Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)
A Peer Reviewed (Refereed) International Journal
Impact Factor 6.8992 (ICI) http://www.rjelal.com;
Email:editorrjelal@gmail.com ISSN:2395-2636 (P); 2321-3108(O)

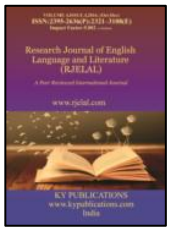
Vol.6.Issue 2. 2018
(April-June)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA
2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

'THE WORLD WAS MUZZLED, THE WAY IT WOULD BE EVER AFTERWARD': REPRESENTATION OF TRAUMA AND MEMORY IN "BLACK-EYED WOMEN" BY VIET THANH NGUYEN

BISHNU PADA ROY[1], AFSANA MOUSUME[2]
[1]Lecturer, Department of English, Noakhali Science and Technology University
Sonapur, Noakhali-3814, Bangladesh
Email: bishnu@nstu.edu.bd
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of English, Noakhali Science and Technology University
Sonapur, Noakhali-3814, Bangladesh
Email: afsanamausumi@yahoo.com



ABSTRACT

While the issues of memory and trauma have been the subject matter of psychology and psychiatry, their literary and cultural connections are nowadays studied widely, especially in relation to literature based on war and war-survivors. But the existing literary and critical study appears to be limited when the investigation of memory and trauma of the refugees – the common people who are the direct victims of wars or war-related atrocities - comes to the front. Hence this article aims at a critical investigation of how trauma and memory affect the lives of the refugees. It bases its investigation on the short story, "Black-Eyed Women" by the Vietnamese American author Viet Thanh Nguyen. After mapping the definitions of and relationship between memory and trauma, this article adopts an interdisciplinary methodology of incorporating literary, and psychological and psychiatric attitudes towards memory and trauma to inquire the workings and influences of these two in the lives of the refugee characters. It further investigates if diaspora or diasporic conditions have any connection to the characters' memory and trauma, or the identities they presently have. Here it will be apparent that the characters in this story are actually driven by the memory and trauma they had in their past life, and this condition now defines their selves or identities. The article also aims to argue that in conflict with their memories, the characters thrive to forget, especially, the trauma that binds them stuck on a single, static moment of life, making their identities stop in one point eternally.

Key Words: Traumatic Memory, Trauma and Diaspora, Trauma and Identity, Vietnamese Refugees, Literary Connections of Trauma and Memory, Trauma of the Refugees

> 'Many people have psychological problems as a direct consequence of war; many have terrible memories of these experiences that they find difficult to deal with; and many never do learn to deal with these memories.' (Hunt 2)

Such is the case with the characters in the short story "Black-Eyed Women" included in *The Refugees*

by Viet Thanh Nguyen, a Vietnamese American author who won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *The Sympathizer* (2015). Himself a victim of the Vietnam war and a refugee in America, Nguyen portrays how the memory and trauma of the war in his homeland go on to affect and define the lives of the people who had direct experience of the atrocities of the war and other physical violent occurrences in his second book of fiction, *The Refugees*, a short story collection published in 2017. The characters of this book are mainly, as Mia Alvar mentions in *The New York Times*, 'men and women displaced from wartime Saigon and resettled in California', for whom, in the words of Joyce Carol Oates, '[t]o survive […] is to be buffeted between the grief-suffused admonition to remember the losses of the homeland and the self-protective counter-admonition to "forget," the effort of which will be enormous and lifelong.' Thus the book which Lucy Scholes calls in *The Independent* a 'rich exploration of human identity, family ties and love and loss' examines that side of the experiences of the refugees – his characters - in their diasporic new land, and in their native land also, which reflects, in the words of Claire Fallon in *The Huffington Post*, 'on how they process the trauma they've suffered and cling to fingerholds in both the old world and the new'.

