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## A Traumatic Analysis of the First-level Witnessing Effective Enlistment in Bennett and Komunyakaa's Poems

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**Abstract:** The present essay focuses on the witnessing process of the enlisting poets' effective responsiveness to the devastations they encountered; the two poets to be studied have been directly or indirectly traumatized by wars. The analytical perspective draws on Dominick LaCapra's theories on historical trauma. It intends to uncover the traumatic effects of circumstances in post-war poems. The methodological procedure is grounded in the qualitative appraisal of the emotive aspect of the poets' expressionist representation through critical discourse analysis. Trauma theories influence the research approach in historical and structural science, emphasizing witnessing levels, coined by Dori Laub, as the most significant determinant of the gestalt of interpretations. The poems' demolished vibe exploits an insight into the amalgamation of historical trauma and its steps towards salvation. The authorial intentionality in war poetry aspires to enlighten human sorrow and redemption by restoring the literary application of the historical, structural, and perpetrator trauma hypothesis. The melioristic agenda for edification via physical and critical phases, such as acting out and working through, coined by LaCapra, foci in the varied poems to be scrutinized, enables the poets' to maintain their readers' empathetic identification with their characters' predicaments in a psychoanalytic context.

**Keywords:** Acting out; Working through; War Poetry; Historical Trauma; Perpetrator Trauma.

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## 1. Introduction

The LaCaprean-developed form of historical trauma theories ascertains the extremity of the phenomena and its responses engendered by peculiar events or affairs. The trauma shaped through historical context; in other words, being in accord with the masses who have been involved with the identical calamity challenges the attendants, as the critic states in his article “Revisiting the Historians’ Debate: Mourning and Genocide,” to “address them only in excessively allusive, underspecified, indiscriminate, and at times obfuscating ways” (83).

Studying the mechanisms of trauma treatment resulting from historical trauma is noteworthy since literature favors psychosocial displays of emotion in composing poetry, which can operate as an adequate restorative apparatus. Dori Laub’s witnessing theory breakthrough permeated the domain of critical theory to perceive the poems from a revived standpoint. Research in different levels of trauma witnessing attests to the predominance of emotional faculty in the various stages of literary composition, the reader and writer’s gestalt of perception, for instance. The incited emotional impression in the trauma poetry contains an immaculate competency for affective reactions and recreation both in the composer and reader.

In view of the significance of such a theoretical framework that this essay is going to address, the upcoming questions with regard to the two abovementioned poets’ capitalization on witnessing trauma from a historical point of view will be discussed: Which trauma treatment, “acting out or working through,” can be better achieved in the genre of war poetry? Furthermore, how is authenticity achieved? In what ways can the pattern of trauma treatment of acting out or working through be administered to the desire to heal? The methodological procedure in seeking responses to such questions is characterized by the qualitative reading of the abovementioned poets’ selected works to identify and decode the steps they have accomplished to cure their trauma.

This article is devoted to the study of two poets whose works are directly related to wars. The first poet to be put into scrutinization is Curtis. D. Bennett. Vietnam war memories have established a new career as a literary person as well as a pilot. Although a veteran, his animosity and resentment of war, in general, made him resort to poetry. It was then apprehended that the Vietnam War was only a pretext for the outset of his literary career. Bennett initiated three collections of poetries in 1968 and 1969, they are called *Pale Moon Rising –Air War*, *Jaundiced Moon –Ground War*, and *Harvest Moon – Returning Home*.

The second poet to be studied has undergone the same torment as Bennett, Yusef Komunyakaa was also a Vietnam War veteran. Holding an MA in Creative Writing from Colorado University, upgrades him to the category of poets with academic literary education. Moreover, the other aspect of him that plays a significant role in his creations is being an Afro-American.

