign” (n.pag.)

<sup>12</sup> “[Casualty Status - U.S. Department of Defense](#)”

<sup>13</sup> Shay 58

maintaining the strength of its forces through plying its soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan with “prescription drugs.”<sup>14</sup> In a tragic incident set off by psychological stress, a U.S. soldier shot dead five of his comrades at a military clinic in Baghdad. This was not the first incident of violence of U.S. soldiers against their comrades in Iraq.<sup>15</sup>

This paper draws on the political and cultural dimension of trauma theory, applying its psychoanalytic perspective of Freud, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Judith Herman and others to the texts under analysis. The research particularly explores the significance of literature, especially poetry in helping war victims and survivors transform their trauma into words and testify to the experience of war. Thus the paper researches war poetry written by traumatized victims and survivors of the U.S.-led war against Iraq, focusing on the works of Brian Turner (1967- ), the American poet and essayist.<sup>16</sup> Through testifying to the war trauma in the poetry of Turner, the researcher attempts to show how this writer has brought the miseries, destruction and terror of the war on Iraq graphically and vividly to the reader through an American soldier’s eyes in an attempt to speak aloud the unspoken reality of war. The paper assumes that the credibility of war poetry is only available through those who have gone through such the horrific experience of war, such as Turner himself. In his poems, Turner, like many other American soldiers and veterans, defies war and its outrages that inflict Americans as well as Iraqis. He also fights back being repressed by any cultural or political hegemony, which forces war victims and survivors into silence.

### ***Psychological Trauma***

The Greek term “trauma” or “wound” originally refers to “a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the body envelop.”<sup>17</sup> Later in the medical and psychiatric literature the term is understood as a wound inflicted on the mind.<sup>18</sup> According to Caroline Garland, Freud “used the word [trauma] metaphorically to emphasize how the mind too can be

<sup>14</sup>The Telegraph (n. page.).

<sup>15</sup>Reuters.com “U.S. Soldier in Iraq” (n.pag.)

<sup>16</sup> Brian Turner (1967- ) is an American poet, essayist, professor and a United States Army veteran, who served for a year in Iraq. Turner has seen his poems published in The Cortland Review, Poetry Daily, Atlanta Review, Crab Orchard Review, Georgia Review, Rattle, [Virginia Quarterly Review](#), and in anthologies including *Voices in Wartime: The Anthology and Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*. He won the 2005 [Beatrice Hawley Award](#) for his debut collection, *Here, Bullet*, the first of many awards and honors received for this collection of poems about his experience as a soldier in the [Iraq War](#).

<sup>17</sup> Garland 9

<sup>18</sup>Caruth, *Unclaimed* 3

pierced and wounded by events...).<sup>19</sup> Since its emergence at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychological trauma is regarded as a highly tendentious field of investigation as “the study of psychological trauma has repeatedly led into realms of the unthinkable and foundered on questions of belief.”<sup>20</sup> In fact, “the notion of trauma has confronted us not only with a simple pathology, but also with a fundamental enigma concerning the psyche’s relation to reality.”<sup>21</sup>

Our present understanding of psychological trauma is actually the offshoot of consuming investigations conducted intermittently over a hundred years or more. Studying psychological trauma is traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The advent of psychological trauma started in France by studying hysteria “the archetypal psychological disorder of women”<sup>22</sup> by the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot in his Salpêtrière.<sup>23</sup> Research in the area of war trauma or the “shell shock” or “combat neurosis,” which is the focal point of this paper, started in England and the United States after the First World War and peaked after the Vietnam War. The political outcome of such research led to the development of an antiwar movement and a challenge to the idea of war.<sup>24</sup>

According to Cathy Caruth there is not a precise definition of trauma up till now. Caruth defines trauma as “the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares and other repetitive phenomena.”<sup>25</sup> The incomprehensibility of a traumatic event can be ascribed to its sudden effect on the victim’s mind; a traumatic experience, Sigmund Freud maintains, “is one which within a very short space of time subjects the mind to a very high increase of stimulation that assimilation or elaboration of it can no longer be effected by normal means,”<sup>26</sup> “In trauma, ”Caruth claims, “the outside has gone

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<sup>19</sup> Garland 9

<sup>20</sup> Herman 7

<sup>21</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed* 91

<sup>22</sup> Herman 9

<sup>23</sup> The Salpêtrière, according to Herman, was an ancient expansive hospital complex, served as an asylum for the most wretched of the Parisian proletariat: beggars, prostitutes, and the insane. Among the many distinguished physicians who travelled to study with the master (Charcot) in the Salpêtrière were Pierre Janet, William James, and Sigmund Freud. (10)

<sup>24</sup> Herman 9

<sup>25</sup> *Unclaimed* 91

<sup>26</sup> *Introductory Lectures* 232

inside without any mediation.”<sup>27</sup> Traumatized persons find difficulty in grasping the traumatic event or experience as they cannot “deal adequately with the situation” and this task remains for them “unaccomplished.”<sup>28</sup> Directly after a traumatic event the traumatized subject forgets temporarily about the event and then only remembers vivid, fragmented images of it. Freud gave this period of temporary forgetting the term “latency.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, a psychological trauma “is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and the repetitive actions of the survivor,”<sup>30</sup> or by what Freud calls “the compulsion to repeat.”<sup>31</sup> Such reliving of the traumatic event or events by the traumatized can be attributed to what Freud calls “a fixation to the moment of the traumatic occurrence.”<sup>32</sup> Freud argues that every fixation to traumas does not necessarily lead to a neurosis, but only to grief. He argues,

