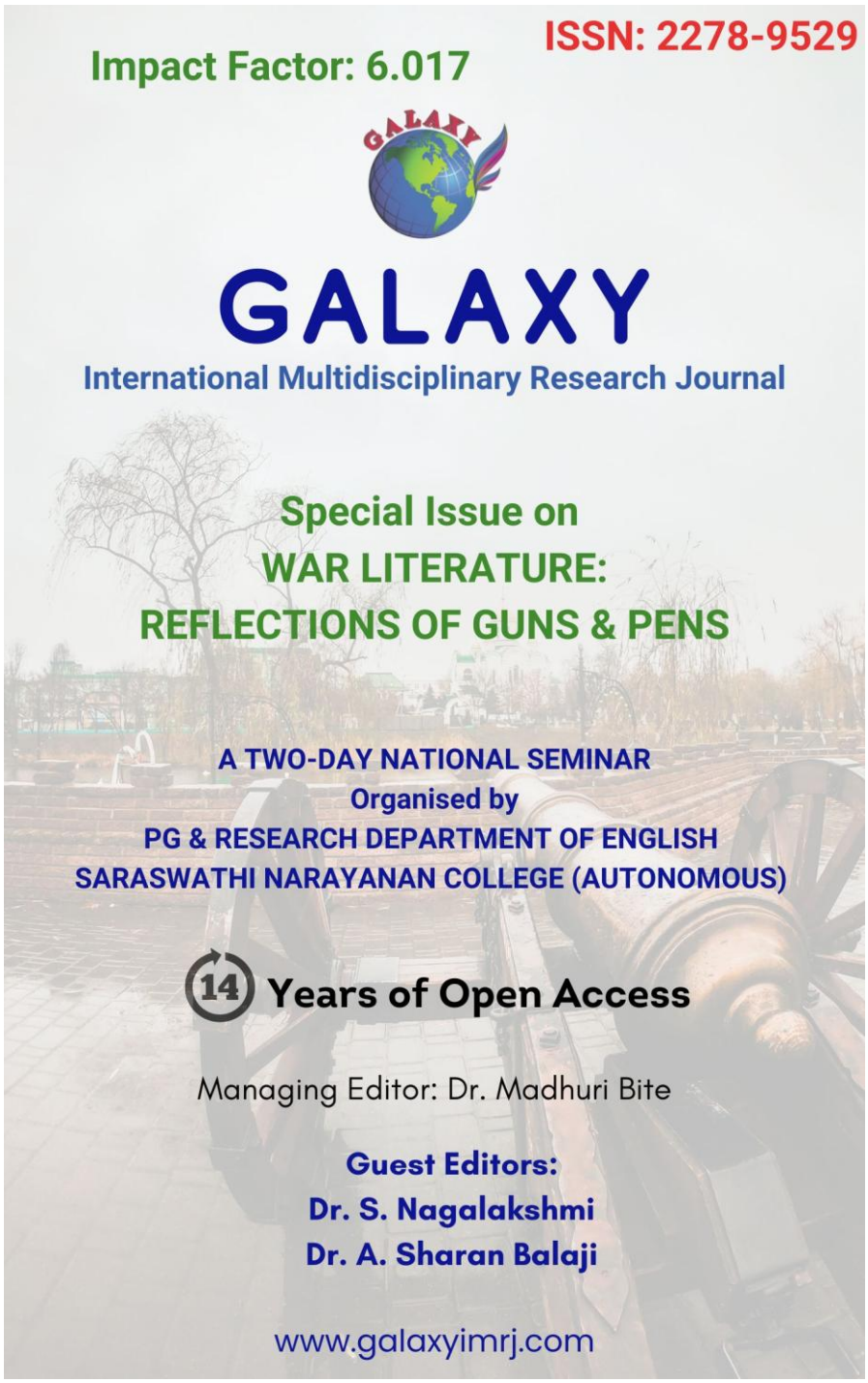


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Silent Battles: Post-War Psychology in *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

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Abstract:

This is a research analysis of the psychological effects of post-war trauma in *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, contrasting the war-ravaged setting of the institutionalized racism with its psychological effects on human beings. It explores how the novel represents psychological reactions such as post-war syndromes, including PTSD, survivor's guilt, and intergenerational trauma, felt by oppressed groups. The research also examines how protagonist Starr Carter and other characters deal with a world in which systemic oppression is a reflection of the long-term psychological effects of war. Through close reading, this essay tries to determine the psychological and emotional cost of racial violence and the coping mechanism that is present in the situation of injustice.

Keywords: Racism, PTSD, Survivor's guilt, Intergenerational trauma, Black lives, psychological effects.