The Refugees (2017), along with the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction winner *The Sympathizer* (2015), is the result, in fiction, of Nguyen's long and thorough anticipation over and obsession with the representation of Vietnamese refugees in Hollywood cinemas, and American literature and culture. Nguyen wrote the stories of this book over a long period of time, from 1997 to 2014. But the most anticipated one is the opening story "Black-Eyed Women" – Nguyen took almost the whole span of his writing career, until the publication of this book, to finalize this story; he said, as Karen Long mentions in *Los Angeles Times*, that this story 'went through at least 50 drafts over perhaps 14 years'. In 'The Rumpus Interview with Viet Thanh Nguyen' taken by Beverly Parayno, Nguyen regarded "Black-Eyed Woman" as his 'most difficult story'. But the remarkable thing about the story is that, in Nguyen's own words in this interview, it 'just terrified me. It was a really difficult one because I just didn't understand the form of the short story. I still don't understand it. I don't have an intuitive graph of it.' That is why it is easily conceivable that this story would entail the gist of Nguyen's thought over the issues of the Vietnamese refugees in America. Hence this article takes the issues of how Nguyen in *The Refugees* exposes and treats trauma and memory into account, as a whole, and deeply examines the complicated interplay of this two in shaping the identity of the characters in the book's first story "Black-Eyed Women", in particular. It argues that whatever their present conditions are, the characters in this story are always in the grip of their past i.e. past history, their memories of the past and the trauma they have been bearing forever – the grip is so tight that it becomes the single indicator of the identity of the characters.

The terms 'memory' and 'trauma' have quite problematic definitions relative to the perspectives they are being dealt with. Though these ideas have been the subjects of psychiatry and psychology for long, their appearance and prominence in cultural and literary studies as theories is as recent as the last decade of the twentieth century. In mapping the history of memory, Anne Whitehead identifies its ancient roots back to Plato (4). But it is since the closing decades of the twentieth century that the concept of memory has become, as Andreas Huyssen notes, an 'obsession' in the Western culture (7). However, Whitehead's explanation of the idea of memory is notable here. To her, memory is 'historically conditioned; it is not simply handed down in a timeless form from generation to generation, but bears the impress or stamp of its own time and culture.' (Whitehead 4) Nigel C. Hunt formulates quite same idea about memory – 'Memory is not objective; it is not some kind of computer-like registration, storage and retrieval system. Memory is flexible, permeable, changeable, and – critically – affected by the social and cultural world in which people live.' (2-3) Thus throughout history, the discussion of memory was not bound to a similar point, nor is it similar in different cultures or societies. In this case, it is appropriate to mention Allan Young who says that people have always been

'tormented by memories that filled them with feelings of sadness and remorse, the sense of irreparable loss, and sensations of fright and horror.'(3) He identifies that it is during the nineteenth century when 'a new kind of painful memory' which was 'unlike the memories of earlier times' came into discussion (3). This kind of memory is termed as traumatic memory which, as Young notes, by following Ellenberger, is 'a kind of pathogenic secret' (28). Bassel A. van der Kolk and Rita Fisler here mention that Pierre Janet was the 'first [who] wrote about the relationship between trauma and memory' in 1889 in his book *L'Automatisme Psychologique* (507). People generally want to hide this type of memory from others; they even want to forget the memory themselves, the failure of which compels them to try to 'push it to the edges of awareness' (Young 28). Traumatic memory which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century is at present identified with 'a psychiatric malady, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)' (Young 3). Here, it is to be noted that this article will use these two terms 'traumatic memory' and 'post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)' interchangeably because of its point of concentration. In Western tradition, PTSD is mainly identified with the war veterans or survivors (mainly soldiers), whereas "Black-Eyed Women" states the issues of memory and trauma of common people who, due to the war in Vietnam, became forced to leave their homeland to America, as refugees, experiencing violent attack, rape, etc. which traumatized them forever. This article considers Pierre Janet's definition of traumatic memory most acceptable – 'traumatic memory consists of images, sensations, affective and behavioral states, that are invariable and do not change over time. He suggested that these memories are highly state-dependent and cannot be evoked at will. They also are not condensed in order to fit social expectations.' (qtd. in van der Kolk and Fisler 520) Thus traumatic memories remain 'fixed in the mind, unaltered by the passage of time or by the intervention of subsequent experience' (van der Kolk and Fisler 507).