It does also happen that persons may be brought to a complete standstill in life by a traumatic experience which has shaken the whole structure of their lives to the foundations, so that they give up all interest in the present and the future, and live permanently absorbed in their retrospections; but these unhappy persons don’t necessarily become neurotic.<sup>33</sup>

Laub describes this fixation, which the traumatized person experiences as an “entrapment,” because, he states, “the survivor, indeed, is not truly in touch either with the core of his traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains entrapped in both.”<sup>34</sup>

What virtually is repeated in the flashbacks or the dreams or the repetitive actions of the traumatized as a result of such “fixation,” or “entrapment” is “an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness” and such repetition or reenactment brings with it “*the truth of an event, and the truth of its incomprehensibility.*”<sup>35</sup> The repetition of the traumatic experience, in fact, can in itself be no less destructive than experiencing it for the first time. It

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<sup>27</sup>Caruth, *Unclaimed* 59

<sup>28</sup>Freud, *Introductory Lectures* 232

<sup>29</sup>*Moses* 84

<sup>30</sup>Caruth *Unclaimed* 4

<sup>31</sup>*Beyond* 19

<sup>32</sup>*Introductory Lectures* 232

<sup>33</sup>*Introductory Lectures* 233

<sup>34</sup>“Bearing Witness” 69

<sup>35</sup>Caruth, “Recapturing the Past” 152-3

can be “retraumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to its deterioration.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, trauma seems to transcend being “a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.”<sup>37</sup> Trauma theory, accordingly, “explains the origins of particular types of psychic distress in relation to happenings in the real world.”<sup>38</sup>

### ***Trauma and the Literature of Testimony***

Art is regarded by some traumatized people as a refuge in which they find solace. It serves as an outlet through which fragmented images, flashbacks, and entangled and inhibited emotions find modes of expression to reach others. Art gives victims the chance to meditate their traumatic experiences in an attempt to comprehend them and gain access to the untold truth of the traumatic events they have experienced. It not only helps traumatized persons speak the truth of such traumatic events, but also enables them to confront their traumas and consequently overcome inhibition and repression, as “[c]onfronting a trauma helps people to understand and ultimately assimilate the event.”<sup>39</sup> According to E. Ann Kaplan,

Trauma can never be ‘healed’ in the sense of a return to how things were before a catastrophe took place, or before one witnesses a catastrophe; but if the wound of trauma remains open, its pain may be worked through in the process of its being ‘translated’ via art.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, art plays, in some cases, a significant role in the process of healing the trauma induced by traumatizing events by working through the pain and translating it into something tangible and comprehensible to the traumatized person and to others. In this case, victims and survivors do not use art for art’s sake but rather for hurt’s sake.

Translating traumatic experiences into language, whether through talking or writing, comes on top of other ways that help traumatized individuals confront their traumas. As a psychoanalyst, Freud believes in

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<sup>36</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed* 63

<sup>37</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed* 4

<sup>38</sup> Hodgkin 96.

<sup>39</sup> Pennebaker 10

<sup>40</sup> P. 19

the unrivalled power of words in psychotherapy. For him, “Words and magic were in the beginning one and the same thing, and even to-day words retain much of their magical power.”<sup>41</sup> He also believes that “mere talk can possibly cure anybody.” Realizing the pivotal role of talking in psychotherapy, Joseph Breuer introduced a technique called “the talking cure”<sup>42</sup> or the “cathartic method.”<sup>43</sup> Both Freud and Breuer assert the importance of talking and its “cathartic effect” in overcoming repressed emotions.<sup>44</sup> “[w]riting about upsetting issues,” according to Pennebaker, “must work in ways similar to talking about them,”<sup>45</sup> because in translating events and emotions into language lies the “therapeutic value of writing.”<sup>46</sup> So, in order to comprehend and gain access to a traumatic event, which is only available to consciousness through vivid repeated images in dreams and flashbacks and assimilate it into consciousness, the traumatized individual needs to translate such entangled images and flashbacks into words. Writing about trauma in this case has a double function. Trauma, Caruth maintains, “requires integration, both for the sake of testimony and for the sake of cure.”<sup>47</sup>

The integration of trauma can be perfectly achieved through writing: “[w]riting about the thoughts and feelings about traumas, then, forces individuals to bring together the many facets of overwhelmingly complicated events,”<sup>48</sup> hence become able to give testimonies of the traumatic events they have experienced. Testimony, as “a privileged contemporary mode of transmission and communication,”<sup>49</sup> subsequently turns to be an essential part of understanding and later overcoming the traumatic event. It is regarded as part and parcel of the psychoanalytic process as “[p]sychoanalytic theory,” Shoshana Felman argues, “is nothing other than a finally available statement (or approximation) of a truth, that at the outset, was unknown but that was gradually *accessed* through the practice and the process of the testimony.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Introductory Lectures* 13

<sup>42</sup> This designation in fact was introduced by one of the patient of Breuer under the pseudonym Anna O. She gave this therapeutic method another humorous name which is “chimney-sweeping” (Breuer, *Studies* 34)