Introduction

Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* is a young adult novel that depicts the real lives of Black people in America, especially in the context of police brutality and racism. While the novel itself is not necessarily war-focused, the ongoing violence, destruction, and survival consciousness echo

the psychological impacts that have been felt by war veterans. This essay maintains that social and emotional trauma in the novel replicate post-war psychological trauma by illustrating how systemic repression acts like a battlefield for oppressed groups. In contemporary psychology, trauma of war is usually accounted for by theories such as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), moral injury, and survivor's guilt.

The book further illustrates a culture where Black people exist with their lives perpetually at risk, e.g., war-torn areas where danger lurks everywhere. The study will investigate in what ways the psychosocial effect of racism in *The Hate U Give* matches that of returning war veterans in capturing the resilience, mental illness, and recuperation following violence. Theoretical Framework: Post-War Psychology and Trauma Theory Post-traumatic psychology, which has been extensively studied in the setting of war wars, contains keywords like PTSD, moral injury, and survivor's guilt. Trauma theory, as put forth by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, presents an understanding of the manner in which trauma impairs identity, memory, and relationships. With the application of the above-mentioned theories to *The Hate U Give*, the present article provides evidence of the psychological impact of racial violence against the Black people.

PTSD and Hypervigilance:

Trauma models theoretically state that prolonged or intensively severe exposure to violence, threat, or life-threatening situation is likely to produce Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD has been predominantly depicted as having symptoms of intrusive flashbacks, being hypervigilant, avoidance behaviors, and emotional numbing. Such psychological reactions are defense mechanisms trying to make sense and stay alive with the catastrophic stress. The Hate U Give, Starr Carter is the ultimate example of trauma’s effect on her after her childhood friend being shot by a police officer. This has a profound effect on her mental and emotional well-being.

Starr becomes increasingly attuned to potential danger in her environment- a define indicator of hypervigilance- as she moves through her life divided between her larger Black community and her largely white private school. She also experiences emotional detachment, at times feeling disconnected from others and even from herself. The anxiety and fear are conveyed not only through what she is thinking but through body response, too, displaying the way that trauma gets written on the mind and the body. Starr's walk-through grieving, confusion, and eventual empowerment does work to surface how PTSD not only compromises one's safety sense but how it gets enmeshed with identity, with relation, and trusting the world again.

Moral Injury and Ethical Dilemmas:

War veterans are most frequently associated with moral injury syndrome, a psychological trauma caused by feeling that one has betrayed his or her own ethical or moral code. While PTSD is trauma caused by fear, moral injury is the result of feelings of guilt, shame, or betrayal resulting from behaviors (or abstentions) contrary to firmly held beliefs. Starr Carter, in *The Hate U Give,* also shares the same inner struggle. She is not a warrior in combat on a path of war but is living within a war zone of police violence, systemic racism, and societal injustice. For what she learned from the experience of Khalil's death, Starr feels herself called to act as a voice for change for a world too often silencing or distorting Black voices. Her dilemma is a question of moral choice- whether to stay silent and protect her family and herself, or speak and face the ramifications. This personal conflict is the height of moral injury: stuck between self-survival and doing the right thing. Starr's journey of finding and taking ownership of her voice is a redemptive moral action, where she transforms from passive endurance to active rebellion. Doing this, she not only battles for Khalil's justice but also recovers her moral agency ibn a world that so frequently strips her of it.

Intergenerational Trauma:

Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of trauma across generations, whereby the psychological and emotional impact of the traumatic experience is transmitted from the individuals who directly suffered to their generations. Intergenerational trauma is not necessarily an event based on a single on incident but is a result of prolonged systemic oppressions like racism, oppression, and violence. Even individuals who have not been directly subjected to the original trauma can bear its behavioral, emotional, and psychological burden.

In *The Hate U Give,* Angie Thomas deeply explores this phenomenon through the lived experience of Starr and her father, Maverick. Maverick, raised under the limitations of a racially charged and gang-infested world, bears the wounds of having survived a system that criminalizes Black identity. His convictions, defensive strategies, and anxieties are all built from this inherited trauma and transmitted to Starr, whom he internalizes with both his strength and fear. Starr, while in a better environment, at a nearly all-white private school, is still deeply impacted by the same institutional racism her dad fought to overcome. Her inner conflict, double identity- shifting between her society and school world- is the equivalent of perpetual compromise between inherited trauma and self. The novel then goes on to show how even structural oppression without having to suffer it personally forever brands itself onto generations.

Parallels Between Post-War Trauma and *The Hate U Give*

1. Starr Carter and PTSD Symptoms

Protagonist Starr Carter experiences psychological trauma when she is a witness to the shooting of her childhood friend, Khalil, by the police. Her symptoms—flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, and numbing of affect—are all the same as PTSD. Starr, like war veterans, is forced to

exist in a world where security is not guaranteed and one cannot rely on authority figures. Her avoidance behavior and fear of policemen and not attending demonstrations for Khalil's killing are typical of symptoms exhibited by patients with PTSD.