## 2. Literature Review

An outstanding modern war poet, Curtis Bennett has included previous, recent, and current wars along with his own experiences in Vietnam as a pilot who flew 201 missions and as a marine on the ground in his poems. He pens from memories and deep reflection. Analyzing his poems on war requires background knowledge of historical trauma, while his private experiences as a bomb-throwing pilot are more concerned with perpetrator trauma. Another eminent war poet, Yusef Komunyakaa has also composed poetry that are both related to historical and perpetrator trauma; his career initiated as a correspondent and later as managing editor of the Southern Cross during the Vietnam war, which earned him a Bronze Star.

LaCapra's psychological theories have been used in some literary works, and he is prominent for the applicability of his psychological trauma studies in literature. In an article by Colin Davis, "What Happened? Camus's "La Chute," Shoshana Felman and the Witnessing of Trauma" (2011), the author states that LaCapra, along with Felman, is looking for traces of WWII in these two stories; they conclude that "*La Chute* refers explicitly to the killing of Jews during the Second World War and it revolves around questions of memory, narratorial reliability and the entanglement of personal and collective histories" (100). His theories also illustrate other novels as well regarding "how selected third-generation novelists revisit, engage, and revise classical archetypes for understanding evil and suffering in the wake of the Shoah" (108).

Levels of witnessing and their relation to the poets is the other selected term that will be discussed in this paper; Dori Laub, in *Bearing Witness* (1991), divides the process of witnessing into three classes; indeed, the "first-level" belongs to those who have experienced the "trauma" firsthand, the "second-level," referring to the population of people including journalists and reporters who have gathered information and ultimately the last group consists of those people who participated in witnessing the process of catching itself. "The traumatic experience has normally long been submerged and distorted in its submersion. The horror of the historical experience is maintained in the testimony only as an elusive memory that feels as if it no longer resembles any reality.

The horror is compelling not only in its reality but even more so in its flagrant distortion and subversion of reality” (62). The three poets whose poems are to be analyzed in this article solely belong to the first-level witnesses.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The present study draws on trauma to focus on the stylistic aspects of its treatment in Bennet and Komunyakaa’s poetry processes. The introduction to LaCapra’s three primary forms of trauma maintains that via an etymological overview, structural trauma is a prerequisite to the other two types. It refers to philosophical concepts such as fundamental and abstract transformations in life; in that regard, ‘absence,’ another notion of LaCapra considers an authentic lack that had never existed for the traumatized person. He states that “trauma” does not always occur due to losing something; sometimes, it is the “absence” of something that creates a lack in the psyche. Keeping in mind that there are no sources for treatment when humans are grieving for something they have never had, the unconscious mind relates it to a “loss,” and the “trauma” treatment starts at that point. Hence, for having an authentic treatment of “trauma,” a person or a psychiatrist must know whether it originally was a “loss” or an “absence.”

Another compelling notion that LaCapra has developed chiefly and not introduced is “historical trauma.” This term was first announced by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart in the 1980s. It should also be considered that although there are different views towards this theory, all of them concede that this historical trauma causes the people of the next generation to be struck by more mental diseases than ordinary people. Considering the warriors, terrorists, or soldiers who were firing the guns or killing innocent people, LaCapra introduced the concept of perpetrator trauma; he denotes that although they were not victims and what has happened to them has not been entirely unintentional, some traumatic emotions might occur, and this theorist is willing to scrutinize it. In this article the mentioned key term has been elaborated via inspecting Bennett’s experience as a bomb throwing pilot in the Vietnam War.

The next concept is “witnessing,” understanding Laub’s ideology, there are “three levels of witnessing.” By explaining the separate, distinct stages, this psychiatrist, being a witness of the Holocaust himself claims in “Truth and Testimony, The Process and the Struggle” (1991): “The level of being a witness to oneself within the experience, the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others, and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (75). It should also be stated that

in this article, due to both poets' situation, only the first level witness will be thoroughly comprehended since they had encountered trauma in the war first hand.

LaCapra also has two options for "trauma" treatment; he labels them acting out and working through. It could be stated that the former notion is related to mourning, and the latter is the healing process. He claims explicitly that these two steps are inseparable because the latter is the pursuance of the former "Trauma, Absence, Loss" (1999) "Acting-out and working-through are intimately linked but analytically distinguishable processes" (718).