<sup>43</sup> Bowlby “Introduction,” *Studies* x

<sup>44</sup> *Studies* 11

<sup>45</sup> P. 30

<sup>46</sup> P. 101

<sup>47</sup> “Recapturing the Past” 153

<sup>48</sup> Pennebaker 185

<sup>49</sup> Felman 17

<sup>50</sup> P. 25

In spite of the pivotal role testimony plays in regard to “our relation to events of our times and traumas of contemporary history,” giving testimonies to a traumatic event, although much aspired by the traumatized as a way of accessing its truth, is not such an easy process as it seems to be. This is because testimony, in this case, is to express incomprehensible events that the brain stores in an unusual way as vivid images in an abnormal kind of memory called “traumatic memory.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, “[w]hat the testimony doesn’t offer is, however, a completed statement, totalized account of those events.”<sup>52</sup>

### ***Literature as a “Scriptotherapy”***

Literature is one of the artistic fields through which the traumatized can decode his/her traumatic memory and testify to his/her traumatic experience. Like in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, literature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century retains its role as a sanctuary of testimonies to traumatic events; since its advent, this century has been rampant with disastrous events, especially wars, and has been much more open to individual testimonies via social media. Thus, the era we live now can be defined as an “age of testimony.”<sup>53</sup> Elie Wiesel identified a special kind of literature as “the literature of testimony.”<sup>54</sup> In fact, there is an intertwined relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. In discussing the repetition and reenactment of the same traumatic event, which traumatized individuals suffer from, Freud in part three of his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* uses the hero of Tasso’s romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* as an example.<sup>55</sup> Freud refers to literature to describe traumatic experience, because, Caruth maintains, like psychoanalysis, literature,

[I]s interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> (Van der Kolk 163)

<sup>52</sup> Felman 16

<sup>53</sup> Felman 17

<sup>54</sup> qtd. in Felman 17

<sup>55</sup> Its hero, Tancred, unwillingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders’ army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again. (Freud, *Beyond* 25)

<sup>56</sup> *Unclaimed* 3

Therefore, literature could be viewed as a psychoanalytic tool through which the traumatized individual can “re-externalize”<sup>57</sup> his traumatic event and reach a catharsis of his repressed emotions, which is the core of the process of healing and reconnection to the society.<sup>58</sup> The re-externalization of traumatic events and consequently overcoming trauma “... begins with the finding of words and of a story about what happened; ‘translating’ trauma into the structure of a language and a narrative is a way of bringing order and coherence into the chaotic experience.”<sup>59</sup> “In the very act of articulation,” Suzette Henke explains, “the trauma story becomes a testimony, a publicly accessible ‘ritual of healing’ that inscribes the victim into a sympathetic discourse-community and inaugurates the possibility of psychological reintegration.”<sup>60</sup> The method of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment is termed by Henke as “scriptotherapy.”<sup>61</sup> As Gibbons points out, “a testimonial writing...works to re-externalize trauma so that it can be properly intergraded into the sufferers' life and that of their society.”<sup>62</sup>

### ***Resisting Trauma in War Poetry***

Poetry is one of the literary genres that can help the traumatized to “speak *for* others and *to* others”<sup>63</sup> about the real story of his/ her traumatic experience. Like World War I and II, which have inspired many poets with poems that helped model our perception about the miseries of war,<sup>64</sup> the war on Iraq has also produced a considerable number of poets who have protested against the resolution of the U.S. administration to wage such a war against Iraq. According to Sam Hamill 11,000 poets have expressed their condemnation to waging a war against Iraq through their poems, which have amounted to 13,000 poems hosted by [poetsagainsthewar.org](http://poetsagainsthewar.org).<sup>65</sup> Hamill describes such unprecedented gathering of poets saying: “[n]ever before in recorded history have so many poets spoken in a single chorus; never before has a single-theme

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<sup>57</sup> Gibbons 64

<sup>58</sup> Herman maintains that “remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisite both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.” (1)

<sup>59</sup> Van der Merwe 15

<sup>60</sup> P. xviii

<sup>61</sup> P. Xii

<sup>62</sup> Gibbons 64

<sup>63</sup> Felman 15

<sup>64</sup> El Said 36

<sup>65</sup> P. xix

anthology of this proportion been assembled; never before such wide-ranging national—and eventually global—‘Days of Poetry Against the War’ been organized.”<sup>66</sup> Other poets have revealed the miseries, destruction and *terror* in a war allegedly waged for eradicating terrorism. Brian Turner's poetry is both scriptotherapeutic and testimonial.

Testimony is not only “... another mode of struggle against the victims’ entrapment in trauma repetition,” but also a kind of protest “against their enslavement to the fate of their victimization.”<sup>67</sup> These victims and survivors endeavor to testify to such a truth to inscribe it in the memory of history and preserve it from the forgetfulness and the conscious or unconscious oblivion of the community they belong to. They, therefore, turn from victims of trauma into activists and agents of change.

In bearing witness to the unspeakable truth of war, war victims and survivors are pressured into remaining silent by the victimizers or perpetrators as “[i]n order to escape the accountability of his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator’s first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim.”<sup>68</sup> Because “[t]he speech of survivors,” Kali Tal maintains, “is highly politicized,” if survivors attempt to testify to what happened, they will be unsettling the status quo. Therefore, “powerful political, economic, and social forces will pressure survivors to keep their silence or to revise their stories.”<sup>69</sup> Since “[n]one find peace in silence, even when it is their choice to remain silent,”<sup>70</sup> by bearing witness, war victims and survivors fight back being silenced or repressed by means of cultural and political hegemony as “[t]he battle over the meaning of a traumatic experience is fought in the arena of political discourse, popular culture and scholarly debate. The outcome of this battle shapes the rhetoric of the dominant culture and influences future political action.”<sup>71</sup> Refusing to be restricted by “the boundaries of convention”<sup>72</sup> defined by the societies they belong to and many war victims and survivors’ determine to represent their traumas; witnessing,

