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## **Returning from the Heartland: Geopolitics and Veterans' Trauma in William Kowalski's *The Hundred Hearts* (2013)**

**Nadia Hashish\***

Lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of  
Arts, Ain Shams University  
[nadia.hashish@yahoo.com](mailto:nadia.hashish@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

Trauma as a literary field, has gained much critical attention since World War I. Starting with the Vietnam war, many cases of American war survivors are diagnosed as suffering from psychological trauma; technically known as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This paper is a study of psychological trauma in William Kowalski's novel *The Hundred Hearts* which. presents an image of America at its worst; a new imperialist, hardened heart America who sacrifices hundreds of its soldiers' hearts for no good reason other than its inner cruelty, perpetual aggressiveness and global violence. The focus is on the effect of US atrocious war behaviour and geopolitical violence in foreign territories on young American veterans who are sent across US borders to collectively fight futile wars and have returned within US borders to lonely fight PTSD.

Existing critical discourse on trauma literature stems from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theories which view the traumatic experience as static and embedded in a deep, lost past. Contrary to this discourse, this paper uses a new approach of the literary trauma theory which views the traumatic experience as lively and active. Crossing the traditional borders of literary trauma theory into a new trauma concept helps understand Kowalski's novel. Kowalski offers his view of this new notion of trauma in which memory of past traumatic experience does not produce a repetitive closed pattern of repressed knowledge, as in old trauma notion, but produces an understanding of it and an attempt at healing it within the existing social and cultural reality. (250 words)

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**Returning from the Heartland: Geopolitics and Veterans' Trauma in  
William Kowalski's *The Hundred Hearts* (2013)**

This paper explores the cause/effect relationship between war and trauma. Trauma, as a literary field, has gained much critical attention since World War I. Starting with the Vietnam war, many cases of American war survivors are diagnosed as suffering from psychological trauma; technically known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This paper is a study of the traumatic impact of America's geopolitics on its surviving youth veterans in William Kowalski's (b. 1970) novel *The Hundred Hearts*<sup>1</sup> (2013). It is divided into two sections: the first one explores America's geopolitical foreign policy of waging war in non-American lands and the second examines the effect of PTSD caused by U.S. war behaviour on surviving American veterans who are sent across U.S. borders to collectively fight futile wars and have returned within U.S. borders to individually fight PTSD. Kowalski's novel is critically approached using both theories of Critical Geopolitics and Contemporary Trauma to understand the socio-political and socio-cultural factors which surround PTSD and contribute to the manifestations of its final image in American society.

**Kowalski's Innovative Treatment of Traditional Trauma  
In *The Hundred Hearts***

*The Hundred Hearts* portrays the post-war life and suffering of Jeremy Merkin, the principal character, a twenty-five-year old American veteran who returns to Elysium, California, his home town after a tour of duty in Afghanistan. Five years have passed and he is still nursing his physical injuries and psychological wounds besides grieving the loss of Smarty, his best friend in the army. An IED blast on "April 7, 2007" (10) in Afghanistan draws a demarcation line in Jeremy's life as the day prior to the bomb explosion is missing from his memory. The novel opens with the death of Helen Merkin, his grandmother in her sleep leaving her family dysfunctional and at a mess. She also leaves behind a hundred hearts, wooden craft gifts that she makes and sells, or gives away to friends as tokens of love. Jeremy lives in the basement of a house that he shares with Al Merkin, his grandfather and a former U.S. veteran in Vietnam, Rita, his divorced mother and Henry, his mentally challenged cousin. During a visit to Wilkins, his father who is locked for twenty years in a lunatic institute, he is handed in a message of two words to be delivered to Al if he is interested in the pursuit of truth. The words read: "My Lai" (105) and his father warns him "it's kind of a Pandora's box. Once it's out, it can never go back in" (105).

Indeed, from this time on, more secrets are revealed, but with dreadful consequences. Jeremy learns about Al's participation in My Lai massacre while on duty in Vietnam and his killing of unarmed women, children and old people. It never crosses his mind when he condemns Al as being a war criminal that he, himself, is no better than him. Thanks to digital technology, Smarty has documented all the events in the missing day before the bomb went off with photos and videos. Jeremy sees himself tormenting and shooting an unarmed American prisoner fighting with the Talibanis against the Americans. Earlier, he saw himself once engaged with Smarty in killing an Afghani mother and her three daughters by mistake. In other words, he is not different from Al whom he once denounces as a murderer and spits on his face. It is only towards the end of the novel that Jeremy realizes that "Now he sees the whole conflict that's been raging inside him as if from high above. He's in a helicopter, flying over the terrain of his own psyche. He's never felt this clear before. He can see his whole life in an instant- the role he has played, the things he has done, his part in the whole machine" (284). Jeremy's revelation about his role in the military machine towards the end of the novel shows, as Kerry Riley mentions in his review "Kerry on Can Lit", how "Kowalski leads one far deeper into America's heart of darkness that one might otherwise be willing to go" (n.p.). Though shocked from this painful self discovery, Jeremy decides to leave America and lead a new life in Mexico; "poor" (Kowalski 287), but "a good one. Because it will be real" (Kowalski 287). He intends to marry a Mexican and have children, but the traumatic shock has been so strong that his legs cannot carry him any longer and he falls dead at the base of a tree. The novel, indeed, presents an image of America at its worst, a new imperialist, hard hearted America that sacrifices hundreds of its soldiers' hearts for no good reason other than its inner cruelty, perpetual aggressiveness and global violence.

The incidents of the novel show that the focus is on two main stages of the trauma experience, firstly, the event of war itself and its consequent traumatic nature and secondly, its aftermath ramifications on returning American veterans who have suffered twice; early on from acquiring PTSD and later on from adapting into their former communities. Most of the existing critical discourse on trauma literature stems from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theories which view the traumatic experience as a static one that is embedded in a deep, lost past; thus, it acquires an absolute, silent, indecipherable quality. Contrary to this discourse, this paper investigates how Kowalski, in *The Hundred Hearts*, could cross the traditional borders of the old literary trauma theory into another realm of a new trauma concept in dealing with the experience of PTSD. This new approach views the traumatic experience as lively and active because it may frequently reappear through the traumatized person's life. Kowalski offers his view of this new notion of trauma in which memory of past traumatic experience does not

produce a repetitive closed pattern of repressed knowledge, as suggested in Freud's old notion of trauma, but rather produces an understanding of it and an attempt at healing it within the existing social reality with its cultural and political institutions. Thus, to present an analysis of Kowalski's innovative treatment of trauma, this paper explores two issues which draw the parameters of these two stages in the whole war traumatic experience; namely, America's geopolitical behaviour in foreign lands and surviving veterans' attempts at coping with their psychological trauma.

