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Third Culture of Trauma: Haunted Hybridity in Cecile Pin's Wandering Souls



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Abstract

This paper offers a critical re-evaluation of the classic *Third Culture Kid* (TCK) theory by arguing that its foundation in systemic privilege is insufficient for explaining the complexities of forced displacement. It contends that the traditional focus on voluntary expatriates must be reconsidered in light of refugee experiences shaped by coercion, loss, and survival.

In response, the study proposes a new sociological framework termed the *Third Culture of Trauma*, which reorients TCK discourse toward displaced populations. This conceptual shift foregrounds trauma as a central force in identity formation under conditions of forced migration.

The research is grounded in a primary case study of Cecile Pin's *Wandering Souls* (2023), using the novel as a textual site to explore the *Haunted Hybridity* of Vietnamese siblings navigating life in Britain during the Thatcher era. Through this analysis, the study examines how historical trauma and diasporic experience intersect to shape fragmented yet enduring identities.

In contrast to the traditional TCK, having a culture of fluidity and global capital to characterize its mobility, the refugee TCK has a new form of movement that can be described as characterized by the friction of movement by loss and indifference of the bureaucratic system. The research paper discusses the linkages of the spectral presence of the lost through the Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Hauntology in the formation of the liminal identity that is never fully integrated. The analysis of the crisis of *Boat People* in Vietnam presents the research paper that the architecture created by the refugee is, quite on the contrary, the *Third Culture*, the locality of unceasing mourning, the place where the fragmented self is manifested amidst the debris of the psychological space. This study therefore redefines the TCK identity as being at home and everywhere and nowhere not through the cosmopolitan prestige, but as a permanent state of fragmented trauma of survival.

Keywords: *Third Culture Kid* (TCK), *Wandering Souls*, Cecile Pin, *Haunted Hybridity*, Trauma Theory, Postcolonial Hauntology, *Third Culture*

Introduction and Background

The development of the so-called *Third Culture Kid* (TCK) as a sociological concept started in the fifties of the last century, which is characterized by the development of globalization of the post-war period. In the ethnographic fieldwork in India, Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem noted a type of children who did not comfortably belong to either of the opposing categories of their parents, namely, the passport culture and the host culture, where they were currently residing. Rather, these children existed in an intermediate place, in a *Third Culture*, neither ancestral nor adopted altogether (Useem & Useem, 1967). This framework, which was improved by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, was used over decades as the main prism in the understanding of the upbringing of global nomads. It defined the TCK experience based on the themes of high mobility, broad worldviews, as well as the formation of a chameleon-like adaptability (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009). Nevertheless, the classical TCK theory is structurally anchored to the pillar of systemic privilege. It is

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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the movement of the children of diplomats, military personnel, missionaries, and corporate expatriates, historically described as having a facilitated movement across the borders supported by the institutions, the governmental protection, and a certain level of economic safety. In that regard, the *Third Culture* is a place of cosmopolitan enrichment with the main problem being rootless as a person that is at home everywhere and nowhere. However, with the modern world being more of a forced movement than a voluntary expatriate's situation, the constraints of this conventional model are very tangible. As soon as the TCK lens is swapped by the expatriate who has been shifted to the position of the displaced refugee, the *Third Culture* is turned inside out. To the refugee child, the interstitial space is no longer a place of global citizenship, but a *Third Culture of Trauma*. The project is aimed at re-assessing and extending the discussion of TCK to consider forced displacement as a source of a psychological and cultural architecture that is in stark contrast to the voluntary mobility of the traditional global nomad.