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<sup>66</sup> P. xvii

<sup>67</sup> Laub “Bearing Witness” 70

<sup>68</sup> Herman 8

<sup>69</sup> P. 7

<sup>70</sup> Laub “Truth and Testimony” 64

<sup>71</sup> Tal 7

<sup>72</sup> Tal 14

thus, turns into a weapon in both the cultural as well as the political arena. Bearing witness, Tal states,

[I]s an aggressive act. It is born out of a refusal to bow to outside pressure to revise or to repress experience, a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than to submit to the seductive pull of revision and repression.<sup>73</sup>

The process of revising the testimonies of war victims and survivors is achieved through the strategies of “cultural coping”: mythologization,<sup>74</sup> medicalization,<sup>75</sup> and disappearance.<sup>76</sup> These strategies work jointly to effect “the cultural codification of the trauma”<sup>77</sup> If war victims and survivors manage to solidify to deconstruct cultural “codification,” they can “retain control over the interpretation of their trauma,” and consequently “... sometimes force a shift in the social and political structure.”<sup>78</sup> If they succumb to political and cultural hegemonies and remain silent, the same event which has caused their traumas, in this case war, will happen again and future wars will be waged as “[o]n a social as well as an individual psychological level, the penalty for repression is repetition.”<sup>79</sup>

### ***American Soldiers Testifying to their War Trauma***

Some American soldiers and veterans testified to their experiences in Iraq as encountered by soldiers on the battleground. Their testimonies attempt to reveal the full and true picture of the monstrous reality of the war on terror through the eyes of soldiers, which is in stark contrast with the tailored rhetoric of the war on terror propagated by the U.S. mass media, the most influential agent in whitewashing the Iraq War. Giving their testimonies is not only intended to intercept the process of cultural codifying the Iraq War. It is also regarded as one of the acts of resistance

<sup>73</sup>p. 7

<sup>74</sup>“Mythologization works by reducing a traumatic event to a set of standardized narratives (twice-and thrice-told tales that come to represent “the story” of the trauma turning it from a frightening and uncontrollable event into a contained and predictable narrative.” (Tal 6)

<sup>75</sup>“Medicalization focuses our gaze upon the victims of trauma, positing that they suffer from an “illness” that can be “cured” within existing or slightly modified structures of institutionalized medicine and psychiatry.” (Tal 6)

<sup>76</sup> “Disappearance - a refusal to admit to the existence of a particular trauma - is usually accomplished by undermining the credibility of the victim.” (Tal 6)

<sup>77</sup>Tal 6

<sup>78</sup>Tal 7

<sup>79</sup>Tal 7

against it and its indelible reverberations, which some of the American soldiers have triggered, whether inside of the U.S. military, or in the American society after returning home, in the hope of putting an end to such a war and voicing their collective pain.

In the U.S. military, for instance, GIs resistance movement has been espoused by many veterans and soldiers serving in Iraq.<sup>80</sup> According to Dahr Jamail, through conducting interviews with many U.S. veterans, "... there was active resistance within ranks to what troops were being ordered to do in Iraq."<sup>81</sup> Many American veterans and soldiers oppose the U.S. occupation of Iraq not only because of the horrors of war they have experienced, but also because they sympathize with Iraqis who suffer from the havoc, chaos, and inhumane conditions. The sense of guilt can be perceived in some of their testimonies.<sup>82</sup>

Going absent without leave (AWOL), malingering to evade their duties, refusing to redeploy, and mutinying are some examples of the subterranean acts of resistance carried out by American soldiers and veterans serving in Iraq<sup>83</sup>. Moreover, American soldiers and veterans have employed writing to reveal their denunciation to this occupation and tell their own true stories of suffering, which refute what the mass media report on them to the American public. Articles, diaries, personal narratives, letters, emails, poems and short stories written by many American soldiers and veterans who have witnessed firsthand the horrors of war best reflect the brutality and barbarity of war in minute details.

The GI resistance movement has also found another way out of U.S military in Iraq into the American society. After returning home, American soldiers and veterans have been active holding conferences and events to raise the public awareness of the reality of the war on Iraq such

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<sup>80</sup>The term "GI," meaning "Government Issue," started being used in the First World War to refer to Army soldiers and their equipment. This term shows that service members are just pieces of property belonging to the government.(History of Resistance, IVAW.org).Although mutinies and anti-war movements have existed since the American Revolution; the GI resistance movement during the Vietnam War has been the largest, most successful, and most extensive. (Kindign.pag.)

<sup>81</sup> P. 24

<sup>82</sup> This sense of guilt has made some of the soldiers become aware of the right of Iraqis to defend themselves and their country against such brutal occupation, despite inflicting a heavy loss on the U.S. troops as a result of such a resistance. Josh Simpson who served as a counterintelligence agent in Mosul, Iraq, admits the right of Iraqis to resist, saying "any American soldier will tell you, even the most right-wing fascists will tell you, if someone invaded my country, I'd be doing the exact same thing that the Iraqis are doing. And that's across the board. I don't think you can get anyone to say, 'No, I wouldn't be doing that'" (qtd. in Jamail 37).

