The Intersection Between Multi-voiced Narratives and First-person Narratives of War Fiction: Epistemology and the Meaning of War

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THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN MULTI-VOICED NARRATIVES AND FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVES OF WAR FICTION: EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE MEANING OF WAR

by

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B. A. Stetson University, 2004

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ABSTRACT

The topic for this project concerns a critical rhetorical analysis of the correlation between texts of first-person narratives and multi-voiced narratives of the Vietnam War (1965-1975) and the American invasion of Iraq (2003-2011). Moreover, this project establishes a correlation between the textual design in these novels and concepts of epistemology that reside in the Western cannon of rhetorical theory. The theoretical framework that is incorporated within this study extracts concepts of (t)ruth from philosophical works such as Michel Foucault’s *Birth of the Clinic* and Friedrich Nietzsche’s *On Truth* and *In a Nonmoral Sense*. In comparison, I examine the concepts and theories that comprise (T)ruth by incorporating the ideas of philosophers such as Carl Marx, especially his *Communist Manifesto*.

The methodological underpinnings that help support the theoretical and conceptual framework of this project are derived from the application and analysis of distinct forms of narrative theory such as Jerome Bruner’s *Life as Narrative*. Lastly, in the conclusion of this thesis, I provide recommendations for how scholars of rhetoric can add their voice to ongoing debates within in the field of war literature.
Thank you, mom and dad, for being mom and dad.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Vietnam War of (1965 to 1975) and the invasion and occupation of Iraq (2003-2011) are examples of the limits of American military power at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The focus of this study is to analyze the existence of an interrelationship that involves texts of fictional war novels such as Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, and Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer* and philosophical approaches that are central to the cannon of rhetorical traditions. I argue that a relationship does exist between war literature and philosophy by implementing a framework that centers on the concept of Postmodernism.

In terms of how rhetoric has influenced how individuals have come to define and contextualize the Vietnam War and Iraq Invasion, it can be stated that many American veterans and other readers have looked to fictional literature that uses these wars as a context or setting for a novel, such as Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds*, and Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*. In part, such novels provide a deeper context and meaning compared to traditional information mediums such as television or news commentary, since either medium constructs or defines war in terms of a person’s political perspective rather than an emotional, physical, or intellectual perspective.

In contrast, war literature from these distinct eras constructs a more sophisticated way to contextualize truth and the meaning of war because these works are designed in a way that a reader is able to extract different interpretations of epistemology from the text of the novel.
Epistemology in the context of this study is concerned with how a multi-voiced narrative or first-person narrative of war literature from either the Vietnam War period or the Iraq Invasion emanates a philosophical position of truth.

In addition, this study situates an examination of how the texts of war novels formulate a philosophy of truth by placing war fiction within the philosophical construction of Postmodernism. According to Brian McHale, in his book *Postmodernist Fiction*, Postmodernism is not modern, whatever that means, it does not come after the present (a solecism), but after the modernist movement. Thus the term postmodernism if we take it literally enough, a la letter signifies a poetics which is the successor of, or possibly a reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth – century Modernism, and not some hypothetical writing of the future. (5)

In analyzing this quotation further, ideas that comprise Postmodernism are considered to be a break from the traditional thinking of the 19th century in regard to ideas of representation in terms of rhetoric, art, and philosophy. During the 19th century, philosophical and rhetorical beliefs centered around factors of modernism that constructed values that contributed to the formation of society to be a product of structures or hierarchical systems. The philosophical perspectives in terms of how to think about truth were determined by individuals within these structures who possessed the authority to develop and engineer ideas (Mumby 15).

Dennis Mumby goes on to state that structuralism thus made language less democratic in terms of how to think about the purpose of meaning in its role to define societal context (15). To continue on this point, Leslie Hendrickson and Bill McKelvin also state that within the 1970s and 1980s individuals who studied philosophy and its connection to science were also looking for
different ways to think about the relationship between truth and science. As a result of this scientific analysis, the humanities eschewed ideas of modernism and formed a belief structure that framed scientific analysis in terms of how individuals independently conceptualize ideas or events.

In connecting this subjective outlook to novels of the Vietnam War and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Postmodernism permits me to construct or deconstruct how the authors define different perspectives of truth that explain how a fictional character contextualizes their environment as a soldier in conflict.

For the purposes of this study, the relationship between Truth and Postmodernism will be framed in terms of (T)ruth (written with a capital T) and (t)ruth (written with a lower-case t). (T)ruth is significant in that it propagates an objective value to epistemology in establishing a universal standard that seeks to explain how wars came about, how they were fought, and what the results were. (T)ruth seeks to identify a type of truth that explains warfare in terms of a grand narrative and how rhetoric and language can explain that grand narrative through the application of multiple approaches. These include political ideology or religious belief. Notions of (T)ruth are exemplified within the design and makeup of multi-voiced narratives that seek to identify how different voices within a singular monograph or novel engender concepts of dueling philosophical approaches in terms of epistemology (Haytock 338).

In contrast, (t)ruth differs from (T)ruth in that it focuses more on contextualization and what the voice of the narrator or main character observes and how those observations can be used as a means of applying definitions of warfare. Truth’s (t) axioms can be used to analyze first-person narratives of warfare because they help construct definitions of war. This is seen in
either specific examples in which the main character or narrator uses facts or fiction to construct stories that present rhetorical problems for the narrator or main character at the center of the story.

The problem or exigency that forms the basis of my thesis is that within the parameters of the field of war fiction, there presently exists an opportunity for rhetorical studies to take advantage of and to add arguments to how fictional novels of war, particularly ones that discuss the Iraq invasion of 2003 and the Vietnam War of 1965-1975, create and design concepts of epistemology within their texts.

I argue that the philosophical schools of thought that have comprised rhetorical tradition have played a part in the construction of American war literature. This is particularly the case in the way that authors of war fiction have learned how the Vietnam War (1965-1975) and the American war in Iraq (2003-2011) construct and design different interpretations of truth through the voice of the main character. Authors of fictional novels that have used the Vietnam War and Iraq invasion as a setting for their novels are unique since each setting says something different about how each author conceptualizes rhetorical truth. The differences between how each author views truth can be understood by how different concepts of truth are situated in the text of a novel.

Multi-voiced narration and first-person narration have brought forth new ideas concerning how these books can have a direct effect on the way that textual analysis can be accomplished by rhetoricians in order to amplify problems concerning epistemological truth and narrative. First-person narration promotes the point of view of the author of the narrative, who is living through the main character. By shaping and designing the characters’ experiences within
First-person narration, authors have predominately written from the perspective of the white male soldier (Haytock 337). However, this statement articulates the interaction and development of first-person narrations, writing themes that often focus on the emasculation of the white male soldier. However, this is changing.

Writers have situated the difference between multi-voiced narratives and first-person narratives; for example, Jennifer Haytock in her article, “Reframing Stories: Multi-voiced Novels of the Wars of Iraq and Afghanistan,” defines the multi-voiced narrative to be a methodological construction “in which the author disrupts the privacy of the trauma hero narrative by presenting at least two (if not more) first-person narrators from opposing sides of the conflict” (338). This is significant because Haytock situates a conception of truth that is centered on how an individual creates an epistemological perspective from their environment and how this formation develops a philosophical approach to the world and knowledge.

Literature Review

This literature review will demonstrate that rhetoric scholarship has contextualized the Vietnam conflict and the Iraq war of 2003 as being characteristic of Postmodernism. I evaluate the arguments of these scholars through analyzing what they have to say about Postmodernism as a factor in shaping the narrative of war.

There is a multitude of scholarly analysis that exists within rhetorical studies. These analyses examine how multi-voiced and first-person narratives inform and construct elements of truth within a formula of Postmodernism. These studies are examined through how different authors situate the factors of Postmodernism and narrative and methodology. To begin with, authors such as Lucas Carpenter, in his article, “It Doesn't Mean Nothing: Vietnam War Fiction
and Postmodernism,” argues that scholarship has incorrectly characterized the Vietnam War as Postmodern. In his perspective, Carpenter states,

In other words, to call Vietnam War postmodern is too hegemonic unity onset of often radically dissimilar concepts, ideas, and experiences, hence contradicting Post Modernism's central logic of diversity and differentiation. Still, this is how the war has come to be regarded by many literary critics and historians and is an important part of their explanations of the emergence of postmodern Vietnam War Fiction, which tends to view postmodernism was fiction as a logical product of postmodernism war. But aren't such explanations based ultimately on the same mimetic principle underlying literary realism? To begin answering this question requires a critical examination of the postmodern "status" of both the war and its fiction. (31)

This quotation is important because it contextualizes the concepts of Postmodernism as a broad theory. Although it is an opposition to the overall aims of my study, Carpenter notes that Postmodernism seeks to amplify aspects of the differences between and among individuals in how they construct meaning. Second, this quotation is important because it also intertwines a definition of the Vietnam conflict that has been formulated by individual scholars, such as Carpenter, who have set out the parameters of the discussion on whether the Vietnam War adequately fits into the definition of what is considered Postmodern.

Ty Hawkins, in his article, “Vietnam and Verisimilitude: Rethink the Relationship between ‘Postmodern War’ and Naturalism,” states that a post-modernistic view of the Vietnam War was formed from how it was fought and its social and political significance. The Vietnam War was viewed as a post-modernistic conflict because it introduced new types of fighting such
as counterinsurgency (3). Hawkins goes on to state that the Postmodernistic construct that developed was transferred into an overarching textual analysis of novels from the period, and in the end, this created a false interpretation within scholarly circles about the nature of the Vietnam War as a post-modernistic conflict.

Lastly, I introduce concepts of narrative theory that influence a newly constructed way of studying war novels in terms of identifying aspects of epistemology that imbed a concept of truth within the texts. One way to look at how different forms of Postmodernism have influenced scholarly debates on the role of war literature from the eras of the Vietnam War and the Iraq invasion of 2003 is to look at the writings of Amelia Precup. Precup highlights notions of cognitive analysis within the context of a rhetorical analysis of Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds*. In her article, “Reversing Absence: The Explorations of Memory In *The Yellow Birds* By Kevin Powers,” Precup’s central argument is that the concept of memory can be used as a rhetorical strategy in terms of analyzing a text that seeks to reconstruct or redefine war experiences. These ideas are then related to epistemology in that the person who is reinterpreting these events can formulate epistemological truth based on their subjective experiences of war (175).

In their article, “Foundations of ‘New’ Social Science: Institutional Legitimacy from Philosophy, Complexity Science, Postmodernism, and Agent-based Modeling,” Leslie Henriksen and Bill McKelvey substantiate Precup’s position. They contend Postmodernism permits individuals to transform themselves into heterogeneous, autonomous agents for change (7294). These concepts underscore the inherited notion that individual persons can reconceptualize and reconstruct events in their minds (Henriksen & McKelvey 7294). This action permits them to
design a subjective reality where an all-encompassing universal meaning can be applied to all things and all objects, thereby making the charge that individuals are created to be heterogeneous and different from their prior experiences of war. This then can inform a construct of truth in that events and experiences of war can serve as a factor in developing how an individual perceives their reality compared to those who haven't been to war.

Other authors have constructed different ways of interpreting and analyzing truth and its relationship to the text within a framework of feminism. In the article "Women in the Gulf War: Towards Intersectionality of Feminist Rhetorical Criticism," Carrie Crenshaw argues that the intersectionality thesis established by Kimberly Williams Crenshaw should be expanded. Carrie Crenshaw argues that an extended version of the method “can and should account for multiple differences among women. It reveals the interconnectedness of patriarchal and heterosexist and neo-colonial ideologies and how they mutually reinforce each other” (219).

This statement is important because it connects to the central argument of my analysis in that it constructs a formation of truth that is both transcendent and subjective. It is subjective in that it helps the main character construct their truth and ideas of feminism in a system or culture that reinforces or highlights a male/female matrix. The male/female matrix is noticeable in Maryam Moussavi’s “Gendered Narrative in Female War Literature: Helen Benedict’s Sand Queen.” According to Moussavi, Sand Queen illuminates concepts of transcendent truth because of its focus on how the role of the female soldier challenges “normative discourses about militarism and gender by negating the naturalization of the dichotomy, between masculine/public and feminine/private” (4).
With different interpretative methods of war fiction that highlight binary social constructions of gender and race, other authors have identified factors influencing concepts of narration in terms of how it can assist in contextualizing and analyzing concepts of truth within first-person narratives. For example, in Robin Silberglied’s "Making Things Present: Tim O’Brien's Autobiographical Metafiction," she criticizes O’Brien’s position as a narrator of the book *The Things They Carried*. Silberglied argues that the concept of metafiction is derived from the dual use of fictional facts that are intertwined with aspects of truthfulness to create a singular meta-narrative of truth (131).

As a result of this, readers are required to question how O’Brien’s use of metafiction manipulates how an audience conceives truth in terms of a conflict between his interest in framing his perspective of the Vietnam War against the realities of war vs. storytelling (Silberglied 132). On the other hand, multi-voiced novels and their relationship to narrative are analyzed differently. This is in part due to different methodological practices of multi-voiced novels that seek to implement concepts of (T)ruth and that describe a form of epistemology or ideology that explains different trajectories that are taken by history or humankind. Moreover, within multi-voiced narratives, authors construct their typologies of narratives and epistemology in terms of identity.

Multi-voiced novels conceptualize a narrative framework that highlights a dialectic nature of rhetorical criticism. In the article, “A fictional Perspective,” Lucaites and Condit state that “the fundamental purpose of this article is that the authors seek to reframe an understanding of narrative rhetorical theory from a functionalist perspective” (3). According to the authors, such a perspective will allow students of rhetorical theory to explore the role of political
consciousness and its relationship to language (3). In the first parts of their article, the authors trace the history of narrative theory. They argue that there are three predominant categories of narrative theory. One, romantic poeticism, is a type of language that attempts to use words to entice people’s emotions. The authors argue that poeticism situates narrative as a tool that is meant to reach people’s emotions and feelings.

Functioning in this way, a speaker or narrator has the authority to formalize or plot words in a sequence that explain a temporal or special relationship between a person or an object (Lucaiotes 3). The second category that the authors discuss as being a part of the traditional method of narrative analysis is dialectic functioning. The primary intent of the dialectic language is "the discovery, revelation, and presentation of truth" (Lucaiotes 4). The truth within the dialectic form is a tool that helps individuals rationalize the distinction between fact and fiction (Lucaiotes 4). The final school of thought that is mentioned in this article is narration. Unlike the other schools of thought, this particular perspective focuses on how the narrative is interpreted. A reader is requested to appreciate the internal propositions and logic of the argument being presented before making a decision (Lucaiotes 5).

The first two elements of this typology are noticeable in an epistemological perspective of the novel, The Sympathizer. The Sympathizer is a multi-voiced narrative that delineates the dichotomy that exists in the internal voice and the mind of the main character, who is a spy for the North Vietnamese, and who has successfully infiltrated the South Vietnamese diaspora in America. A form of dialectics is noticeable in analyzing how the character engages and navigates the dual environments of the belief systems of North Vietnamese communism and how the South Vietnamese accommodate the ideals of Western capitalism (Nguyen 155).
This dialectic undergirds and internalizes concepts and issues relating to identity and how narrative can construct a universal truth that situates the obstacles that the main character has to overcome in attempting to develop his belief system, one that separates itself from the existing structure. This underlying concept of identity is a central theme in Postmodernism and truth since Postmodernism exposes the belief that transcendence can only occur when existing structures are eliminated or reformulated to permit human flourishing (Nguyen 150).

This is the case in the writing and perspective of Michel Foucault’s *Anthropology of Knowledge*. In his work, Foucault formulates frameworks to analyze how institutional elements of power and authority formulate a concept of discursive rhetoric (33). Discursive rhetoric is defined as rhetorical words, signs, or symbols that permit existing institutions to place indigenous groups in representative categories since they cannot be represented by themselves (Nguyen 154).

These concepts of representation and categorization are connected to epistemological truth, in terms of how the epistemological truth restricts a category of people from determining what their history is based upon, such as the subjective experiences of war. This in the end hampers concepts of rhetorical agency in that it allows indigenous groups the freedom to tell their truth on their terms. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, ideas of categorization can be applied to ideas of transcending truth in that, it permits great powers that did not win wars to construct a false narrative of Truth so that it could shape how domestic audiences perceive a loss in the war.

In Chapter One, I have situated a unique rhetorical issue, which reflects a shift in how scholars have previously thought about the function of Postmodernism theory and its relationship
to war literature. In the literature review, I have thoroughly examined the contemporary events that have informed how scholars within the field of rhetoric have conceptualized how war fiction can be understood, and I have situated these theories within a post-modernistic construct. To this end, I have discussed three lenses through which the current debate within scholarship has taken place. Finally, within the scope of Chapter One, I have highlighted how the theories and philosophical approaches discussed can, in fact, be traced to my overall argument for this project, which is that war literature from the Vietnam war and the American invasion of Iraq can highlight distinct perspectives of epistemological truth.

This discussion has established a good foundation for a transition into Chapter Two of this project, which discusses the methodological and theoretical approach that guides my project moving forward.
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

Research practices within the field of writing and rhetoric are undergoing significant changes. These changes are a response to the growth of many disciplines within the field, which range from gender and feminist theories to narratology. Affecting the degree and quality of this course correction is that it is happening within the backdrop of 21st century Postmodernism. Scholars today have discussed the range of research challenges that the field of rhetoric is encountering. This includes scholars such as Mary P. Sheridan and Lee Nicholson. In their book, *Writing Studies Research and Practice Methods and Methodologies*, Sheridan and Nicholson note that "radical changes in what we consider writing and research over the last 20 years have prompted a need to adapt traditional research" (1).

What Sheridan and Nicholson are articulating is for writing studies to develop an emerging research design that is commensurate to new trends that are influencing how research is accomplished. Such areas include the rise of digital technology and how it is influencing rhetorical engagement in social media and other technological platforms (1). In a similar vein, there is also considerable consternation in terms of how the research and methodologies are being implemented to evaluate fictional narratives. Within this debate, newer scholars such as Orna Sasson-Levy have criticized how traditional constructions of feminism have prevented new perspectives from emerging. For example, in the field of rhetoric, new perspectives could facilitate how Israeli scholars think about the relationship between female soldiers and
citizenship, and how the relationship influences the way female Israeli soldiers think about themselves as women.

Feminism as a mechanism to study war novels has come under consistent criticism. I discuss this topic in-depth within the framework and methodological section of this chapter. In her article, “Feminism, and Military Gender Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in ‘Masculine’ Roles,” Sasson-Levy states that

Women’s military service is the focus of an ongoing controversy because of its implications for the gendered nature of citizenship. While liberal feminists endorse equal service as a venue for equal citizenship, radical feminists see women's service as an indication of martial citizenship and cooperation with a hierarchical and sexist institution. These debates, however, tend to ignore the perspective of the women soldiers themselves.

(440)

What the author is noting here is that by placing a debate of feminism within the rigid construction of what it means to be an Israeli citizen, both sides of the feminist debate are ignoring how the aspects of gender have changed to include multiple forms of identification. Doing so has silenced the diverse voices and identities of a variety of Israeli female soldiers. In contrast to the perspectives of feminism, other scholars such as Ty Hawkins, in his article, “Vietnam and Verisimilitude: Rethinking the Relationship between Postmodern War and Naturalism,” has criticized the limited methods that have influenced how the texts of war novels have been evaluated in the past.