The next step is to distinguish whether the process they are going through is acting out or working through; these are the terms that LaCapra discussed in his article as mentioned above to investigate the strong effect the event has on them. LaCapra remarks in his article that "in acting-out, the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription, and it hauntingly returns as the repressed" (716). In other words acting out could be taken as a period when the victim mourns his trauma, and if the person is successful he could move to the next level that is working through, a situation that the traumatized could overcome the devastations and return to his normal life.

Their poems will be scrutinized to detect the impact of trauma on their psyche and, consequently, to check whether poetry could positively affect them in the healing process. Generally, this article wishes to detect the poets' psychological status and understand whether their purpose was closure or merely illustrating the traumatic situation in which they had been trapped. Respectively, an amalgamation of these concepts will be administered to the chosen poems desiring to achieve the trauma treatment goal through poetry.

#### **4. Poetical Establishments for Trauma Treatment**

The investigation of Bennett's stream of poetry books will disclose his predetermined mission in his procedure through trauma treatment as a first-level witness and also trace back the convictions underlying the poems' authorial intentionality. The first hinges of his considerations as a pilot are included in the book's introduction, where he compares the adversary that a pilot and a ground soldier had to endure. He states that the pilot's job is effortless to a great extent as they are not obliged to encounter the enemy and fight with them directly.

The poems' order in this book can be considered accidental at some points, and the reason lies in its disorganized classification of poems regarding their content, style, and length. Taking length into account, it has appeared in three kinds: very short, as in two or three lines; medium size, such as half a page; and very long, as in five pages. Considering style, it comes in three disparate versions, too. There is one rare Shakespearean style of iambic pentameter, including classic literal words; here are a few lines of this type to state the fact of the poem, "Ode to a Leech" "Oh blithe wafting tendril of soft, blackened slime/ That swelleth the swamp-muck's murky clay mire/ Thou slowly climbeth yon drooping green vine/And biteth me hard, with hot jaws of fire (46).

The first poem to be worked on is "Conditioning." it is a three-stanza poem; the first and last stanzas are short, about four to six lines, and the middle stanza, containing the main point, is the longest. Regarding content, it is somewhat philosophical and political. It discusses the fictitious myths dictated to children from an early age and will not stop throughout their lifetime. It initiates with some transparent legends such as Santa Clause and Easter Bunny, yet more fundamental concepts such as God would arise; the lines below are the opening lines of the second and longest stanza that questions God and politics "And as boys become young men and go to war,/ Still, the myths persist, God himself, is on our side;/ After all, this war is a just and necessary war, by God!" (12)

According to LaCapra's trauma theory, also acknowledging the epistemological aspect of questioning God, Bennett is battling against structural trauma. As the theoretician declares, this trauma occurs differently, through disparate occasions to different people and societies; there is also the feasibility of eliciting various reactions. In his article "Revisiting the Historians' Debate: Mourning and Genocide," LaCapra cited that "Structural trauma is often figured as deeply ambivalent—as both shattering or painful and the occasion for jouissance, ecstatic elation or the sublime" (83). Doubting and being angry with God are recurrent themes throughout his works; therefore, regarding the structural trauma in this case, Bennett struggles with the sublime. Also, in his previous book, *God Don't Fly Airplanes* (2005), he claims that God is too busy and negligent of his creatures to help them, so people are alone. Having that in mind, linking his structural trauma with absence would be inappropriate. It seems that Bennett once sincerely believed in a God as the sole creator and maintainer of the world, is now, by the whole image of war, thoroughly suspicious of the existence of God and has come to believe that his reliable caretaker has left him. Hence, it could be categorized as a trauma of loss rather than absence. Not only has he lost some dear ones in the war, but most importantly, his faith in God has left him.