<sup>83</sup> For more information about American soldiers' resistance in Iraq see (Jamail*The will to Resist*)

as *Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan* event held by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW)<sup>84</sup> in 2008 in and many other events across the U.S. and abroad. Other soldiers have employed art because “art allows [them] to look back and understand what [they] have experienced.”<sup>85</sup> Many of these soldiers and veterans “have made use of a wide range of visual and performing arts—through theatre, poetry, painting, writing, and other creative expressions—to affirm their own opposition to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq.”<sup>86</sup> Projects such as Warrior Writers<sup>87</sup> and Combat paper<sup>88</sup> have been organized to embrace the artistic works of the veterans and offer a platform for these soldiers to testify to their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cameron, who is the co-founder of the combat paper project, believes firmly in the power of such art works produced by American veterans in conveying their war experiences: “You can tell people through a didactic political conversation or panel how brutal the whole thing is, but it is not the same. What we are now doing through our art and writing gives people the full picture.”<sup>89</sup>

Turner is one of those American soldiers who convey their war experience by transforming it into testimonial poetry. The following analysis of a number of his poems shows how they serve as his own testimony to the U.S. led war against Iraq. Turner condemns the Iraq War

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<sup>84</sup> Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) was founded in July 2004 at the annual convention of Veterans for Peace (VFP) in Boston to give a voice to the large number of active duty service people and veterans who are against this war, but are under various pressures to remain silent. IVAW’s strategy is to mobilize the military community to withdraw its support for the war and occupation in Iraq. Therefore, IVAW is leading the movement of veterans and GIs who are working to bring the troops home now. IVAW members educate the public about the realities of the Iraq war by speaking in communities and to the media about their experiences. For more information visit <http://www.ivaw.org/about/founding-ivaw>

<sup>85</sup> Wilber 163

<sup>86</sup> Jamail 187

<sup>87</sup> Warrior Writers is a veteran-focused arts organization that fosters artistic exploration and expression through casual, welcoming workshops and retreats. By reflecting and creating in a comfortable and open space, we encourage and support healing and community building. It is a community of military veterans, service members, artists, allies, civilians, and healers dedicated to creativity and wellness. They use writing, painting, photography, and a host of other mediums to reflect on their experiences and to articulate/express them creatively. <http://www.warriorwriters.org/>

<sup>88</sup> The Combat Paper Project is a collaboration initiated by Drew Matott and Drew Cameron, involving war veterans, activists and artists. Combat Paper is made possible through the collaborative effort of artists, veterans, volunteers, colleges and universities, art collectors, cultural foundations, art spaces, military hospitals and installations. Through papermaking workshops, veterans use their uniforms worn in service to create works of art. The uniforms are cut up, beaten into a pulp and formed into sheets of paper. <http://www.combatpaper.org/>

<sup>89</sup> qtd. in Jamail 192

in an interview conducted by Patrick Hicks in *War, Literature and the Arts* (WLA) Journal saying: “I was against the war from the beginning and nothing has changed since, other than a deepening and heightening of that belief ... .”<sup>90</sup>

Through analyzing Turner’s poems it becomes clear that the sense of melancholy and distress haunts most of his poems about the Iraq War because he feels that death, violence and devastation are what remain in Iraq after this experience. It is through his traumatized psyche, which cannot be easily healed, that he addresses the reader in his poems. In these poems “[he] attempts to capture the extreme experience of war by depicting the feeling it generates: the sense of loss, hatred, humiliation, love, uncertainty, and dreamy longing for a normal life ....”<sup>91</sup> Testifying to his traumatic experience helps Turner to come to grips with his trauma and heal; as Warn points out, “writing poetry, if you’re a soldier, could help you heal by knitting together your consciousness,”<sup>92</sup> which has been torn apart by the indescribable experience of war. Because too much happens at war, poetry gives Turner the chance to “...play it back in [his] brain in slow motion...to understand the details.”<sup>93</sup>

In his poem “What Every Soldier Should Know,” Turner describes the traumatic experience of every American soldier traced down by death as threatened every minute to be killed at the hands of Iraqis, who resist the U.S. - led occupation of their country. Each soldier and veteran feels that he ironically has “a rendezvous with death”:<sup>94</sup>

If you hear gunfire on a Thursday afternoon  
it could be for a wedding, or it could be for you.

.....

*O-guf! Teraarmee* rarely useful.

It means *Stop! Or I’ll shoot.*

.....

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<sup>90</sup> P. 4

<sup>91</sup> Library Journal (n.pag.)

<sup>92</sup> P. 71

<sup>93</sup> White 112

<sup>94</sup> This clause is quoted from a poem written by Alan Seeger, a 28-year- old soldier who died in the First World War, entitled “I have a Rendezvous with Death,” which was anthologized in *Voices in Wartime*.

*Inshallah means Allah be willing*

Listen well when it is spoken. (1-10)

Although Turner addresses American soldiers in this poem, the soldier addressed in the title of the poem is anonymous. He could have said instead “what every American soldier should know.” The title of the poem, therefore, may serve as an implied warning addressed not only to American soldiers but also to any soldier on any war front; death physical deformations and psychological traumatization are the cost of any war that every soldier has to pay. Hearing gunfire even from a distance could strike terror into the hearts of American soldiers out of the incessant fear of being the target of stray bullets. Letters for American soldiers have also been visualized as weapons threatening them as the “Graffiti sprayed onto the overpasses:” (19) reads “*I will kill you, American.*” (20).

Turner resumes depicting graphically and agonizingly the traumatizing horrors every American soldier experiences in Iraq saying:

You will hear the RPG coming for you  
Not so the roadside bomb.