According to Hawkins, contemporary war novels that use the Vietnam War as a textual background have implemented what he calls a "naturalist methodology" (2). This means that
scholars of Vietnam and Gulf War novels commonly articulate the harrowing experiences of war such as battle and death (Hawkins 2). In Hawkins's opinion, writers of Vietnam era novels must transcend this false category of analysis and stop "presenting the verisimilitudes of war in framing a textual analysis from the viewpoint of naturalism" (2). This is because readers and researchers have been left with false and limited constructions of the meaning of war and how it influences a person's overall reality.

How Narrative Can Be Used to Study War Fiction

The evolution and history of narrative theory is an interesting one. In the article “Towards a Conceptual History of Narrative,” Matti Hyvarinen writes that narrative theory has evolved in many different forms throughout history. The author notes that as a concept, narration first began to take focus on rhetorical studies at the beginning of the 1980s. During this time, scholars perceived the function of narrative to be tied to cognitive, psychological, and biological studies (22).

Expanding on these themes, authors such as Jerome Bruner, in his article, "Life as Narrative," has constructed a view of narrative that explicitly expresses the fact that it "is a constructivist one- a view that takes a central premise that 'world-making' is the principal function of mind whether it is in the science or in the arts. But the movement that applies a constructivist view of narrative to the self-narrative, to the autobiography is faced with dilemmas" (691). Bruner extends the cognitive model to include an analysis of the individual in the context of how a person creates or defines an autobiographical identity of themselves as they relate to the outside world. This then helps them form different strategies to help them solve
problems. Other authors have contextualized narratives as mechanical systems in which inputs are translated into certain rhetorical outputs.

In their article, "The New Narrative: Applying Narratology to the Shaping of Future Outputs," authors Paul Graham Raven and Shirin Elahi contextualize narrative and its relationship to literature as being an overarching rhetorical structure in which an individual places inputs from their external environment such as audience and text into a mechanistic structure that then creates particular rhetorical strategies as a byproduct of molding those inputs (50).

According to the authors, each of these categories provides particular and distinct outcomes that will assist an individual in articulating a narrative that serves a particular purpose. However, in the paradigm of Postmodernism, other individuals have documented the need for a different type of narrative structure. In his article, “Style Rhetoric and Post-modern Culture,” Bradford Vivian notes that through the trajectory of Postmodernism, narrative has been sandwiched between two categories. These two categories are rhetorical style and construction of arguments (223).

The classical model that is articulated above by Ravin and Elahi can help situate an understanding of the significance of multivoice narratives. The purpose of multivoice narratives or multivoice narration is to provide readers with multiple points of view, which adds complexity to a text in terms of how an author contextualizes issues of identity and culture. Novels such as *The Sympathizer* attempt to illustrate how two person narratives can influence how readers understand what type of inputs the author is putting into the text. These are questions of what structural analysis or method of textual design causes rhetorical outputs of discursive rhetoric. An example from a scene in the book that highlights this point is when the main character is in a
meeting with the chairman of the Oriental Studies department at the university where he is an employee. During the course of their meeting, the main character begins to discuss his struggle with identity. This stems from the fact that he is Vietnamese posing as American. After he states his dilemma, the chair responds “Ah, the Amerasian, forever caught between worlds and never knowing where he belongs! Imagine if you did not suffer from the confusion you must constantly experience, feeling the constant tug-of-war inside you and over you, between Orient and Occident” (Nguyen 63). This quote denotes ideas of Orientalism, in that confusion over personal identity can be solved by combining one geographical location as a prefix with another geographical as a suffix, complicates how a person can find a place for themselves as being a part of a nation’s history. The dilemma over how the central character defines their own identity is important, since identity is a key factor in connecting how multivoiced war fiction establishes a rhetorical analysis of Truth.

Unlike multivoice narration, a first-person narrative structure would emphasize a Tale and Telling and Players and the Playwright (Raven and Elahi 50-55). This formula centers on what role the characters play in forming the overall message or concept with the truth that is at the center of a novel. A Tale and Telling, Players and the Playwright also identifies how the characters within a first-person narrative novel engage in a dialogue to reach a consensus towards truth. This approach can be identified within the context of The Yellow Birds by Kevin Powers. For instance, the character Paul Bartle promises Ladonna Murphy, the mother of Daniel Murphy: “I promise,” I said. “I promise I’ll bring him home to you” (47). Paul Bartle sets the context for his entire experience in Iraq as a catalyst for how he defines truth. This statement represents a turning point for Paul Bartle in the novel, in that it is symbolic of a textual
trigger point that frames his entire philosophical evolution of truth. For example, in the beginning of the book, he thought the events of warfare would go in a linear fashion, from beginning to middle to end (Powers 187).

However, this wasn’t the case with his own experience in Iraq, since the death of Murph changed his perception in that he believed those in power rather than the soldiers created the narrative (Powers 187). Therefore, in Bartle’s mind, there were two types of truth—one was with his own observation and what he experienced after Daniel Murphy’s death, and the other was created by those in power who sought to cover up and characterize him as being the one to blame for Murphy’s death (Powers 185-186).

Methodology

Methodological design and implementation issues have also affected how scholars of war fiction have approached a rhetorical analysis of this topic. For example, scholars such as Kimberly Crenshaw, in her article, "Women in the Gulf War: Towards an Intersectional Rhetorical Feminist Criticism in the Gulf War," Crenshaw argues that feminist scholars should expand traditional applications of feminist theory to war fiction that go beyond the common analysis of a woman's role in a hierarchical and patriarchal system (K. Crenshaw 219). Instead, Crenshaw advocates for a rhetorical analysis of the perceptions that create a concept of "intersectionality" within the environment of persons who are female and African American soldiers (K. Crenshaw 220).

Feminist theorist and scholar Frank D'Angelo borrows Julia Kristeva's definition of intersectionality. Kristeva defines this term as "the transportation of one (or several) sign systems
into another" (60). In clarifying this definition, D'Angelo says “in other words, every text is connected to another by citations, quotations, illusions, borrowing, adaptations, imitation and alike” (33). In D'Angelo's perspective, intersectionality assists readers in understanding how ideas of race and war intersect with one another to create discursive adaptations towards minority groups that reside within institutions such as the military (D'Angelo 33).

However, there are significant limitations to the use of intersectionality as an analytical instrument in the investigation of war fiction. One significant handicap is it would be difficult for this study to locate an initial text or documents, which include all significant rhetorical devices that adequately transition into a particular war narrative. This is the case since different authors employ a variety of rhetorical strategies to convey their points. For example, in Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, the author seeks to amplify rhetorical devices of metacognition, which are used to emphasize the difficulty Vietnam veterans have making sense of their experiences 20 years after the war has ended.

If an intersectional analysis were applied to *The Things They Carried*, it would be difficult for a researcher to identify where the text’s specific narrative story is being derived from an exact document. This gives narrators such as O'Brien the liberty and flexibility to shape and design the narrative of the entire book according to the message that they want to tell. Due to the particular rhetorical strategy of metacognition, an intersectional approach cannot be applied.

The principles of Critical Discourse Analysis are a methodological design that is viewed as being an alternative to intersectionality. Acknowledged by the acronym (CDA), critical discourse analysis is defined as a methodology that "wants to know what structures, strategies, or other properties of text, talk or verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these
modes of representation" (Van Dijk 250). To satisfy the criteria of CDA analysis, I would be required to examine the presence of questionable conditions of "legitimacy or acceptability, including what is usually called ‘abuse of power’" (Van Dijk 250). In other words, Van Dijk is concerned with issues relating to how the internal design of institutions reproduce or solidify social inequities within systems in which an analysis of discourse can be explained (250).

Despite the growth in popularity of CDA within rhetorical scholarship, this methodology will not serve the purpose of this research project adequately. This is the case because the exigency that is the central focus of this study does not involve an examination of how institutions and their internal designs reproduce factors that propagate inequality or political dominance. For example, a CDA analysis of The Sympathizer will not permit the flexibility that is needed to reach conclusions about how the text of the sympathizer highlights aspects of rhetorical epistemology. This is because a CDA investigation would only go as far as understanding how the main characters communicate with Americans within the structure of the dialogue. This would reinforce cultural biases of American culture towards the South Vietnamese culture.

Instead of following the traditional methodological approaches of intersectionality as a part of feminist theory and CDA to the study of war fiction, the methodological design that I employ within the contours of this research project is narrative theory. In his article titled "Antimimetic, Unnatural and Post-modernism Narrative Theory," Brian Richardson notes that within the era of Postmodernism Theory, the scholarship community has reinterpreted the purpose and design of narration. Richardson states that all narratives have elements of both "mimetic and antimimetic traits (20)."
When speaking of mimetics, Richardson highlights the fact that mimetic forces "typically try to conceal their contractedness to resemble artificial narratives" (20). Mimetic forces can be helpful in an event of trying to dissect concepts of truth in novels such as *The Yellow Birds*. This novel is narrated from the voice of Paul Bartle; he is a soldier who was returning home from serving in Iraq following the 2003 invasion. Powers constructs a narration style of a circular nature. In this construction, Bartle is viewed within the context of his environment. His environment enforces his notions of truth. The story discusses the disillusionment of the main character throughout his war experience. Powers uses the rhetorical strategy of memory as a euphemism for how the main character redesigns his concepts of truth to create a narrative that will allow him to come to terms with his participation in the war.

Narrative theory can also assist in conceptualizing the role of the narrator in the context of epistemological truth. David Darby’s article, "An Essay in the History of Narratology,“ traces the evolution of narrative analysis within the history of language. Darby contextualizes narrative as a product of a debate between two primary schools, the Germanic School and French Structuralism (829). Darby delineates the Germanic perspective of narrative theory as one that emphasizes the traditions of rhetoric, in which narrative is constructed as a concept through the voice of a storyteller (829). The consequences for narration is that as a strategy, it became synonymously linked to concepts of "temporal distance that separates the representative events from their recapitulations” (Darby 832). Darby continues to write that in contrast to the classical features of the Germans, French structuralism strove to reconstruct the utility of narrative theory within rhetoric.
Germanic narration and French structuralism are important to this study in terms of how they link philosophy and language. Both theories can help answer the research question concerning how the narrator in each of the four novels is a mitigating factor towards understanding either concept—Truth or truth—from a text of a first-person narrative or a multivoice narrative. This is because each school of thought applies a different form of textual analysis. For example, the Germanic school seeks to identify how words are used within traditional mimetic narration. Mimetic principles target analysis on traditional forms of rhetorical design that pay close attention to general story lines and plot lines. French Structuralism distinguishes itself from the Germanic school in that it will help to identify anti-mimetic patterns that are beneath the surface of a text. These include questions such as: Why is a text following a dual narrative structure? and What is the significance for understanding Truth?

In terms of philosophy, both schools of thought serve as a tool for comparison in that they help me judge in matters of degree why the different philosophical schools that I discuss in this thesis fit under the rubric of Postmodernism. In doing so, I discern how vital is a rhetorical narrator's role in examining a text that highlights concepts of epistemology.

For example, in *Sand Queen*, by Helen Benedict, Benedict contextualizes each chapter from the perspective of the two main characters in the novel. One is Kate Brady, an American female soldier who has gone to serve in Iraq as a means of bringing freedom to an oppressed people. In the chapters articulated from Kate's point of view, an individual can get a sense of gradual deterioration and appreciation of American values. As Kate is undergoing this metamorphosis, a reader of the book can get a sense of both how an internal narrative and an
external narrative come together to propel her to this emotional precipice. From this experience, a reader can appreciate how the role of the narrator can bring together notions of Truth and truth.

**Analysis of Narratives**

The four primary sources that will facilitate analysis of the different types of narratives that are within each book are the following: 1) Tim O'Brien’s *The Things They Carried*; 2) Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer*; 3) Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds*; and 4) Helen Benedict’s *Sand Queen*. All four books were chosen because each one is representative of how the authors of each book conceptualize or understand how the Vietnam War and the 2003 Iraq invasion can enforce concepts of either Truth or truth. For example, the novel *The Sympathizer* structures a narrative from the viewpoint of a Vietnamese double agent, in which the main character is present in situations that involve both the North Vietnamese and their South Vietnamese counterparts. The point of this book is that the author is trying to accentuate that the Vietnam War is so complex and traumatic that it is necessary to perceive and construct concepts of truth that involve the perspectives of the North and South Vietnamese.

On the other hand, *Sand Queen*, by Helen Benedict, is a multivoiced novel that situates the 2003 Iraq conflict through the voices of US female soldiers and Iraqi female civilians. Benedict constructs a narrative that requires a reader to conceptualize concepts of internal voice narrative design. This is defined as being factors that help a reader understand how a character in a novel subconsciously constructs meaning. To continue, the author of this novel confronts questions to help either the main protagonist or antagonist form an internal point of view that then helps them design an external environment. This in turn helps them formulate a concept of
truth that influences how females in the US forces and Iraqi civilians interact with each other during a military occupation.

Additional novels that have been selected for my analysis are Tim O'Brien’s *The Things They Carried* and Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds*. *The Things They Carried* has stirred vigorous debates ever since its initial publication in 1990. This is because academics and Veterans of the Vietnam War hold different points of view concerning whether the book is a genuine representation of the Vietnam War experience or just one soldier's attempt at explaining his frustration with the Vietnam War. The rationale behind why this book was chosen for my thesis project is that I analyze how the author frames issues that involve time, space, and truth within particular stories that say something about or have a relationship to the principals of rhetorical theory.

The final novel I discuss is *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers. *The Yellow Birds* is similar to *The Things They Carried* in that *The Yellow Birds* is considered to be the preeminent novel that accurately explains and describes the events of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The reason behind selecting this novel is that it fits into an overall discussion of how aspects of Postmodernist theory have influenced the writing of war literature. This is in large part since *The Yellow Birds* employs unique rhetorical strategies such as discussions about light and darkness and the fading of memory. These rhetorical strategies can be turned into tools to understand how the author constructs his concept of epistemology.

**Methodological Design**

I will examine the intersection between fictional narratives of the Vietnam War and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 from a rhetorical position of strength that argues that the
implementation of a narrative theory methodology permits a more expansive application of the ideas that comprise the study of rhetorical theory than existing theories such as feminism. A construction of narrative theory fits into a postmodernistic paradigm since it amplifies how the different voices that come from the text of these novels illuminate diverse concepts of epistemology.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide the implementation of a narrative methodological formula for this project are:

- How does each piece of war literature that serves as a primary source for this research project interact or highlight concepts of epistemological truth in terms of Truth and truth?
- What are the differences between how multi-voice narratives and singular voice narratives construct concepts of truth that are highlighted in their texts?
- How do the characters that are at the center of the plots in the four novels conceptualize truth and how does that influence how the characters define war within the scope of narrative theory?
- How does the narrator in each of the four primary sources serve as a mitigating factor towards a conceptualization of either Truth or truth, which is prevented from being understood?

Each research question by itself is connected to the overall topic of this thesis since an individual question touches or discuss aspects of epistemology or textual analysis, and taken together, they provide a logical framework for discussion. My discussion involves an in-depth
analysis of what factors contribute to an author’s construction of truth that is blurred within the text of a novel and make it difficult for me as a researcher to uncover the nature of truth within the text.

**Philosophical Approaches that Are a Part of Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework for this thesis analyzes how philosophical approaches from the field of rhetorical theory interact or substantiate concepts of epistemological belief, which can be extrapolated from a text of either a multi-voiced or singular voiced novel.

This will involve examining an analyzing the view of a variety of scholars such as Martin Heidegger's “The Exposition of the Question of the Meaning of Being.” This is connected to formulations of epistemological truth in that it notes a concept of Truth in that the essence of being is a philosophical approach that believes the essence of man can be categorized and labeled to fit a certain definition, thereby removing any obscurity from the concept of being.

The privilege to categorize comes from the structure of relationships, which can be in either universal or heretical structure where one group is seen by another as being universally inferior. This is seen in the quote below from the book *The Sympathizer*. In their initial encounter, Kate Brady is surprised that Naema can speak English articulately (Benedict 20). Such a perception of the other undergirds a type of discursive rhetoric that is at the roots of Michael Foucault's *Anthropology Of Knowledge* and Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. In contextualizing Foucault’s philosophies towards X, western rhetoric constantly categorizes individuals of other cultures into groups and structures. Therefore, the categorization of other
people then forms a vocabulary of words that stigmatize and overgeneralize a certain group of people during an epoch or time (Foucault 33).

In conjunction with notions of philosophies that solidify concepts of Truth, there also have been writers who have undergirded ideas of truth. One such writer is Sir Frances Bacon. Bacon saw the connection between rhetoric and epistemology in several different ways. The first significant model he gave was to perceive the relationship as a metacognitive one that uses reason and memory of the mind to envision certain imaginations of science and applies them to reality (Hertzberg and Bizzell 737). In order to do so effectively, individuals have to observe how epistemology and truth are created at the ground level. This served the foundations of truth, which argued that the long epoch of history that is part of Truth should be broken down into smaller time periods that help determine how language and truth are developed within a certain cultural context. According to Bacon, doing so can “dispel the mist of prejudice and complacency that hinder the acquisition of learning” (Herzberg and Bizzell 727).

This predisposition then contributes to rhetorical or linguistical prejudices that illuminate certain falsehoods in how one culture that is deemed superior views another. This is seen in the quote below from the book Sand Queen. One of the reasons Kate Brady enlisted in the army was because she believes “the lord lift up the downtrodden, he casts off his wicked ways to the ground” (Benedict 44). The end result is that Kate constructs a messianic vision of the American mission in Iraq, one that involves changing every individual Iraqi citizen, and how the people of Iraq saw themselves as human beings.

What this expresses about epistemology and warfare is that epistemology in warfare is determined by how the perceived victor in a war conceptualizes the being or essence of those
that have suffered the most. This concept is taken from Martin Heidegger’s “The Exposition of the Question of the Meaning of Being.” Heidegger argues that following warfare, the essence, or being, of humanity can be formalized into a uniform structure (3). That can assist individuals in understanding how to be who they are and how to conceptualize an environment.

Multi-voiced narratives such as Helen Benedict’s *Sand Queen* seek to identify and expand how female voices contextualize war from a perspective of how they navigate their personal experiences and then transform the experiences into an overall arching narrative of truth (Haytock 338).

**Conclusion**

Chapter Two has designed and articulated a logical research formula for this project. In terms of methodology, I construct an overall methodological structure that examines how pieces of war fiction illuminate concepts of epistemology within a framework or narration. This framework allows me flexibility in determining how and why the voices that are a part of singular and multivoiced narratives are representative of being a rhetorical mediating factor in how the author's voice prevents an enlightened conceptualization of the text itself.

Secondly, this chapter has also documented how traditional methodologies such critical discourse analysis or a feminist perspective have certain shortcomings that confine the potential applicability of this study.

The next chapter situates discussion around first-person narratives and documents and compares how first-person narratives in war literature are unique and help to conceptualize a distinct category of epistemology. In Chapter Three, I discuss in-depth the development and structure of first-person narratives of war novels such as Tim O'Brien’s *The Things They Carried*
and Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds* demonstrate concepts of truth. Moreover, in Chapter Three, I provide evidence that illustrates the degree to which notions of truth are undergirded by philosophical approaches in rhetorical theory.
CHAPTER THREE

Part 1: The Things They Carried

Introduction

War fiction as a specific genre has attempted to introduce readers to the context in which war is fought and why it is fought. Authors such as Tim O’Brien and Kevin Powers have achieved bringing the first-person narrative to light. Their first-person narratives try to explain the complexities of the Vietnam War and the American invasion of Iraq, respectively.