Another powerful poem in this book, a picture within the poem, is “Nature's War;” it contains complaints about the war, politics, and being a pilot. The general subject of the poem is spraying the Dow chemicals on trees. In the footnotes, Bennett mentions that the Dow company sold an incredible amount of its products to the government; they were bombs used in different wars, the Vietnam War included. By acknowledging the vast side effects on nature and human beings, spraying Agent Orange was stopped by 1970, but the incurable damages were already done by then. In this poem, the frustrated Bennett objects to the effects of this bomb on nature, claiming that neither humans nor nature matter to the American government.

The last line of the poem, also resembling the picture's caption, illustrates Bennett's viewpoint as a pilot while throwing bombs at people. As explained thoroughly in LaCapra's book *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (1998), this is a type of trauma that may or may not happen to the perpetrators. Yet, if that occurs, the traumatized may suffer from some symptoms such as hallucinations, indigestions, and other symptoms similar to a victim. Yet he strongly stresses the significance of not confusing them with each other; he claims that “perpetrator trauma, while attended by symptoms that may be comparable to those of victims, is ethically and politically different in decisive ways” (41). LaCapra puts great emphasis on his belief because he mentions that the trauma of a victim had occurred without the direct intention of the person, while the trauma of the perpetrator had occurred more decisively; he cites that “As Freud noted, trauma is attended by an absence of *Angstbereitschaft*, the readiness to feel anxiety. One of the purposes of studying history, notably the history of the limit-case, is to generate that anxiety in tolerable, nonparanoid doses so that one is in a better position to avoid or counteract deadly repetitions” (41).

Throughout this short poem, he complains about the government's actions; in the end, he inserts a picture from the ‘inside’ stating that he is acting upon their instructions; therefore, he feels guilty, not only for the people and their future generations but also for the nature and destroying the species. His first book of poetry ends with a reminiscent of Wilfred Owen, who, in his short life, which was taken away from him in the First World War, wrote some poetry about his war experiences. Bennett claims that governments glorify war by making martyrs out of dead soldiers to embolden others to participate in battles and sustain this vicious circle.

The third book in the saga of the Vietnam War opens with an introduction, preface, and a short forward written in 2010. In the introduction, Bennett briefly confers the three

books on the Vietnam War, and in the preface, he specifically provides a general perspective of *Harvest Moon*. The author discusses his path through trauma treatment via composing this poetry; he pens that “Most of this book was written in the ’70s as a way for me to expunge some of the toxic karma I carried back then, as did most returning Vietnam Veterans” (7). Also, in the forward section, Bennett states his anger and disagreement with the most recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan “In many respects, the war in Vietnam closely parallels our two current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which means our country learned nothing from the lessons of Vietnam...But this doesn’t mean I can’t think, can’t observe, cannot have my own opinion, and draw conclusions about what I seen happening, especially when my son is in the Military, and he too, is about to go to war, just like I did those many years ago” (10).

War Trauma discusses how veterans will never feel the same or become the same men once they return from the war. It could be a great example of Laub’s witness from the inside, defined in his book *Bearing Witness* (1992). The author relates the sort of trauma to the Holocaust devastations “The Nazi system turned out, therefore, to be foolproof, not only in the sense that there were, in theory, no outside witnesses but also in the sense that it convinced its victims, the potential witnesses from the what was affirmed about their ‘otherness’ and their inhumanity was correct and that their experiences were no longer communicable even to themselves, and therefore, perhaps never took place” (66). It canvasses a massive type of trauma where the traumatized person feels detached from himself and others; to prove this point, the researcher calls attention to the following lines of the poem, “Old men in young boy’s bodies /Who will never, be quite the same. /For they can never, ever, /Come all the way back. /Some don’t even try. /Others topple over the edge, /To remain lost there...forever.” (30)

He mentions that they will never be the same people after the war; some do not try, and they will not become successful even if they do. Therefore, it is an incurable process that the victims have to endure permanently. ‘Witness from the inside’ can be deciphered from some of the poems with the theme of guilt; in *Healing Tough*, Bennett identifies it as ‘survivors’ guilt,’ a remorseful feeling resulting from not dying in the field. He states, “The guilt of not dying, of being a survivor, / The guilt of them dying, perhaps in your place, /Called “Survivor’s guilt,” it is common to all men, /Who manage to survive a war. (70)

