

War Challenges and Psychological Trauma: A Reading of the Women by Kristin Hannah Through the Lens of Trauma Theory

Sehar Rashid¹, Phool Shehzadi², Faiza Amber³, Hina Yaqoob⁴

¹ BS English Literature, University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

² BS English Literature, University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

³ BS English Literature, University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

⁴ Lecturer, Surprise College, Shakargarh, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

The present research examines the character of Frankie in the novel *The Women* and how war circumstances and the after-war behavior of society affect Frankie's mental health, which later became the cause of PTSD. The main objective of this research is to analyze the character of Frankie through the lens of PTSD and observe how the responses of her surroundings led to her trauma. Cathy Caruth's trauma theory serves as theoretical lens, in interpreting the PTSD and trauma depicted in the novel. The research leaves a cognitive space to apply the feminism theory to novel *The Women* (2024) by Kristin Hannah.

Keywords: Kristin Hannah, war challenges, societal response, betrayal, PTSD, Cathy Caruth

Introduction

Presentation culture and social issues in an artistic way is called literature—a way that transforms words into varieties of thought, emotion, and complexities of human experience through novels, poems, short stories, and plays (Goodwin). In the modern era of writing, writers are not only talking about common social issues like child labor, racism, and the beauty of nature; instead, they also start talking about the mental health, identity crises, and psychological issues of individuals due to any social circumstances. One of the reasons for these social issues is war. The impact of war on an individual's mental health and identity is significant. Reality of wars is that, it not only hurt someone physically but also mentally (Cathy Caruth). The people who survive during this time period see the cruelty of human beings. Humans became worse than animals; they attacked without seeing who was next to them. These circumstances affect one's mental health, but mostly on children and women. There are numerous writers who talk about these issues like Earnest Hemingway, James Jons, V. V. Ganeshanathan, Robert Alan Gurval, and Sharon Talley. To improve the fluency, replace with; they all write about war challenges and identity issues they've faced. Additionally, Kristin Hannah writes about mental health and trauma from war and social issues. Kristin Hannah was a former lawyer who turned writer. She is an award-winning writer and bestselling author of more than 20 novels. Film companies have optioned her novel *Home Front* for cinema. She began writing her first novel during her final year of law, coinciding with the news that her mother was dying of cancer. She collaborates on a novel with her mother, as she wishes Kristin could be a writer. But later after her mother's death she packed everything to her closet. Later she got married, and during her pregnancy, when she was in bed, she started reading every piece of writing. Also, she starts writing novels again and never looks back. She won the Audience Award in 2018, the RITA Award in 2015 and the Goodreads Choice Award for best