The urgency of this theoretical change is condensed in the literary intervention of the novel by Cecile Pin titled *Wandering Souls* (2023). The novel tells a devastating and enormously subtle story of the Vietnamese Boat People focusing on the life of three brothers: Anh, Thanh, and Minh. Their emigration is not a professional migration or diplomatic application but a desperate escape out of the ruins of the 'Vietnam War'. The culture they bring with them is a culture of loss and the culture they are introduced to is the culture of indifference and exclusion by the system. A catastrophic break in Pin is the narration of the change between these worlds in the death of their parents and younger siblings at sea. This trauma ensures that their *Third Culture* is not a rubbish of different cultural features, but a field that has been created in the furnace of survival. This research paper recognizes an existence of *Haunted Hybridity* by locating these characters in the TCK framework. It is a state in which the hybrid identity that is characteristic of TCKs is filled with the spectral existence of the lost, the phantom limb of the lost homeland, erased both physically and ideologically. The protagonists of Pin, as opposed to the traditional TCK that moves through cultures with the effortlessness of an insider-outsider, decide to go through their new reality with the heavy baggage of the psychological rubble of what can be called a journey that never really ends. Their identity cannot only be described as a mixture of Vietnam and Britain; it is a liminal feature full of ghosts of those who never made it through the crossing. To comprehend how profound this is the novel must be placed in the historical sense of the Vietnamese refugee crisis. In 1975-1995, another re-education of the communist government led to close to 800,000 individuals fleeing Vietnam by sea (VO, 2006). These people, commonly known as the Boat People, had to endure such inhuman conditions as attacks by the pirates, dehydration, starvation, as well as a constant risk of drowning in overcrowded and ineffective boats. The survivors in most cases were also in years of squalid refugee camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia, or Thailand, and then resettled in Western countries. This history is typically consumed in the Western popular imagination as a rescue narrative a kind of Western benevolence in which the refugee is a passive recipient of democratic freedom (Espiritu, 2014). Nonetheless, the story of Cecile Pin does not concur with such teleologies. She puts the reader in the gut-level of the internment and the icy reality of Thatcher Britain. The Britain that Anh, Thanh and Minh face is not a pleasant place to rest but the place of controlled resettlement, racial strain and bureaucratic indifference. Putting the psychological and social barrier of the 1980s and 90s in the limelight, Pin

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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emphasizes the conflicting nature between the state wishing to have its way through integration and the refugee living in the condition of luminosity. The gap in the context of this study, then, lies between the historical macro-narrative of geopolitics and the micro-narrative of the individual psyche, in arguing that the experience of being a refugee constitutes a very specific version of TCK, existing in the state of continuous mourning. This study will be based on Trauma Theory as one of the main analytical pillars, referring specifically to the work of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman. The classic definition of trauma as an experience that cannot be claimed by its owner, or in other words, an event that has not been properly absorbed into consciousness during the moment of its appearance but is coming back to haunt the survivor in the form of flashbacks and repetitions as defined by Caruth (1996) is fundamental in understanding Nick Pin narrative structure (Caruth, 1996). The trauma of the sea crossing should not be seen as something the siblings are over with; in the case of *Wandering Souls*, it is a living entity that determines how he or she perceives the time and space. This distortion of time characterizes the *Third Culture* that they live in. In the case of Anh, the eldest sister, the part of the parental figure is a playing a game of stability intended to be a cover of a broken interior. In the case of her siblings, the trauma is in the form of withdrawal or a desperate bid to fit in a British culture, which is essentially unhomey. This research paper presents an argument that the refugee TCK does not acculturate in the usual meaning. They experience instead what Herman has termed as a shattering of the self (Herman, 1992). Their cultural hybridity is a defensive process, a psychological structure constructed to accommodate the trauma and still enables the person to operate in the world that requires them to remain silent and be thankful.