There are bombs under the overpasses,  
In trashpiles, in bricks, in cars.

There are shopping carts with clothes soaked  
In foogas, a sticky gel of homemade napalm.

Parachute bombs and artillery shells  
Sewn into carcasses of dead farm animals. (11-18)

In these lines, Turner bitterly captures the horrifying, and nerve-racking atmosphere American soldiers have lived in Iraq. These soldiers always have the feeling of being chased by death, which is hiding behind the bombs that are planted under the overpasses, in trash piles, bricks and cars, by the roadside and sewn into the dead bodies of animals, waiting for their souls to reap. Even shopping carts have turned into lethal weapons.

Turner goes on giving a true to life account of the traumatizing moments of expecting death as an American soldier on the war front.

Xenophobia kills the soldier as he expects death from everyone around him:

Men wearing vests rigged with explosives  
walk up, raise their arms and say *Inshallah*.

There are men who earn eighty dollars  
to attack you, five thousand to kill.

Small children who will play with you,  
old men with their talk, women who offer chai—

and any one of them  
may dance over your body tomorrow. (21-28)

As the previous lines display, American soldiers may not only be targeted by planted bombs, but also by unexpected attacks carried out by suicide bombers wearing vests rigged with explosives. Attacking and killing American soldiers has become a source for earning living for some Iraqis and the cost is fixed; eighty dollars to attack an American soldier and five thousand to kill him. Stating the exact price of attacking or killing an American soldier here indicates that American soldiers in Iraq have become fully aware of the degrading conditions of turning into mere targets of a death game. Consequently, they have become suspicious of even harmless persons such as small children, old men and women. In spite of playing with the Iraqi children, talking to old men and women who offer tea *Chai*, Turner, controlled by such death haunted atmosphere, expects being attacked or killed by any one of them and his body being danced over. This indicates that American soldiers in Iraq have been hysterically obsessed with the idea of being targeted and attacked. They have become xenophobic as a result of being surrounded by people who want to get rid of them and who are willing to kill them for different reasons. Turner asserts being possessed by fear as saying in his memoir:<sup>95</sup>

I am afraid much of the time. Deep-down scared. Afraid  
so long and continually that it becomes normal and I  
don't even realize I'm scared. I'm worried I'll end up in

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<sup>95</sup> The memoir is defined as “a species of autobiographical writing, stressing the people known or events witnessed by the author, rather than concentrating on personality or life.” (Gray 172)

pieces with little flags pinned into the ground beside me.

I'm worried I'll be blinded or crippled. (24-5)

Similarly, in his poem "the hurt locker," Turner attempts to open that hurt locker to unleash pain, which he and his comrades imprison inside of each one of them. The title of this poem has a story of its own, which Turner talks about in an article entitled "Home Fires: The Bomb Within Us." The first time for Turner to hear the phrase "the hurt locker" was when his squad leader turned to him to express his frustration with so many indirect attacks on them, saying "sometimes I just want to put them in the hurt locker" "which means," according to Turner, "in a broad sense, a private place of pain."<sup>96</sup> The phrase "the hurt locker" implies that the hurt these soldiers experience is not just physical but most importantly psychological. As a soldier, Turner speaks for every American soldier experiencing the same unspeakable horrors of war. In Iraq for them there is:

Nothing but hurt left here

Nothing but bullets and pain.

and the bled-out slumping

all the *fucks* and *goddamns*

and *Jesus Christs* of the wounded.

Nothing left here but the hurt. (1-6)

Turner in this poem gives voice to such repressed pains of American soldiers. These pains escape the hurt locker in the "fucks," "goddamns" and "Jesus Christs" of the soldiers. Such taboo swearwords not only underscore the soldiers' condemnation of war but also serve as a reflection of the harsh psychological experience they have gone through. The repetition of the word "nothing" three times and the word "hurt" more than one in the previous lines and throughout the poem reflects the sense of despair and distress, which possesses American soldiers in Iraq and imposes a melancholic tone to the poem. Turner's usage of words like "hurt," "bullets," "pain," "the bled-out," "slumping," "the wounded," "fucks," "goddamns," "Jesus Christs," which are shouted at the top of the American soldiers' voices, together imparts a panoramic audiovisual image of the battle to the poem. The vivid images and the immediate realistic effect these words evoke make them perfectly fit the famous observation of Ralph Waldo Emerson in his review of Montaigne's essay

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<sup>96</sup>*New York Times*(n.pag)

(1850) entitled “Montaigne, or the Skeptic”: “Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive.”

Later in the poem Turner addresses the reader:

Believe it when you see it.  
Believe it when a twelve-year-old  
rolls a grenade into the room.  
Or when a sniper punches a hole  
deep into someone’s skull.  
Believe it when four men  
step from a taxicab in Mousl  
to shower the street in brass  
and fire. [...] (7-15)

In these lines, Turner takes the reader right into the middle of the inexorable horror every American soldier in Iraq experiences by giving him/her snapshots of routine, life-threatening situations in which death is the only winner. He depicts bitterly the targeting of American soldiers by a grenade rolled by a twelve-year-old or by a sniper or unanimous men stepping from a taxicab and open fire aimlessly. The casual depiction of such precarious situations is complementary to those portrayed in “What Every Soldier Should Know,” and many other poems, which show the extended image of the Iraq War that Turner employs in his poems to capture his horrendous experience as an American soldier serving in Iraq. Although Turner takes pains to transfer such tangled images through words to the reader, s/he may not be able, after all, to feel and believe such a horrible experience because, as Elie Wiesel states, “those who haven’t lived through the experience will never know.”<sup>97</sup> So, Turner reiterates the word “believe it” three times in this poem in the hope of urging the reader to perceive the atrocity of that war. He also asks the reader to,

[...] Open the hurt locker  
and see what there is of knives  
and teeth. Open the hurt locker and learn

<sup>97</sup> Wiesel, *Sh'ma*314

how rough men come hunting for souls. (15-18)

Turner urges the reader in these lines to open the hurt locker to see the remnants of human bodies “teeth” and weapons “knives,” which implies destruction, and to learn how rough it is at war to kill and be killed and to see men around you hunting for nothing but each other’s souls.