historical fiction in 2024. The Ho Chi Minh Force starts resistance. Many people lost loved ones in this war. Some of these individuals were soldiers, but the war also claimed the lives of children. Explosions in this war claimed the lives of many children, young men, medical staff, and citizens. The young boys, who had come with the hope of fighting for their nation, met their demise here. The families of these boys endure immense hardship. War not only has physical effects, but it also has mental ones. Loss of their boys gave them trauma that led to posttraumatic stress disorder. The young girls who were nursing in the hospitals in these areas also became mentally ill. The individual who witnessed the bodies firsthand often sustains invisible injuries. These wounds were not only physical, but they also left psychological scars on the minds of these young girls. This world only remembers the sacrifice of men; understands the pain of struggle only related to men. The same thing always happens during war. Although women are less brave and they want emotional support, no one understands. This kind of behavior leads to trauma and stress (Kristin, 2024). This behavior can shatter a girl's identity into pieces. Cathy Caruth's 1996 publication, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, prominently presents this trauma model. This book employs a particular interpretation of Freud's trauma theories to promote a broader post structural focus on the referential limitations of language and history. The approach established the foundation for the ensuing critical discourse regarding the importance of trauma in literature and the relationship between personal and culturally caused trauma. Caruth argues that the delay and dissociation linked to trauma hinder a comprehensive comprehension and accurate representation of a traumatic experience. Individual traumatic experiences and significant collective historical events are ultimately never directly known, but are instead understood through a disrupted referentiality that relates to the past's meaning as a form of replication or performance (Caruth 1996: 11). This applies to both individual and collective traumatic events, respectively. The belief that a traumatic event can only be understood as a persistent absence reflects the dissociative nature of trauma and the irregularity of its expression. Caruth examines the "rhetorical potential" of recurring motifs in texts that encapsulate the fractured referentiality pertaining to the "knowing and not knowing" of the traumatic past, so revealing the "traumatic nature of history" itself (1996: 4, 18). The title of this book is "Rhetorical Potential. "The inability of trauma to be effectively assimilated into the psyche and memory presents a psychoanalytic challenge for scholars seeking to comprehend it within this framework. Caruth contends that trauma is "not identifiable in the straightforward violent or original event in the individual's past," but can only be recognized in "the manner it is specifically not known initially—returns to haunt the survivor subsequently" (Caruth 1996: 17, 4). This is accomplished by interpreting trauma through the frameworks of Freud and Lacan, who conceptualize trauma as the belated resurgence of the repressed and a significant absence. Trauma engenders a dual dilemma between consciousness and language. This dual paradox encompasses the contradictory necessity to understand the past while simultaneously being unable to do so, along with the conflicting crises inside the traumatic story between the dread of death and the compulsion to endure (1996: 7). Caruth elucidates that "Traumatic experience, in addition to its psychological suffering, presents a paradox: the most immediate perception of a violent event may coincide with a complete inability to comprehend it; this immediacy may, paradoxically, manifest as a sense of belatedness" (1996: 92). Seven This occurs because traumatic experiences infiltrate the psyche differently than ordinary experiences, resulting in atypical memories that defy narrative representation. The distinctive nature of this recollection process yields approximate recall rather than definitive knowledge. Caruth employs a neurobiological framework to elucidate the effects of trauma on consciousness and memory. Specifically, he utilizes the findings of psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk. Van der Kolk asserts that the neurobiological reaction to trauma causes a universal response characterized as "speechless terror." This "speechless terror" inhibits narrative recall in memory as the incident cannot be "organized on a linguistic level" (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart 1996: 172). Memory serves as a

repository of experiences, with traumatic memories being stored differently and inaccessible for typical narrative recall due to their dissociation from consciousness (1996: 160, 163). The notion of trauma's unspeakability suggests a causal relationship between trauma and dissociation, alongside a perspective of memory as a repository of experiences. Narrative remembering is crucial not just for regular memory but also for the recognition and understanding of the past.

Kristin Hannah is one of the female writers who understands the feelings and thoughts of women; She is the one who wrote about it. The mental health of a woman can be negatively impacted by ignorant behavior and inadequate attention. In one of her novels, *The Women* (2024) she writes about the experience of a young girl in the time of war, and when she returned home, no one understands her feelings; no one believed that she served in the Vietnam War, and when she returned home, everyone cursed her by saying baby killer; she was in a state of shock. The societal response led her to a trauma. This trauma profoundly impacted her identity. A young girl named Frankie lived with her family in California. She doesn't like the behavior of others who treat women as second-class citizens. Frankie wanted to prove herself and wanted her picture on the hero's wall at her father's office, just like the other men in her family whose pictures are hanging there. She wishes to serve in the war of Vietnam. She left for the war, but the experiences she had there and the responses she received from society had a profound impact on her identity. She feels isolated. It is a peaceful place where no one dies. During the war, not only were young men dying, but women and children were also suffering. Where the opponent never sees who is next to them, they only shoot them. All these deaths lead to identity destruction and mental issues. Due to her posttraumatic stress disorder, she experienced the most severe symptoms when she returned home. Trauma is a word derived from the Greek, which means 'Wound', a wound that is not physical but mental. Trauma is caused by any emotional response, like seeing any horrible event that is stored in your mind, like an accident, experiencing war, abuse, violence, etc. The horrible flashbacks of the event, like have nightmares, difficulty sleeping, and trust issues, can effect an individual's mental health. Kristin Hannah is one of those writers who describes PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) through the character of her novels. One of her novel, *The Women* (2024) in which we see the PTSD through the lens of a young girl, Frankie. Frankie went to a war in Vietnam, where she nursed the injured people, not only soldiers but also civilians and children. She experienced the bombing attack for the first time, and she panicked and screamed to get free. PTSD is the most important component of Cathy Caruth's theory; it also reflects in the behavior of Frankie. When Frankie returns from war, she craves isolation. She wants to be alone and not with any human being. She started having difficulties sleeping; she started getting sleeping pills. She suddenly felt like his brother was calling him. Due to this incident, she was going to die. While chasing the voice, she fell into a river. She was unaware that she was going to attempt suicide. She went to the hospital due to these activities. The man she loved also cheated on her, which shocked her. As a result, she no longer trusts anyone and plans to never enter into a serious relationship again. She was unable to start a new life after these incidents. She was stuck in her past and in war. As a result of PTSD, she experienced nightmares, difficulty sleeping, attempted suicide, and numerous other issues that contributed to her trauma.