## **1. American Foreign Policy of Geopolitical Violence**

### **1.1. American Rhetoric of Power: Revival of Old Imperial Culture**

The first issue to be examined in this paper is concerned with America's employment of specific power mechanisms and geopolitical violence in foreign lands that acts as a direct cause of the American veterans' traumatic experience of war in the first place. Since the end of the cold war and America's emergence as the last and only super power worldwide, the American administration has propagated a rhetoric of power based on its unhidden triumphant sensations and unmatched self-pride. However, as Edward Said mentions, in the introduction of his book *Culture and Imperialism*, this rhetoric of power is "a rhetoric whose most damning characteristic is that it has been used before, not just once (by Spain and Portugal) but with deafeningly repetitive frequency in the modern period, by the British, the French, the Belgians, the Japanese, the Russians, and now the Americans" (xix).

### **1.2. Why American Army Is There in Foreign Non-American Lands**

It seems that the old theme of empire lurks back at the heart of America's violent practices in non-American foreign lands. Though America has gained its independence from the British empire after so much suffering and at a dear cost, it seems that its heart has been hardened by the passage of time that it is ultimately enacting the same role played by the old empire and is emerging as the new imperialist, political power which only acts in pursuit of its own interests. To guarantee its unique global power, it sends its American troops to fight in foreign non-American lands guided by an illogical sense of commitment to fight insurgencies to maintain global peace and security. According to Report Brief issued by the *Institute of Medicine: of the National Academies*, "The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been the longest sustained U.S. military operations since the Vietnam era, sending

more than 2.2 million troops into battle, and resulting in more than 6,600 deaths and 48,000 injuries" (Grossblatt 1).

America has appointed itself to set rules for the world and to dictate its own law and apply it to all peoples. In "The Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will not Hold, and the Implications for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan", M. Chris Mason argues that "Americans are a practical people restlessly in search of solutions, but some problems have no solutions, and Afghanistan is one of them" (3). Nevertheless, America works on to achieve its goals through many means; by investing in foreign lands, fighting insurgencies, curbing resistance, financing counter armies, but more important of all, waging wars. Mason mentions that:

Three times in 40 years, the United States committed large numbers of U.S. ground forces to land wars in Asia anyway and lost all three of them, not on battlefield, but at the strategic level of war. As of December 2014, 65,069 Americans have died in those wars ... the explicit lessons of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan ... remain unlearned and which would have prevented every single one of those deaths. (1)

America's imperialist path is clearly felt in *The Hundred Hearts* through Jeremy's antiwar blogger friend who is always worried about the way of the world. He describes America's imperialist practices "in the most depressing terms" (77). In his blog posts, he attacks the corruption of both the American system and government worldwide. He also posts videos of police brutality and pictures of families killed in Iraq, Syria and other parts of the world downtrodden by the American military. In the novel, Jeremy, once asked by a reporter about what he is fighting for, knows well that "Of course, they were not fighting for anything. Everyone knew that." (38), but Al, embodying the American viewpoint, justifies his killing of women, children and old Vietnamese people by the fact that "women and old people provide comfort to the enemy ... and babies grow up into soldiers" (159). Al believes America's success in the Vietnam war is measured by the million people killed there simply because "they belong to the other side" (160), and not to the American side.

Said alludes to the fact that "the idea of overseas rule-jumping beyond adjacent territories to very distant lands" (xxiii) has always been a systematic characteristic of the imperial culture. Indeed America's foreign policy has practically proven the endorsement of this idea by crossing its geographical borders and expanding into unlimited far off spaces apparently holding a strong sense of commitment to enforce law and spread freedom and democracy in addition to an inherent, unrelenting dedication to lead the world<sup>2</sup>. It is totally negligent of the traumatic effect of overseas, trans-Atlantic wars on the American soldiers. Even Al, who is totally pro-American, knows deep inside himself that this overseas rule-jumping is the

cause of his PTSD and his ultimate choice to leave his house and walk into the desert to achieve "his final sacrifice" (Kowalski 263) by committing suicide. He understands well Jeremy's suffering, but he cannot disclose it to anyone to appear forever the loyal "soldier in the army of the United States of America" (158). As if addressing Rita, his daughter, apologetically, he thinks: "Sorry, Rita, he thought Vietnam ruined your father. And now Afghanistan has ruined her son" (61).

### **1.3. Two Factors Nourish U.S. Geopolitical Policy**

#### **1.3.1. Adoption of the Heartland Theory as a Geopolitical Concept**

U.S. foreign policy of geopolitical violence is best understood by exploring two factors that have nourished this policy: Mackinderian philosophy of the Heartland theory and American administration enterprise of war-on-terror in 2001. Firstly, the fact that America's geopolitical practices are mainly targeted in central Asia is not a coincidence, but it logically brings into mind the influence of Halford J. Mackinder's theory of the Heartland. The idea starts from a premise that the world is divided into two parts: the World-Island which consists of the three old world continents: Africa, Asia and Europe, and the peripheries which include North America, South America and Australia. At the centre of the World-Island, lies Eurasia; known as the Heartland which is a vast Euro-Asian land. In his paper "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace", Mackinder explains, "The Heartland is the northern part and the interior of Euro-Asia. It extends from the Arctic coast down to the central deserts, and has as its western limits the broad isthmus between the Baltic and Black Seas" (197-8). According to Mackinder's theory, the Heartland is the pivot area of the world and any military power that can control the Heartland can easily control the whole world. Mackinder believes that what the Americans and British learn from German's project of a German East Europe in command of all the Heartland is that

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:

Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:

Who rules the World-Island commands the World. (106)

Under the American warfare policy and its geopolitical practices earlier in Vietnam and lately in the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan; the four countries which lie in the Heartland, Mackinder's theory of the Heartland has not lost its significance, or consideration as a geopolitical concept for the American strategic experts, policy makers, or think tanks. Mackinder's theory places Asia at the centre of the world. Mackinder argues that the

Heartland, that vast space of central Asia, occupies the centre of the world politics. In general, he draws a relationship between geography and politics as he points out the connection between the west and the most strategic and advantageous geopolitical location in the whole world. This theory explains the colonization project of the early British empire and the new imperial American military engagement in land warfare in Vietnam, the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan.