In his poem “Ashbah,” Turner exposes the agony of American soldiers even after death in their pursuit for salvation. 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.[...](1-8)

In the above lines, Turner captures the wandering of the ghosts of American soldiers in the streets of the city of Balad in Iraq at night. Although ghosts cannot be seen, Turner depicts them and their state as if seeing the ghosts of his comrades not by his eyes but by his soul. This indicates his “fixation” to or “entrapment” in the traumatic experience of war and the ongoing reliving or reenactment of it. He sees them, “unsure of their way home,” “exhausted,” “a lone,” “lost.” Such epithets indicate the sense of despair that overwhelms American soldiers even after death. Their souls are restless and tortured because of being trapped in Iraq, searching helplessly for their way home amidst desert wind that is blowing trash. Adding to the gloomy atmosphere of the poem are the words “night” and “silhouette,” which when combined with words like “ghosts” and “dead” gives a picture of Iraq after the U.S. occupation as a big cemetery.

Turner not only imagines seeing the ghosts of American soldiers, but the Iraqi dead too! He depicts them:

[...] 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 (8-11)

The Iraqi dead silence may indicate the deep grief they feel at the destruction that has wrecked their country and the state of chaos that plagued it as the wastelandish image in “the desert wind blowing trash/down the narrow alleys[....]” (4-5) implies.

The transliterated title of the poem “Ashbah,” which means ghosts shows Turner’s knowledge of Arabic. Turner also uses symbols from the Iraqi environment. For example, he uses the “date palms,” “the desert wind,” and “city of Balad” in addition to some Islamic symbols such as “minaret,” “the soulful call,” which means the call for prayer, and “Mecca.” Turner’s usage of such symbols may serve as a tool for helping the reader conjure up the life in Iraq, which many readers may not be familiar with.

The sense of guilt of putting an end to any man’s life resonates in Turner’s poem “Sadeq,” a transliteration of the Arabic for “friend.” In this poem, he tries to capture how painful it is to kill a man, which is not stated clearly till the last line of the poem but could be inferred from the epigraph to the poem to arouse the curiosity of the readers:<sup>98</sup>

It should make you shake and sweat,  
nightmare you, strand you in a desert  
of irrevocable desolation, the consequences  
seared into the vein, [...] (1-4)

The addressee in the above lines is unknown; he uses only the personal pronoun “you.” So, the poem may serve as a universal message of peace from man to man, as Turner seems to address man’s conscience in this poem. For him every human being is “sadeq.” Throughout the poem Turner attempts to express the gnawing sense of guilt of killing another human being that leaves the killer stranded in “a desert of irrevocable desolation.” The word “irrevocable” is meant to show that the sense of guilt and desolation will never come to an end with the passage of time and keeps haunting the killer while awake or asleep as the word

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<sup>98</sup> The epigraph to this poem reads: “It is a condition of wisdom in the archer to be patient because when the arrow leaves the bow, it returns no more” (*Here Bullet*56). This aphorism comes from *The Gulistan of Sa’di*, Chapter Viii. (Turner, *Here Bullet* 71)

“nightmare” indicates. Turner poignantly compares desolation to a desert in which the killer is stranded, such a comparison, which implicitly points to his entrapment in this endless sense of desolation. The connectedness of the word “desert,” which connotes loneliness, emptiness and isolation to “desolation,” which also connotes loneliness and isolation is asserted by the internal rhyming of the two words created by alliteration and assonance. Turner’s usage of the sound “s” in many words like “desolation,” “seared,” “sweat,” “strand,” “consequences” reflects an angry and admonishing hissing that comes from within and struggles to be heard.

Later in the poem, Turner expresses his own belief that there are no justifications whatsoever for ending another human’s life. For Turner,

[...] no matter what adrenaline  
feeds the muscle its courage, no matter  
what god shines down on you, no matter  
what crackling pain and anger  
you carry in your fists, my friend, (4-8)

For Turner no motive whatsoever can justify killing another human being. This motive can be fear, which makes adrenaline rush into the muscle and gives it the strength and courage to commit the act of killing; religion, when people kill in the name of a holy cause; or anger, which may cause people to commit acts of violence and homicide. In all cases, Turner speaks to his "sadek" and to his fellow soldiers alike “it should break your heart to kill” (9).

The mere thought of ending another man’s life while writing this poem seems to inflict Turner with deep psychological pain. Such psychological pain is indicated by words such as “stranded,” “desolation,” and “nightmare,” and phrases such as “seared into the veins,” and “break your heart.” It is reflected in physical reactions; perhaps, Turner was himself “shaking” and “sweating” while writing this poem. This indicates that Turner experiences “the compulsion to repeat,” to used Freud’s term, in an attempt to get to grips with the traumatic experience of war, in which humans kill each other, by writing about it. To describe such vehement emotions of such a heartbreaking experience of killing a human being, Turner employs the run-on-line throughout the

poem to serve the rush of such vehement emotions along with caesura to control such emotional rush and help Turner and his readers catch his/their breaths.