These novels are sophisticatedly structured so that they can highlight a unique relationship between literature and epistemology. I argue that the texts of The Things They Carried and The Yellow Birds incorporate rhetorical and philosophical ideas that illuminate different concepts of truth; I show that the different philosophical frameworks that are intervolving within the text of each novel bring to light divergent rhetorical interpretations of the meaning of war.

Literature Review of The Things They Carried

In this literature review I discuss how, in general terms, contemporary debates on issues of epistemology and war fiction have contributed to my analysis of The Things They Carried.

One avenue of analysis that has not been extensively researched is the connection that exists between first-person narrative war fiction and issues of epistemology. Authors such as Tina Chen, in her article, “Unraveling the Deeper Meaning: Exile and the Embodied Poetics of Displacement in Tim O’Brien's The Things They Carried,” tangentially touched on the topic of epistemology in her discussion of the concepts of “Rhetorical Exile and Rhetorical Homeland”
She propagates the position that O'Brien, as both narrator and character in certain stories, is attempting to construct an epistemological philosophy that allows his stories and his conception of the Vietnam War to find a rhetorical space among American contemporary audiences.

Despite the contributions that Chen has brought to the analysis of first-person fictional narratives of war, the present scholarship does not provide a context in which an individual can appreciate how a text of a fictional novel of war emanates different perspectives of epistemological thought from a text. Jennifer Haytock, in her article, “Reframing War Stories: multi-voiced Novels of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” postulates that one of the reasons for a reluctance within war scholarship today to address research questions in connection with multi-voiced narratives is that practitioners have become too beholden to conventional analysis that evaluates war literature in terms of gender or institutional structures (341).

In choosing to diminish the importance of epistemology, Haytock contends that this has left war scholarship to discuss conventional themes such as the concept of the “Traumatic War Hero Narrative” (341). The notion of the traumatic war hero places at the center of analysis the issue of how a soldier loses their masculinity. This masculine identity is gradually replaced with a perspective that looks towards a man in a feministic light (Haytock 342). Such a concept as “Traumatic War Hero Narrative” has negative implications on the role of narratives within war fiction. This is because by focusing exclusively on the male perspective of masculinity, Haytock believes that scholars are excluding additional narrative voices that might enrich and extend the application of war narrative beyond the traditional bounds of feminist theory (342).

I have integrated the ideas and concepts of this literature review into a specific methodological framework that directs the course of the analysis of The Things They Carried.
Methodological Design

I advocate that the rhetorical methodology that is in *The Things They Carried* is not a form of metafiction. Rather, O’Brien’s construction of his internal voice helps construct what Jerome Bruner calls a “Life World.” To paraphrasing Bruner's definition, a Life World is an imaginary construction of what a situational context should be within the minds of characters or narrators (690).

Bruner, in “Life as Narrative” defines internal voice as a form of autoethnography “that permits a person or character to construct stories that do not happen in the real world, but rather are constructed in people’s heads” (691). To continue, Bruner states that the creation of these stories is an aspect of how an individual develops "ways of world-making" (692).

Further, Bruner’s construction of the concept of world-making is connected to mimetic narration so that both mimetic narration and world-making are concepts that seek to logically paint a picture of reality as it exists in real-time in the mind of a narrator (692). Moreover, both mimetic narration and the concept of world-making seek to situate the text of a fictional narrative at the center of analysis.

My analysis centers on the following structure:

- What is the connection between O'Brien’s (as narrator) construction of the meaning of warfare and the ideas of Frederick Nietzsche?
- How does O'Brien integrate notions of truth to inform and highlight significant experiences of warfare in Vietnam? These experiences are shaped and defined in ways that are similar to the concepts of Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic.*
• How does O'Brien provide a context for understanding how he develops stories that include the facts from the experiences of other soldiers? I demonstrate how O'Brien's approach to storytelling is an example of subject-centered reasoning that closely parallels the ideas and arguments of Jürgen Habermas’s *An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Reasoning*.

Formatting my analysis in this manner allows a detailed investigation into how certain philosophical theories of the rhetorical tradition intertwine with specific elements of *The Things They Carried*. I strategically chose certain chapters to show how *The Things They Carried* as a text places a spotlight on the truth. This methodological framework and the questions that are associated with it will be expanded upon in greater detail in the following discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework that will comprise and textual study of *The Things They Carried*.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical and conceptual framework for the first portion of this chapter centers around analyzing and discussing how chapters within the text of *The Things They Carried* intertwine with philosophical approaches from rhetorical theory. The analysis includes Fredrich Nietzsche’s essay “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” Michel Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic*, and Jürgen Habermas’s *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Each of these writings was chosen because they situate a discussion of concepts of truth epistemology, which in turn can be transferred into a textual analysis of certain chapters of *The Things They Carried*. The chapters that correspond closely to the ideas that are expressed in the works of the trio of philosophers are “On the Rainy River,” “I Killed a Man,” and “Speaking of Courage.”
Each chapter was chosen individually because the text of the chapters articulated a complex perspective of war, truth, and rhetoric.

Now I will begin my examination of how each thinkers' approach to epistemology intertwines and results in, a sophisticated interpretation of warfare.

A Rhetorical Analyses of Friedrich Nietzsche and “On The Rainy River”

A textual examination of the relationship between truth and warfare within the context of war literature must begin with a discussion about how the main character or narrator in a novel constructs a meaning of war. This construction can be seen in the chapter called “On the Rainy River.” In providing a synopsis of the chapter, it can be argued that “On the Rainy River” is both a rhetorical and metaphorical construction of how O’Brien perceived himself in terms of his participation in the Vietnam War and epistemology. In connecting the chapter “On the Rainy River” to how O’Brien constructs meaning within the context of the Vietnam war, I also argue that O’Brien's definition of the Vietnam War is philosophical.

This philosophical formula has its origins in an internal struggle that is dominating how O’Brien is struggling to reconcile his definition of the Vietnam War versus with the definition of his community. To continue with this, O’Brien views himself as an intellectual who has lived in an abstract world that is too good to live within during the realities of war. This is connected to the ideas of truth in that this highlights the fact that O’Brien questions the authority of institutions to determine his fate in Vietnam. O’Brien states:

I was too good for this war. Too smart, too compassionate, too everything. It couldn’t happen. I was above it. I had the world dicked-Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude and
president of the student body and full-ride scholarship for grad studies at Harvard. A mistake, maybe a foul-up in the paperwork. I was no soldier. (39)

This quotation is important because O'Brien is contextualizing his identification of himself and his decentralized notion of truth. O'Brien thinks of himself as a progressive person who is completely unequipped to function within an institution such as the military, which he believes perpetuates oppression by military force. O'Brien's internal voice is forcing him to confront the question of who determines subjective truth in a time of war. O’Brien, like Nietzsche, is questioning where philosophers derive the authority to formulate a concept of truth that is meant to distort the perception that human nature and humans have of themselves.

Nietzsche connects his criticism to the role and function of the all-powerful philosopher in terms of how philosophers distort rhetoric and language to reach a false truth. This can be seen in a quote from the essay “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” in which Nietzsche states:

What is then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphism; in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions, they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal no longer coins. (112)

This quotation is linked to the overall perimeters of this chapter, in that both Nietzsche and O'Brien are projecting their internal voices outward; they examine how rhetoric can be used as a
weapon to simplify notions of truth that have long-lasting consequences that are not thought about when they are constructed. O'Brien, in *Things They Carried* states:

I'd be screaming at them, telling them how much I detested their blind, thoughtless, automatic acquiescence to it all, their simple-minded patriotism, their prideful ignorance, their love-it-or-leave-it platitudes, how they were sending me off to fight a war they didn't understand and didn't want to understand. I held them responsible. By God, yes, I did. (43)

O'Brien is criticizing how Truth can design a framework of a knowledgeable overarching rationale for America's participation in the Vietnam War. O'Brien's position is that he questions how each factor or element in the quotation above is connected. The significance of not having a cohesive rhetorical message is that it could lead to rhetorical division and alienation of people from one another. This can occur because an individual can take hold of a particular argument that is a part of a scatter message and make it their truth. The quotation above does qualify as a mimetic narrative since O'Brien is attempting to use his inner voice as a way to construct a plot.

Secondly, the characters that are in this plot are determined by the words being stated. Their simple-minded patriotism notes a disgust in O'Brien’s voice towards how his fellow citizens construct a meaning of warfare that does not take into account the consequences of the Vietnam War and those who have to fight it. This is significant because O’Brien is stating that his fellow citizens of Minnesota who are not going to Vietnam are provided the luxury of constructing an interpretation of the Vietnam War in terms of an absolute construct because they are not the ones who are going to die.
O’Brien’s first-person narrative *The Things They Carried* and the philosophical position of Nietzsche in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” both have a distrust of the notion of Truth. O’Brien and Nietzsche might say that Truth is static and controls the capabilities of mankind to use their skills of rationality and reason. O’Brien then uses the text of *The Things They Carried* to argue for a more nuanced meaning of war.

This nuanced position is born out of a stance of philosophical uncertainty that suggests that larger, overarching philosophies do not appreciate the point that words and rationality can sometimes be incongruent to one another. This incongruency is purposefully designed by individuals in institutions to divide society into factions. During times of war, the factions that are a by-product and created by institutions frame the meaning and context of warfare that is intended to obscure or exaggerate the actual events that are occurring on the ground.

That concepts of large encompassing epistemologies influence how soldiers construct meanings of war is countered in the chapter “On The Rainy River” in *The Things They Carried*. This chapter presents a conflicting picture of how the soldier engenders a definition of warfare; for the soldier, when a meaning of warfare is situated within the context of the construction of Truth, it places the soldier in a difficult situation and in an ethical dilemma. O'Brien wanted to follow his consciousness and oppose the war, but due to his confusion over how he constructs the meaning of the Vietnam War, he became paralyzed wanting to not disappoint his family and friends (O’Brien 55). A detailed textual analysis of the chapter “On the Rainy River” illuminates the fact that O'Brien as a soldier had difficulty constructing an overall meaning of the Vietnam War because the war was poorly defined and could not be applied abstractly to his situation. “On The Rainy River” is connected to the work of Nietzsche in that it demonstrates O’Brien’s
aversion to how words can form an abstract concept that leads only to partial knowledge or understanding of an issue. This is connected to the research question that is associated with these two authors in that this handicap then extends one’s dependence on so-called experts or philosopher kings to teach and impart knowledge onto human beings when individuals are fully capable of deciding for themselves.

The theme of embracing abstraction is key to understanding how O'Brien viewed his own experiences and and developed his own conceptual epistemologies.

*The Birth of the Clinic and “The Man I Killed”*

The writings of Michael Foucault diverge significantly from Nietzsche’s writings; rather than discussing scientific knowledge, Foucault contextualizes a concept of truth that brings in the factors of rhetorical mediation and deconstruction in an attempt to design a concrete interpretation of the war.

One reason *The Things They Carried* is an interesting narrative is because O'Brien designs storylines in which he encounters instances of truth within the context of fighting in the Vietnam War. The chapter “The Man I Killed” is one such example; the significance of this chapter involves O'Brien as narrator and writer and his attempt to understand the enemy, which, in this case, is a North Vietnamese soldier. The chapter begins as an alpha company, which is the name of O'Brien's platoon, is engaged in a battle with the North Vietnamese. One of the casualties in the conflict is a young man who is hung from a tree. As the chapter continues, O'Brien the narrator offers a detailed description of how the enemy soldier looked.
His jaw was in his throat, his upper lip and teeth were gone, his one eye was shut, his other eye was a star-shaped hole, his eyebrows were thin and arched like a woman’s, his nose was undamaged, there was a slight tear at the lobe of one ear, his clean black hair was swept upward into a cowlick at the rear of the skull, his forehead was lightly freckled, his fingernails were clean, the skin at his left cheek was peeled back in three ragged strips, his right cheek was smooth and hairless, there was a butterfly on his chin, his neck was open to the spinal cord and the blood there was thick and shiny and it was this wound that had killed him. (118)

This important statement is valuable to my thesis because it amplifies how O'Brien’s internal voice and life world, as described and defined by Jerome Bruner, shapes reality. O'Brien is trying to empathize with the enemy. How O'Brien goes about describing the enemy undergirds a philosophical perspective of truth because it is O'Brien's perception of the enemy that influences his construction of truth. Similarly, Foucault argues in *The Birth of the Clinic* that as medical science has become more sophisticated throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, it has had deleterious consequences for physicians’ relationships with their patients (11). Through their years of training, physicians have reduced their knowledge of individuals in terms of "space and classes" (Foucault 10).

Furthermore, Foucault defines space as "the objective choice in favor of objectivity itself" (10). This concept centers on the belief that objectivity is constant in all modes of communication. Moreover, objectivity confines epistemological study concerning rhetorical tradition in that it imposes formalistic rules and guidelines on which discourse and conversation are to be determined (Foucault 12). A consequence of space is classification. This is when
certain classes of professionals such as doctors project a dimension of power over their patients through observation. This form of observation comes in two categories: “gaze and glance” (Foucault 13-14).

Each of these concepts is central to Foucault's theory that knowledge or truth resides in how individuals with a certain category of knowledge observe items and things and extract meaning from those objects (13). For instance, the gaze is when doctors describe the relationship between "the visible and invisible—which is necessary to all concrete knowledge—changed its structure, revealing through gaze and language what had previously been below and beyond their domain" (Foucault 13). “A new alliance was forged between words and things enabling one to see and say” (Foucault 12). Individuals can make a rhetorical connection between the object or individual they see and themselves.

Foucault constructs this concept of gaze as a means of comparison to glance, which is understood to be only observing objectively and empirically and in doing so constructing the meaning of the overall context in which an object or item can be found in a simplistic context of words (Foucault 12-13).

The gaze is connected to O’Brien in The Things They Carried; O’Brien rationalizes the general act of killing, which includes his disillusionment with how the act of killing objectifies the human being. O’Brien uses elements of the gaze to understand his background and why he would join the North Vietnamese side. O’Brien says:

He would have been taught that to defend the land was a man’s highest duty and highest privilege. He had accepted this. It was never open to question. Secretly, though, quitting frightened him. He was not a fighter. His health was poor, his body small and frail. He
liked books. He wanted someday to be a teacher of mathematics. At night, lying on his mat, he could not picture himself doing the brave things his father had done, or his uncles, or the heroes of the stories. (119)

This quotation is significant for two reasons. First, it has the characteristics of mimetic narration and the concept of the living world. It is mimetic since it follows traditional lines as O’Brien constructs central storylines around what the soldier's life would have been if he would not have joined the North Vietnamese army. The quote undergirds the principles of truth because by using observation and analysis, human beings can contextualize their experience through means of reconstruction. O’Brien does this when he attempts to place the dead soldier in the context of a life-world by articulating his inner voice, making the soldier's life parallel his own, thereby permitting him an opportunity to distance himself from the killing by replacing a violent experience with a more humane one. This quote also upholds notions of truth through the principles of gaze by understanding and appreciating the true essence of the individual; O’Brien establishes a mutual connection between himself and the soldier outside the boundaries of war.

However, within war narratives, main characters such as O’Brien are prevented from expanding their analysis of what they observe into the realm of epistemological sciences. This is because their fellow soldiers remain attached to the prevailing thinking that when in war they are supposed to kill other human beings without concerning themselves with their personal stories. For example, when Kiowa, a fellow soldier, says to O’Brien “Just forget that crud, he said. He opened up his canteen and held it out for a while and then sighed and pulled it away. No sweat, man. What else could you do?” Later, Kiowa said, “I’m serious. Nothing anybody could do. Come on, stop staring” (O’Brien 120).
Unlike his fellow soldiers, O'Brien wants a concept of truth that values the experiences of both armies and underscores the idea that American soldiers and North Vietnamese soldiers have much in common with one another. This concept of unity is a common feature within first-person narratives of war because rationalize soldiers’ engagement with the brutality of war. Further, Kiowa’s language represents a form of rhetorical mediation and the concept of the glance. Rhetorical mediation is defined and contextualized by David R. Russel in “Writing Mediates Activity,” which defines mediation as the act of writing as an obstacle that “comes between, intervenes in—the activity of people” (26).

From a textual point of view, the actions of Kiowa can be labeled as mitigating since he tries to intervene in O'Brien's attempt to understand the North Vietnamese soldier’s experience. The rhetorical object that Kiowa uses as a wedge to come between O'Brien and the soldier is the philosophical design of glance; Kiowa admonishes O’Brien to not humanize the enemy in an environment of warfare, the purpose of war being to kill the enemy and survive. Kiowa states, “Tim, it’s war. The guy wasn’t Heidi—he had a weapon, right? It’s a tough thing, for sure, but you got to cut out that staring” (O’Brien 120). Kiowa’s words underscore the point that during times of war, attaining a more humanistic or philosophical point of view or truth is difficult due to the environmental context of war. This is extended to the issues of how soldiers tell their stories to audiences that have not participated in the war or the war that the soldier has experienced.

The correlation between Foucault’s philosophies and O’Brien’s behavior is that both writers are seeking ways in which individuals can understand others without classifying or objectifying the person. This concept is linked to the research question in this section in that both
authors are presenting truth within a context that permits them to provide flexibility and context that includes observing the other within the confines of their own cultural dynamics.

Highlighting the writings of Nietzsche and Foucault demonstrates how the text of The Things They Carried undergirds a perspective of truth that attempts to prevent an individual from coming to terms with how they specifically define warfare for themselves.

**Jurgen Habermas and "Speaking of Courage"**

Here, the ideas of Jurgen Habermas are applied to the final chapter of The Things They Carried, “Speaking Of Courage,” which is the story of Norman Bulker, a soldier who served along with O'Brien in Vietnam. This narrative centers on how Bulker was unable to live up to how his Midwestern community defined courage. Bulker notes that this town defined courage by how many medals or accommodations he brought home from Vietnam (O'Brien 132).

The significance of this definition is that Bulker had to create a construction of truth that was based on how his community and his father conceptualized courage, prompting Bulker to discuss his war stories in terms of phrases such as "I almost won the silver star" (O'Brien 136). Framing his experience in this way signifies that Bulker does not have to confront or talk about the situational context that would have rewarded him the silver star: the safe capture of Kiowa.

This story can be understood within the context of truth because the reality is constructed by language that is derived from previous generations’ meaning of the term. True stories within the context of storytelling narrative want to integrate how they have been taught how to think about the word within personal narratives as a means of expressing themselves. However, a problem emerges when society and a person's interpretation of a word or phrase do not align.
In his article, “An Alternative way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,” Habermas offers a framework that is based upon a theory of communicative action (589). The key components of the communicative action are that rationality and linguistics are linked (Habermas 589). This is significant because Habermas’s framework alters the discussion on the range of truth; he shifts the nature of dialogue from the object, which can be considered to be a thing or item, to the subject. The subject is the person in a narrative who is telling a story. The typology provided by Habermas creates a community-centered action in which persons who are a part of a dialogue or a discussion help to define what a term means as they are discussing a concept. The idea of community-centered action is beneficial to both the listener and the storyteller in terms of how a particular subject or groups of individuals define terms that are essential to a story and its conclusion (Habermas 594).