### 1.3.2. Launch of War-On-Terror Enterprise

Secondly, in the aftermath of the attacks of the two towers of the World Trade Centre on September, the 9<sup>th</sup> in 2001, the American administration launches its war-on-terror global enterprise. America's foreign policy regards the use of military force and geopolitical violence as a viable response in its global war-on-terror and the consequent invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries in South West Asia. This preparation and state of readiness for war is also reflected at home among the American civilians. In *The Hundred Hearts*, people in Jeremy's small, desolate town are accustomed to live by certain beliefs for ages; "The right to bear arms is sacred. ... American flags snap in the mad rush of the Santa Ana winds" (7-8) They are also familiar with the American soldiers' daily military training: "Two or three times a day, the ground is slapped by sonic booms from nearby Edwards Air Force Base" (8-9).

### 1.4. Critical Geopolitics in Theory and Representation

Unlike traditional Geopolitics which emerges at the end of the cold war to rationalize the political and military intervention of the west in foreign territories and to justify their construction of the military machine and their plans for waging war in non-western lands as a reason for the provision of global security, Critical Geopolitics, as a literary theory, reaches its prominence in the early 1990s and seeks to criticize the imperial geopolitical discourse which justifies geopolitical intervention in the global political scene and legitimizes warfare and violence in foreign lands under the apparent commitment of implementing and maintaining global peace<sup>3</sup>.

New Geopolitics, or as later known as Critical Geopolitics theory is relevant in this respect and can be employed as a tool to understand this idea of re-militarisation of global U.S. power politics. It provides a critique of the U.S. foreign policy thinking in non-American lands and its usage of specific geographical measures to guarantee global security such as the use of imperial language, counter-insurgency warfare and the policy of "evacuate, hold and build". In his essay "Imperialism, Domination and Culture: The Continued Relevance of Critical Geopolitics", Simon Dalby explains that "traditionally military forces of empire have had two primary functions: first, patrolling the peripheries against external threats and second, internal

pacification, administration and policing. The latter has come to prominence once again in the war on terror" (415).

What makes the emergence of Critical Geopolitics a necessity is the appearance of moral and political concerns worldwide about the unlimited extent of American power specially after the defeat of the USSR. In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy's war rationalization during his visit to Wilkins, his father is best explained through the lens of Critical Geopolitics. He feels that he is duped into participation in war and tells Wilkins that the idea of starting a war, or fighting in it is not an important thing to do in life: "You go into it thinking there's some big reason behind it, but there isn't. It's just the same damn thing over and over again. So many people get hurt and die, but eventually so much time passes even their suffering doesn't matter anymore. It's like they never existed. Its all just gets wiped out" (104).

In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy denounces Al's participation in My Lai massacre in Vietnam and the killing of five hundred people there whereas Al justifies his role in the war as well as America's geopolitical reasoning. He tells Jeremy: "I don't say I'm proud of it. But I didn't start that war. I just got sent to go fight it. Do you have any idea what that part of the world would look like now if we hadn't gone in?" (160). Al is indeed the spokesman of hard hearted America. Wilkins earlier describes him as a murderer when he tells Jeremy that "Mars, the god of war. Mars is Al's personal deity. He believed passionately in Vietnam. Any war America was involved in was a good war, by definition.... But to him I was a threat. I threatened everything he believed in, every made-up tenet of that mockery of masculinity he so deeply cherishes" (99). Wilkins can perceive how America uses its geographical knowledge to wage war in far away spaces only to serve its political ends at any rate and under any cost.

### **1.5. "The Geo in Politics and the Politics of Geography"**

Interested in the relationship between geography and politics, geographer and geopolitician Yves LaCoste mentions that "[l]a g'eographie, ca sert, d'abord, a' faire la guerre" (geography is primarily for waging war) (6), this very statement which is given as the title of his seminal book. He draws the attention to the use of geography as a strategic tool to reach a political end. He proposes that geography is used by the military, or politicians as a form of knowledge on both levels, the strategic and political so that they can exercise their power on weaker countries, or in political circles respectively. In reference to his work with others in the field of Critical Geopolitics, Dalby, in his paper "Geopolitics, Grand Strategy and Critique: Twenty Years and Counting ...", mentions that "we deliberately



tried to encourage political and methodological pluralism to open up new ways of thinking about the geo in politics and the politics of geography" (4). He further explains that "Critical Geopolitics is all about understanding the production of knowledge of spaces facilitating certain kinds of violent practice, the drawing of lines, the specification of dangers and the legitimization of violent actions to deal with these 'threats'" (4).

It is strange to specify fighting terror as war, but as Dalby explains, "once it was so specified the knowledge practices brought to bear were ones of targets, battle spaces and regime change, rather than international diplomacy, criminal investigations, arrests, trials and the exercise of justice" ("Geopolitics, Grand Strategy and Critique: Twenty Years and Counting ..." 10). Through its military affairs, the U.S. has militarized the global space and involved the world into a vicious circle of never ending violence. America's insistence on its being "at war, in an aggressive 'long war' as part of its struggle to end tyranny on the planet" (Dalby "Geopolitics, Grand Strategy and Critique: Twenty Years and Counting ..." 6) is ironic since what actually ends any global mischievous act is not the waging of wars, but the calling for peace.

Since peace is globally absent, peace of mind is also missing among Al Merkin's family members. Tom Sandborn in his review, "In *The Hundred Hearts*, an Entire Family Feels the Burden", states that the American veterans Al and Jeremy are "both marked for life by their war experience in Vietnam and Afghanistan" (n.p.). However, surviving youth veterans like Jeremy sometimes seek ways to cross the borders of their traumatized experiences into new realms of hope and coping strategies which will be further explored in the second issue of the paper.