In relation to traumatic memory comes the point of trauma. Though the formal study of trauma, in its present meaning, dates back to Sigmund Freud – prior to Freud during the nineteenth century trauma was related to physical injuries (Young 6), 'a renewed interest in the problem of trauma', as Cathy Caruth mentions in her book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, was found in psychiatry, psychoanalysis and sociology after the Vietnam War (3). But as 'an area of cultural investigation', it actually 'came to prominence in the early-to-mid-1990s' with Cathy Caruth herself being 'one of the leading figures in trauma studies (along with Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra)' (Stef Craps and Gert Buelens 1). Cathy 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' (91). Bessel A. van der Kolk and Rita Fisler define trauma 'as an inescapably stressful event that overwhelms people's existing coping mechanisms' (506). Thus trauma could be the result of the experience of a war, loss of a loved one, displacement from one's country of origin, a violent occurrence, rape or any other physical oppression, etc. But the most striking feature of trauma is its recurrent arrival in the psyche of the victim, irrespective of the victim's will or conscience, haunting the victim perpetually.

The relationship between trauma and memory lies in the pastness of the events which haunt the victims through the victim's mostly unconscious remembrance. But trauma and memory meet on a single point when they are considered in relation to the self or identity of a person. In tracing the relationship between memory and self, Anne Whitehead identifies that from the Enlightenment to the nineteenth-century 'memory is concerned with the personal and is inherently bound to identity' (7). The prominent filmmaker Luis Bunuel says in his autobiography *My Last Breath*, '. . . memory is what makes our lives. Life without memory is no life at all . . . Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing.' (4-5) Allan Young also maps this relationship by citing John Locke and David Hume – memory is 'intrinsically connected to our conception of "self" and "self-awareness"'. He goes on to say -

> 'By connecting self-awareness with the past, memory provides the body with a subject and subjectivity. It is the source of the "I" that initiates the body's purposeful acts and the "me" who experiences its pleasures and vicissitudes and must accept responsibility for its actions. Without memory, the I/me would fail to transcend momentary states of awareness and self-consciousness.' (4)

In case of traumatic memory, Young here follows Dworkin, Harris, Johnson, Ouroussoff, and Rorty to say that traumatic memory not only 'revised' the Western conception of self, but also 'created a new language of self-deception'. (4) To sum up the ideas of Whitehead and Young, the self or identity of a person could be understood by investigating her/his memory. To map the relationship between memory and trauma Nguyen says in his book *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War,* 'Memory is haunted, not just by ghostly others but by the horrors we have done, seen, and condoned, or by the unspeakable things from which we have profited.' The horrors he mentions here are the trauma which haunts the memory of a person. And to him, these horrors are 'especially evident when we speak of war and our limited ability to recall it. Haunted and haunting, human and inhuman, war remains with us and within us, impossible to forget but difficult to remember.' (19) The war here he especially talks of is the Vietnam war, the memory of which traumatized numerous Vietnamese, forcing them to be refugees and conditioning their identities to their traumatic memory of the war. The birth of his story "Black-Eyed Women" lies in this background.

Through the interaction among the three major characters, Viet Thanh Nguyen in the story "Black-Eyed Women sheds a clear light on the representation of trauma and memory in a diasporic condition. He presents in this story the way his characters fight with the memory of their homeland, of the war in their homeland and of the violence they experienced in the boat on their way to America, the socio-cultural factors the characters are presently fighting with to adapt to their new, diasporic land, and the way their memory and trauma interact with their present conditions. All these Nguyen does by presenting a chain of environments, which provides the characters, especially the narrator-protagonist, of the story with no free and steady passage, blocking instead every possible means of improvements. The characters of this story are, just like the author himself, Vietnamese refugees in America, who were forced to leave their homeland to seek refuge in America. As a result of this mobility, the characters are now in an in-between situation regarding their life and identity. But what surpasses this dilemma is the cause which takes them back to their war-torn land – the primary environment or reality – again and again. The traumatic memory gifted by the atrocity and violence of the war and other occurrences related to the war to these characters is simultaneously the cause and the effect of the workings of both the secondary environment or reality, that is, diasporic America, and the first one.