Moreover, the very notion of the Postcolonial Hauntology, as introduced by Jacques Derrida and Avery Gordon, offers the conceptual structure that is likely to cover the haunted quality of the hybridity of the two siblings. The claim by Derrida that the time is out of joint can be traced in the fact that Pin has incorporated the ghost of Dao, the younger brother who passed on in the sea (Derrida, 1994). The voice of Dao is flowing in and out of the story, acting as both a literal and a metaphorical haunting one cannot forget. The traditional TCK study may position the child on the balancing act of the connections of the home country and the host country in matters of holiday. The study of the refugee TCK Hauntologically changes the perspective on the living culture as the active influence that the dead culture imposes on the present which is the living one. The location where the borders between the present and the past, the living and the dead, the here and there are blurred, is the so-called *Third Culture*. The haunting in Gordon work on ghostly matters hints that haunting constitutes a component aspect in the contemporary societal life and particularly to the ones marginalized by history (Gordon, 2008). In the novel by Pin, *Vietnamese Boat People*, the ghost is not a savings that happened in the supernatural realm but is a social reality. The political powers that displaced them, the sea which has swallowed their family and the British society which regards them as nothing other than statistics or success stories haunt the siblings. This research paper assumes that *Haunted Hybridity* is the hallmark of the refugee TCK that makes them stand out of the voluntary TCK when their ghosts are often merely the memories of the past city or the lost friend. The Intersection of these theories -the TCK studies, the Trauma Theory, and the Hauntology helps to explore further the liminality within the context of the film *Wandering Souls*. Liminality according to sociological terms is a state of passage or

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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Online ISSN: 3006-5895

transition where an individual is in between and among social categories (Turner, 1969). To the conventional TCK, this liminality can be considered transitional or contextual. In the case of the refugee brothers in the work by Pin, though, liminality is a condition, a state of permanence. Their location is a *Third Culture* which is physically situated in a council flat in London but psychologically, in a refugee camp in Hong Kong and a sinking boat in the South China Sea. This study reasons that this liminal nature is not a failure of integration, but a truthful evaluation of the state of being a refugee. The *Third Culture of Trauma* is the place where the siblings are trying to create a feeling of home using the pieces of the broken past. It is a patchwork identity; a reconstruction that is never fully achieved and subject to infiltrations of the memory and cold winds of modern xenophobia. Through the internal monologues of the siblings and their engagements with the British landscape, this research paper shows that the physical space of the host nation is always being re-traced in the perspective of traumatic memory.

Research Objectives

To examine the psychological impact of traumatic displacement on the identity formation of the Vietnamese refugee siblings (Anh, Thanh, and Minh) in *Wandering Souls*.

To examine the manifestations of *Haunted Hybridity* in the siblings' lives, focusing on their connection to a phantom homeland and their struggle to integrate into British society.

Research Questions

What are the effects of traumatic displacement on the identity formation on Ann Thanh and Minh ?

What are the visions of hunting hybridity in sibling's survival strategies?

Significance of the Study

This research is significant as it provides a critical intervention into contemporary sociological, psychological, and literary discourses by expanding existing frameworks of identity, trauma, and displacement. It extends *Third Culture Kid* (TCK) theory through the introduction of *The Third Culture of Trauma*, thereby addressing the experiences of refugee children whose identities are shaped not by privilege but by forced migration and systemic upheaval. In doing so, it offers a more inclusive and ethically grounded understanding of identity formation under conditions of catastrophe.

Moreover, the study contributes to trauma studies and mental health discourse by highlighting the enduring effects of displacement, particularly the concept of unresolved mourning, which shapes the psychological and developmental experiences of displaced populations across generations. Additionally, its application of *Haunted Hybridity* in the analysis of *Wandering Souls* advances postcolonial literary criticism by illustrating how traumatic histories persist through spectral presence in diasporic life.

Overall, the research is significant for its interdisciplinary contribution and its broader engagement with global issues of forced migration, memory, and the ongoing search for belonging in a world marked by displacement and loss.