An example of how Habermas’s contextual concepts engage the text of this chapter is when Bulker is describing the events of battle to his father:

Song Tra Bong overflowed its banks and the land turned into a deep, thick muck for a quarter-mile on either side. Just muck—no other word for it, like quicksand, almost, except the sink was incredible. "You couldn't even sleep," he'd tell his father. "At night you'd find a high spot, and you'd doze off, but then later you'd wake up because you'd be buried in all that slime. You'd just sink in. You'd feel it ooze up over your body and sort of suck you down. And the whole time there was constant rain. I mean, it never stopped, not ever.” (O’Brien 136)

In placing this quotation within in the rhetorical context of Habermas, this narrative is a form of subject-centered reasoning because it is how Bulker contextualizes the events and how
he defines the terms of the events. Bulker is trying to provide for his father a sense of the
environment of Vietnam so his father can appreciate how Bulker defines the war, which is in
stark contrast to how Bulker’s father views and constructs the meaning of the Vietnam War.
Unlike Bulker, his father constructs the meaning and purpose of warfare from a perspective that
accentuates the masculinity and bravery of soldiers, which is symbolized by how many medals a
soldier wins (O’Brien 136). In the following exchange, however, Bulker constructs a definition
of the event from his father’s perspective, and his father expands his own definition of courage:

He looked out across the lake and imagined the feel of his tongue against the truth. “Well,
this one time, this one night out by the river ... I wasn’t very brave.”

“You have seven medals.”

“Sure.”

“Seven, count ‘em. You weren’t a coward either.”

“Well, maybe not. But I had the chance and I blew it. The stink, that’s what got to me. I
couldn’t take that god-damn awful smell” (O’Brien 136)

The shift in his father is significant in terms of community-centered reasoning and is in
line with Habermas; opposing parties agree on the precise definition of a term that contextualizes
an entire event (Habermas 594). Mutual agreement can occur when both participants who are
engaged in a dialogue eliminate preconceived rhetorical signs and symbols that were formerly
applied to a definition (Habermas 597), as demonstrated in Bulker and his father’s agreement on
the definition of courage:

Courage was not always a matter of yes or no. Sometimes it came in degree, like the
cold; sometimes you were brave up to a point and then beyond that point you were not so
brave. In certain situations you could do incredible things, you could advance towards the enemy fire, but in other situations, which were not nearly so bad, you had trouble keeping your eyes open. Sometimes, like that night in the shit field, the difference between courage and cowardice was something small and stupid. (O’Brien 141)

“One on the Rainy River, “Speaking of Courage” and “I Killed a Man” highlight an evolution in the novel’s framing of the notion of. “On the Rainy River” gave an impression that truth is formed in a dialectic struggle between a narrator’s internal voice contextualizes and pre-determines a definition of war against their external environment. “I Killed a Man” constructs a more sophisticated and mature view of truth in part because it uncovers how a predetermined abstract notion of truth does not necessarily correspond with the reality of war. O'Brien as narrator perceives the war in human terms rather than political and philosophical terms.

_The Things They Carried_ employs Habermas's model of community-centered action to fill a gap between soldiers and civilians; they can build consensus around issues concerning the meaning of warfare. Both Bulker and his father both denied a concrete concept of truth based on lived experiences of the Vietnam War and their relativistic nature; they embraced the ambiguity and complexity of warfare.

This section demonstrates the possibilities and potential for individuals to create rhetorical spaces for a community to come together and to agree upon language to form a communal concept of truth. Moreover, Habermas’s perspective on the concept of epistemology seeks to expand and change the parameters of how language is used in order to define the wartime experience.
Lessons Learned

Many lessons can be taken away from the first part of Chapter Three. The first lesson has to do with how the nature and scope of the internal voice of a narrator that operates within a structure of a first-person narrative to solve an inchoate dilemma that is taking place. In connecting this to a concept of warfare, and specifically O'Brien's internal voice *In The Things They Carried*, I argue that O'Brien attempts to make sense of the complex and abstract environment of Vietnam by searching for to help himself place his new situation into context. For example, in the chapter “I Killed A Man,” O'Brien paradoxically attempts to find common ground with an enemy soldier to not lose his sense of humanity. Despite his attempts to make sense out of his predicament by considering another’s perspective of truth, O'Brien is discouraged from doing so by his fellow soldiers and his platoon, who want to bring O’Brien back to the reality of war.

The second lesson learned is the epistemological message that O'Brien centered on the fact that truth is relative to a struggle in which the internal voice of the character wants to transcend the limitations of their environment and find a rhetorical space in which a construction of truth can be a part of how American society conceptualizes the Vietnam War.

Part II: *The Yellow Birds*

Introduction

The American invasion of Iraq had a profound impact on American society and politics, the result of how America went to war and the rationale given by the US government to its citizens as to why we needed to be in Iraq and the failures to execute our policy. Moreover, at the
root remains the dilemma facing Americans: what is the nature of warfare and how can truth and epistemology play a part in determining the scope and breadth of warfare.

*The Yellow Birds*, by Kevin Powers, seeks to answer many of these questions within the context of the experiences of the main character. *The Yellow Birds* is considered to be the preeminent novel that adequately explains the Iraq war from the point of view of a soldier; it interweaves a notion of truth in which the main character, John Bartle, seeks to distance himself from the war through an analysis of his external environment and the relationship that he forms with fellow soldier, Daniel Murphy.

**Literature Review of The Yellow Birds**

Scholars within the broad fields of the sciences and humanities have identified themes within the text of *The Yellow Birds* that include ideas relating to the field of psychology and rhetoric. In situating *The Yellow Birds* as an examination of psychological trauma and memory, scholars such as M. Ikbal, M. Alosman, and Raihanah Mydin, in their article, “Survival Psychology in Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds*,” argue that the novel “underlies a survival psychology that demonstrates unpredictable and threatening situations where people's lives are a stake, they either choose to fight, flight or freeze in reaction to these horrible experiences” (139).

Ikbal, Alosman, and Mydin state that the main character experiences the four steps of psychological survival, which are: pre-impact period, impact period, post-impact period, and conclusion (144-147). In each stage of this cycle, the authors argue that the psychological state of Bartle designs an external regulatory mechanism that permits the main character of *The Yellow Birds* to control himself within his environment. Thus, the main character is permitted to
design a concept of an epistemological perspective that corresponds to a particular situation. This
facilitates him reacting and adapting to his environment and embracing certain elements that
create a perspective of truth; this prevents an audience from truly uncovering how the text of The
Yellow Birds amplifies a philosophy of epistemology.

Contemporary scholars have examined how this psychological theme says something
larger about the Iraq war generation and how it is different from the WWI and WWII
generations. In the article “The Great War, The Iraq War, and Post-Modern America: Kevin
Powers, The Yellow Birds and the Radical isolation of Todays U.S. Veterans," author Ty
Hawkins states that "Powers narrative and the Iraq War itself marks a radical departure from
earlier literature and conflicts, given the presence of an all-volunteer military in America, as well
as several other factors. This essay argues that Kevin Powers and his novel are ‘not members of a
lost generation so much as they are cut off from their generation" (Hawkins 95). What Hawkins
is stating here is that the psychological component reinforces the narrative style that Powers has
chosen. This is because Powers endeavors to articulate how different soldiers who participate in
the same conflict can have different interpretations of the purpose of war and can define the
conflict differently, resulting in isolation from one another.

In conjunction with the psychological interpretation of The Yellow Birds, a rhetorical
analysis of the strategies that author Powers uses to develop his text can contribute greatly to an
investigation of how the novel undergirds a philosophical perspective of truth. For example,
Precup’s "Reversing Absence: The Explorations of Memory in The Yellow Birds by Kevin
Powers" evaluates how cognitive memory can be integrated into rhetorical criticism. The author
postulates that the way that cognitive memory is used in The Yellow Birds is that Powers’s
an attempt at "revisiting stored memories of re-tracing the ‘absent of something’ of the past responsible for generating coherence on the individual level, functions as a mechanism for constructive a sense of self" (175). The significance of this statement is that Precup constructs an evaluation of *The Yellow Birds* from a perspective of psychology, in which memories of the past inform and construct present realities.

However, the protagonist in the novel does not want to come to terms with his frailties and mistakes. The main character engages in rationalization or revising his recollections (Precup 176). This activity not only allows an individual to try to understand the sequence of events that transpired, but also to make sense out of them. What Precup is focusing on is not so much the role of memory as a scientific analysis of *The Yellow Birds*, but a rhetorical strategy that explains why Bartle does not want to retrieve memories of his Iraq experience. This is the case because according to Precup, Bartle wants to design the facts and interpret the events in Iraq.

**Methodological Design**

For my analysis of *The Yellow Birds*, I use a focalization narrative for methodological design. I define focalization methodology as a structure that permits an analysis of a first-person narrative to pinpoint how the presence of the main character acts as a filter through which the entire novel can be conceptualized. Framing the analysis this way narrows the scope and perimeters of the main character’s position on truth.

According to scholar Goran Nieragden, focalization is a design that focuses on the subject at the center of a story in which the narrator or main character is the focalized (688).
Structuring an analysis around focalization will illuminate how Bartle perceives and reacts to his external environment and how that in turn creates a perspective of truth.

As a part of my methodological structure, I take into account Bartle's role and function as the narrator of the story by integrating the concepts and arguments of Wayne C. Booth’s *Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth defines a narrator as a person who takes the role of an observer and views what is happening in the text from an external position. The significance of this contextualization of the narrator’s role is that it allows me to consider how the environment of Iraq and specific situations that occur within the narrative affect Bartle’s external voice (Booth 153).

The questions that form the basis of my analyses are:

- In what fashion does John Bartle as the main character construct a definition of warfare and how is it connected to Guy Debord’s writings in *The Society of the Spectacle*? Is there a connection between how John Bartle constructs a meaning of warfare and Guy Debord’s definition of Truth?
- How does the promise that John Bartle makes to LaDonna Murphy affect his external environment in terms of his desire to be completely isolated and shut off from his own Iraq experience? Is there any connection in this promise and how it is made to the works of Jean Billiard in “The Ecstasy of Communication”?

Lastly, I analyze the relationship between the repercussions following John Bartle’s writing of a false letter to LaDonna Murphy and how that highlights aspects of Aristotelian truth.
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In integrate this methodological framework and the questions that are associated with it into an analysis of how The Yellow Birds illustrates a correlation between and among texts and certain philosophical approaches within the canon of Western rhetorical tradition. The theoretical and conceptual framework underscores the prevalence of rhetorical division and rhetorical alienation. The rhetorical division is defined as when the language and rhetoric of a text are meant to divide individuals into camps that frame their perspective of truth from how they interpret a text (Marx & Engels 5). In contrast, rhetorical alienation occurs when the internal design of a text articulates a message that is meant to ostracize or categorize a person that is different from the mainstream majority (Heidegger 4). In support of these general themes, I employ the writings of Guy Debord’s “The Society of the Spectacle” and Jean Baudrillard’s “The Ecstasy of Communication.”

John Bartle and Guy Debord

Powers’s purpose in designing the main character John Bartle was intended as a medium through which Powers would be able to articulate how he defines his experiences in the Iraq War and connect them to his experiences of epistemology. The text of The Yellow Birds is constructed in terms of a time sequence that shuffles between the past and the present.

Similar to The Things They Carried, The Yellow Birds emphasizes how past events can influence a contemporary soldier's present interpretation of the war. In the initial chapter “September 2004, Alta far Nineveh Province Iraq,” the Bartle’s voice provides a definition of the Iraq War:
Then, in summer, the war tried to kill us as the heat blanched all colors from the plains. The sun pressed into our skin, and the war sent its citizens rustling into the shade of white buildings. It cast a white shade on everything, like a veil over our eyes. It tried to kill us every day, but it had not succeeded. Not that our safety was preordained. We were not destined to survive. The fact is, we were not destined at all. The war would take what it could get. It was patient. It didn’t care about objectives, or boundaries, whether you were loved by many or not at all. While I slept that summer, the war came to me in my dreams and showed me its sole purpose: to go on, only to go on. And I knew the war would have its way. (3-4)

This quotation is important in terms of contextualizing how Bartle saw his environment in Iraq, which influenced his external voice. Bartle conceived of Iraq as an organism that would consume and kill anyone. Moreover, this organism didn’t care about how the army went about conducting its objectives, nor did it care about distinctions between reality, cruelty, and humanity. Eventually, the war would kill Bartle physiologically in terms of its emotional impact on him. This is significant because it is similar to the way that Debord constructs his concept of “the spectacle.”

In "The Society of the Spectacle," Debord contextualizes the spectacle as a set of images that enter into the conscious mind (Debord 2). These images are derived from how individuals not only conceive objects, but also how they perceive their surroundings (Debord 2). The result is that these images are meant to present a message of unity and identification with others when in actuality their real purpose is to sow division and polarization (Debord 4). This is noticeable when Bartle says during basic training, “Maybe all I noticed was a condition of reality,
applicable everywhere on earth: some people are extraordinary, and some are not. Sterling was, though I could see at times that he bristled at the consequences of this condition” (Powers 35). Bartle focalized his reality in terms of how he saw himself within the army’s structure; Bartle perceives himself as being distinct from the others in his platoon. From this outside position, Bartle is free to make judgments and observations of others and not apply them to himself. This frames how *The Yellow Birds* constructs truth; truth is not a straightforward concept. John Bartle develops his notion of the truth of warfare based upon his perceptions of others, which allows Bartle to view himself as not involved in the war; rather, he sees himself as a rational agent that is only observing the shortcomings of others (Booth 153).

To come towards a concrete view of truth one must navigate certain grey areas that they don't want to confront. In avoiding these grey areas, characters like Bartle design truth that is based not on an abstraction but on a disassociation of self from reality, thereby creating a "Life World" in which Bartle manipulates and reconstructs truths to fit his own separate and distinct reality.

This idea of creating an alternative reality that splinters off from an already unorthodox environment can be connected to the theoretical construct within this section because Bartle attempts to create a sense of himself as separate and outside of the context of Iraq. So therefore, he is projecting this observation of himself as the narrator upon the text.

**The Promise to LaDonna Murphy and Jean Bulliard**

Bartle's perception of himself as being external to the text of *The Yellow Birds* comes into conflict when he makes a promise that he cannot keep. Bartle conceives Iraq as an image in the form of an organism whose real purpose is to kill the American soldier. This realization creates
in Bartle a focalized narrative in which he filters a perception of others by distancing himself and not creating emotional connections. The next context in which Bartle expands this notion of alienation and division is in the promise that he makes to LaDonna Murphy, a promise that has a great consequence for Bartle’s construction of truth.

The context for this promise takes place at Fort Dix, New Jersey, which is the base for Bartle's company when it is shipping out to Al Talfar, Iraq. LaDonna Murphy is the mother of Daniel Murphy, a soldier in Bartle's company who will have a significant influence on Bartle throughout his experience in Iraq. LaDonna Murphy is concerned about her son; she implores Bartle to bring her son home alive:

“John, promise me that you’ll take care of him.”

“Of course”’ Sure, sure, I thought. Now you reassure me, and I’ll go back and go to bed.

“Nothing’s gonna happen to him, right? Promise that you’ll bring him home to me.”

“I promise,” I said. “I promise I’ll bring him home to you.” (Powers 47)

Jean Bulliard, in his article “The Ecstasy of Communication,” argues that within modern society today, there is no concept of objective reality, since time and space are created through images and words that lead to disorientation or misunderstanding of external reality (126). Individuals only examine truth in terms of what it means on the surface, thereby constructing truth to be artificial and without meaning (Bulliard 126-127).

This concept of the internal construction of truth can be analyzed in terms of the way Bartle made his promise to LaDonna Murphy. He never intended to keep the promise to LaDonna Murphy; he perceived it as just a way to assuage a concerned mother. LaDonna Murphy saw it differently and internalized it as a promise to her that her son would return alive.
Buillard’s “ecstasy of communication” is when two people understand different truths based on the same constructed words.

Under Bartle’s promise is an implication that he is interested only in protecting his interests and not those of the other individuals in his company. This obliviousness is seen again in a discussion between Bartle and his commanding Lieutenant Sterling:

“I overheard you talking to private Murphy’s mother.”

“Oh, right. That.”

“You shouldn’t have done that, private.”

“What?”

He stopped and put his hands on his hips. “C’mon promises? Really? You’re making fucking promises now?” (Powers 47)

Bartle is looking only at the surface rather than the possible consequences of making that promise to La Donna Murphy. Sterling realizes that he cannot keep the promise, because, in warfare, it is impossible to predict who will die and who will come back alive. From a rhetorical perspective, this dialog also underscores how Bartle designs the scope and function of his role as the narrator as being outside of the text. This is because he doesn't even realize the significance of the discussion and what role it would play throughout his Iraq experience; it signifies that Bartle sought to design a new interpretation of how words are constructed in the form of promises that would not leave him culpable if he does not fulfill them. But by solidifying the promise within the statement “I’ll bring him home,” Bartle boxes himself in, creating the expectation in LaDonna Murphy that the promise has already been fulfilled. Bartle struggles
throughout his Iraq experience to find ways and instances where he can bring Daniel Murphy home alive, but he is ultimately unsuccessful.

It could be argued that *The Yellow Birds*, suggests there is no connection between truth and warfare, that they are mutually exclusive Bartle’s designed truth was separates himself from the realities of his actions, creating and designing a notion of warfare based on an illusory meaning of warfare that is nebulous and uncertain so he could consciously avoid negative consequences.

**The Repercussions of John Bartle's False Letter and Aristotelian (t)Truth**

Following the death of Daniel Murphy, Bartle found himself in a quandary. This quandary revolved around his initial unkept promise to LaDonna Murphy and the actual death of her son. He compounded this imbroglio by writing a letter to LaDonna Murphy, posing as her son, to assuage her concern for her son’s safety; Bartle’s provides the following rationale for writing the letter:

I’d had this idea once that you had to grow old before you died. I still feel like there is some truth to it, because Daniel Murphy had grown old in the ten months I’d known him. And perhaps it was a need for something to make sense that caused me to pick up a pencil and write a letter to a dead boy’s mother, to write it in his name, having known him plenty long enough to know it was not his way to call his mother “Mom.” (Powers 30)

This quotation is important towards appreciating the rhetorical context that the author is trying to design. The text of *The Yellow Birds* is articulating a point in which the main character uses a concept of non-artistic proofs that are a part of the philosophies of Aristotle that accentuate the
importance of physical evidence or what is known partially based upon one’s external environment (Hertzberg and Bizzell 174). By situating a context of truth in this manner, the main character is perceiving truth in terms of a contractual give and take in which he frames a structure of truth from a partial knowledge of Daniel Murphy’s life, which he assumes comprises the totality of his life. Another trend that is hidden in the text is how the main charter places importance of living in the shadows of truth. The manner in which a character of a first-person narrative lives in shadows of truth underscores the value of rhetorical symbolism.