Significance of the study

This study has significance because we look at the character of Frankie through the lens of PTSD in the novel *The Women* (2024) by Kristin Hannah that illuminate how PTSD affects women and their mental health. The main cause of their trauma is the behavior of the people around them, like they don't care about women's contributions in any sector. Just like the character Frankie in the novel, society and her parents disregarded her services as a Vietnam War veteran. These things led her to trauma. This helps us to study how PTSD affects women and the things that give them

trauma. This study contributes knowing how much family and societal support a woman needs after facing mental trauma and an exhausted situation for a long time period.

Problem statement

Wars leave a lasting impact on individual's minds and give psychological scars. The Women (2024) novel by Kristin Hannah shows us the challenges and struggles of main character Frankie and how this war and the reactions of society and her family give her PTSD. This study interrogates PTSD and identity crises through the character of Frankie at the time of the war, when she was treating the injured soldiers. Children and young boys were being killed. This study explores how these traumatic events effect women, taking the main character Frankie from Kristin Hannah's novel The Women (2024).

Research objectives:

To find out the effect of societal response on her identity after coming back from war in the novel The Women by Kristin Hanna

To evaluate the character of Frankie through PTSD in the selected novel, The Women

To find out the love-betrayed effect on the identity of Frankie in Kristin Hannah's novel The Women

Research Questions:

How does societal response affect her identity after coming back from war in the novel The Women by Kristin Hannah?

How did Frankie's character from The Women by Kristin Hannah study through the lens of PTSD?

How does love betrayed affect the identity of Frankie in Kristin Hannah's novel The Women?

Literature review

Kristin Hannah's *The Women* (2024) tells us about the experiences of women, most importantly those who served in the Vietnam War as nurses. A critic of *New York Time* Beatriz Williams(2024) suggests about *The Women* (2024), as most of the stories of Vietnam war is about the male soldiers and their bravery and contributions but no one tells Vietnam war like Kristin Hannah tells us through the woman character Frances "Frankie" MacGrath, a young woman who use to live a comfortable life with her family and not aware about the privation and troubles of outside world before she joined the army as a nurse. Hannah clearly illustrates the situation at that time—the chaos in hospitals during war and bombing attacks—and the civilization in the 1960s. The story tells us about the aftermath of war when Frankie came back home as a woman who served in the Vietnam War and how the people around her did not appreciate her servings and struggles she faced there; they did not care at all. She faced isolation and psychological trauma. Williams identify that there are few things in novel that are not suitable for that time period like the slang; “girl squad” and some other modern names She believes that these issues are more prevalent today, but they are not accurate for the time period of the story, which is set in the 1960s. Despite this, she commends Hannah for crafting a compelling narrative about Frankie's life and experiences, which readers find incredibly realistic. The novel *The Women* (2024) stands out as a remarkable literary work for the younger generation, as it delves into the history of the Vietnam War while emphasizing the role of women, a departure from traditional stories that primarily focus on men. This story tells us about PTSD and makes it more relatable for today's readers.