Similarly, in his poem “VA Hospital Confessional,”<sup>99</sup> Turner gives voice to the agony that overwhelms him of being a soldier on the war front who is supposed to take hold of a rifle or any other weapon and end another human’s life. For Turner each night he spends in Iraq as a soldier is different, yet it is the same:

Each night is different. Each night the same.  
Sometimes I pull the trigger. Sometimes I don’t.

When I pull the trigger, he often just stands there,  
gesturing, as if saying. *Aren’t you ashamed?*  
When I don’t, he douses himself  
in gasoline, drowns himself in fire. (1-6)

The paradox in the first line sums up the harsh experience that American soldiers have gone through in Iraq. Each night is different for a soldier as s/he encounters different situations, some of them, if not most of them, are life threatening. But what makes each night the same is war reality, which is too horrific to be grasped by soldiers and civilians’ consciousness and the soldier’s awareness of fact of being involved in a war that they helplessly and hopelessly aspire to its end. The overwhelming sense of guilt and desolation that Turner expressed poignantly in his poem “Sadeq,” echoes here as Turner imagines, as he pulls the trigger of his rifle, that it stands there gesturing as if it is a man who reproves Turner for using it saying, “*Aren’t you Ashamed?*.” Turner personifies the trigger referring to using the pronoun “he” and the reflexive pronoun “himself.” It seems that such rebuking phrase, which Turner quotes here, comes from within. It is likely to be the voice of his conscience that admonishes him.

Turner’s conscience seems to never stop pricking him as the following lines show:

Men are bound on their knees, shivering

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<sup>99</sup>VA is the abbreviation of the Department of the Veterans Affairs.

in the animal stall, long before dawn.

I whisper into their ears, saying,  
*Howlwin? Howlwin? Meaning, Mortar? Mortar?*

*Howl wind, motherfucker? Howl wind? (15-19)*

In these lines, Turner recalls a real situation that he narrates in his memoir in details. Some American soldiers raided a suspected, pre-located site capturing all the men from the nearby farmhouses who were of military age, keeping them in the animal stall, like animals, with their hands tied behind their backs with flex-cuffs and sandbags over their heads. They were bound on their knees shivering as Turner describes them. These soldiers were searching for mortars (hawyn) and they were interrogating these young men inhumanely, as the above lines show and the word “motherfucker” indicates, to know where they hide mortars. Turner says, “I checked the haystack in the corner/for a weapons cache. I checked the sewage sump” (23-24).

The irony that follows is that: “The milk cow stares with its huge brown eyes/ The milk cow wants to know /how can I do this to another human being (20-22). The cow, which was kept in the animal stall, was staring at what the American soldiers were doing to Iraqi prisoners as if wondering how a human being can do this to another human being. Turner imagines that the milk cow was also reproving him just like the trigger for taking part in dehumanizing, victimizing, and terrorizing other human beings. The disturbing impact of the shattering experience of war on soldiers and veterans’ psychology resonates as saying: “Some nights I twitch and jerk in my sleep” (9) and when he starts hallucinating: “when the boy brings us a platter of fruit / I mistake cantaloupe for a human skull” (33-34). Such hallucination reflects again Turner’s “entrapment” in or “fixation” to the traumatic experience of war. While writing this poem and others about his war experience in Iraq, Turner is reliving or reenacting that experience in an attempt to comprehend it.

To sum up, war trauma induced by the “war on terror” is not only restricted to soldiers and veterans on the battlefield. Civilians also could encounter and live war trauma, by reading the literature of the traumatized. War victims and survivors' traumatization cause them to relive the horrible and indelible memories of war which remain always

vivid in a helpless attempt to get a comprehensible picture of what has happened and as a result of a fixation on his trauma. In order for the traumatized individual to comprehend his traumatic experience and gain access to its truth, he needs to decipher his traumatic memory by transforming the inaccessible graphic experience stored in it into words. In this case, the traumatized individual not only becomes able to give testimony to his trauma but also to overcome it. Art in general and literature in particular, especially war poetry, is employed by some traumatized victims and survivors both as a scriptotherapy and an outlet for their testimonies. Some American soldiers and veterans through different artistic modes bear witness to the reality of the traumatic experiences they have gone through and endeavor to unveil their horrific truths. By testifying to their traumas, they also defy being repressed by cultural or political means and encourage readers to be witnesses themselves to this illegitimate war and its outrages in the hope of changing the current policies and incept future wars.

Through his poems, Turner unfolds and speaks aloud the untold truth of war. By testifying to his war trauma, Turner not only aims to overcome it but also to speak out against war and its outrages that has inflicted Americans as well as Iraqis and still does. In attempting to testify to his war trauma, which reflects his stance against war, Turner employs different techniques in his poems to show the physical and psychical victimization of both American soldiers and Iraqis as a result of the Iraq War. Through his poems, he relives and reenacts his traumatic experience of war through depicting the psychical horrors of war American soldiers have experienced in Iraq while expecting death every minute, grieving over dead American soldiers that he imagines seeing their lost ghosts, imagining the cow and the trigger of his rifle reproaching him for victimizing others, hallucinating as seeing the fruits as human skulls and expressing his sense of guilt of killing another human being.

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