> *"I always said that if I saw someone get shot, I would have the loudest scream. But I don't make a sound."* (Thomas.,p.42)

In addition, Starr has nightmares and dissociative moments, where she struggles to stay grounded in her everyday existence. Her psychological suffering is further exacerbated by societal expectations and the need to adapt to various settings, producing the trauma survivors' dilemma of becoming normal.

2. Survivor's Guilt and Psychological Burden

Survivor's guilt, which is typical among war veterans, is expressed in Starr's internal struggle. She struggles with survivor's guilt for surviving while Khalil did not and for not acting swiftly to secure justice for herself. This is in accord with the sentiments of war survivors who question their right to be alive when fellow comrades have died. Starr keeps wondering whether there was something she might have done differently that evening, a kind of thinking all too prevalent with people afflicted by survivor's guilt.

> *"I've seen it happen over and over again: a black person gets killed just for being black, and all hell breaks loose. I've tweeted RIP hashtags, reblogged pictures on Tumblr, and signed every petition out there."* (Thomas.,p.30)

In addition, the survivor's guilt of Starr is compounded by the wider consequences of institutionalized racism. She feels caught between her privileged position at Williamson Prep, a white suburban private school, and her affiliation with Garden Heights, where she comes from.

This internal conflict adds to her guilt, as if she were being disloyal to Khalil and her people for failing to have taken to the streets sooner.

3. Generational Trauma and the Cycle of Violence:

While war leaves families with generations of psychological wounds, institutionalized racism causes generational trauma in *The Hate U Give*. Maverick Carter, Starr's father, and Lisa Carter, her mother, both carry emotional wounds on their psyche as a result of what transpired in the past and transfer an overwhelmingly exaggerated sense of racial prejudice to their kids. Their necessity to harden Starr and her brothers and sisters against interactions with the police illustrates a survival strategy akin to that of war veteran households who toughen up a dangerous world. Maverick's individual history of gang violence, incarceration, and racial profiling are evidence of the manner in which systemic injustice permeates the lives of Black individuals.

"Being black is an honor, but it's also a heavy burden." (Thomas.,p.132)

His insistence that Starr and her siblings learn about their rights is a reaction to his own history, and it illustrates the manner in which intergenerational trauma influences parenting and socialization in marginalized communities.

4. The Neighborhood as a War Zone

Starr's neighborhood, Garden Heights, is depicted as a war zone where gang violence, police brutality, and economic oppression make life like in post-war settings. Psychological trauma from living in such a setting leads to increased anxiety, aggression, and a general sense of hopelessness among the populace. The novel depicts how systemized oppression leads to cycles of violence that ensnare communities in war-like tension.

"The gun shots are louder than the fireworks." (Thomas.,p.78)

Starr's childhood is filled with moments of joy and belonging but is also filled with the pervasive mood of possible violence. Desensitization to gun violence and suspicion of police are replaced by a mood of survival at any cost, similar to war zones. Along with the psycho-trauma, *The Hate U Give* also touches on resilience. Starr's personal change from silencing to activism closely mirrors the process of healing after wars, wherein healing begins with the reclaiming of trauma and presenting it to society for assistance. The novel spurs storytelling, being a champion, and collective rebellion as mechanisms towards healing, similar to therapy and rehabilitation for war survivors.

Starr comforts herself with her loved ones, friends, and activism, presenting us with the proof of social support's power to overcoming trauma. The climactic moment for the novel when she finally speaks out is symbolic of regaining her agency and independence from psychological bonds of terror and guilt.

Conclusion

As a post-war trauma novel set within the context of a racialized American society, *The Hate U Give* can be properly understood on a psychological level. Angie Thomas writes the psychological and emotional impacts of state violence deeply, portraying characters within the intangible wounds of poverty, racism, and loss. The novel does more than discuss PTSD’s flashbacks and hypervigilance symptoms- it discusses survivor’s guilt as well because Starr must contend with why she survived and Khalil did not, and how she will continue to live with the weight of his memory. In addition, the book discloses the existence of intergenerational trauma,

particularly in Starr and her father Maverick's relationship, whose own history of racial injustice shapes his parenting and Weltanschauung.

Through these psychologies, the novel powerfully demonstrates how structural violence penetrates subordinated groups in the long term. These are not sporadic occurrences of wretchedness but existent within the very fabric of daily life- transmitted, lived, and fought against. In these images and metaphors, the reader is invited to see how racial injustice is a war in every sense- a war that inflicts emotional, psychological, and social scars on its survivors. And yet, even in all this pain, *The Hate U Give* is also a survival narrative. Starr's struggle from silence to activism is a call to psychological and social healing writ large. Angie Thomas's book is a mirror and a manifesto- a call to consciousness and a strong moving testament to the resilience of those who continue to rise up in the face of oppression.

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