The first part of the title of this article is taken from the text of the story "Black-Eyed Women" itself. It is from the situation on the boat to America when the narrator and protagonist of the story was being raped and tortured by a pirate. To describe her feeling of that time the narrator says, 'The world was muzzled, the way it would be ever afterward with my mother and father and myself, none of us uttering another sound on this matter. Their silence and my own would cut me again and again.' (*Refugees* 16) The key point here is the situation that is 'muzzled', which could refer to several layers of meanings. The apparent meaning is that the situation of the world was such that people could not express their opinion freely. The restriction in freedom of speech is further found in the opening part of the story where the mother of the narrator tells her a story about a reporter in Vietnam 'who said the government tortured the people in prison. So the government does to him exactly what he said they did to others. They send him away and no one ever sees him again.' (*Refugees* 1) This could be true in the war-time Vietnam. But the speaker is not limited to this simple meaning. Nor does she refer to the situation of the boat where no one could utter a single word of protest against the violence of the pirates. Also, in one sense, this meaning is applicable

to the lives of the narrator and her parents, like other refugees in America, who could hardly enjoy the right to free expression. But the more appropriate meaning for the narrator lies deep in her psyche. While uttering these lines, she is engaged more in her mental turbulence than the actual violence of the outside world. Through this expression, she even links the overall mental condition of her family to a condition which leads them to only a blocked path – the path which has only one thing to provide – the memory of the brother who did all he could to save his sister, our narrator, but eventually failed and was murdered. The meaning is enhanced by the last sentence which mentions the condition of 'silence'. The silence of this single moment has silenced the narrator forever. This silence becomes the mode of her life. She chooses to be a ghost writer – the profession which hides the name of the actual writer, making the actual author silent. She says she 'preferred the silence of writing' while her mother liked to talk – the things beyond which they have quite nothing to do with themselves (*Refugees* 3). Thus in these lines, the narrator indicates that the workings of the memory and trauma of that single event will never cease to influence her life. This is the moment which traumatized the narrator; this is the memory which remains stitched in her psyche; this is the image of herself and her family which, accompanied by the image of her brother's murder by the pirates, repeatedly comes to her to haunt her forever. This traumatic memory of the boat comes to America with her, remains with her forever, guiding and obstructing the formation of her identity at the same time, and finally defines her self, her identity. She says, 'I had not forgotten our nameless blue boat and it had not forgotten me, the red eyes painted on either side of its prow having never ceased to stare me down.' (*Refugees* 14)

The functioning of trauma and memory is not limited to that part of the story; rather Nguyen's attention seems to more on the encounter between the ghost of the brother and the narrator, which is obviously the result of that traumatic moment. The encounter begins with forgetting which the traumatized victim always tries to do, as the above definitions of trauma suggest. The working of memory and forgetting is found here the way John Storey in her essay "The articulation of memory and desire: from Vietnam to the war in the Persian Gulf" articulates the relationship between these two - 'Memories do not just consist of what is remembered but also of what has been forgotten.' (105) When her mother mentions her brother's coming to them, her reaction is deliberate and desperate trial to avoid the name and thus the memory of her brother – 'When she said my brother's name, I did not think of my brother. He had died long ago. I closed my eyes and said I did not know anyone by that name' (*Refugees* 2). Here, it is to be noted that the return of the ghost of the brother is not just like any other ghost. It is the ghost created by the narrator herself due to her eternal trauma. She refers the ghost as an 'apparition' and 'a figment of my imagination' – 'Perhaps this apparition was the first consequence of what my mother considered my unnatural nature, childless and single. Perhaps he was not a figment of my imagination but a symptom of something wrong, like the cancer that killed my father.' (*Refugees* 9) But, however, the ghost brings so many childhood memories live again to her – the years the protagonist and her brother spent together in the war-torn Vietnamese landscape. Thus trauma and memory play with the narrator, limiting her to an 'apparition' whose further proof, and literal this time, is the ghost-writing profession; and whose another further proof is that she cannot lead a 'natural' life – she is of 'unnatural nature, childless and single'.