## **2. Returning Veterans' Trauma, Suffering and Coping Strategies**

The second issue that this paper considers is the surviving veterans' attempts at coping with their psychological trauma and their struggles with either the act of survival at the best estimation, or suicidal act at the worst. Coming back home from war, American veterans find it difficult to adapt into their previous civilian societies. Afflicted with PTSD among many other injuries, they are no longer the same after their duties in Vietnam, the Gulf, Iraq, or Afghanistan. At the same time the nature of assimilating these American veterans back home is determined by disoriented and indifferent society members. In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy is quite aware of the indifference of his society because of its ignorance of the horrible moments soldiers pass through. Looking at his disinterested students, he thinks as if addressing them:

If only you could see what I have seen. But he'd been trained to see those things so other people didn't have to see them. That was the role of the army: not to fight for freedom, whatever that nonsense meant, but to see the unseeable, do the undoable, and later to try to

forget the unforgettable. And to somehow try to fit back into a society that had no clue. (68)

In dealing with the experience of trauma, embodied in the returned veterans, his society only relies on an already cut-and-dried, codified, pre-defined model of war trauma where the traumatic experience of war fits in within specific existing dominant structure on versatile levels; social, cultural and political.

### **2.1. Contemporary Trauma in Theory and Representation**

Contemporary trauma studies as a literary field may pay tribute to Sigmund Freud's early, classical concept of trauma. However, the early path laid by Freud has been recently challenged by contemporary trauma theory which has gained considerable attention in the nineties of the last millennium with the works of such significant critics in the field as Cathy Caruth, Kali Tal, Dominique La Capra and others. Whereas early trauma scholarship propagates the idea of trauma as unrepresentable, indecipherable event, contemporary trauma scholars suggest new approaches to the role of trauma in literature which render the traumatic experience as possibly representable, decipherable event. Crossing the borders of classic trauma theory which forbids trauma representation into new realms of contemporary trauma theory enables the literary critics to reconsider the particular nature of trauma which poses a meaningful value through its influential presence in the social and cultural milieus of the traumatic experience.

In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Caruth defines psychological trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (57-8). In her attempt to interpret Freud's theory of trauma, Caruth explains that "What returns to haunt the trauma victim in Freud's primary example of trauma, ... is not just any event but, significantly, the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an accident" (6). She further explains that "What returns to haunt the victim, ... is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way its violence has not yet been fully known" (6).

In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jenny, Jeremy's student, asks him to kill Lincoln, her step-brother because, as she tells him, "you were in the war, right? You've killed people before. I hear it's a lot easier after the first time" (18). This has such a shocking effect on Jeremy that he starts to have a panic attack. He realizes that he cannot explain to Jenny that he is not that

kind of a soldier; that he is not a killer, but language fails him because of his PTSD and because of his lost memory of the day before the bomb went off. Jeremy realizes that Jenny asks his help, not because she regards him as her reliable physics teacher, but because she sees him as a trained killer. Jeremy cannot stand the shock and he goes into a traumatic fit; the symptoms of which he knows, but the limit of its violence is never fully known. He feels "his head begins to swim. He recognizes these sensations ... he's been getting headaches lately, too. Bad ones. They emerge from somewhere inside his skull like a knife blade appearing point first. Each time, the blade is a little wider, a little sharper; and each time, it opens the gap between the hemisphere of his brain a little more" (19).

Because language can not represent the experience of trauma, this unspeakable place in the unconscious mind, it only offers an indeterminate value with respect to the inaccessible traumatic experience. Not only is it inaccessible, but it is also incomprehensible. In her book *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, Caruth concludes that "[f]or the survivor of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension. The flashback on traumatic reenactment conveys, that is, both the truth of an event, and the truth of its incomprehensibility" (153). In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy's traumatic fits lack linguistic expression, and they are so incomprehensible for him that he cannot understand them himself. Jenny is startled to see him weak, sick and vomiting, but he can neither describe his state of suffering nor understand it: "I feel heavy, he wants to say ... But he can't find the words. There's something squeezing his chest from the inside, trying to pop his heart. He sits on the bed opposite her, puts his head down, and tries to breathe" (19).

Caruth is highly attentive to the binary opposition between both the experience of trauma and its language. she suggests the possibility of an alternative model of representation of the traumatic experience through tangible, determinate, accessible values, other than the impossible linguistic form. She, henceforward, poses her breaking through question about the real entity of trauma:

The crisis at the core of many traumatic narratives ... often emerges, indeed, as an urgent question: Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it? At the core of these stories, I would suggest, is thus a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival. (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History* 7)

In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy finds himself torn between two worlds due to his traumatic war experience: a world of probable death that he has chosen on joining the army and a world of probable survival that he

has not thought of in case he returns back home. In New York, during his search for his mentally challenged cousin Henry who has left Al's house without notice, Jeremy has enough time to contemplate the real "crisis" of a veteran's trauma as referred to by Caruth. He ponders:

How did you return to a world you'd let go of? How did you come home and do things like get a job and get married and have kids when a handful of months earlier you were kicking in doors in a dusty little village and screaming in the faces of terrified families, threatening to kill if they didn't tell you where the weapons were? The two worlds did not exist on the same plane. There was no point at which they intersected. The gap between them was so vast that not even the spark of memory could cross it. (206)

Caruth suggests that surviving trauma is just as traumatic as witnessing it. She sees that the act of survival may serve as a source of trauma. In her essay "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence and Survival", She explains that "trauma is not only the repetition of the missed encounter with death, but the missed encounter with one's own survival. It is the incomprehensible act of survival- waking into life- that repeats and bears witness to what remains un-grasped within the encounter with death" ( 23). She argues that "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival. It is only by recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience" (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* 57-8).

Caruth's argument is very relevant to the novel as the assimilation process that American veterans undergo is not often smooth owing to the fact that veterans who go to war are usually never the same on returning home. In *The Hundred Hearts*, Helen, acting as the "gravitational core" (Riley n.p.) and "emotional anchor" (Riley n.p.) of the Merkin family, is the only person who understands how difficult this assimilation process is for both the veterans and their communities. Helen is a symbol of the sympathetic, kind and sound anti-war American whose presence in the novel as the "Heart Lady" is the ultimate image American propaganda would like to reflect for America worldwide. The word "heart" is a recurrent motif in *The Hundred Hearts*; it is present in the title, it occupies the raw material of Helen's domestic craft business and it is a reference name for Helen, a soft hearted American. She paints her hearts in deep, arterial red, caresses them and enjoys their company until she sells them, or gives them away as gifts. She tries to convince Rita of how war has changed Al: "He

wasn't always like that. Before he went away, he was a lot of fun. The Al I married went away to Vietnam and never came back" (61). Al himself could understand the traumatic, destructive influence of war, but he would not admit it in front of anyone except himself: "Sorry Rita, he thought, Vietnam ruined your father. And now Afghanistan has ruined her son, he thinks. Jeremy the little boy was friendly, curious, outgoing, sweet, affectionate. Now he seemed to have just two modes: angry or silent" (61). A more serious problem though arises from the fact that the veteran's society fails to fully comprehend his assimilation process as it accomodates it within its existing social and cultural codes which might not serve as a proper fitting pattern for all veterans alike.

