

Abstract

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Imagination and Memory in James Fenton's War Poetry

The aim of this research paper is to discuss Fenton's war poetry within the framework of the theory of cultural trauma as represented by Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. in their book, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004) and Ron Eyerman's *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2001). The researcher will adopt the analytical approach where the poet's work is analyzed and its main features highlighted to evaluate his war poetry in light of the cultural trauma theory. Aftereffects of trauma will be discussed, particularly the collective memory of the Southeast Asian people as a form of remembrance that shapes their identity. Though Fenton's war poetry has been discussed by some writers (Tim Kendall, Jon Stallworthy, Gareth Reeves, and Thomas Depietro), no one has presented the strong link between Fenton's war poetry wrote while a reporter in the Southeast Asian wars and the cultural trauma theory that has played a major role in modern thought, particularly after World War II. The prominent traumatic historical events that have been widely discussed are the Holocaust in Germany and slavery in the United States of America. However, Fenton focuses on the atrocities of Khmer rouge regime in Cambodia that has massacred nearly one third of its subjects. Effects on the collective memory of the people inflicted by such violence and atrocities have been given proper attention in his poems, such as "Children in Exile," "A German Requiem," "Dead Soldiers," "Out of the East," etc.