A critic of *Bookpage* Alice Cary (2024) suggests about *The Women* (2024) , that it tells a detailed and significant story about women's who participated in Vietnam war and their roles and contributions is often ignored by society those Women's are nurses mostly. The story follows a young woman named Frankie as she embarks on her life's journey, beginning as an inexperienced nurse and evolving into a skilled nurse during the Vietnam War. Her experiences treating injured

soldiers and navigating the challenging conditions of the war profoundly impact her life, highlighting the hardships endured by those who served there. More than 265,000 women served in the Vietnam War including 10,000 American military women stationed in Vietnam; most of them are nurses. And after all the efforts and struggles they faced there when they back people tell them that “There were no women in Vietnam”, that’s what Frankie faced after her return these comments makes her dishearted and in the second half of the book it tells us about how the society treated her and her parents tell others that Frankie was abroad for her studies they felt ashamed to tell them about her services and how she dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation, addiction and depression. Kristin Hannah created a captivating story and tells us about the Vietnam war and women's roles and struggles. Sara O’Brien in her article *Translating Trauma in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner* (2018) suggests that Khaled Hussaini's 2003 novel *The Kite Runner* assists western people to know better about the history of Afghanistan, make it accessible for them to understand it through the character's personal struggle. O'Brien emphasizes how the novel *The Kite Runner* became more important after the 9/11 attack; the people of western countermeasures see Afghanistan as a place for terrorism and war. This novel switches their opinions by making an amazing tale of a personal narrative about self-blaming trauma, and redemption. Khaled Hussaini portrays reality of Afghan lives in a beautiful way, helping reader understand Afghan life in a more emotional and relatable way. As Amir witnessed his friend Hassan's rape, he was unable to escape the incident. He was unable to come out of the eyes of Hassan, as when Hassan got raped he was there. There was hope in Hassan’s eyes that he would come to help him, but he went back and hid himself. It was also difficult for Amir to leave with the Sohrab, son of Hassan. Amir struggled with feelings of pain and flashbacks from the past. As the effect of PTSD, he was suffering from all these pains and traumas. Many of the Afghans experience these feelings of pain and betrayal. Many people were being killed, and when the Afghan rulers came, it became more difficult for women to live. Afghan soldiers forced many children, who had lost their parents, into servitude. Sohrab was also enslaved by an Afghan soldier when Amir abducted him. Sohrab feels pain; betrayal affects her identity. Khalid Hussein portrays the reality of Afghan soldiers and their cruel treatment of Afghan people, which negatively impacts their mental health and destroys their identity. Hediye ÖZKAN in her article *HEALING INVISIBLE WOUNDS: DON DELILLO'S FALLING MAN AND THE RECOVERY OF TRAUMA* (2020) suggests that 9/11 attacked not only shake the life's of people and the politics but also extremely influence on the mental stability, relationships and the identity of individuals. Here in this article the main focus is on the main character Lianne Glenn, how the attack impacted on her mental health and gives her trauma and how she overcome it, Özkan identify that how all the literary work related to 9/11 is mainly focused on men's trauma but this study tells us about recovery journey of Women from the trauma. Lianne's healing journey is shown through her efforts to feel secure in life, rejoin her family, and engage in different activities. She made efforts to join her husband again and protect her son, showing how much she wanted to have a peaceful and secure life amid the chaotic time. By participating in Alzheimer’s patients, visiting church, and doing different things, it tells us how much this trauma disrupted her life and how she perceives reality and her true self. After seeing performance artist *Falling Man*, this helps her to handle the shattered memory of the 9/11 attack, which gives her a way to find comfort and ease. Özkan describes that with the concatenation, her past, present, and future are beneficial for her recovery, although trauma can never be completely solved or recovered. This study emphasizes that healing from trauma requires reconnecting relationships and searching for associations in a community. Özkan connect ideas from different traumatic theory and stress studies about how literature and science can assist one another in comprehending trauma and healing. In ‘falling man’ we see how someone dealt with trauma and prevailed over loneliness, recovered identity, and rejoined the world between relationships and mutual understanding.