Bartle’s wanting to live in the shadows of the truth and his making a personal choice of self-alienation is a type of focalization that requires him to perceive those around him through a perspective that takes into account only a kind of truth that is designed to be a kaleidoscope of many different shapes and sizes and which allows Bartle to remain in the shadows. This symbolic rhetoric is shown when Bartle is wandering through the woods of northern Richmond, Virginia, and comes across a tree with his initials on it:

I hadn’t known what I was doing then, but my memories of Murph were a kind of misguided archaeology. Shifting through the remains of what I remembered about him was a denial of the fact that a hole was really all that was left, an absence I had attempted to reverse but found that I could not. There was simply not enough material to account for what had been removed. The closer I got to reconstructing him in my mind, the more the picture I was trying to re-create receded. (Powers 138)

This quotation undergirds Aristotle’s perspective on artistic proofs (Herzberg and Bizzell 171). According to Aristotle, artistic proofs are individual premises that stand alone, which are called enthymemes, which build upon each other. This construction of truth connects a specific logical
formula with a specific incident that permits Bartle to reconstruct his own recollections of Murphy, which permit him to create a narrative that absolves his guilt. The end result appeals to the logic, the ethics, and the emotions of an individual in an attempt to understand the specific contours that are designing a particular moment in time that is in turn contextualizing a truth. These parameters must be understood individually and not within an overarching framework (Herzberg and Bizzell 174).

In constructing truth in this manner, *The Yellow Birds* blurs the distinctions between present and past to absolve Bartle of any culpability. The fact that the memories of Daniel Murphy are receding in Bartle’s mind is not a demonstration of the absence of memory, but an illustration of the fact that war and one’s activities in war are difficult to comprehend within a present day audience of war literature. It must be understood abstractly by using metaphors such as the sun as a means of exposing the truth, which the soldier wants to remain hidden.

**Conclusion and Lessons Learned**

Both books elicit different interpretations of truth. For example, O'Brien constructs a narrative in which he wants to embrace the reality of the Vietnam War by contextualizing the connection that one can have with the enemy. However, at the same time, he must juggle the consequences of this interpretation in terms of the obstacles that he must overcome. One particular obstacle is the fact that others within his environment want him to embrace a concept of his internal voice that accentuates warfare in terms of killing and dying and patriotism. The obstacle in *The Yellow Birds* provides a different interpretational context for understanding truth within a first-person narrative. Powers presents a concept of truth in which the main character does not want to be associated with the realities of warfare. Unlike O'Brien, Bartle successfully
resists others’ pulling him back into a space where he must encounter warfare as it is. The reluctance on Bartle’s part to come to terms with the death of Daniel Murphy centers on his inability to contextualize his actions that led to LaDonna Murphy possessing a false construction of truth. In conjunction with the promise, the letter that Bartle wrote in the voice of Daniel Murphy permitted LaDonna Murphy to have some hope that her son was coming home.

In terms of finding a space for first-person narratives of war within rhetorical traditions, this chapter has laid out a roadmap for examining the concepts of external and internal voice, the role of narration in terms of mimetic and focalization, and finally, the diversity of interpreting the nexus between epistemology and an appropriate meaning of warfare.
CHAPTER FOUR

PART I: The Sympathizer

Introduction

The textual design of multivoiced narratives of the Vietnam War has allowed American and Vietnamese authors to provide a unique perspective on how the Vietnam era has shaped their present realities. Viet Thanh Nguyen, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, The Sympathizer, provides a very complex construction of how both the North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese conceived the realities of war. As a result of the textual construction of The Sympathizer, audiences must pay close attention to how the author of the text defines and constructs diverging formulas towards understanding a grand narrative of Truth.

The narrator of the novel is an undefined North Vietnamese double agent who has infiltrated the South Vietnamese diaspora in America. The rhetorical strategy in making the character unknown and invisible is that doing so allows the narrator to view both sides objectively. The narrator realizes that he must undergo different personas to create a rhetorical space. In doing so, the narrator constructs a narrative that exposes the contradictions and complexities that are central to how both the North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese construct meaning out of the Vietnam War. In the end, the text of The Sympathizer and the epistemological perspective that it proposes can be placed within a rhetorical construct that encapsulates a unified grand narrative that incorporates the principle of Truth.

Rhetorical theory situates a grand narrative concept as a pattern that combines the elements of rhetorical analysis in conjunction with philosophy to explain the progress that
society will make. One prominent rhetorical school of thought that has played a significant part in formulating grand narrative paradigms is the grand narrative of unity. A grand narrative of unity is valuable when trying to explain how a narrative compels people to come together and unite to reorganize society.

My argument in this chapter is that the narrator of *The Sympathizer* is functioning as a medium who is trying to expose the contradictions and misperceptions of both the North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese factions. In uncovering the underlying contradictions and misperceptions of both sides, the narrator is amplifying the grand narrative of unity, a rhetorical philosophy of Truth that must confront external and internal structural forces that reside within each of their movements. My rhetorical analysis takes into account how the spatial context of a particular event or scene in *The Sympathizer* exacerbates or heightens the presence of the structural forces at play. The presence of these factors makes it difficult for both the South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese to achieve their respective approaches to Truth and a grand narrative of unity.

**Literature Review**

A review of the scholarly debates that have evaluated the rhetorical significance of Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* has touched on many issues that have not been considered in the western rhetorical tradition. The debates that have mentioned *The Sympathizer* have taken on many different dimensions. One example is the debate between textual analysis and philosophical Truth.

A topic that has influenced how scholars examine the *The Sympathizer* is in the way Nguyen conceives of terms such as, "stateless refugee" (Kumamoto Stanly 282). In Sandra
Kumamoto Stanly’s “Citizens of the Imagination: Refugee Memory in Viet Thanh Nguyen's The Sympathizer and Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam And The Memory Of War” she argues that "Nguyen's search for a just memory might be mirrored in Hirsch's description of stateless memory--what I would describe as the exile of refugee memory" (283).

Kumamoto Stanley is arguing that Nguyen's textual design must be viewed in the wider construct and that, from a textual standpoint, Nguyen has developed a narrative text in The Sympathizer that portrayed the South Vietnamese as "stateless refugees." Conceiving a character as unencumbered by attachments permits a person to objectively evaluate Truth (Kumamoto Stanly 284). In not allowing a narrator to be defined by an ideology, the main character can find a solution out of an epistemological impasse (Kumamoto Stanley 284).

Kumamoto Stanley argues this is the case in part because of Nguyen's determination to paint the South Vietnamese as a minority group that is capable of reacting against the persistent racial stereotypes in literature and Western culture (284). One of the rhetorical outcomes of implementing the textual strategy of the stateless refugee as the focal point of the construction is that it requires Western audiences who are not familiar with Vietnamese war literature to challenge any preconceived or biased notions that they have of the South Vietnamese.

Another interesting topic that is being discussed within the ongoing debate regarding the rhetorical importance of The Sympathizer is that scholars of Asian descent are redefining issues of identity. Take, for example, Tianwel Liu’s article, “Refugee Narratives In Ru,” in which she writes about the South Vietnamese refugee experience as a general topic in Canadian literature. She argues that "in modern Canadian literature, refugee narratives reflect the change in global political power caused by Neo-Colonialism in the West after World War II as well as the
turbulence of the political situation in the Third World" (115). This is important in the sense that Liu is differentiating herself from Nguyen. Liu is proposing that scholarship within Asian-Pacific literature evaluate the Vietnam War in terms of identifying how the conflict disrupted local culture.

Textual themes accentuate the destruction of the social structure of South Vietnam, including evaluating the effects of dislocation in the rural areas and how topics of mass migration to the cities contributed to the collapse of the agrarian economic system (Liu 115). The issues that concern Liu are the issues that I discuss in this project. For example, I discuss the collapse of the agrarian economy in South Vietnam because the collapse of the agrarian society can help explain in context the reasons why communist ideology encountered obstacles in South Vietnam. This discussion evaluates Truth within a larger scope, which will point out the limitations of an overarching ideology as a theory versus its actual application in society.

In response to the arguments of other writers, Nguyen, says in his article, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," that Vietnamese American scholars have unwittingly accommodated American intellectuals’ contextualizations of the Vietnam War (2). Instead of identifying ways to accurately represent individuals who have experienced the destruction and the brutality of the Vietnam War, Nguyen postulates that scholars who are of Vietnamese descent have mirrored the common conventional analysis of Western scholars. (2).

Nguyen is of the opinion that Western scholars contextualized the concept of war as "something being fought by soldiers ‘over there’" (2), implying that Vietnamese scholars are situating the experiences of their parents and ancestors who had to escape their homeland as
some kind of intellectual abstraction and as a result, minimizing the effects the Vietnam War had on them (2).

Nguyen goes on to argue that identifying stories at the ground level of the villages helps scholars frame a concept of "just memory as a form of active resistance" (6). A rhetorical strategy that emphasizes "just memory" comes from Nguyen’s rethinking Truth as a paradigm that takes into account all existing experiences and ideologies of the Vietnam War. In attempting to do so, Nguyen designed a formula that can be used by other Vietnamese American scholars. This rhetorical strategy serves as a response to the "hegemonic American perspective that is prevalent within the field of Vietnam War literature (Nguyen 8).

The American hegemony in terms of Vietnam War literature can be understood through themes and issues that are still being interwoven within a narrative structure. For example, Jennifer Haytock, in her article, “Multi-Voiced Narratives of the Wars In Iraq and Afghanistan,” argues that traditionally American textual analysis of war focuses on reclaiming the hyper-masculine perspective of the American soldier while little or no attention is paid to how the multiple voices of different characters from a variety of cultures enrich textual analysis (338). Haytock’s opinion is that there is a shift occurring within the confines of war literature that will identify how –multiple voices, from the perspective of different characters, contribute to a fluidity within the four corners of a text (340). Haytock might also say that intellectuals and writers such as Nguyen are contributing to this shift, in that the arguments that he makes are forcing scholars to reassess how they interpret and understand fictional war novels.

Nguyen’s arguments can be linked to the scope and parameters of my project in that they provide unique questions to confront within the boundaries of textual analysis. Nguyen's
responses to the arguments of other scholars, such as those mentioned in this literature review, amplify the fact that there is not a consensus on how a grand narrative epistemology can influence the direction taken by multi-voiced novels of the Vietnam War. Multi-voiced narratives have the potential to frame a new perspective of the war and represent an opportunity for new voices to be added to the field of rhetoric.

What is absent from this literature review is an analysis of the important role that epistemology can play in understanding the many dimensions of a relationship between the text in *The Sympathizer* and a true definition of the Vietnam War. Within this literature review, it is the case that there is a modicum of discussion relating to the issues of epistemology. It is my intention that a discussion of the methodological design and research questions in the next section begins an evaluation of *The Sympathizer* within a broader rhetorical context, arhetorical context that includes a discussion of philosophical principals.

**Methodological Design and Research Questions**

The methodological design that forms the basis of my evaluation of *The Sympathizer* concerns the connection that exists between "spatial context as a part of "story world" (Herman 98). The methodological design facilitates a demonstration of how the methodological tool of spatial context “can be used in extracting a definition of Truth from multi-voiced narratives such as those in *The Sympathizer*. Scholar and author David Harmon defines "story world" as a school of narrative theory that seeks to connect events and incidences within a thematic context that informs the audience of a thematic message (98). Spatial context is essential to the creation of the story world in that spatial context "is the process of building a mental representation of narrated domains as evolving configurations of participants, objects, and places" (Herman 98).
From this definition, the meaning derived from spatial context is that it permits a test to rumin ate on the gray areas in which characters, objects, and events operate. This is done out of the need to demonstrate that specific decisions or events help prevent or propel the illustration of rhetorical philosophies from a textual document. The concept of spatial context helps me discern how to reconfigure the manner in which a particular context facilitates or prevents how the North Vietnamese formulate a concept of truth.

A spatial context methodology also permits me to evaluate and contextualize the countervailing forces that are preventing either side from winning the ideological battle and how the ideological struggle between North and South Vietnam is one of the key issues at the center of the text.

For instance, I evaluate whether the North Vietnamese side is struggling to gain traction to retake Vietnam from the communists. I examine what are the internal factors within the American political system that make it difficult for the South Vietnamese side to gain political support for their endeavor to loosen the grip of North Vietnam. The absence of adequate political support is a void within the narrative that has a significant effect on how the South Vietnamese diaspora ultimately views its relationship with the United States and plays a significant role *The Sympathizer’s* characterization of Truth.

Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* is considered the preeminent piece of literature that adequately analyzes how the Vietnam War shaped and formed the lives of the people of both South Vietnam and North Vietnam. The textual design of *The Sympathizer* is important for the boundaries of this project since inadequately discusses issues concerning the consequences of the Vietnam War on minority groups by skillfully incorporating certain philosophical approaches
that are part of the rhetorical tradition. The research questions covered in my analysis establish the framework for the methodology of Chapter Four.

**Research Questions**

- How did the interaction between the South Vietnamese general and the American congressman represent a countervailing factor that forced the narrator to reconfigure how he saw the South Vietnamese version of Truth?

- How did the narrator's dialogue with Sonny cause him to reevaluate his commitment to communist ideology as the basis for his beliefs about Truth?

- As a text in the form of a multi-voiced narrative, how does *The Sympathizer* construct an interpretation of the Vietnam War as a means of demonstrating how a grand narrative design of Truth can be interpreted incorrectly in terms as contexts for the understanding of the meaning of the Vietnam War in the years after it was fought?

Each research question was specifically designed to coincide with the methodology chosen for this chapter. For example, the first question attempts to analyze how specific choices that were made by the General and the Congressman informed the main character’s perspective towards the epistemological compromises that were being made by the South Vietnamese.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical formulation of my argument comes from a variety of different sources. I integrate each secondary source into a larger analysis of how that source substantiates or answers a research question. For example, I blend the ideas of Renée Descartes into an analysis that examines how a relationship between the South Vietnamese diaspora and an American
congressman develops into a quid pro quo relationship. In order to frame the dynamics of the association properly, I use Descartes' work to analyze "Six Meditations."

I use concepts from “Six Meditations” to demonstrate the phenomena of how doubt develops within the construction of Truth. I bolster Descartes' connection to the text of The Sympathizer, by interweaving the writings of Edward Said’s "Orientalism.” The scholarship and principles in the works of Descartes and Said allow me to establish the connection between orientalism as a theory and Descartes’ philosophy. The augmentation of each work illuminates how the novel incorporates doubt within an epistemological framework.

The Sympathizer reveals the concerns that are within the mind of the narrator, which question whether a communist revolution in America is possible. The political struggle that is occurring in the conscience of the narrator is illuminated in a discussion that the main character has with a fellow revolutionary named Sonny. As a part of my analysis of the dialogue between the two characters, I incorporate the theoretical ideas of W.E.B. Dubois's concept of "double consciousness" in his book, The Souls of Black Folk. This term is important to my argument because W.E.B. Dubois's construction of a psychological and sociological idea of "twoness" is relevant to how the narrator situates himself in reference to the contradictions that he saw in the political underpinnings of communism and the South Vietnamese counterrevolution.

My rationale for incorporating Karl Marx’s The Communist Manifesto into a broad theoretical discussion concerning multi-voiced narratives of the Vietnam War stems from intellectual curiosity; I find it useful in answering the question about to what degree the rank-and-file members of the communist revolution were true believers in the ideology. In applying
the manifesto as a theoretical source, I engage in cross-referencing specific dialogue between the main character and Sonny.

I use these theories to examine how both characters diverge in their thinking about communism and to discover what were the underlying fissures within the ideology that prevented communism from being a successful ideology in America during the time of the Vietnam War. Taken together, all of these factors provide an explanation that connects communism to Truth.

A theoretical construction that highlights the relationship of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* with the perspective of philosophers such as Frederick George Wilhelm Hegel frames my response to the final research question. Using these sources, I identify how the text of *The Sympathizer* creates a dialectical design that deviates from both Fukuyama’s and Hegel’s characterizations of a grand narrative of Truth.

The philosophical structure outlined above supports the conceptual framework for this chapter, which consists of philosophical approaches in a rhetorical tradition that try to explain or highlight how a grand narrative design that corresponds to a belief of Truth epistemology behaves paradoxically within a multi-voiced novel. I accomplish this by noticing how certain countervailing forces that are within an overarching truth can contribute to the creation of obstacles the prevent a grand narrative of Truth from being implemented (Nguyen 3). Going further, countervailing forces can be understood as political thinking of individuals, which compel a character to accommodate themselves to the prevailing ideological or philosophical concept of Truth during a time of war.
The South Vietnamese and The American Congressman

The aim of this section is to identify how and why the American congressman is a personification of a countervailing force who is an obstacle towards the South Vietnamese reaching a version of Truth. In doing so, the *The Sympathizer* brings forth a unique construction in the way that second-generation South Vietnamese Americans think about the war that made them American citizens.

Nguyen designed a formulation of Truth that situates the South Vietnamese, who have come to America as a result of the Vietnam War, in a position of displacement. The rhetorical concept of displacement can be contextualized in reference to multi-voiced narratives in the way a new minority group is attempting to navigate a foreign environment. For instance, the South Vietnamese exiles endeavor to make sense of America through a lens of political networking. Their doing this is an attempt to find "a middle position or middle voice for the means of expressing their truth" (Derrida 260). The concept of a middle position for Truth can be traced to the work of Jacques Derrida’s essay “Difference,” in which he argues that the epistemological truth of either Truth or its counterpart, truth, can be ascertained by deconstructing and analyzing the placement of the category of truth that is being sought out within a certain construction (Derrida 261). The end result of this construction is that it places choices within a juxtaposition that requires one to confine a middle ground to project their truth from that middle position during an overarching period of time (Derrida 264).

*The Sympathizer* situates a philosophical perspective that places Truth in between the concepts of revolution and counterrevolution. Truth in terms of counterrevolution must be
thought of as an epistemological belief in an alternative ideological construct about the governing of society.

Nguyen contextualizes counterrevolution as an epistemology that follows the concepts of democracy. Nguyen argues that the notions of Truth that are embedded within the counterrevolution are being compromised. Take, for example, how South Vietnamese refugees who fled the country following the fall of Saigon perceived the leaders of the counterrevolution. The refugees’ view of counterrevolution is a negative one in *The Sympathizer*. In this exchange describing the evacuation of Vietnam, an elderly woman comes up to the general, who is leading the counterrevolution. She exclaims:

> Look at the hero! We swiveled to the left and saw the one thing charging us that could not be defended against an enraged elderly citizen we could neither beat down nor back away from. Where is my husband? She screamed, barefoot her other slipper in her hand. Why are you here when he is not? Aren't you supposed to be defending our country with your life like he is? (Nguyen 52 – 53)

The sentiment behind the elderly woman’s anger is important to the underlying thesis of this project because it represents an awareness by the general that the narrative of the counterrevolution will have to be changed.

The citizens of South Vietnam who are followers of the counterrevolution think their leaders are abandoning and compromising the principles of the counterrevolution because of their own self-interests. The general is aware of this, and he recognizes that in order to regain the support of his people he needs to reconfigure how the South Vietnamese people define the war within a larger narrative. The general is aware that the only way to design a positive message of
the counterrevolution is to engage in a military exercise that is successful in changing the negative perception that has taken hold. For example, the elderly woman's use of the word "hero" is meant to imply derision towards the counterrevolution and the general, because, in fact, they did not act in a heroic manner but in a cowardly manner. This rhetorical construction is connected to the intent of the methodological design that is at the center of this project. The elderly woman reconfigured her notion of what it means to be heroic and mutated the meaning to have a cowardly context. Where the reconfiguration of the term takes place is significant; she does it in a plane where the general is escaping the battlefield and leaving his soldiers behind. The individuals in the plane project a negative application of the epistemological tenets of the counterrevolution and cast doubt in the minds of his followers that the counterrevolution will be victorious. The concept of doubt is important here because the general does not want his followers to use their reason to question the rationale of the counterrevolution.