It is a genuinely unforgettable emotion that makes life unbearable for the survivor, to the extent that he wishes to die. This long poem includes some almost identical stanzas



with the subject of guilt and its incurability, “Of an experience they never want to go through, /Of a memory so hard to accept, to acknowledge,/ Where it remains throughout the rest of their life,/ Never completely gone; never completely forgotten. (70)

The permanent inhabitation of guilt in the traumatized’s psyche is an appropriate instance of what Derrida calls hauntology; Jacob Glazier, in his article “Derrida and messianic subjectivity: a hauntology of revealability” (2017), provides an explicit explanation of the term, he pens that “since the Derridean notion of hauntology points to a certain empty space without presence, the ghost of a substance, it, therefore, informs the precise deconstructionist notion of temporality” (2).

As he claims, when a feeling of guilt, remorse, loss, or any other negative emotion does not leave your soul, it feels like it is haunting you and trying to hurt you. Despite war returning, the traumatized soldier is still haunted by the guilt of being alive instead of those who are not. The book's last page was written about 40 years later, in 2010; its significance is recognizing the modification from the Vietnam War to the more recent conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan. Fortunately, he claims that the warriors are being treated with more courtesy, and the American people are not patient enough to continue eight years of war. Bennett cites, "Perhaps one reason is lessons were learned about returning from war, and people in America decided it was not the war, it was the warrior that should be celebrated and recognized, should be honored and welcomed" (116).

### **5. Yusef Komunyakaa: A Universal Voice**

Negro in color, born and raised in America during the Civil Rights Movement, Yusef Komunyakaa spent his youth in the U.S. Army. He became distinguished from the other soldiers not long after his entrance into the camp, even before he started his academic education, Komunyakaa revealed his talent in writing. Regarding this poet, many other poets and critics have shared their thoughts; among them, Toi Derricotte wrote for the Kenyon Review that “He takes on the most complex moral issues, the most harrowing ugly subjects of our American life. His voice, whether it embodies the specific experiences of a black man, a soldier in Vietnam, or a child in Bogalusa, Louisiana, is universal. It shows us in ever deeper ways what it is to be human” (1993).

One must consider Komunyakaa’s lifetime events to discuss his poetry regarding content and style. His subject matter is divided into three contradictory parts, his distorted childhood, war trauma, and jazz music combined with poetry. To be more specific and in order to be able to compare this poet to the previous one in this article, the second subject will be more foregrounded. Regarding his PTSD from Vietnam War

Malynda states, "The speaker of the poem is no ordinary man. He is a Vietnam Veteran himself living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) caused by the horrific events he witnessed during his tour of duty" (2001).

Kevin Stien, in his article, "Vietnam and the "Voice Within": Public and Private History in Yusef Komunyakaa's *Dien Cai Da*" (1995), stresses that Komunyakaa, as a minority has experienced the war differently, and has published a distinguished book. He proves his statements by quoting from the poet in an interview ". Based on Komunyakaa's Vietnam war experiences; the book details an inward turning, "a way of dealing with the images inside my head," as Komunyakaa tells an interviewer, a means to put in order a private history" (541).

With that regard, an advanced type of war poetry is generated; via this method, the poet personalizes the events he had witnessed and composes a subjective, inward, and idiosyncratic work indirectly relating to the traumatizing battle. In that sense, Komunyakaa, by creating a private history, in Heideggerian terms "Geschichte," "has more to do with the individual's own inward and "authentic" sense of life, the way what is recorded may pale in comparison to the individual's own immediate experience of those very outward events that shape "Historie." In "Geschichte," time becomes an ontological category, the historical being of the individual" (543), which conforms to the aforementioned German philosopher belief that all poets must, through the natural agent of memory, through the second "coming of what has been" (542). Therefore, ontologically speaking, Komunyakaa channels the 'historical trauma that occurs to everyone into a more personal 'structural' one. It creates a positive opportunity to delve deeply into his soul and extract more influential results and treatments.