Ashitha Vilbi in her thesis *The Wounded Observer: Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Perception in The Girl on The Train* (2023) suggests us about Cathy Caruth's trauma theory from Cathy's *Unclaimed Experience*. The study looks at three main female characters from the novel *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins and how these characters, Rachel, Megan, and Anna, go through post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and experience it. It describes how PTSD influences the characters by showing Rachel's alcoholism and her impaired memory, Megan's emotional pain and remorse, and at the end, Anna's findings about her husband's deceptiveness are shown in depth. She wanted a blissful married life, but it didn't happen, and the thoughts ultimately lead her to PTSD at the end. This study also emphasizes how these characters dealt with trauma and highlights resilience and self-realization, through connection of literature and psychological analysis.

Research Methodology

This research examines Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* and appraise the character of Frankie and her journey by using Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. This study involves a close reading of the selected novel to identify the historical context of the war, the challenges and psychological trauma experienced by the main character, and an investigation of the story's structure and discourse to illustrate these traumatic experiences. This research is qualitative in its method and uses a descriptive research design. The research evaluates the character of Frankie through the lens of PTSD in the selected novel. The study tells about the struggles and problems women's face in society and how societal feedback led Frankie to PTSD; she faced nightmares, trust issues, identity issues, difficulty sleeping, and flashbacks of the wartime. It explores the causes of trauma in women through the character of Frankie in the chosen text. The primary source of the study is the text of the novel *The Women* while the secondary data sources include different websites, articles, and the book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) by Cathy Caruth.

Data Analysis

The Women is the story about the Vietnam War and those who suffered at the time of war, especially the women who participated in the war and served there, and all medical staff, the army, POW/MIA, and their families who struggled so much. This novel especially highlights the struggles of those women who served in the Vietnam War and how they are marginalized, and their services are often forgotten by society. This story is about a girl named Frankie who wants to become a hero, to achieve something in life and want her picture in her father's office at her father's wall. She also wanted to serve her country as her forefathers did. To achieve her dream, she decided to join the army nurse corps in Vietnam War. On her way to Vietnam she panicked when their plane got attacked, she faced sudden feeling of being in danger, "is someone shooting at us?" (*The Women*, 2024, P. 24), and she grabbed the seat so tightly that her fingers ached, but it was just the start of her war challenges. She was assigned at Thirty-Sixth-Evac Hospital and she was overwhelmed by the harsh realities of war, her first day at hospital was unbearable, she was failed to understand her surrounding, "Frankie felt abandoned," (p.30) and she was missing her family and brother who was also died in Vietnam war. She regret for joining the army due to these feeling as she wish "she'd never joined the army" (P. 32). The explosions continued, causing Frankie, who had never encountered a war situation before, to panic as she witnessed the young soldiers' death, "At first all she saw was the horror" (p.42). She was assigned to the neuro ward, and they go to the village to provide medical care to the locals. She got shocked when she came to know that, "they plant bombs on kids and old women" (P. 59).

Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experiences* published in 1996 claim that "trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" (P. 61). As Frankie observed the life threats, her perspective changed. Her perspective on war shifted when she realized that it wasn't just fought at borders, but also caused

suffering for the people of that country. People of villages were dying by bomb attacks, mainly kids and women of villages. This threat of life raised fear in her. They were oblivious to the precise moment and location when a bomb struck, claiming their lives. Frankie experienced the chaotic environment in OR; the blood was everywhere in the walls, and she heard the painful voices of the injured soldiers. With her team Frankie goes on a MEDCAP trip, to orphanage, “it broke Frankie’s heart to think of how many orphans were being made by this war” (P. 88). There she treated the young girl Mai whose whole village was bombed and she was found by her dead mother’s arms “Frankie felt a heaviness in her heart” (P. 88). She feels sorrow that it doesn’t matter how much she is trying to be strong, but some pains do not be forgotten; they stay with the person forever. Frankie was aware of this child’s trauma. Many villages were bombed and nothing remained; more Vietnamese died daily due to this war; no TV channels mentioned them, “Her heart ached” (P. 89). She does not forget that little girl, and her story keeps coming to Frankie’s mind. They were at the party and the bombing start gunfire burst “Frankie cried out” (P. 101). The red alert siren blared, and the camp was full of injured people. War is like that—its ups and downs, unpredictable, “War was full of goodbyes” (P. 103). War taught that nobody stays with you forever. One chopper came and in that Jamie who is severely injured and for Frankie he was an important person she was very shocked to see him like that, his condition was very serious “Frankie screamed, save him” (P. 106). For Frankie, it was a very difficult time. Frankie transferred to Seventy-First Evac Hospital, and on the first day of her duty, the explosions attacks happened because that is the place where enemies continue attacking this place called Rocket City. “The noise was excruciating and heightened Frankie’s sense that hell had broken loose here” (P. 118). Panicked during the surgery, she sought the support of her friends, closing her eyes and feeling their presence. She knows that there is no permanent thing in Vietnam.

Treating injured and performing surgeries in the midst of attacking is very difficult for them; the wards were being filled with soldiers, civilians, and children. The Seventy-First Evac hospital was under attack, and the red alert siren was blaring, causing the hospital to tremble. Frankie was yelling for help and calling the doctor for patient treatment, but in that chaos there were no answers the situation was very arduous. “God, I’m tired of this” (P. 156). Frankie saw the dead newborn baby in the mother’s bandaged arms, “Unbearable grief” (P. 157). When her hooch mate asked her that you okay, Frankie replied “how could any of us be okay?” (P. 157). The whole village burned they got attacked through Nepal, the burning patients came and Frankie saw the woman and it’s impossible to tell that what were her age, there were a baby with her, “the horror overwhelmed her” (P. 179). She held the baby who was not much older than three months the baby died in her hands, “overwhelmed by this loss, unable to move, unable to stand” (P. 180). This incident made her unsettle she was so tired of seeing the deaths of young men’s, childrens and women.

War taught frankie so many things, and she thinks that she found herself here and saved many lives. She experienced the things that she never imagined in her life; she overcame her fears and encountered the hardships of war with bravery, but this war affected her so much that the horrors of war she saw will last forever in her mind. The man she loved she found here, Rye Walsh, who told her that women can be heroes and comforted her when she was disturbed by the war, the deaths, and the explosions. Frankie came back to her country after serving in Vietnam and at the airport people cursing her someone spat on her called her “Nazi bitch” (P. 190). Frankie was shocked, feeling that this was not the welcome she had expected from her country. “Frankie stumbled to a halt in shock” (P. 190). The protesters keep cursing her and saying go back to Vietnam “we don’t want you baby killers here” (P. 190). She thinks that how could they do that to an Army nurse who just came from war? Even though the taxis are not stopping for her. At last she came home and met her parents. She brought the picture of her with friends and tell her father “I brought this one just for you” (P. 193). She wanted her parents to feel proud of their daughter’s army services, and want her picture on the heroes wall at her father’s office. However, her father

leaves the house, stating that he is attending a meeting because they do not want her to serve in the army. Frankie feels sad about how everyone treated her, even her parents. She tried to comfort herself and think “Tomorrow would be better” (P. 194). The responses of society and her parents when she is coming back from war affect her identity. She wanted them to be proud, but they just neglected her efforts and the people cursing her, spitting on her, and saying to her that she is the baby killer when she is at the airport. Her mental health suffered as a result of these responses, which deeply hurt her feelings:

“The smell of burning flesh. Someone is screaming.

