Distorting the Senses: the Traumatic Narrative of Brian Turner's *Phantom Noise*

In his collection of poetry *Phantom Noise*, Brian Turner weaves a narrative that addresses issues of war and traumatic experiences, post-war assimilation, and the impact of trauma on memory. Calling back to his service in the Iraq War, Turner's poetry combines one's witnessing of fatal violence with their everyday, mundane operations, such as running errands at Lowe's Home Improvement Center. In doing so, the narrative of Phantom Noise relates the ways in which traumatic experiences impact sense perception, and further, the reliving of those experiences. When one's sense perception is relentlessly distorted by traumatic memory, the grips of their natural identity begin to fade behind those memories. As the soldier is running errands at Lowe's, he's re-experiencing the violence of war contained within "sheets of plywood" and "mower blades." In this re-experiencing, the soldier's memory intertwines with the present, perverting their sense perception between both the traumatic experience and what they're experiencing in actuality. Where, in that moment of re-experiencing, does one's consciousness exist? As such, a psychoanalytic analysis of Phantom Noise offers insight into the post-war functioning of soldiers that have encountered traumatic experiences. Reflecting on the research of trauma theorists Cathy Caruth and Santanu Das, the re-experiencing of traumatic memories is accompanied by what Caruth describes to be "the endless impact on a life" (7). Quandaries of healing as it relates to one's acclimation to a post-war environment are then proposed—is there a method as to escape the reliving of a traumatic memory? With that, an analysis of Turner's poetry offers a psychoanalytic framing to the effects of war-time trauma, revealing a distortion of sense perception, memory, and ultimately, identity.

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