Contemporary Trauma theory, like classical trauma theory, asserts the fact that trauma evidently causes physical as well as psychological disruption. However, in its attempt to cross the traditional trauma borders into new realms of the traumatic experience, it tries to avoid immersion into the sole destructive nature of trauma by focusing on other features like social and cultural contexts that enrich the whole experience of trauma. Instead of dwelling on the universal, pathological, unrepresentable nature of the classical world of trauma, the various theoretical, pluralistic alternatives offered by new trauma theory go beyond this restricted concept of trauma to inform people about new approaches that eschew these pathological and unrepresentable notions of trauma. These can be achieved, as Michelle Balaev notes, in her article "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered", by considering "the multiple meanings of trauma that may be found within and between the spheres of personal and public worlds, thus providing views of both the individual and society, rather than consolidating the experience of trauma into a singular, silent ghost" ( 5).

## **2.2. An Existing Three-Factor Pre-defined Trauma Model**

Thus, there is a shifting attention towards the impact of trauma on surviving individuals and their suffering in addition to their adapting strategies into their former communities. Besides suffering from their own physical and psychological wounds, surviving American veterans also struggle with three existing factors that evidently shape the cultural experience of their psychological trauma. These are the cultural codification of trauma, the institutional objectification of the individual and the failure of language representation of traumatic experience.

### **2.2.1. First Factor: Three Cultural Coping Strategies**

The first factor that traumatized American veterans suffer from is the existence of cut-and-dried cultural codes that often characterizes contemporary American social structure. Studying this phenomenon in American society, cultural critic Kali Tal is preoccupied with the impact of trauma on the individuality of survivors and the way this impact is reflected in American society at large. In her book *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, she examines

three strategies of cultural coping- mythologization, medicalization, and disappearance. 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 continued and predictable narrative. 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. Disappearance- a refusal to admit to the existence of a particular kind of trauma- is usually accomplished by undermining the credibility of the victim. In the traumas I examine, these strategies work in combination to effect the cultural codification of the trauma. (5- 6)

In his literary representation of war trauma in *The Hundred Hearts*, Kowalski seems to be attentive to Tal's three strategies which actually permeate the overall action. Mythologization is the first strategy that is best reflected in Rico's mother, Elizabeta's unrelenting invitation to Jeremy for a spiritual counselling session. By trying to help him spiritually, Elizabeta is actually locating the trauma experience within a mythological, unreal, imaginary context. Besides, Elizabeta's advice to Jeremy to meet his father for more learning reflects Kowalski's innovative attempt at crossing the borders of the old notions of trauma theory, which foster dwelling on the unknown, past experience of trauma, into a new alternative offered by new trauma theory through his quest for knowledge which acts as one of the surviving modes adopted by Jeremy.

Medicalization, the second strategy, is a social approach that regards trauma as a medical illness that can be cured by pathological treatment or psychological therapy, and Vietnam PTSD veterans as victims. It is one of the socially constructed codes set by American society to understand the traumatic experience. In *The Hundred Hearts*, during one of his panic attacks, Jeremy remembers that "Lola Linker, his counselor had hinted that he might be cured" (19). When Rita entreats him to see Lola on the basis that "she said if you could remember what happened \_\_\_" (89). Jeremy quickly interrupts her saying: "I don't want to remember. I just want these attacks to go away" (89). In New York, he finds himself at a hospital, probably after a panic attack, and the physician's assistant deals with him as if he were an ill person. She diagnoses his condition as "debilitating neurological" (245). Through Jeremy's refusal of Lola's therapy, and his negligence of the physician's assistant's diagnosis, Kowalski is challenging

the old pathological notions of trauma and seeks a new alternative by Jeremy's decisive statement "I'll remember on my own" (89).

Disappearance is a third strategy that is used by a society which only minds its business and is indifferent to the veteran's trauma. *The Hundred Hearts* is deplete with examples that show its presence in contemporary American society. Rita refuses to admit that Al is suffering from PTSD. She considers Al a killer by participating in Vietnam war and she undermines his traumatic state by refusing Helen's remark to watch her words of accusation. She sarcastically questions Helen's "protective tolerance" (Riley n.p.) of Al: "It's like he's made of glass or something ... Why do we all have to be so careful around him?" (61) In his accusation of Al, Jeremy, though suffering from PTSD himself, is also too harsh in condemning Al without any consideration of his psychological trauma. He argues with him as if he were a normal person, not a PTSD afflicted veteran. At Smarty's parents, Jeremy ponders that "it was the Als of the world who were what the army considered good soldiers. He followed orders without asking questions" (233). Jeremy is fully aware of the cultural codification in his American society. His disbelief in Elizabetha's spiritual counseling, his negligence of Lola's therapy and the physician's assistant's medical diagnosis and his inattentiveness to Al's PTSD are all meant by Kowalski to challenge all the traditional notions of trauma and open up new alternatives of its versatile values.

### 2.2.2. Second Factor: Institutional Objectification of soldiers

The second factor that is added to the set of American veterans' sufferings is the institutional objectification of the individuals. This is quite evident in the example of the American military institution and its role in objectifying the American soldiers in combat, or the veterans on returning home from combat. By joining the military, American soldiers are objectified; they undergo a transformational change from being human beings to being objectified subjects. In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy's nightmares are not about the Afghani enemies, but about Woot, his commanding officer. He knows that a soldier must obey his officer's commands and what he really fears are "the things he would order Jeremy to do. And the fact that Jeremy knows he would obey" (40).

