

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: PTSD AND NARRATION: TRAUMATIC
STORIES' IMPACT ON REALISM IN FILM AND
LITERATURE

Eva Wright, PhD 2021

Directed by: Dr. Craig J. Saper, Professor of Language, Literacy & Culture

This dissertation studies how Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds* (2012), Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), and films such as *Unbroken: Path To Redemption* (2014), and *The Hurt Locker* (2009) represent the traumatic experiences of war and corrode classical realist forms of narration. The phenomenon of PTSD affects the characteristics of narrative and film that take trauma as their central topic, where linear chronology collapses and time is experienced as fractured and unmanageable. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this dissertation considers the concept of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by rethinking its literary, cinematic and cultural representation. In these forms, narrative experimentation is often aimed at controlling the unrepresentability of trauma by performing rather than representing it. This dissertation provides evidence of contemporary war writers and artists who felt the need to divert from traditional narrative forms to meet the demands of representing collective and individual traumas. This dissertation examines representations of trauma and the victims of war, not just where a fatalistic and stoic perspective dominates, but also to consider the subjective meaning of traumatic events. Instead of examining the accuracy of biographical accounts of warfare trauma and PTSD, this dissertation highlights the transformative changes the writers and artists make to realist representation itself.