The encounter between the narrator and the ghost of her brother reaches its peak when the narrator from her sheer guilt, depression, and hopelessness asks the ghost - 'Why did I live and you die?' The answer of the ghost sums up the whole life of the narrator, which always upheld the grip of the traumatized memory to it - '"You died too," he said. "You just don't know it."' (*Refugees* 17) All her life she strived to make some meaning by struggling with the memory and trauma she has especially with her brother. But this straight-forward utterance of the ghost concludes her life to nothing but living death, the kind of reality the traumatized usually go through. This utterance sounds like a direct and

formal declaration of the victory of traumatized memory, of the single traumatized moment over the willful actions of a traumatized victim.

But as the psychiatrists agree, not all victims suffer the same proportion of traumatic memory, some even do not suffer at all, and some recover very soon. Following Pierre Janet, Bassel A. van der Kolk and Rita Fisler mention that remembering is associated with 'existing mental schemata' – 'once an event or a particular bit of information is integrated into existing mental schemes it will no longer be available as a separate, immutable entity, but be distorted both by associated experiences and by the emotional state at the time of recall.' (507) Ernest G. Schachtel says, 'Memory as a function of the living personality can be understood as a capacity for the organization and reconstruction of past experiences and impressions in the service of present needs, fears, and interests.' (qtd. in van der Kolk and Fisler 507) Thus the suffering of memory is conditioned by the subjectivity of the victim. To consider the narrator and her family, it would then appear that their present living reality – the diasporic condition in America – is the one which compels them to appropriate their traumatic memory according to the needs for present existence. But instead of loosening the grip of the traumatic memory, the diasporic experiences of the narrator and her family heightens it.

Nigel C. Hunt discusses these things. He mentions, 'Low perceived social support is seen as a predictor of traumatic stress. If a person experiences a traumatic event and they do not perceive that they have good social support, then they are more likely to be traumatized than if they perceive that they have good social support.' (3) So, the importance of social support will come first if we think of the diagnosis of trauma. And this case could easily be eliminated from the experience of the refugees, at least during the moment when they came to live normally, outside refugee camps. Nguyen shares the same experience as a refugee and writes "Black-Eyed Women" along with other stories of *The Refugees* out of his 'feeling that to be a Vietnamese-American growing up in this country was to understand that Americans knew little and cared less about the experiences of Vietnamese people' (Nguyen, interview with Alexander Bisley). In an article in the *Financial Times*, Nguyen says,

> 'I came to understand that in the United States, land of the fabled American dream, it is un-American to be a refugee. The refugee embodies fear, failure, and flight. Americans of all kinds believe that it is impossible for an American to become a refugee, although it is possible for refugees to become Americans and in that way be elevated one step closer to heaven.'

The narrator and her family go through the similar experiences. The parents of the narrator were in constant fear and danger of being attacked violently, while she herself did not have a normal adolescent life in America. 'My American adolescence was filled with tales of woe like this, all of them proof of what my mother said, that we did not belong here. In a country where possessions counted for everything, we had no belongings except our stories.' (*Refugees* 7) Thus the diaspora where the narrator and her family live now does not provide a profound ground for the traumatic memories to be salvaged. The diasporic situation of the narrator thus could not stop her trauma; if anything diaspora did to her trauma, it is to enhance and facilitate the workings of traumatic memory to the psyche of the narrator, defining her identity within the framework of that traumatic memory.

However, like a resistant post-colonialist, the only way for the narrator to escape the grip of traumatic memory is to write:

> 'Writing was entering into fog, feeling my way for a route from this world to the unearthly world of words, a route easier to find on some days than others. Lurking on my shoulder as I stumbled through the grayness was the parrot of a question, asking me how I lived and he died. I was younger and weaker, yet it was my brother we buried, letting him slip into the ocean without a shroud or a word from me. The wailing of my mother and the sobbing of my father rose in my memory, but neither drowned out my own silence. Now it was right to say a few words, to call him back as

> he must have wanted, but I could not find them.' (*Refugees* 12-13)

Writing thus eventually turns out to be the means through which the narrator could try to make a kind of reconciliation with her traumatic memory of her rape and her brother's murder. In an interview with Alexander Bisley, Nguyen himself told about the importance of writing to recover from trauma –

> 'Traumatic pasts need to be dealt with in complex ways. We need to be able to tell stories about this past . . . . We also need to be able to confront these pasts collectively as societies, to try to figure out the proper measure of apologies and reconciliations and reparations that need to take place. And I think in both the cases of slavery and the Vietnam War, we haven't had that just confrontation with our pasts.'