These ideas undergird the philosophy of Descartes. In 6 Meditations, Descartes devises a construction of Truth as a form of transcendent reason, which cannot be understood through ontological or individual experiences (10) because the act of applying an individual's capability to reason within an ontological design may create doubt in their mind towards the essence of the truth (10). So in order to forestall the use of reason in doubting the essence of Truth, individuals must design an overarching theme towards the application of the meaning of events and objects (Descartes 10).

The relationship of this rhetorical philosophical position to my overall project is that it underscores that oftentimes, individuals create a universal narrative in which they surrender the true essence of the construction of truth in exchange for political access and resources that end
up compromising the ideals of a movement. Nguyen shows people acquiescing their own Truth about how the South Vietnamese leadership engages with individuals who hold a position of political power.

Nguyen formats the text *The Sympathizer* in such a way that it delineates American political power as being congruent with the American military and the character "Napalm Ned" (Nguyen 117). Ned is a Republican congressman from Orange County, California, and a Green Beret who served in the Vietnam War (Nguyen 117). This character introduces the concept of a "countervailing force" (Nguyen 2); being a Green Beret, the congressman portrays himself as a champion of democracy. Augmenting the presentation is an image of a public servant who has access and resources that the South Vietnamese do not possess. So this duality creates a force that compels the South Vietnamese to negotiate with the congressman.

In associating the concept of countervailing force with the congressman, I argue that the congressman's presence serves as a restriction in the degree to which the South Vietnamese are given autonomy towards rhetorical identification. The textual context for this rhetorical problem is that the general has come to the congressman to gain financial and political support for his counterrevolution. In return, the general offers help in building a political base for the congressman. The nature of this exchange is seen when the general says:

> Our community appreciates your words but in the process of becoming American is as learned the expression "money talks." And if voting is our best way of participating in American politics, we must vote for those who can deliver the money. This hopefully will be you. (Nguyen 146)
The consequences of this type of language for the South Vietnamese are that it circumscribes their authority and how they can create their version of Truth. In essence, the South Vietnamese will become tools of the American military establishment to disseminate a fictional narrative of the Vietnam War to American audiences. South Vietnamese citizens who believe and take part in this counter-revolution will eventually be delineated as uncultured and backward. This discursive narrative is meant to be a way for the American military to rationalize the defeat that they encountered in Vietnam. Most importantly, it recognizes the fact that the general does not value the epistemological aims of the movement that he leads. This will leave individuals such as the narrator feeling disillusioned and without an identity. One of the consequences is that the narrator concludes that Truth can always be bargained away. Secondly, the narrator realizes that the congressman is also playing a game to twist how the South Vietnamese view themselves as individuals concerning Truth.

The congressman's function in this context is to serve as a countervailing force that slowly shapes the mindset of the South Vietnamese general, which will cause him to relinquish the epistemological Truth of his people, and which was formed following their expulsion from South Vietnam. The beginnings of this can be seen when who is speaking at a wedding to which she and the congressman were invited says: "Look at yourself, ladies and gentlemen, look at yourselves the way I wish my fellow Americans will look at you, which is as a fellow American" (Nguyen 118). This statement is important undergirds a spatial methodology of reconfiguring a minority’s identity can be manipulated and they can be led to believe that they are equals to the majority in a society.
The narrator identifies that the congressman is articulating that the small South Vietnamese community should not consider themselves to be full American citizens. Their position in America is in the middle between Blacks and Whites. Both groups will use the South Vietnamese as a scapegoat for either their economic or racial problems (Nguyen 118). The point here is that the narrator identifies a contradiction between the congressman's rhetoric and the real way the South Vietnamese are perceived. This contradiction is external because it is pushed up on the South Vietnamese community.

The Communist Manifesto illuminates some structural underpinnings for a wider interpretation of the narrator's comments. The Communist Manifesto is understood to represent a political ideology. It can also be used as a source to provide a theoretical interpretation of the textual analysis. To this end, "The Communist Manifesto", must be understood concerning its sociological arguments. The underlying sociological argument that is in "The Communist Manifesto", is the perspective that the Proletariat working class is an oppressed division of society (Marx and Engels 5). The consequences of the sociological structure are that the proletariat class works for the benefit of the Capitalist class called the Bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels 5).

The congressman is an internal countervailing force who compels the South Vietnamese diaspora to perceive themselves as something they are not. The narrator notices the congressman is only articulating such a message for his self-interest. The point is that countervailing forces have the power to shape and distort Truth. One of the consequences of surrendering or bargaining away a minority groups' version of the truth is that the minority group will always be exploited. Rhetorical exploitation as a concept can also be associated with the methodological
design of this project; from the perspective that the congressman is reconfiguring how the South Vietnamese immigrants view themselves relative to their former lives in Vietnam, the congressman words, such as "look at yourselves" are a rhetorical tool for not for self-reflection but for self-projection.

This is meant to underscore the point projecting out a modicum of success, is a countervailing force in that it plants a seed of behavior that is associated with assimilation or accommodating how a group of individuals formerly perceive themselves and fusing it within your perception. In this case, the South Vietnamese view themselves as still being the torchbearers of democracy since they had to surrender their previous social status as a counterrevolutionary force in Vietnam with the working-class image of America (Nguyen 51). The South Vietnamese diaspora fuses this native identity with the belief that they can be Americans by engaging in the democratic process.

**The North Vietnamese Conversation with Sonny**

Nguyen’s rhetorical and textual construction of communism is a complex one. The text of *The Sympathizer* underscores the point that a political theory such as communism cannot survive within a formation of Truth since there is always going to be a force that pulls a person to accommodate their political philosophy.

This conflict is demonstrated in a conversation between the spy, who is both the narrator and main character in the story, and his revolutionary compatriot, Sonny. The spy believes that Sonny, who was also aligned with the communist cause, is a fellow revolutionary. He questions
Sonny’s allegiance when he observes that Sonny questions the purpose and intent behind a proposed communist revolution in America. Sonny says:

He winced. I had hit him where it hurt, in the solar plexus of his conscience, where everyone who was an idealist was vulnerable. Disarming an idealist was easy. One only needed to ask why the idealist was not on the front line of the particular battle he had chosen. The question was one of commitment, and I knew, even if he did not, that I was one of the committed. (Nguyen 215)

_The Sympathizer_ uses ideology as a spatial construction to examine the nature of Truth; it serves as a beginning point for the General to argue with Sonny about the value of starting a revolution. This discussion affirms the narrator's commitment to the communist cause; in reaffirming his commitment the narrator also is made aware of the emerging doubts in his mind towards the practicality of a communist revolution in America.

This is out of a concern that if an individual of Sonny’s kind, who is thought to be a partisan, is not participating when there must be something inherently incorrect with the foundations and principles regarding the movement. For example, in his discussion with Sonny, Sonny argues that if one stays in a western country for a long period of time, a communist can turn into a capitalist without consciously knowing it. A communist can become transformed by imbibing the principles of a capitalist country such as America:

What I learned, against my will, is that it’s impossible to live among a foreign people and not become changed by them. He swirled his vodka and knocked it back in one punished swallow. Sometimes I feel a little foreign to myself as a result, he said. I admit that I am afraid. I admit my cowardice, my hypocrisy, my weakness, and my shame. I admit that
you are a better man than me. I don’t agree with your politics--I despise them--but you went home when you had the choice and fought the fight that you believed in. You stood up for the people as you see them. For that, I respect you. (Nguyen 216-217)

Sonny thinks that a cultural group that is in a minority position will ultimately accommodate their behavior; mimicking the values and morals of the majority culture is better than fighting for a cause that is doomed to fail. The tenets of Sonny’s arguments are important because they force the narrator to confront the fact that in either the case of accommodating or fighting, he will lose his philosophical truth.

The second and perhaps most important extrapolation and how it validates the thesis and methodology in Chapter Five is that the author is using W.E.B Dubois’s concept of double consciousness and a form of spatial context. Dubois constructed the term double consciousness to mean a position in which African Americans find themselves standing in two worlds. In one world, they are Black and descended from freed slaves, and in another world, they are accommodating themselves to the white majority culture (Dubois 6). Dubois calls this “twoness” (Dubois 7), a state in which an African American must comply with a preconception of how they are supposed to act within a particular setting. They are required go readily between these two identities, which emerge as a form of double consciousness. Dubois's double consciousness is applicable to this project because it creates a spatial context in which a person must constantly go between two distinct environments in order to conform to the image that a majority culture has of a minority group. In the end, Sonny is acting as a countervailing force for the main character in compelling him to consider how to cope with a double consciousness. The narrator considers the ramifications of double consciousness, an application of Edward Said’s concept of orientalism.
One of the core tenants of orientalism is the fusion of two identities (Said 230). In the orientalist construct, there is always present a problem of identity that Western culture has created for a minority group. As an external power, a society that colonizes must always observe how a minority group uses truth to construct their own reality in order to align it with how the colonizing power wants to rule.

The North Vietnamese military is unaware that the narrator is one of their men who is acting as a double spy. In order to ensure that he is a true communist, his interrogator forces him to write a letter of confession. Within the letter, the narrator does not adequately show reverence for the ideals of the communist revolution by mentioning the perspective of the leaders of communist literature. The narrator writes:

I'm contaminated by the West. Exactly. That wasn't so hard to admit, was it? Funny, then, how you can't put it into writing. Of course, I can understand why you didn't quote “How The Steel Was Tempered” or “Tracks in the Snowy Forest.” You wouldn't have had access to them, even though every one of my generations from the north had read them. But not to mention To Huu, our generation’s revolutionary poet? And to cite, instead, the yellow music of Pham Duy and the Beatles? (Nguyen 312)

*The Sympathizer* engages the philosophical perspectives of both DuBois and Said. In terms of DuBois's double consciousness, the main character references particular North Vietnamese writers while omitting others. This can be the result of the main characters not understanding the importance of these Eastern writers because he was spending time conforming to the South Vietnamese perception of a democratic freedom fighter.
In contrast, Said's typology is noticed here when the main character must be forced to admit that he is contaminated by the West and needs training in Northern Vietnamese orthodoxies. This requirement of reeducation is an aspect of Orientalism in that the North Vietnamese want to ensure that their prisoners are thinking in accordance with communist ideology. This type of cohesion is out of a sense of fear that the South Vietnamese citizens and military soldiers will become corrupted by Western ideals.

The conversation with Sonny represented a countervailing force that first opened the eyes of the main character to the possibilities of an alternative representation of truth.

The example of the interrogation is another countervailing force in that the interrogator wanted to bring the narrator back within the boundaries of communism. In terms of methodological design, the theories of DuBois and Said taken together afforded a critique of the role and function of spatial analysis; both models formulate a different type of spatial analysis. First, in terms of Dubois's construction of twoness and double consciousness, *The Sympathizer* questions identity and its convergence with ideology, thereby forcing the central character to make a choice between what he values most.

Said's Orientalism connects to spatial analysis in terms of how Westerners characterize as being both Asian and American or Amerasian (Nguyet 64), which demonstrates behavior by Western society towards a different culture to categorize things that they don't understand by fusing them together with phrases and words that are illogical and do not make sense (Nguyet 64).
The Unity Grand Narrative Dialectic and Truth Within The Text of *The Sympathizer*

Another design of the grand narrative Truth is dialecticism. Dialecticism has its roots in the scholarship of Fredrick George Welham Hegel’s *The Philosophy Of History*. Hegel designs a methodology of history that views the time periods and events within those periods as cyclical (Hegel 5). In this cycle are the elements of the thesis and antithesis (Hegel 5). These are positioned facing one another and are structured to produce an outcome called synthesis (Hegel 6).

Synthesis is a byproduct of the conflict that occurs between the thesis and the antithesis (Hegel 5). The purpose behind this construction is that Hegel wants to emphasize how reason can be used to form a conception of Truth. For the purposes of this project, I demonstrate how Hegel's construction can actually act as a countervailing force. For example, Hegel's design can be used to underscore the role of rhetorical manipulation.

The dialectical pattern of Hegel’s construction can be seen in *The Sympathizer*; the thesis emerges when the main character confronts the producer about how the South Vietnamese should be directed to speak in their own language. The main character is annoyed that the script only says “cut to the villagers speaking in their own languages” (Nguyen 152). The antithesis appears when the main character notices how the movie producer intends to use the speech pattern of certain characters to fit the common biases and assumptions of American audiences (Nguyen 134). For example, the main character points out that the script has the South Vietnamese people screaming in pain similar to how westerners scream. X says, “So let me just point out that in your script you have my people scream the following way, AIIIEEEE!!! But, having heard many of my countrymen screaming in pain, I can assure you that this is not how
they scream, would you like to hear how they scream?” (Nguyen 131). This is important because it sets out the parameters in which the main character is trying to disabuse the movie producer of the racial biases that are underneath his reconfiguration of South Vietnamese identity. Furthermore, it also undergirds Said's Orientalism in that it epitomizes a position of universal arrogance on the part of Westerners. In particular, Americans possess knowledge of Truth in terms of a owning a universal knowledge of all cultures. The synthesis emerges when the narrator and the producer agree to have a script that correctly uses the Vietnamese language and in the appropriate context.

This is meant to demonstrate the authenticity of the Vietnamese culture. This is attributable to a grand narrative perspective in that the main character wants to construct an overarching narrative of truth that requires audiences who see the movie titled *The Hamlet* to use logic and reason in appreciating how underrepresented groups’ Truths are presented in the film (Nugent 125).

In contrast to the Hegelian dialectic, Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and The Last Man* argues that following the end of the cold war, ideology will no longer be a factor that characterizes the 20th century (147). His perspective can be extended the end of the book, where Fukuyama expresses a desire to return to a time period before the war in which ideologies did not exist (Nguyen 153).

The absence of cultural racism would lead to a grand narrative of truth that would facilitate individuals from all parts of society coming together and creating an epistemological perspective of unity instead of division (Nguyen 353). Unlike Fukuyama’s argument, which highlights the point that in order to go forward with history, society must break with the past
The main character seeks to return to the past where there were not any countervailing forces that influenced how truth was formed.

**Conclusion and Lessons Learned**

The key conclusions and lessons that can be extrapolated are that Truth, in the terms of Vietnamese War literature, is complicated by countervailing forces that require the main character to doubt his pre-existing beliefs or ideals; the questioning a result of bargaining, negotiating, or surrendering Truth. In return, a minority group, in this case, the South Vietnamese counterrevolutionaries, received a false version of Truth because the South Vietnamese thought they would be a part of the democratic experience in America. Eventually, communist regimes will accommodate their political principle towards capitalism.

Nguyen tries to articulate that there was no purpose to the Vietnam War. The only reason for the war was to perpetuate a paradoxical narrative of Truth through the mechanisms of internal and external countervailing forces that resulted from individuals behaving in opposition to how they typically would. A third point is that the consequences of war are not just psychological, political, or social. The results of the war also affect how dueling cultures interpret what defines truth. This is perhaps the most significant consequence, since human beings have to live with how they have defined what truth is long after a war is over.

A fourth and final point in terms of contextualizing Truth is that it is shaped greatly by outside forces who do not understand or have the experience of war and its legacy of cultural self-perception; the legacy of the Vietnam War significantly impacted how all parties that participated in the war perceived themselves afterwards. For example, in America, military institutions were perceived as weak because they could not defeat what was thought of as being
an inferior gorilla resistance, making the American people and their leaders resistant to engaging in military conflict for many years following the Vietnam War.

**Part II: Sand Queen**

**Introduction to Sand Queen**

Multi-voiced narratives that implement the perspectives of female characters from different cultural, political, and religious backgrounds can affect how a text conceptualizes Truth.

First-person narratives are designed to extrapolate notions of truth within the context of both the Vietnam War and the American invasion of Iraq. Both *The Things They Carried* and *The Yellow Birds* illustrate a distinct concept of truth that is determined by either internal voices or external environments. The result of the analysis of these two works was that first-person accounts of war fiction conceive notions of war that are either abstract or complex, and these conceptions significantly affect whether the narrator desires to embrace the meaning of their participation in a war.

First-person narratives remain a staple of war literature, but not withstanding this fact, a shift is occurring in terms of the relationship between textual design and narrative. Recently, authors such as Helen Benedict and Nguyen have reconfigured the genre of war fiction in that they both design a textual analysis that incorporates multiple voices from the perspective of different characters. Haytock says that multi-voiced narratives are growing:
...because recognizing the humanity of the enemy and even civilian populations often conflicts with the experience of the soldier--often, indeed, it must, for the older to do his job--the American war story tradition tends to reify the individual soldier's experience over a broader representation of the causes and consequences of violent conflict.

(Haytock 337)

What Haytock is saying here is that the purpose behind the phenomena of multi-voiced narrative is to change the focus of war novels, which is accomplished by colliding the experiences of the enemy, with the everyday soldier. Haytock accentuates the reason for the balancing of these two perspectives because the soldiers often recognize how their own experiences diverge from the civilian populations they are supposed to protect.

In Chapter Four I work with the novels Sand Queen, by Benedict, and The Sympathizer, by Nguyen, to argue that these novels provide a unique context into how to understand the complexities of Truth. Specifically, my argument is that grand narratives of Truth are constructed to highlight aspects of rhetorical division.

The rhetorical division is defined as a type of Truth that seeks to understand how the role of rhetoric divides and defines people into groups when discussing broad overarching themes within a grand narrative structure. I contend that both the Sand Queen and The Sympathizer are illustrative of particular tensions in terms of how rhetorical division is enforced within a multi-voiced platform. Both narratives discuss how Truth can be used to engender certain notions of identity and the rhetorical construction of individuals.

The tense moments that occur in both Sand Queen and The Sympathizer take place between different characters or when individual characters identify certain cultural and political
themes. Haycock’s analysis helps me demonstrate how *Sand Queen* and *The Sympathizer* illuminate the American Invasion of Iraq and the Vietnam War.

**Literature Review of Sand Queen**

Since its publication in 2011, *Sand Queen* has provoked extensive arguments within the field of rhetoric and gender studies, especially having to do with representation.

In the article “Gendered Narrative in Female War Literature: Helen Benedict’s *Sand Queen*” by Maryam Mousavi, Azra Ghandeharion, and Mahmoud Reza Ghorban Sabbagh, the writers stipulate that the novel is representative of methodological designs that are associated with “the school of the third wave of feminism” (1) because *Sand Queen* articulates a feminist viewpoing on military institutions, especially in the wake of the third wave of feminism. The character-narrators adopt and/or resist traditional gender roles and attempt to negotiate the conflicting demands made on them by their dual roles of warriors and women skilled in domestic affairs (Ghandeharion, Mousavi, and Sabbagh 3). The general betrayal of both characters in terms of their construction as women is a dichotomy: Kate Brady tries to evolve into a masculine soldier, and Naema Nassim Al-Jubur forgoes her aspirations to fulfill her obligations to her mother and grandmother. While this is occurring, both characters endeavor to modify or resist the construct in which they both find themselves (Ghandeharion, Mousavi, Sabbagh 1).