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Literature Review

The sociological heritage of the so called *Third Culture Kid* (TCK) is traced back to the aftermath of the war to the globalized society, the world where the act of shifting nationalities to cross border is started to fundamentally alter the conventional sense of national identity. It was first coined in the 1950s by Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem, who carried out ethnographic studies in India and saw a clear demographic of children who were caught between the different worlds of culture (Useem & Useem, 1967). Such children who were mainly the sons of the American expatriates did not identify really with their passport culture (that of the origin of their parents) or the host culture (that of the place in which they were presently living). They instead created a *Third Culture*, an interstitial reality, which served as a common way of life and identity structure to people living in a transnational environment. TCK model has been the dominating paradigm of global upbringing throughout decades which was codified by the masterpiece of David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) established the TCK as an individual who has lived a substantial part of his/her development period out of the parental culture and established connections with all the cultures not owning any of them in *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds*. This model focuses on a chameleon like adaptability, a high level of cross cultural competence, but a continuing sense of rootlessness with home being defined not by place but by people. Nonetheless, the historical process of the development of TCK studies has demonstrated a structural bias towards systemic privilege. The original research by the Seemans and subsequent developments by Pollock focus primarily on children from globally mobile families namely the offspring of diplomats, corporate executives, military personnel, and missionaries (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). These are people whose movement is authorized either by the institutions of state or corporate and are enabled by the law and are backed up by economic stability. The *Third Culture Kid* within the context of this conventional TCK discourse is perceived as a place of cosmopolitan enhancement, an identity of the elite that will provide the individual with a distinctive array of social capital (Tanu, 2015). Even the problems inherent in such a lifestyle, including the unresolved grief, or identity confusion, are placed into a framework of voluntary migration. This rootlessness of the traditional TCK is, as Walters (2011) puts it, a privileged displacement where one is able to cross-cultural borders is a status symbol and not a sign of desperation.

With modern world trends being more and more characterized by forced migration, war, and disintegration of nation-states, the shortcomings of this model become quite tangible. The application of the TCK lens on the displaced refugee gives the radical ontological transformation of the so-called *Third Culture*. The interstitial space is not a location of global citizenship to the child of forced migration, but a *Third Culture of Trauma*. This research aims to reconsider the existing discourse of TCK and broaden it by looking at the ways in which the mental and cultural structure of displacement is in contrast to the voluntary mobility of the classical global nomad with the use of the *Wandering Souls* (2023) as a central piece of literature. They do not relocate with the intention of pursuing a career but rather a flight away to the devastation of the Vietnam War. When we put these characters in the TCK paradigm we find a state of *Haunted Hybridity*. As opposed to the classic TCK whose mobility through cultures is as effortless as an insider-outsider, Pin protagonists have to face their new life with the baggage of the mental debris of a journey, which has ended in the devastating loss of their family. To comprehend this *Haunted Hybridity*, it is