This story is thus a part of Nguyen's recurrent effort to write about the traumatic past of the Vietnamese Americans, just as it was with the narrator of his story. While the narrator sought her personal salvage, Nguyen speaks for the broader picture, for the Vietnamese Americans who are continual victims of war-trauma and troubled memories.

Finally, to place the condition of the narrator into the framework of traumatic memory, it is evident that in spite of her desperate effort to forget, the connected image of rape and murder comes to her mind repeatedly, limiting herself to a ghost-like figure. Thus trauma and memory are the dominants she cannot escape even in the land of the American dream. Instead, this diasporic land with all its adversities to the refugees like her augments her plight created by her traumatic memory. But, even in this condition the author acts optimistically and makes a way for his character – the narrator takes the profession of (ghost) writing to escape her trauma. The author himself, with a view to speaking for the Vietnamese American community, took this strategy to lessen his own suffering of trauma and memory. However, though the author here appears to be successful, the case with his character results in direct opposition. The ghost writing profession of the narrator does eventually nothing to find her a passage from her condition; on the contrary, it only increases her plight. She appears to prove the words of Hang Kang - 'Some memories never heal. Rather than fading with the passage of time, those memories become the only things that are left behind when all else is abraded.' (139) The story notwithstanding ends in a positive note, establishing the author's urge to write, because '[s]omeone has to' (*Refugees* 20).

Works Cited

Alvar, Mia. "Ghost Stories: Vietnamese Refugees Wrestle With Memory in a New Book by the Author of 'The Sympathizer'". *New York Times.* New York Times, 13 Feb. 2017. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

Bunuel, Luis. *My Last Breadth*. Translated by Abigail Israel. London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1985. Print.

Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995. 3-12. Print.

----------.*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Print.

Craps, Stef and Gert Buelens. "Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novel." *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 1 & 2, 2008. 1-12. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

Fallon, Claire. "The One Book You Need To Read To Understand The Plight Of Refugees". *The Huffington Post*. The Huffington Post, 2 Feb. 2017. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

Hunt, Nigel C. *Memory, War and Trauma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.

Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Kang, Hang. *Human Acts: A Novel*. London/New York: Hogarth, 2016. Print.

Long, Karen. "In Viet Thanh Nguyen's 'The Refugees,' wistfulness is an anthem of displacement". *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 9 Mar. 2017. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Cambridge, MA and

London: Harvard University Press, 2016. Print.

----------."Black-Eyed Women". *The Refugees*. London, Corsair, 2017. 1-22. Print.

----------. "Viet Thanh Nguyen on being a refugee, an American — and a human being." *The Financial Times*. The Financial Times, 3 Feb. 2017. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

----------. "The Rumpus Interview with Viet Thanh Nguyen." Interview by Beverly Parayno. *The Rumpus*. The Rumpus, 8 Mar. 2017. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

----------. "History is Not Over: An Interview with Viet Thanh Nguyen." Interview by Alexander Bisley. *The Common*. The Common Online, 4 Jun. 2017. Web. 18 Dec. 2017.

Oates, Joyce C. "Refugees in America". *The New Yorker*. The New Yorker, February 13 & 20, 2017 Issue. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

Scholes, Lucy. "The Refugees by Viet Thanh Nguyen, book review: Never has a short story collection been timelier". *The Independent*. The Independent, 8 Feb. 2017. Web. 16 Nov. 2017.

Storey, John. "The articulation of memory and desire: from Vietnam to the war in the Persian Gulf." *Memory and popular film*. Edited by Paul Grainge, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. 99-119. Print.

Van der Kolk, Bassel A. and Rita Fisler. "Dissociation and the Fragmentary Nature of Traumatic Memories: Overview and Exploratory Study." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1995. 505-525. Web. 23 Jan. 2018.

Whitehead, Anne. *Memory*. London & New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Young, Allan. *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995. Print.