Studying the objectification of the subject, Michel Foucault mentions that "The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (777). Foucault's concept of these "dividing practices" (777) are relevant to the study of U.S. veterans. They are divided from others in a way that they are placed, by the military, in power<sup>4</sup> relations which are beyond their grasp. In *The Hundred Hearts*, Wilkins, Jeremy's father, is trying to explain to Jeremy facts about his family and about Al, his Vietnam veteran grandfather: "it's a very damaged family you come from. And a lot of it has to do with the very thing I was trying to protect you from; that military mindset I spoke of. Al's demon" (103). U.S. veterans are viewed, by anti-

war supporters, like Wilkins, as criminals as opposed to the innocent civilians and they end up as being mad, or PTSD suffering veterans. Jeremy's opinion of the role of the army is totally different from Wilkin's. On the one hand, Jeremy assures Wilkins that the army for him is the most viable option as he tells Wilkins: "It was my best choice. ... I guess at first I believed it was the right thing. I wanted to help the country out. And I believed in what we were doing there. We were really helping people, you know, clearing the Taliban out so normal people could live. And the army would pay for college. ... There weren't any good jobs" (100). On the other hand, Wilkins can see how Jeremy is objectified by the military. He tells Jeremy:

The army is never the best choice ... It's the worst possible choice that exists. You're a peon in a corporation whose business is death. The army protects the interests of the insane plutocracy that rules this country. They have the money, so they make the rules. And they brainwash you with so-called patriotism. Don't ever fool yourself into thinking this is a democracy. (100)

It is only after delivering Wilkins's two-word-message of "My Lai" to Al that Jeremy becomes aware of his own powerlessness against the power of the military. His criticism of Al's role in Vietnam is based on his observation of this one war only after his meeting with his father, but it embodies a general declaration about the way individual's subjectivity is threatened by dogmatic, existing, social structures. Not until Jeremy discovers his role in the military machine as a subject, that he becomes aware of his own powerlessness to change his own subjection to the military system.

### **2.2.3. Third Factor: Failure of Linguistic Representation of Trauma**

The third factor that American returning veterans struggle with is the failure of language to represent their traumatic experience. Caruth confirms the unresolved problem of representing trauma, or gaining knowledge of the traumatic experience. She learns from Freud that trauma "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. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* 4). However, she suggests that where as trauma fails representation in conventional language, it can be represented in non conventional referential expressions.



In *The Hundred Hearts*, Jeremy is unable to talk about his traumatic experience because verbal expression for him is marred by the missing day in his memory. In her paper "Trauma and Post- 9/11 novels: Foer, Mc Ewan and Mc Lnerney", Ellen Verbestel remarks that "[t]he main idea behind the failure of conventional language is that the characters have to learn to make their own language work, in order to testify. Without a real testimony, one cannot experience the healing effect of the traumatic narrative" (6). The failure of language is a characteristic of trauma, but Caruth in her theoretical framework provides an alternative way of trauma representation by focusing on other features, or values that are related to trauma such as the reactions to trauma, or its impact on the veteran and his community. Kowalski uses the three wars of Vietnam, the Gulf and Afghanistan as a background in the novel, but this tells a lot about the sense of insecurity and perpetual threat felt in the U.S.A. Though wars always take place in foreign lands, their consequences affect the Americans at home through acts of revenge, terrorist attacks and frequent bombing.

### 2.3. Traumatized Veterans' Self-Illumination

Waging war in far off countries like Vietnam, the Gulf, or Afghanistan engages American civilians at home with trans-Atlantic world affairs and reorients them about America's geopolitical violence in foreign lands and its illegitimate intervention in the affairs of other countries. It also illuminates veterans about their public image as helpless combat soldiers and victims of war. A self-seeker and thinking veteran like Jeremy, however, has trouble identifying with Vietnam veterans, like Al, as victims. Later on, when he watches the videos on the internet and sees himself killing and torturing people in the war, he discovers his own status as a perpetrator, a killer and a war criminal, exactly like Al.

Jeremy's illumination is important for two reasons; firstly, it shows how the traumatized veterans' minds work and how they cope with their trauma experiences in diverse ways that are very different from the traditional ways in dealing with trauma as forever unrepresentable, unspeakable and unclaimed experience by either individual veterans, or their communities. New trauma theory could locate versatile meanings through consideration of the different cultural and social contexts of trauma experience, hence, crossing the borders of the old trauma theory which renders trauma as a past, unknown, functionless, closed psychoanalytic experience.

Secondly, through his fictional character, Jenny, Kowalski exposes the recent tendency to regard war veterans as heroes. An example from the novel shows Jenny explaining to Jeremy why she chooses him in particular to help her by killing Lincoln: "Everybody says you're like some big war hero or something. It would be easy for you" (18). Another example takes place on the day of the dedication ceremony at Elysium High school where Jeremy has recently started working. Jeremy refuses to wear his military

uniform with its medals though he is one of the guests of honour. He also notices the exaggerating attitudes of the school superintendent as well as the school principal towards him. They are waiting for the senator to honour figures whom they all consider heroes like Jeremy and Thomas Sarty who had been killed in a jeep accident in Iraq. Superintendent Gonzalez's words to Jeremy "So you gotta be our hero for the day" is reflective of the current inclination to elevate the veteran's status to that of a hero. Jeremy tells him: "I'm not a hero" (116) and he also knows "neither was Thomas ... But he's the only citizen of Elysium to have been killed in uniform in a recent news cycle, and the town needs someone to canonize" (117).

#### **2.4. Veterans are neither Heroes nor Victims of Combat**

Tal believes that combat soldiers should not be regarded as either heroes, or victims. She comments on the Vietnam war mentioning that

Those exposed to combat or other life- threatening events ... were traumatized. But combat soldiers, though subordinate to their military superiors and frequently at the mercy of their enemies, still possess a life-or-death power over other people. Much recent literature- popular, clinical and academic- places the combat soldier simply in the victim's role, helpless in the face of war, and then helpless to readjust from the war experience upon his return home ... (9- 10) Tal sees that the soldiers of combat could never be equaled, at any rate with, or put in the same category as oppressed, victimized groups. The reason, as Tal proposes, is that they could control the tools of violence, but real oppressed people have no control over these tools.

#### **2.5. Veterans are Victimizers**

For Tal, "the soldier in combat is both victim and victimizer; dealing as well as risking it. These soldiers carry guns; they point them at people and shoot to kill. Members of oppressed groups, by contrast, almost never control the tools of violence" (10). This idea of managing the tools of violence by carrying guns and killing people has set the public status of the veteran-hero entanglement in question. The concept of heroism is rearticulated in terms of specified codes that characterize the American soldier such as war, violence and killing.