The educated and talented poet seeks salvation in himself via internal dialogues; familiarity with the German philosopher Heidegger (1889-1976) and Russian theorist Bakhtin (1895-1975) prepares him for a conversational quest in the poems. Comprehending Heidegger's theories on history and "Geschichte" released his burden and strengthened him to "accept the present, and forge ahead into the possibilities of the future opening before him" (555). Stein then asserts that in that regard, 'history' would alter into ahistorical "bound more to an immediate experience of time than that provided by objective history" (555).

Through that sense, and in relation to Komunyakaa's final poem in *Dien Cai Dau* (1988), the German philosopher channels the external dialogue of two subjects into an internal one within a person, in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984),

Mikhail Bakhtin, sublimely proclaims his theory that “Finally, dialogic relationships are also possible toward one's own utterance as a whole, toward its separate parts and toward an individual word within it, if we somehow detach ourselves from them, speak with an inner reservation, if we observe a certain distance from them as if limiting our own authorship or dividing it in two” (184).

Ergo, via the consolidation of historical and dialogical theories of the preceding philosophers, the last poem of the book *Dien Cai Dau* (1988), “Facing it,” will be scrutinized to decode and detect the method through which Yusef Komunyakaa has dealt with his trauma. Prior to context examination, an overview of its style would disclose more facts about the poem. There is no particular rhyme scheme for this 31-line verse; he has composed this poem through a combination of long lines and short cut-out phrases, all connected via enjambment.

Considering the other literary devices utilized in this verse, many assonances, consonances, and alliterations would appear. These devices indicate that despite the poem's lack of rhyme schemes, it includes an ear-catching sound that would make it poetic. Yet, it is not the only literary tool; Komunyakaa has successfully articulated rich symbolism and vivid imagery in ‘Facing It.’ Utilizing this technique paves the way for building a better connection between the direct, concrete meaning of the words that the writer uses to communicate his anguish and their deeper abstract meaning. Acknowledging the protagonist as the poet himself, the significance of imagery and symbolism would be more apparent as their profitable incorporation throughout the structure of the poem and its carefully chosen words enable the reader to analyze and interpret the poem's psychological themes and meaning as they relate to the mental state of the protagonist.

The poem centers on reflections of himself; it is a motif that repeats itself through a number of identical words; the terms that demonstrate this idea in the poem to be traced are “face, granite, reflection, stone, shimmer, eye, window, mirror.” This fact may prove the existence of self-reflection and, therefore, a specific form of inner dialogue. To admit Komunyakaa as the focal point of the poem, the two literary devices, symbolism and imagery, would be convenient. The richness of the symbolism in this poem becomes amply evident right from the start, where the poet connotes the protagonist's ethnicity by using the words “black face,” which may be an allusion to his being a Black American and having experienced discrimination at the hands of Viet Cong as well as the country he fought for, “My black face fades,/ hiding inside the black granite” (1-2). Besides, the

color black serves as a sense of gloom that encroaches on the conscience of a war veteran when he visits a memorial created in honor of those who died in the said war.

The other vital case of this verse is the disparity of a handful of names; it reveals itself as a dialectic between power and powerlessness, racial difference, and human universality; instances of this matter will be stated correspondingly. In accordance with these inclinations and the form of its merged personal and collective history, the sole voice of this poem, as mentioned earlier, can be Komunyakaa himself. The following initial lines of the poem indicate the inner dialogue between the speaker and himself; there is no compassion, only repression, and rage, "I said I wouldn't, /dammit: No tears" (2-4). The other binary opposition that must be comprehended in this piece is the location in opposition to the narrator; despite the poet uttering a kind of monologue, he is centered in a very crowded place, the memorial. It is a popular destination and more than likely, there would be many people walking, talking, and disturbing the speaker's solitude. These lines make his contemplation of the black granite memorial more profound as he has been able to find a precise moment to think alongside the chaos of Washington, D.C.