I run forward, crying for help, trying to see through the smoke.

There’s a baby in my arms, burning; her skin blackens and falls away. I am holding a pile of bones
Choppers overhead. Incoming.

A scream. Mine? The red alert siren blasts. Something explodes near my head.

I throw myself out of my cot, hit the floor, and crawled for my flak jacket and helmet.

Quiet.

Frankie came out of the nightmare slowly, realized she was on the floor, in her bedroom.” (p. 195). Frankie having nightmares after coming back home; she does not forget the time of the war; her mind was stuck there, and the reactions of others affected her so much. Her mother says you look awful and Frankie responded by saying, “I’m having nightmares” (P. 197). But her mother does not care much about that thing. Frankie wanted to share her experience with her parents, but they do not care. Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experiences* published in 1996 claim that “the notion of trauma as that which most clearly marks the past, and its structural description as a delayed experience, may lead to a seemingly universalizing description in which experience itself becomes tied up with trauma” (P. 114).

Cathy posits that a person stores traumatic experiences in their mind, which then manifest as nightmares and flashbacks of the incident. Frankie’s parents told everyone that she was in abroad for studying they do not tell them that she was serving in Veitnam war, Frankie found that truth when she met Dr. Brenner, but she said “I just got home from Vietnam” (P. 200). He said “there were no women in Veitnam, dear. There are, sir. I did two tours” (P. 200). Frankie was stunned to hear that her father was ashamed of her services. “Tears scalded Frankie’s eyes” (P. 200). She thought they would encourage her, but they are ashmed; she felt betrayal from her parents; the nightmares becoming worsening; she was in depression. Written the letter to Rye “I have these terrible nightmares of the war. I wake up feeling like I’ve been beaten up” (P. 204). She says that my parents do not want to listen anything about war they said it is over now and they want me to react like nothing was happened. “St. Elizabeth’s Orphanage. I’m kneeling on the cold stone floor, holding Mai in my arms, stroking the child’s soft hair. I hear the whirl of incoming helicopters from far away. The sound of gunfire fills the air.

A bomb rips into the stone walls and sends stones flying in a dozen directions. I hear children screaming.

Another bomb.

I look down; Mai is melting in my arms. Fire everywhere.

Frankie came awake with a scream, her heart pounding; she was drenched in sweat.

She stumbled out of her room, into the dark, quiet house” (P. 206). When she goes to meet Rye’s father she hears the dog barking, “a car backfired, sounded like a gunfire. Calm down, Frankie. Breathe. It was just a car. Not a mortar attack” (P. 208). It was in this car that she learned of Rye’s death. Frankie was unable to breathe when she heard that. She came home and told Mom about Rye and how she fell in love with him in Vietnam, “Frankie waited for words of wisdom, for something __anything__ to remind her that she still had a reason for living” (P. 211). But her parents did not say anything that comforted her. Every day, she was plagued by nightmares; when