Veterans are not only recently re-viewed by some anti-war proponents as victimizers, perpetrators and killers, but their own masculinity, as individuals, is also challenged. As individuals, they are turned by war into physically impotent beings and their individual, muscular power is rendered of no importance by modern warfare. In his reply to a

letter sent to him by Albert Einstein after World War II to ask him about his conception of a world peace and his views concerning the might of countries and the right of international law, Freud prefers using the word "violence" to the word "might" and presents the problem at its ground level: "To begin with, in a small human horde, it was superior muscular strength which decided who owned things or whose will should prevail. Muscular strength was soon supplemented and replaced by the use of tools: the winner was the one who had the better weapons or who used them the more skillfully" (4793). Kowalski seems to allude to a recent reality that American veterans' masculinity is evidently shaped by their war experiences. More generally though, individuals' masculinity is rendered of zero importance in the context of modern American tools of warfare.

### **2.6. Cost of War is Dear for Americans and Non-Americans Alike**

While *The Hundred Hearts* is about the effect of warfare and geopolitical violence on American veterans, it is also very much about self-realization and self-knowledge. Jeremy's arrival at his own self-understanding is achieved through a recorded account of the missing day in his memory before the bomb went off. In her review, "Book Review: *The Hundred Hearts*, By William Kowalski", Emily M. Keeler notes that the reader "will only become aware of the protagonist's complicity in the criminal horrors of dirty, 'counter-insurgency' wars that weren't necessarily worth fighting" (n.p.). Jeremy also becomes aware of this fact and it seems that his encounter with the truth revealed about his criminal role in war accelerates his encounter with death, an encounter he has never wished to make. All through the novel, he attempts to cross the boundaries of his traumatic war experience to achieve the act of survival, however, surviving becomes impossible when one fails to cross "acts that cannot be construed as knowledge nor assimilated into full recognition, events in excess of our frame of reference" (Felman 16) and death steps in to finalize the crossing attempt.

Jeremy's death at the end of the novel does not reveal his failure at defeating the unconquerable effect of his war trauma, his soldier's heart, but it marks his success at realizing his selfhood by denouncing his role in the war. His own "soldier's heart" which is caused by America's hardened heart could not cross, or alleviate the trauma borders of the others' hundred hearts bleeding on non-American, foreign lands, whether the Afghanis like the little girl in the yellow shalwar kameez, or the American soldiers like Charlie Cooper. Turning into a ghost after his death, he finds himself in Afghanistan seeing the little girl who shows him the way to join his fellow war soldiers. Through modern trauma theory, one can better understand this final image which takes place in the afterlife since Jeremy is dead and the girl "must be dead too" (Kowalski 292) because she can see him. This scene truly speaks the unspeakable, presents the unrepresentable and decipher the indecipherable. Jeremy knows that "the sight of me was important for her"

(Kowalski 291). The significance of the scene lies not in the death of the perpetrator embodied in Jeremy and his fellow American warriors, but in the death of the little Afghani girl, the victim, as well. Everyone is affected by war, perpetrators and victims and the cost is dear for both.

Kowalski shows how taking part in America's militarized, geopolitical violence in foreign, non-American lands evidently reverberates through veterans' families. American veterans carry "the evil acts" (Keeler n.p.) committed in overseas war zones inside them, rendering their lives uneasy and painful, their minds damaged and perplexed, their bodies wrecked and filled with dope and alcohol, their dreams full of horror and terror and their thinking determined towards ultimate suicide acts. This is almost at the same time the reader joins the protagonist in his discovery that he is a war criminal. Both recognize, with material evidence of photos and video recording, Jeremy's compliance in the criminal horrors of wars that are never worth fighting in the first place. Both Al and Jeremy, "two former but unreformed" (Keeler n.p.) U.S. veterans in Vietnam and Afghanistan, respectively, are confronted with their own capacities for cruelty within the legitimized context of military intervention on foreign lands. There is a price for war and it has to be paid. Worse still, not only do the Als and Jeremys of this world have to pay it, but also all the parties involved.

### Conclusion

Thus, in his literary treatment of *The Hundred Hearts*, Kowalski could manage to cross the restricted borders of traditional trauma to new engaging borders of trauma. Kowalski expresses his concern for the current U.S. world affairs through portraying the traumatized past of America's young veterans through Jeremy, the principal character, a youth in his mid twenties through whom Kowalski exposes America's hard hearted behaviour towards its youngsters. Jeremy's traumatic experience of war in Afghanistan is the centralized traumatic event which is meant by Kowalski to place the American veteran dilemma at the core of discussion of the trauma issue and to show the result of the atrocious behaviour of hard hearted America towards its sons, which is the real cause of the veterans' trauma and their suffering from PTSD, otherwise known as soldiers' hearts. In the same vein, Kowalski portrays an indifferent, self-indulgent, chaotic American domestic society with which veterans react back home. A veteran's experience of trauma with what it entails of suffering and pain act as necessary steps in the process towards self-knowledge and true insight. Not only does crossing the borders of traditional trauma theory into new realms of contemporary trauma theory enable the literary critics, consulted in this paper, to offer new possible methods of trauma representations, but it also gives them the opportunity to explore new ways of remembering, other than the traditional talking therapy procedure, such as setting out for a personal quest journey for truth, consulting the elders, or seeking help through digital information technology.

Kowalski's criticism of contemporary American society is materialized into flesh and blood, real images of a horrible American geopolitical violence in foreign lands and American domestic chaos at home seen in confused community members and fragmented family life. Kowalski's novel foretells a future of American dystopia<sup>5</sup> framed by its involvement in a vicious circle of geopolitical atrocities and futile wars and centered in its youths' deaths, or its surviving veterans' suffering of the "soldier's heart". However, anti-war proponents, embodied in such characters as Wilkins, hope America will come to its senses and revise its actions. In an analogy to Helen who distributes her hearts among people, optimistic, anti-war proponents would like to see America distributing love, support and cooperation all over the world instead of hatred, violence and war. Instead of bringing in more soldier's heart afflicted veterans, America may stop ruining her soldiers' hearts by starting a heartfelt, sincere commitment to repair the damage it has done to the world. America should believe, like Helen, that the more existing hearts in the world the better.