As the lines move forward, a vivid description fosters our understanding and foregrounds the contrasts he has provided and their logic. In the opening stanza, the poet focuses on reflection. He pens, "My clouded reflection eyes me/ like a bird of prey, the profile of night/ slanted against morning. I tum/ this way –the stone lets me go/ I turn that way –I'm inside/ the Vietnam Veterans Memorial" (6-11). These lines are indications of Komunyakaa's haunted soul. Although he is back from Vietnam, its vision has not left him; he lives desperately with those memories, as if there is no departure from them. The protagonist is facing an everlasting trauma that has been haunting him for years. In his remarkable work *Spectres of Marx*, Jacques Derrida refers to a post-trauma situation endemic coined hauntology as "repetition and first time, but repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time, makes of it also a last time. Each time it is the event itself, the first time is the last. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history" (10). A blend of LaCapra and Derrida's theories suggests the effusion of the abovementioned trauma not only in the masses but in their minds throughout the span of time.

The poem is pursued by the first person viewing thousands of names on the granite wall, those who died in the Vietnam War, encountering them he authors, "I go down the 38,022 names, /half-expecting to find/ my own in letters like smoke" (14-16). There are

some presuppositions to these lines; firstly, Komunyakaa might have come close to death in the war; therefore, he was traumatized by that. The other assumption could be that he has lost his soul in Vietnam and finds himself alongside his dead comrades as if he has never left there. This part of the poem indicates a structural trauma of his complaining about more severe problems; facing death has been a significant encounter for him from which he can not recover. It leads him to structural trauma to ask more questions about being and engages him in more profound agony.

The whole verse is a combination of images through which the reader may concede to the author's significant aspirations. In the concluding lines, Komunyakaa encounters a white vet; as their eyes meet, he feels close connections with the white man having the same experience in the war; it is also apparent that the other soldier has lost his right arm, most probably in the war. The white man, despite his contrast regarding his skin color, is his mirror, both having fought in the same battle. Those two are the only people in the memorial who are genuinely absorbed by the monument.

The composition ends with these lines: "In the black mirror /a woman's trying to erase names: /No, she's brushing a boy's hair" (29-31). The black mirror may one more time be an indication of the poet. Furthermore, another paradox exists in these lines; the closing paradox is between the world at home and in the war. These realities can function simultaneously and come close to touching but never fully or entirely know one another. All through the poem, Yusef contradicts himself as the protagonist battles between enduring the reality of the present and reliving the hardships of the past. He is aggressive in describing the vivid flashbacks he sees and feels as he visits the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and then quickly shifts back to what is going on around him in the present moment and the memorial he is observing. The reflection and consequences of the Vietnam War are seen through the author's wounded conscience, his sense of guilt, and the resultant distraught words. Thus, by the effective use of imagery and symbolism, Yusef Komunyakaa powerfully depicts the feelings of guilt and psychological fears of his protagonist.

## 6. Conclusion

A LaCaprean traumatic analysis of the two poets, reveals the stylistic strategies underlying their outstanding capacity to enlist the poets' and their audiences' apt procedure towards treatment. The inquiry also authorizes that structural trauma embedded in their poems stems from an absence that they endured and channeled to the loss of their dear ones. Hence, the applicability of the healing process called acting out

and working through will become acceptable only if the absence would properly pass onto loss so that they could face their trauma and overcome it.

This article concentrated on the war poetry of the two poets; throughout their books in the related matter, although vast, a feeling of rage reveals itself. It is comprehensible that both composers have used verse writing as a tool to pour out their fury via the depiction of the Vietnam War and its aftermath; acknowledging the fact that they both have written other subject matters too and reaching closure in the end discloses that not only one book or a sole case would lead the people to work through their trauma, but more efforts is needed. Still its effect in the process of salvation should be recognized.



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