she woke up, she was unable to do anything, and she struggled to sleep comfortably after returning from war. And the grief of losing her lover made her situation worse; she had nightmares about war, and she was thinking about her time with Rye. She resumed her nursing career, but the employers disregarded her war experience, claiming she lacked hospital experience. She goes to party and her anxiety was so high, she breathe slowly and trying to calm herself, because of depression she feels danger and have no control over her body, she wanted to leave here, “if she didn’t leave now she might scream” (P. 230). There, the girls do not believe that she was in Vietnam. Now Frankie decided not to tell others about her army services in Vietnam; she was sick of others not believing in her. She goes to doctor and tell him about her condition said that I am crazy, “my thoughts...I get angry and sad and...my boyfriend was just killed in action” (P. 240). She told him that she was a combat nurse, but he said, just like the others said, there were no women in Vietnam. She left the house and faced termination from her job, “Medics run past me, carrying men on litters. Someone’s screaming” (P. 297). Frankie woke up with a startled cry and was breathing heavily. She was pregnant, and soon she and Henry will be married. She finds out that Rye was alive and she was shocked, she goes airport to see him and saw that he has a wife and daughter, she feels betrayal, he told her that he broked off his engagement how is that possible he has daughter and wife he cheated on me, these questions came on Frankie’s mind. She has the nightmare of her and Rye and she open her eyes with tears his words keep playing on her mind, “I swear I’m not engaged” (P. 320). She was so tensed by Rye’s betrayal that somehow this thing led to her miscarriage; she canceled the wedding. Caruth (1996) “I link the notion of trauma to a larger conception of the very possibility of history” (P. 115). Frankie’s nightmares came back again she thinks maybe because of Rye, “or maybe new trauma reawakened old trauma” (P. 329). She started taking sleeping pills. The only thing that comforts her is nursing she started her job again. Later on, she began stalking Rye and his family after meeting him, only to discover that he had cheated on her once more. She now hated herself more than Rye. The betrayal in love affects her identity; she hated herself that she trusted Rye, which also has a strong influence on her mental health. She attempted suicide without knowing, she just hear her dead brother’s voice and follow him and go to sea, “it was a dream. I thought Finley was here. I followed him” (P. 363). Her father said “you tried to kill yourself” (P. 364). She was in psychiatric ward, “screamed, struggling to be free” (P. 364). Henry told her that you have PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder).This is how we studied Frankie's character through the lens of PTSD; she struggled with nightmares and flashbacks from the war, attempted suicide without realizing it, and now takes pills due to her difficulty sleeping. According to Caruth (1996), “post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, which describes 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” (P. 57).

Conclusion

The research is conducted to analyze the text of the novel *The Women* by Kristin Hannah, in which the researcher analyzes the character of Frankie through the lens of PTSD. The main source of data is the text of the chosen novel, and the theoretical framework applied is Cathy Caruth’s theory of trauma and PTSD. The story of the novel is about the Vietnam War. The researcher deeply looks at the war and how this war affected Frankie as we thoroughly analyze her character. She witnessed the deaths of young men, women, and children who were innocent and immaculate; they do not understand the brutality of the world. These experiences of war lasted on the person's mind forever, even if they went far away from war. Frankie’s mind does not forget that horrible event she saw and experienced. She faces the hardships and horrors of war, and the experiences of the traumatic events affect her mental health. When she came back to her country, the responses of the people enormously hurt her, and the feedback from them caused her trauma. The person whom

she loves betrayed her, and that betrayal affected her. The researcher deeply analyzed Frankie's PTSD. She underwent severe mental trauma after the war. When she came home, she was having nightmares and flashbacks of the war, trust issues, she was having difficulty sleeping she started taking sleeping pills, and unconsciously she tried to kill herself. Through her condition, we studied how PTSD affects women, especially those who served in Vietnam War, but society does not remember them and does not appreciate them; they only remember the sacrifices of men.

References

- Balaev, Michelle. 2012. *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*. Northwestern University Press.
- Berger, James. 1999. *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bouson, J. Brooks. 2000. *Quiet As It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Breuer, Joseph and Sigmund Freud. 1955 [1895]. "Studies on Hysteria." In *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 2, trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press.
- Buelens, Gert, Sam Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone (eds.). 2014. *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. London: Routledge.
- Caruth, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Caruth, Cathy. 2014. *Literature in the Ashes of History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Forster, Greg. 2011. *Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Forster, Greg. 2014. "Colonial Trauma, Utopian Carnality, Modernist Form: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." *Contemporary Approaches to Literary Trauma Theory*, ed. Michelle Balaev. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1959 [1920]. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Norton.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1955–73 [1914]. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, vol. 12. New York: Norton.
- Hannah, K. (2024). *The women*. First edition. New York, St. Martin's Press. Chicago