العودة من ارض القلب: السياسة الجغرافية و الصدمة لدي المقاتلين  
في روايه القلوب المائه لويليام كوالسكي (2013)

نادية حشيش

المستخلص

لقد جذب موضوع الصدمة، كمجال ادبي، انتباه الكثيرون منذ الحرب العالميه الاولى. ومع اندلاع حرب فيتنام، تم تشخيص حالات عديده من الامريكيين الذين بقوا علي قيدالحياه بعد الحرب بانها تعاني من صدمة نفسيه، وهو ما يعرف مهنيا بالاضطراب العصبي لمرحلة ما بعد الصدمة. تعد هذه الورقه البحثيه بمثابة دراسه في موضوع الصدمة النفسيه في روايه القلوب المائه لويليام كوالسكي، و هي حائزه علي جائزه توماس ايتش رادال للاعمال الروائيه لعام 2014. تقدم الروايه امريكا في ابشغ صورها، صورته رمز الامبرياليه الجديده، و صورته امريكا ذات القلب القسي التي تضحي بالمانات من قلوب ابنائها بلا سبب وجيه سوي اتسامها بشر داخلي، وغداء مستمر، و غنف عالمي. ان محور الارتكاز في الروايه هو السلوك الناتج عن الحروب الامريكيه الضرواء، و العنف السياسي الذي يؤثر حتما في جغرافيه المناطق اللامريكيه، و مدي تاثيره علي المقاتلين الامريكين صغار السن، الذين تم ارسالهم عبر حدود الولايات المتحده ليشاركوا معا في جروبا ليس لها جدوي، ثم يعودوا الي داخل الولايات المتحده ليصارعوا منفردين، كل علي حده، الاصابه بالاضراب العصبي لمرحلة ما بعد الصدمه.

ان معظم ما يدور من حوار في المجال النقدي الحالي حول موضوع ادب الصدمه ينبع اصلا من نظريات سيجمند فرويد بي التحليل النفسي، و التي تعتبر تجربه الصدمه تجربه ساكنه، تكمن في اعماق ماض مفقود، ومن ثم تكنسب سمه اللغز الغامض الذي يحيطه السكون المطلق. و علي النقيض من هذا الحوار، تستخدم هذه الورقه البحثيه منحى جديدا للنظريه الادبيه لموضوع الصدمه، و التي بدورها تري ان تجربه الصدمه هي نابضه بالحياه، و تتسم بالنشاط. و ذلك لامكانيه ظهورها من ان الي اخر في حياه الشخص الذي يعاني من الصدمه. ان العبور من منطقه الحدود التقليديه للنظريه الادبيه في موضوع الصدمه الي نطاق اخر ذي مفهوم جديد في نفس الموضوع يساعد حتما في فهم روايه كوالسكي. و توضح هذه الورقه البحثيه ايضا رؤيه كوالسكي لهذا المفهوم الجديد للصدمة حيث ان تذكر التجارب الماضيه للصدمة لا ينتج نموذجا مغلقا مكررا من معلومات دفينه كما هو الحال في المفهوم القديم للصدمة، و لكنه ينتج فهما لها و محاوله للتعافي منها من خلال الواقع الاجتماعي و الثقافي المتواجد حاليا.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>A winner of the 2014 Thomas H. Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award.

<sup>2</sup> Said compares America's contemporary, imperial quest to those quests of the earlier British and French empires. He believes that British, French and American imperial experience is that it has a unique coherence and a special cultural centrality. England of course is in an imperial class by itself, bigger, grander, more imposing than any other, for

almost two centuries France was in direct competition with it ... America began as an empire during the nineteenth century, but it was in the second half of the twentieth, after the decolonization of the British and French empires, that it directly followed its two great predecessors. (xxii-iii)

<sup>3</sup> The 9/11 attacks of the two towers of the World Trade Centre is another important event which leads the American administration to lay down fire on the less powerful third world countries over the globe and initiate its global war-on-terror by sending its troops to Iraq and Afghanistan among many other countries. The end of the cold war renders America the only super power worldwide and the 9/11 attacks render the whole world a global battlefield for the American military. Critical Geopolitics is mainly concerned with questioning violence, exposing its practice of geopolitics and falsifying its logic in propagating such ideas as just war theory, or global security. Because, as Dalby states, "the world is divided into spatial entities competing for power and willing to use violence or the threat thereof to gain their ends" ("Geopolitics, Grand Strategy and Critique: Twenty Years and Counting ..." 4), Critical Geopolitics should continue in criticizing the practices of politicians, states policy makers and war wagers over the globe. In his book *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics*, Dalby clearly asserts that "the function of a Critical Geopolitics is not to provide 'advice to the prince' in terms of using geopolitical reasoning to advice state policy-makers, but rather to investigate how geopolitical reasoning is used as an ideological device to maintain social relations of domination within contemporary global politics" (14-5).

<sup>4</sup> For Foucault, power is "a question of government" (789). It is not the power of a certain administration that he attacks, but rather the government, or the technique, or form of this power. This is a refusal of state violence. The U.S. administration exerts its power on its soldiers whom it sends to wage war in non-American, foreign lands by ignoring their individuality and considering only the interests of the totality, or the civil citizens. In the same vein, the U.S. administration, being an institution of political form of power, may not be criticized for how powerful it is, but for the technique, or form of power it exerts on its soldiers. This form of political structure, or power

categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault 781)

<sup>5</sup> In *The Hundred Hearts*, Kowalski foretells a future of American dystopia. Al, seeing the

beloved Old Glory, a nickname for the flag of the U.S.A. touching the lawn of one of his neighbours' lawns, teaches his neighbour's son a lesson on patriotism: "It means freedom ... It's a precious gift ... It's a way of life. And tell your dad to straighten that pole. It should be straight, right? If the flag touches the ground, it has to be burned. Did you know that?" (262) The son, of course, does not know about that and it seems that not many do care. The novel does not portray people glorifying the American flag with its red, blue and white colours, but foretells a future tinged by the redness of American soldiers' bleeding hearts, the blueness of powerful, super power, America's hardened heart and the whiteness of the shapeless, repeated, surviving veterans' traumatic experiences, full of suffering and pain, with memories damaged, troubled, or lost.

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