Further, in the article, “‘The Woman in Peril’ and the Ruined Woman: Representation of Female Soldiers in the Iraq War,” Jennifer K. Lobasz argues that observing the role of women in war through a paradigm of feminism obscures the fact that women can be violent in war and kill people (Lobasz 307). Lobasz goes on to argue that a key error in how the poststructuralists view feminist identity in war as a binary formula (Lobasz 308).
This binary design places women within certain stereotypes that portray them as “strong/weak, active/passive, reason/emotion” (Lobasz 308). The result is that there is a misperception that violence is the exclusive domain of men (Lobasz 308). Lobasz states that this false belief is perpetuated by a critic who does not want to expand and analyze the role of women in warfare in a different way.

In his article “Fictionalizing Iraq,” Roger Luckhurst argues that the current dialogue between scholars about Sand Queen misses an essential point. This point is how society may reconfigure its understanding of how Iraq as a country is conceptualized within a text (715); Iraq’s place as a physical location is being constructed as “less an event than a global network of confusing alliances and hidden complicities” (715).

What this means currently within the fields of rhetoric and literature is that Iraq as a setting for multi-voiced narratives is situated within a design that accentuates the political dynamics of war rather than the issues of philosophical truth such as time, space, and sequential events (Luckhurst 715). Luckhurst argues that scholars must introduce issues of rhetorical epistemology so rhetoricians can pay attention to rhetorical identification in terms of space and context (715).

**Methodology and Research Questions**

The research design I use for Sand Queen is one that examines how Benedict as an author creates “narrative worlds” in contrast to “world making,” which is a methodology that is designed to instruct how one character develops an internal voice to make sense of their external environment. Narrative worlds, on the other hand, try to develop a formula in which the text of multi-voiced narratives can demonstrate how the environment of two distinct characters diverges
or intersects. Narrative worlds seek to identify incidences or shifts within the thinking of a set of characters or main characters over time (Phelan and Rabinowitz 85).

Phelan and Rabinowitz frame narrative worlds as a formula that is meant to take advantage of three elements: synthesis description, and setting (85-86). Synthetic can be understood as a “rhetorical function that is to furnish the best possible way for any given story” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 85). This is explicit in that it requires the text of a narrative to interweave the conditions of “time and place and characters which shall make that story possible and actual” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 85).

In contrast, description is defined by Phelan and Rabinowitz as “spreading out of the element of space to the actual object or theme that is being discussed within the text of a narrative” (85). This includes either physiological or theological discussions of how the world works, while it still includes discussion of character” (85).

However, Phelan and Rabinowitz also note that descriptions often become conflated with the setting, in that both often become synonymous with each other within a narrative, which forms a discursive analysis often seen as the opposite of narrative (85). The final element in this trinity is setting. The setting is defined as the symbolic significance of a physical geographical location within a text (Phelan and Rabinowitz 86). Therefore, the element of setting can conceptually be viewed as the link between how space influences a text in its effort to design a notion of Truth, which then forms a world perspective.

The implications in terms of multi-voiced narratives in the novel Sand Queen is that each particular setting influences a certain perspective. In addition to discussing how elements of space and narrative play within a methodological structure, I incorporate sociology and
psychology and their relationships to power within institutions and how they influence consciousness.

I incorporate ideas from W.E.B. DuBois’s seminal book, *The Souls of Black Folk* to demonstrate that the concept of double consciousness has a significant impact Kate Brady’s struggle to navigate between three significant identities that influenced how she frames a perspective of Truth.

DuBois constructs double consciousness as a fundamental factor that establishes a duality in the mind of an African American. This duality is rooted in an internal self-perception while being conscious of how they are viewed through the eyes of White Americans (DuBois 6). This duality then engenders a struggle within the consciousness of an individual in that they are forced to think differently about how they perceive epistemology. The significance of double consciousness is relevant to a discussion of multi-voiced narratives that include female soldiers and citizens of an occupied country, given that double consciousness deals with issues of power dynamics and cultural construction (Du Bois 5-7). In the end, double consciousness identifies a construction of identity in which an individual finds themselves in an unidentified space between two conflicting identities (Dubois 6).

Exacerbating this notion of identity is a sense of exclusion from a predominant culture with which one seeks to identify. I use Thomas S. Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* to examine the degree to which Naema Jassim Al-Jubur, a young Iraqi woman in *Sand Queen* forgoes embracing Western concepts of gender and self-determination. Instead of embracing these ideals, as a form of rebellion, she accepts and agrees with a conservative interpretation of her gender in terms of her cultural norms and morals. The ultimate goal of this methodology is to
amplify how rhetorical division as an analysis method can be implemented to understand how
dialogue can function as a means of ascertaining how characters of a multi-voiced narrative
define a Truth.

Research Questions

The following research questions form the basis for the analysis in this section:

• What is the significance of rhetorical division in terms of how it affects a textual analysis
  of Sand Queen, in how the text articulates an approach to Truth?

• How are the connections between Kate Brady's religious alienation and W.E..B DuBois's
  concept of double consciousness made, and how does she formulate Truth?

• How does the concept of displacement influence how Naema Jussim Al-jubur
  contextualizes her war experience in terms of Truth?

• How do certain philosophical approaches of Truth engage the text of Sand Queen, and
  how can this novel inform the way women within a time of war apply meaning and
  conceptualize their environment?

Each of these questions requires an intense focus on how both female characters in the
novel react to specific transformative events that occur. These events have a significant effect on
how each character conceives of their place within the war and its meaning. Moreover, this
methodological format integrates specific philosophical outlooks that are part of rhetorical
traditions that shed some light on how Kate Brady and Neama Jassim formulate an
epistemological perspective.
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual and theoretical framework that will comprise my analysis of *Sand Queen* focuses on how rhetorical truth through dialogue and interaction can lead to a construction of Truth. *Sand Queen* is a primary source, and secondary sources that are derived from the philosophical positions of Martin Heidegger and Michel De Certeau.

Heidegger's "The Question on the Essence of Being" formulates a notion of human nature that can define the essence of mankind (2). From this position, parties that are victorious in warfare can summarize the true essence of man. In the end, what Heidegger implies is that war permits the side that is victorious the authority to represent the vanquished by applying a new means of identification. The significance of Heidegger's interpretation is that the true essence that one applies for themselves is taken away and a person is automatically defined by whether or not they meet the criteria for a certain classification (9).

De Certeau's notion of space implies that the rhetorical element of metaphor is perceived differently within different class structures of society. This notion of rhetorical space informs and exploits of how class divisions are created among different groups (De Certeau 124).

Rhetorical Division and Textual Analysis of *Sand Queen* and Truth

One way in which to analyze the text of *Sand Queen* is to appreciate how the novel as a whole undergirds notions of Truth within a format of structuralism. Author Raymie E. Mckerrow contextualizes the extent of Truth within structuralism as being an element of power that propagates a division of class and White privilege (91). Going further, Mckerrow argues that the
sense of societal privilege is noticeable in how groups of individuals frame Truth in terms of a relationship among themselves.

Rhetorical division can be understood as a form of Truth that seeks to divide or categorize groups into divisions or partisan identifications. By situating one group against another, it is believed that larger narratives will be able to easily create a notion of Truth in which a minority group ultimately prevails over a majority and determines the course of history. This theme of the relationship between power and truth can be correlated to a textual analysis of Sand Queen. The context of the analysis is in a dialogue that takes place between Kate and Naema. Naema questions Kate’s veracity in terms of her knowledge of where her brother and her father are imprisoned, but underneath the dialogue is a significant discussion about how Naema begins to question the true purpose of the American presence in Iraq:

“Kate, I was at medical college before the war sent me here. I am not stupid. You must not lie to me. I ask you again: What are you going to do with our men?”

“I'm not lying! I'm just telling you what they told me! I'm a junior enlisted. Do you know what that means? It means they tell me nothing, I know nothing. I've got no power to help you.”

“Yes, this is true. You are nothing,” she says calmly.

“I know that should make me mad, but all I feel is tired. Look, the only thing I can do is ask my higher-ups. They might not tell me anything.”

“And why do I believe you will do this?”

“Because I didn’t make this war.” (Benedict 72)
This dialogue is important to place into context because it accentuates the factor of space and perceived position. In terms of space, which is a methodological principle that seems to underline how characters initially perceive one another in a defined setting, Iraq as a setting has created a gulf between Kate and Naema in terms of how they define Truth. For example, Naema determines truth as a way to demonstrate her hostility to American power, whereas Kate determines Truth in terms of what she is told by others.

This dialogue between both characters captures the essence of De Certeau’s philosophy, in which he argues that divisions between upper and lower classes within society are determined by whether they apply meaning or context to an object (125). Naema believes that the cultural dynamics of her being an Iraqi and Kate an American soldier develop into a form of Truth. In this Truth, Naema is perceived to be an uneducated Iraqi woman who is fulfilling her obligations to her family. In contrast, Kate is contextualized as a soldier that is a representation of America as an entire object. In this dynamic, America is perceived as being an object that possesses an overarching hostility and occupation (Benedict 21, 51).

This analysis connects to Kate and Naema because it notes how the scope of rhetorical division affects the notion of Truth as a form of false perception. Truth and perception are formed within a text due to the nature of the dialogue that is taking place within a given time and space. The dialogue above takes place early on in the narrative and it establishes the tension that exists between both characters throughout the novel. The distrust that is being defined early on in the book is significant because it is born out of preconceived notions of false truths that are formed from either prior experience with a culture or their own incorrect cultural beliefs that were taught to them.
Most importantly, the dialogue that was chosen tells more about how each character constructs meaning from her Iraq experience. Naema constructs an understanding of the American invasion of Iraq in terms of the nature of American violence:

How would you feel if we dismantled your army and police, and destroyed the power that cleans your water, works your traffic lights, and illuminates, heats, and cools your home? How would you feel if, having crippled your defenses, we opened the way for criminals and fanatics to come in and rob and murder and rape you--and then, when you tried to protect yourself, we arrested or shot you for being a terrorist? How would you feel if we drove you from your homes, scattered your friends and lovers and families, killed your children...? (Benedict 51)

Naema is basing her attitudes and point of view of Americans on her specific ontological experiences and formulating an overall design of Truth.

How Naema structures her philosophical approach to Truth parallels Heidegger's perspective in “The Exposition of the Question of the Meaning of Being.” In this essay, Heidegger postulates that human nature and essence can be understood in a way that permits individuals to frame a conception of their being from their ontological point of view, which then in turn comprises a larger framework for understanding the world. Heidegger states, “All ontology, no matter how rich and tightly knit a system of categories has at its disposal. remains fundamentally blind and perverts its innermost intent if it has not previously clarified the meaning of being sufficiently and grasped this clarification at its fundamental task” (9).

What is important here is that both Heidegger and Naema are converging on a notion of Truth that situates mankind in terms of a philosophical design that is based upon defining the
way they interact with others and the nature of their dialogue. This contrast with Kate’s notion of Truth is that her concept of Truth is in how Naema falsely perceives her position within the army structure. This means that Kate’s reality is determined by how a higher power constructs a notion of Truth that trickles down to her.

Naema's articulation of rhetorical division within this section is divergent from Kate’s in that Kate perceives the reason for the rhetorical division as religion. Throughout the novel, there are numerous instances where Kate's religious background is an obstacle in her attempt to categorize Iraqis.

An example of Kate’s doing this is when she is monitoring prisoners. She is disgusted by the overt lewd behavior of the soldiers. She reminds herself to act in a Christian way by saying, “So I try to be Jesus-like and forgiving about it, the way Mom and Father Slattery would want. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them- isn’t that how the verse in Hebrews goes? It isn’t me they hate, I tell myself, it’s what I represent (Benedict 98).

This quotation is important to my overall thesis because it connects aspects of my methodological design to the concept of rhetorical division. In terms of methodological design, this quotation parallels the second element of the Phelan and Rabinowitz formula. This is because Kate is trying to sort out the contradiction between her spiritual upbringing and the reality of the actual behavior of the Iraqi prisoners (Phelan amd Rabinowitz 85).

A second and perhaps most important point is that her religious statement is a reflection of how Saint Augustine conceives the purpose of the Bible in rhetorical persuasion. In Book I of On Christian Doctrine, Saint Augustine states, "Reading scripture can help us on our journey to blessedness so long as our reading encourages charity, the love of one's neighbor that leads to the
love of God" (Bizzell and Herzberg 453). This quotation can be connected to the text of the novel because by suffering as a prisoner with the Iraqi soldiers, Kate is demonstrating a form of religious charity by making herself equal to them and suffering as the Iraqi prisoners are. However, this is complicated by the tension of what her gender represents in a different environment. This will be further complicated by Kates's development of a form of double consciousness" (Dubois 6).

**Kate Brady and Her Double Consciousness as a Soldier**

The textual construction of Kate Brady as a character in *Sand Queen* is meant to highlight a paradox of the concept of "the female soldier" (LaBasez 307). This paradox resides in the fact that female soldiers want to maintain an image of being a soldier, while at the same time remaining unadulterated as a woman. *Sand Queen* illustrates this paradox perfectly when Kate is required to confront the issue of how the male soldiers in her unit think of her as a female. Another female soldier, who is nicknamed "Third Eye" is contextualized within the text as an outcast within the unit, in part because she is a lesbian.

Third Eye warns Kate that she must put up the pretense of having a boyfriend while in the theater so that the other members of the unit will not think she's available for sex (Benedict 103-104). Kate ignores the warning because she does not want to violate her Christian values and cheat on her boyfriend just for the sake of keeping up appearances (Benedict 103).

Kate is forced to deal with the reality of how she is perceived when she is directed by Third Eye to read a statement written by Kate’s fellow male soldiers, which says, "TITS BRADY IS A COCK-SUCKIN SAND QUEEN SIGN IF YOU'VE FUCKED HER" (Benedict 104). The significant point here is that the *Sand Queen* is a type of representation that stigmatizes
Kate as being "an ugly ass chick who's being treated like a queen by the hundreds of horny guys around her because there's such a shortage of females (Benedict 105).

Placing these two statements into a contextual framework is important because Benedict creates a type of Truth that permeates how Kate engages with other people within the military; the rumor is false but will remain in the mind of whomever she encounters. Kate constructs a meaning of warfare in terms of how other people see her. For example, in her analysis of the implications of warfare, she is consistently consumed with the idea of being thought of as a soldier, but this is undermined when her fellow male soldiers think of her only as a concubine. In the end, this creates a dialectical format in which Kate constructs meaning from her experience in Iraq as an overarching pendulum that goes between being a soldier and being viewed as a concubine. Connecting these two ends of the pendulum is a chain that is an albatross around Kate's neck, one which she must reconcile with the image her parents have of her as a good Christian. Kate's concept of warfare and its relationship to truth is navigated through these three identities of soldier, Christen, and self.

Within *The Soul of Black Folk*, Dubois argues the legacy of the Civil War and the era of Reconstruction had a negative psychological effect in the manner of how former slaves should represent themselves to Southern Whites. Dubois went on to postulate that the accommodationist arguments of Booker T. Washington, along with the negative legacy of reconstruction, caused former slaves to have a double consciousness (6).

Dubois articulates the point that double consciousness is the result of how former slaves were represented in a region of the country which desired to return to a time when Black people were enslaved (6). This construct was placed against the views of conservative Blacks such as
Booker T. Washington, who desired that former slaves accommodate themselves to abide by how Whites in the region saw the African American people (Dubois 17). The result of this debate was that it formed the psyche of former slaves, which accentuated a double consciousness in which the former slaves had "a twoness" (Dubois 6). This concept undergirded the notion that the former slave remained in a dialectical structure where they were either represented as being an African slave or being American (Dubois 6). The concept of double consciousness underscores the point that institutions construct notions of identity and representation. This, in turn, can create a crisis for a person who is a part of a system that prescribes a certain notion of an overarching truth.

It is at the end of the war in Iraq when Kate realizes that she is not the same person that she was when the war began. This is because the American Military as a system constructed her notion of identity. How that particular identity was created led Kate to question own her role as a soldier, which is important because it shows how identity construction can be affected in a structure that proscribes a certain type of Truth. One consequence is the loss of rhetorical agency.

The importance of being denied rhetorical agency, which is defined as the ability and the empowerment of a person to tell their own story, is that the individual being denied ultimately becomes distant and alienated from a group of people that have a prior perception of them that is shown to be false.

One situation in *Sand Queen* demonstrates this. Kate is convalescing in an army hospital due to injuries she sustained as a result of an attack on her unit. Exacerbating her convalescence is the fact that she learns that she is about to be discharged from the Army. The following
quotations are from the perspective of a nurse who was in the room observing how Kate interacts with her parents. One particular incident is when her father is trying to calm her down following being notified that she will be discharged. Kate's father says, "Oh Katie you know what I mean. You don't want a smear on your record all your life, do you? It’s not right what you've done for this country. I don't give a shit. The last thing I ever fucking want to do is go back to the Army. They can smear me all they 'friggin want (Benedict 132-133)."

The nurse goes on to say that "they [the parents] don't understand that she's got no patience anymore. Not for their bullshit, not for their hypocrisy, not for their total God damn dangerous ignorance. So her parents can't be proud of her now? Can boast about her being a hero, as brave as any son might have been? So fucking what" (Benedict 132-133).

It is important to place these two quotes into the rhetorical context of this thesis; the first quote values how gender is defined by a masculine culture that has a great effect on the way people view it. Kate's father wanted her to go back into the Army so that she could fulfill his perceptions of her. Therefore, her parents already determined her rhetorical agency by taking away her authority to define how she wants to be perceived in her own story.

The second quotation must also be placed within a rhetorical framework. The significance of this quote is that it brings to light the fact that Truth can become an obstacle in terms of how a person wants to be perceived after a traumatic event. This is because following the incident, Kate did not want to be perceived as a masculine soldier or a feminine woman. She wanted to be thought of as a woman in identification suspension. The suspension created a great disruption in how she formulated Truth. Instead of situating Truth in an overarching manner that encompasses all factors and all explanations of how the world works, Kate is now aware that the
world is not constructed in that way, so she must remain in a suspension of double consciousness.

This analysis underscores a philosophical position of Truth that is in flux and the person undergoing that change cannot find themselves within a rhetorical space that they cannot define. It is important to note that when an individual within a multi-voiced narrative is situated within the context of identity, gender, and institutional dynamics, the textual analyses place importance on how specific incidences formulate the progression or digression of a specific character (Haytock 338).

It is even more interesting to examine how a woman during a time of war chooses to forego the benefits of Truth. These benefits are progress and modernity given to a civilization that is thought of as being barbaric and backward. In contrast, interpreting Truth as a time of displacement and regression is an outcome of an oppressive military occupation and the ignorance of the occupying power.

Naema Jassem and Her De-evolution From Modernity to Religious Conservatism

I argue that Naema's turn towards a conservative interpretation of Truth was an outcome of the consequences of the American occupation of Iraq. A conservative definition of Truth can be ascertained by looking at the theoretical constructions of both Said’s Orientalism and Kuhn's perspectives on the nature of scientific revolutions. Both of these resources articulate a perspective of Truth, which frames a concept of power. For example, Said's construction of Orientalism situates a design of an overarching truth as being the motivation for colonialism and violence (36).
What is most important is understanding how Said constructs a definition of what Orientalism is and how it is used rhetorically. For example, in describing the relationship between power and a conception of Truth, Said states, "The two great themes here in his remarks [Lord Balfour] and in what will follow; knowledge and power. As Balfour justified the necessity for the British occupation of Egypt, was supremacy in his mind is associated with our knowledge of Egypt (32). Said underscores Truth is conducted through notions of power and domination that are done to rhetorically subjugate a people. This comes from a perspective of the Western power that their knowledge is sacrosanct and right.

However, colonizing rhetoric can have negative consequence for those that are being colonized in terms of how they contextualize their reality. This is the case with the character of Naema. As the Americans began their occupation of Iraq, she realized how the Americans viewed their purpose in Iraq:

In the beginning, we thought the Americans would stop it. After all, they had their tanks and guns, soldiers, and we had nothing since they had dismantled our army and police. But no. They lounged on their trucks in the sun taking photographs while the looters stripped our shops, our homes, our museums. Criminals would snatch anybody for ransom (our poor neighbor's son, a little boy of twelve, was shot dead in the street for nothing but his CD player). (Benedict 30)

What this quotation underscores can be connected back to my thesis for this section in that it represents a turning point. Naema recontextualizes the purpose of the Americans in Iraq. She thought the presence of the Americans would bring stability and peace so that she could pursue living in a society that abided by Western notions of gender equality, which included
women as professionals. However, she became alienated from the Americans because their demonstration of power and military force was only a part of the invasion and not a part of keeping the peace.

This realization led Naema to turn inward and embrace the traditional roles and functions of what it means to be an Islamic woman in modern society. This turn has resulted in the character developing a new form of Truth. The first event that epitomizes Naema's turn inwards is when she examines a set of poems and letters written by her father to her mother during his captivity (when Saddam Hussein was in power). The words from these letters and poems express the true nature of love; for love to endure, the partners must experience hardship and separation and give each other support. One of the letters written by Naema’s father to his wife during his imprisonment states:

Last night in my uneasy sleep, dearest Zaynab, I dreamt of Naema and Zaki when they were babies, a sweet dream that allowed me to awake with a smile on my lips. My dreams, like my memories, protect me from this hideous place. (Benedict 193)

This quotation can be traced back to my thesis in that the letter forms a new concept of Truth for Naema. Instead of constructing love in terms of quixotic romance that is temporal and obstructed by time, the words from the letter make Naema realize that love must endure and have some purpose; it must cross over the barriers of time and be limitless to be of comfort to a person in instances of trial.

Another specific incident that is an example of Naema’s turn inward is in a conversation she has with Kate over why women in America want to be soldiers. Naema begins the conversation by stating to Kate, “You look very young to be a soldier…That surprises me”
Naema then asks “But why are you a soldier? Why as a woman did you choose such a path? Soldiers take life, women give life” (Benedict 73). Kate responds by answering “I can’t answer that, I don’t even know what to think of it, in my country, a lot of people have to be soldiers to go to college” (Benedict 73).

This quotation is essential to understanding Naema's course correction in her views towards womanhood; essentially, what Naema is doing here is equating the female soldier as a murderer. This action is the antithesis of how she was taught women are supposed to function in modern society. For Naema, the notion that women would go into the Army for it to pay for university training, which would then ultimately lead to innocent people dying, is an anathema. Naema's philosophy on life is an outgrowth of her having her mother's example of living. A woman is supposed to create conditions for her children to flourish in a peaceful society even though she did not have the same opportunities.

Naema constructs a notion of power in these three examples to form a paradigm structure of truth as a form of knowledge in terms of her relationships and her place during the time of occupation. Kuhn argued that Truth, in terms of science, is a category of knowledge that takes into account the accumulation of ontological experiences and forms it into an overarching belief system (13). Moreover, within paradigm structures, overarching truths can encompass minor opposing arguments that inform a system of knowledge (Kuhn 10). Alas, existing paradigms will be illuminated by new ones when current ones become obsolete.

In Naema's case, she constructed a notion of power through her observation of Americans that was balanced against her turn inward by embracing her religion. This also included elements
that oppose notions of power such as love and family. Finally, the American paradigm will be
replaced at a time when Americans ultimately withdraw from Iraq. Therefore, what is important
to note is that Naema has constructed a scientific and logical system for evaluating why she has
turned inward and embraced her Islamic faith and rejected Western notions of Truth.

**Conclusion and Lessons Learned**

There are three fundamental conclusions and lessons that can be taken away from my
reading of Helen Benedict’s *Sand Queen*. The initial and perhaps most significant extrapolation
is that women must not only deal with the vicissitudes of war, but they also experience a physical
and psychological change that is different from their male counterparts. This change can take the
form of both evolution and regression.

As it was demonstrated in the sections of this chapter that analyze the nature and scope of
Kate Brady's struggle with double consciousness, a significant interpretation that can be
understood by analyzing this event is that Kate evolved in her perspective and attitudes towards
the American presence in Iraq. This constituted an evolution of how she thought of Iraq at the
beginning of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Kate contextualized her presence in Iraq as
being a liberator of an oppressed people, but now she views the entire country as a society that
did not deserve an outside force to engage in an invasion. Moreover, this evolution was formed
through Naema’s perception of Kate’s place within an all-male dominated institution such as the
Army.

Unlike traditional interpretations that have placed importance on how Kate navigated the
male-dominant culture of the US military by attempting to transform herself into a female
warrior, I have consistently argued that what brought about Kate's disillusionment is how the
dialogue forced her to confront how she was being identified and represented by both the military and her parents. The factors of identification and representation created tension within Kate about how to construct a form of Truth that was designed as a byproduct of her rhetorical agency.

As a result of her rhetorical agency being taken away from her, Kate became disenchanted with how her life was constructed in terms of following a narrative of an overarching truth. She felt that she was living her life by other people's perceptions of her and not her own. The result of this discontentment was that Kate rejected the belief system that her parents instilled in her regarding Christianity and faith, plus she disassociated herself from the structure of the military because she knew that the military wants women not to be soldiers but concubines for men--to be a rhetorical token in the dominant male culture.

Benedict’s rhetorical strategy in creating the character Naema was for her to represent a protagonist’s perspective that upholds the traditions and mores of Islamic culture during a time of displacement and chaos in Iraq. However, how it is designed serves a larger textual purpose to the story because the presence of Naema symbolizes an inverse experience to that of Kate. The novel gradually shows how the character slowly comes to appreciate her Muslim culture and heritage. She does this first by redefining the meaning of the relationship that she has with her family. For example, at the beginning of the book, the character does not think deeply about the consequences of the American occupation of Iraq in terms of her family’s safety.

Instead of focusing on the requirement of keeping her family safe and remaining together, Naema becomes preoccupied with the relationship she has with her current boyfriend. They are both under the illusion that following the war they will be able to live together and start a
medical practice. However, this all changes when the character's father and brother are taken prisoner by American forces. She believes that she will be able to reason with the Americans that her father and brother are not a danger since she speaks English. However, this is a false assumption. She soon realizes that the Americans cannot be reasoned with because they are ignorant in their knowledge of Islamic tradition and culture.

The significant point that I'm trying to make here is that the arc and scope of Truth is diverse and more complicated in multi-voiced narratives than in singular-voiced narratives. This is especially the case if women are at the center of textual analysis because women characters have to juggle multiple roles within a narrative construction that male narrators do not. One element is culture--cultural differences and how each character determines a construct of Truth are interlinked because culture allows the text of a multi-voiced narrative to expand into different areas such as religion, dialogue as a tool to reach Truth, and inter-organizational power that constructs and defines place. Scholars of rhetoric should include elements of culture within their analysis on war novels because it offers a new way to examine how war novels add to the debate of what is the proper place for war fiction within literature and rhetoric.
CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

The first significant outcome of this project is a connection between the different methodologies of textual analysis and the divergent interpretations of philosophical truth. For example, methodological designs that were a part of Bruner's “life world” applies to an analysis of O’Brien’s first-person narrative account of the Vietnam War in *The Things They Carried*. Bruner defines narrative as a construct of "stories but, these stories do not happen in the real-world, rather, they are constructed in people's heads" (Bruner 691). Bruner is saying that narrative as a design is meant to express an ideal version of society that is present in a person's head but does not correspond to reality.

O'Brien serves as both narrator and main character of *The Things They Carried*, and is seen when O'Brien tries to design a lifeworld in which as narrator, he constructs a philosophical perspective of a North Vietnamese soldier. He does this in emotional and human terms out of the need to connect with another human being. The thinking process that is involved in abating the act of killing corresponds to a lifeworld conception; O'Brien is making the act of killing a more human experience. This humanism is a truth because it requires intellect in the application of philosophical principles and connecting it to how an individual in a scenario describes and analyzes their external environment by using words that are constructed from an internal voice; however, this methodology has drawn fire from the scholarly community.

According to authors such as Robin Silbergleid in "Making Things Present: Tim O'Brien's Autobiographical Metafiction," *The Things They Carry* raises fundamental questions about the nature of the connection between truth, concepts of epistemology, and narrative. This is because *The Things They Carried* is a work of imaginative literature rather than an historical document. This fundamental matter encourages “‘inexperienced’ readers to appreciate the text as a ‘statement of actual things,’ as a work of ‘truth’”(Silbergled 129). However, Silbergled raises
serious questions about the role of O'Brien as a narrator. Being a narrator, he structures and chooses certain events to be conceived as true and others as false. This contentious debate over the connection between mythology and philosophical truth is that it provides a space for rhetorical scholars to add their voices because rhetoric can contextualize and situate arguments of methodology that involve the understanding of how a voice of a narrator and how the inclusion and exclusion of facts compromises a text.

A discussion of the range of this methodology also involves arguments that discuss the restraints and abilities of the narrator. Constricting or freeing a narrator's ability to tell a story is important because in war literature there is an absence of a discussion in the context of methodology of how the function of a narrator can affect how a reader constructs a meaning of a conflict within a particular text. The lessons I took away from Powers’ *The Yellow Birds* surround the experiences of John Bartle, a military soldier who was deployed to Iraq. Bartle’s deployment occurs at a time when American forces are encountering resistance from the Sunni insurgency.

*The Yellow Birds* develops a narrative style in which Bartle designs an idea of truth that is heavily influenced by the relationships he creates. Out of these relationships, the text informed a methodological style that accentuates the main character's external voice and environmental influence on his perspective of the American invasion of Iraq.

A significant moment within the text that contextualizes how Bartle creates meaning out of his Iraq experience is his interaction with LaDonna Murphy. An important conversation takes place between LaDonna Murphy and John Bartle, which frames an incipient epistemological perspective in the mind of Bartle. The outcome of this conversation is that Bartle promises LaDonna Murphy that he will bring her son Daniel home alive (Powers 47). The methodological
design that is used in this example undergirds the point of how a main character's external environment changes how a character frames an understanding of warfare.

At the beginning of the novel, Bartle believed he understood the purpose and intent of the Iraq war better than anybody else. He saw the war as a deadly organism that is out to kill the American soldier at any cost, so as a result, an individual soldier cannot afford to develop any important friendships because it is uncertain how long the soldier will be alive (Powers 3). It is obvious that Bartle constructed a view of truth out of a sense of the need to stay alive for his own self-interest. However, as a result of him making the promise to LaDonna Murphy, he is now required to put his own self-interest aside, which causes his notion of truth to change; the success or failure of the Iraq War depends on whether Daniel Murphy is alive at the end.

Constructing a methodological formula that is meant to evaluate the external factors and their relationship to rhetorical philosophy is a new approach to analyzing war fiction. The use of this kind of approach will permit rhetorical scholars to expand the scope of how existing debates on methodology are discussed.

Precup argues that Powers constructs a text that seeks to eliminate or reconstruct how the main character uses memory to reformulate his experiences in Iraq to nullify the consequences of his actions. Bartle engages in rationalization or revising his recollections (Precup 176).

Precup focuses on how memory is used to reconstruct events. While this may be the case, in rhetorically contextualizing Bartle’s position within the novel, Precup does not pay adequate attention to Bartle’s behavior in trying to avoid his experiences and the use of his memory to come up with an alternative truth. In exclusively contextualizing her analyses by focusing on
memory, Precup shortcuts how the entire text of the novel can be used to further enhance rhetoric’s place within war literature.

Another recommendation would be that structuring an analysis of methodology that is explained in its connection to truth would allow for individuals who are interested in reading war fiction to notice any internal structural paradoxes that are within the text. For example, *The Yellow Birds* expresses a paradox of truth that embraces a concept in which Bartle does not want to confront the consequences resulting from his experience in Iraq. This reluctance causes him to want to live in the shadows and not permit his guilt to come to light (Powers 138-140). An examination of the internal paradoxes that reside within a text will permit experts in rhetorical philosophy to apply rhetorical symbolism to fictional narratives of war.

Take for instance, *The Yellow Birds* describes the symbolic nature of the sun. The title and the book is an homage to the Greek mythological fable of Icarus, in which he ultimately dies for not heeding the warning of his father to not fly too close to the sun. This is connected to *The Yellow Birds* counterintuitively since the text seeks to demonstrate that the Iraq War caused soldiers to want to redesign their narratives so that they could conceal the dangers of the truth.

In returning to multi-voiced narratives of war and a discussion of their value to rhetorical studies, I framed *Sand Queen* and *The Sympathizer* in ways that illustrated two different textual definitions that contributed to alternative meanings of the Iraq War and its occupation as well as the Vietnam War and the significance of its aftermath. The American war in Iraq and its subsequent occupation uncovered many dominant themes in terms of politics, religion, and civil society. Benedict sought to design her multi--voiced narrative as a story that discusses the convergence and divergence of two women from opposing cultures and countries.
For example, military soldier Kate Brady is portrayed in the text as a naive 21-year-old military police officer who has been deployed to Iraq during the occupation of the country. Kate contextualizes a version of Truth from two conflicting parallel lines. The first parallel line is her desire to be thought of in terms of a male soldier, strong and masculine, with the ability to fight in the war. Kate desires to shed her identity as a feminine woman because of the expectations placed upon her by her family growing up in Buffalo, New York (Benedict 40).

The second parallel line that enveloped Kate's sense of identity is her religious background (Benedict 44). She has grown up in a strict conservative Christian household that views her service in Iraq to be a form of serving Christ. The purpose of presenting these two different conflicting constructions is not new within war literature. However, what is new is a discussion of the effect that it has on a person during a war. As stated in Chapter Four, this duality created a sense of double consciousness in the mind of Kate (Dubois 6). W.E.B. DuBois derives this term to mean a sense of a dual identity within individuals who have to present themselves differently in a variety of situations (6). What is most important here is that the burden that is placed upon one as a result of the phenomena of double consciousness is the concept of twoness (DeBois 6). This implies that when struggling with an identity crisis a person finds themselves in a no man’s land that is between two points that view an individual’s identity differently.

In terms of how this concept can be applicable to rhetorical theory and how to think about the way multi-voiced narratives differ from First-Person accounts of war is that rather than identifying philosophical or personal experiences that help shape the context in how a character or text can uncover concepts of epistemology that are then connected to a definition of war.
multi-voiced narratives tend to focus on how a geographical space affects or contours how a character either embraces their identity or deviates from it.

In contrast to the portrayal of Kate, Naema is the complete anthesis; she is meant to be thought of as being cosmopolitan, knowledgeable about the world, and educated (Benedict 16). Throughout the course of the book, Naema gradually disassociates herself from her allegiance as a Western-educated woman towards an embrace of her conservative religious upbringing. What drives her metamorphosis is the idea behind Heidegger’s “The Questions of the Essence of Being” because Naema constructs a meaning of Truth to signify that the war and its outcomes are intended to extrapolate differences rather than similarities (4). The systemic consequence of categorizing the differences in culture, religion, and geography between Eastern and Western culture is that it contextualizes a notion of Truth that is connected to Orientalism. Said argues that there is a historical trend within Western civilization that inculcates a culture of Orientalism that applies discursive and pejorative language towards Eastern cultures (38). What is important here is that Orientalism becomes institutionalized within Western doctrines and humanistic studies, which in turn get disseminated as a form of knowledge.

Integrating concepts such as Orientalism into a textual analysis of Truth can help rhetoricians articulate that military occupation does not make a distant culture want to emulate the West. It in fact causes them to turn away from Western ideals. The significant point that I want to underscore in my discussion of how Sand Queen contextualizes the concept of Truth and how the author creates both characters is that Benedict implicitly argues that Truth is a paradoxical concept. The characters were designed as paradoxes in that Naema was intended to represent a liberal point of view who ended up embracing a conservative view and Kate Brady is
the opposite. Therefore, rhetoricians should use characters as a rhetorical tool to demonstrate the complexities of Truth in order to accentuate the point that in fact Truth does not come in a monolithic form.

*The Sympathizer* is a multi-voiced narrative that contextualizes how the South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese apply meaning to the Vietnam War following the collapse of Saigon in 1975. *The Sympathizer* can be placed within the realm of multi-voiced narratives since Nguyen seeks to highlight how an individual’s identity is formed when they understand the complications of the consequences of war through the eyes of both sides. *The Sympathizer* can help rhetoricians when it comes to narrative designs, informing and instructing debates that touch on issues of the connection between ideology and Truth epistemology.

Examples of this can be derived from how a particular novel discusses the consequences of a war in reference to topics, such as how a construct of Truth accurately tells the perspective of individuals that are powerless in terms of rhetorical identification. For example, within *The Sympathizer*, there are discussions about how Western culture seeks to portray the South Vietnamese in American films as a means to perpetuate the American myth, which is that the American military didn't actually lose the war in Vietnam. In extending this analysis further, rhetoricians can apply ideas from the *Communist Manifesto* written by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels in 1848. Marx and Engels discuss the ramifications of economic developments for European society in the aftermath of the industrial revolution (5).

Rhetoricians can use Marxism as an example to examine the text of *The Sympathizer* in terms of how the concept of geographical dislocation along with social status can represent an obstacle in how a minority group seeks to reclaim their rhetorical autonomy in terms of being
able to tell their own narrative. In regard to theoretical design in evaluating how a text that discusses the Vietnam War incorporates philosophical elements of the rhetorical tradition, practitioners of rhetoric and their students can bring to war literature an examination of the countervailing forces that are embedded within a text.

A countervailing force can be understood as a factor or obstacle that prevents a group of people from reaching or achieving their definition of Truth. In terms of *The Sympathizer*, this was exhibited in the discussions about the presence of certain characters and how ideology and questioning ideological belief in the main character shifted his thinking in reference to communism. Most importantly, this shift can be underscored in how the main character saw the shortcoming of both South Vietnamese capitalism and North Vietnamese communism. The shortcomings revolved around how both sides made concessions or accommodations in their ideological belief systems that did not fit with either traditional forms of Marxism or capitalism.

My analyses of these shifts were the ideas that were a byproduct of the thinking processes of Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*. Fukuyama argues that following the Cold War, ideological movements will no longer be a factor in international relations. The reason for this is that all societies will be on the trajectory that embraces neo-liberalistic ideas. These concepts are connected to Hegel’s ideas of the history of philosophy (5). This is because both Hegel and Fukuyama formed their theoretical perspectives from a basis of dialecticisms. Themes of dialecticisms are seen in *The Sympathizer* in how Nguyen frames the ideological questions that grow into the main character’s mind as the result of doubting the value of both capitalism and communism.
In this final chapter, I have provided recommendations for how rhetorical scholars can find a place to situate themselves within the field of war literature. My recommendations and analyses are to use both first-person accounts and multi-voiced narrative novels as a way to highlight the complexities of the interrelationship that is present between textual analysis and the perspectives of different philosophers of rhetorical theories. This intersection brings forth new ways to think about methodology and how to expand rhetorical theory within the scope of war literature.
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