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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necessary to combine Trauma Theory, that is, definitions that were presented by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman. In her renowned work, Caruth (1996) describes trauma as an experience that remains unclaimed by the subject at the moment of occurrence, in other words, something that is not completely incorporated into his or her consciousness but comes back to torment the survivor in the form of repetition and flashbacks. The trauma of sea passage, the death of parents and younger brothers of the siblings, in *Wandering Souls* is not one of the memories that the main characters end up alleviating; it is a component of their identity. Their *Third Culture* is characterized by a time warp in which the past continuously bled into the present. Herman (1992) goes on to state that trauma also causes the shattering of the self-wherein the fundamental trust of the world by the victim is ruined. The cultural hybridity that the refugee TCK must construct is not a set of divergent cultural characteristics, but rather an armory of defenses created to accommodate this fragmented self in its endurance within a host culture that requires them to remain silent and grateful. This cultural specificity of the Vietnamese refugee crisis is what creates the context of their defensive psychological architecture. In the 1975-mid-1990s period, the sea-based exodus of Vietnamese refugees was almost 800,000 individuals fleeing the Vietnam-post-coup fate and the unleashed post-Soviet blatant re-education (Espiritu, 2014). Such Boat people had to endure the unthinkable, such as being attacked by pirates, starving, and being subjected to the danger of drowning in leaky boats. The survivors were sometimes left to live in filthy refugee camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia or Thailand and then resettled in the Western countries. This crisis in the Western popular history is very frequently diminished to a rescue narrative, an account of Western beneficence in which the refugee is merely an inert receiver of liberty (Nguyen, 2012). But Pin does not allow this simplification in his novel since he puts the reader in the chilly reality of the Thatcher-era Britain. The Britain the two brothers' face is that of controlled resettlement and systematic apathy. It was a period of the solidification of the British national identity and the advent of neoliberal politics based on assimilation rather than actual integration (Hansen, 2000). The refugees were commonly scattered all over the nation to eliminate the possibility of creating an ethnical enclave of people and this policy led to extreme social isolation (Robinson, 2003). This indifferent hospitality compelled the refugee TCK to adopt an otherwise internal and invisible culture of silence where names of the dead and horror of the water were repressed so as to preserve the perception of the good refugee. Whereas to the traditional TCK, liminality is just a temporary state of passing through between two cultures, in the case of the refugee siblings in *Wandering Souls*, luminosity is a nature. They are neither of the two worlds or cultures, neither between the living and the dead. This leads to the second theoretical foundation of the current research, which is Postcolonial Hauntology. In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Jacques Derrida formulated hauntology to mean that the present is never haunted by the ghosts of the past and the promises of the future that are never fulfilled. This was further broadened by Avery Gordon (1997), in her novel, *Ghostly Matters*, where she opines that haunting is a component aspect of social existence especially to those who have been marginalized in the course of history. The ghost of the younger brother, Dao, who drowned at sea, is a literal narrative voice in Pin in his novel. The spectral nature of Dao is not willing to allow the siblings to blend completely into the British life. He is the phantom limb of a vanished country, which was physically and ideologically washed away. In a traditional TCK research we may be interested in the way in which

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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a child has to balance Christmas in New York with Diwali in Delhi. In a hauntological analysis of the refugee TKK, here we are concerned with the role of the culture of the dead on the living present. The identity of the siblings does not lie in the fusion of Vietnam and Britain, it is a marginal life that the ghosts of the people who failed to cross over live in.

This is the encumbrance of this *Haunted Hybridity* and this can be demonstrated in the Internal monologues of Anh, the elder sister. Being the self-proclaimed matriarch, the act of stability by Anh is an illusion that is aimed at shielding her brothers against the fissures of her inner world. The decision to become a TCK is necessitated by the need to learn how to work within the British bureaucracy and even in the labor market but her *Third Culture* is pegged at the 'South China Sea'. This is in line with what Bhabha (1994) defines as the Third Space of enunciation, which is a location of hybridity, where the cutting edge of translation and negotiation takes place. But in the case of Anh, this is not an agency space but an enduring space. It is the hybridity that she has so that this research paper calls it Survivalist Hybridity. It is a psychological process that enables the refugee to operate in the host nation though his or her major core identity is established by the traumatic dislocation of displacement. This is quite a contrast of the Cosmopolitan Hybridity of the voluntary TCK which is commonly hailed as a symbol of global agility. Using the interactions of the siblings with the British landscape, we understand how the physical landscape of London is still being drawn upon again with the use of traumatic memory. However, it is not only a geographical site; a rainy street in Peckham is a place where one is haunted by the damp state of the refugee camp and the coldness of the ocean. The policy of the Thatcher government towards the refugees in Vietnam was one of invisibility. The state was trying to hasten the assimilation by spreading the families to places where there was no existing community of Vietnamese (Robinson, 2003). But this policy overlooked the psychological needs of the survivors. In *Wandering Souls*, isolation of the siblings in Britain is similar to isolation in the framework of TCK. They belong nowhere and everywhere, yet to them, this is not a poetic statement, but a social fact of being excluded. The antagonistic atmosphere in Britain in the 1980s and 90s led to the conflict between the state integration expectations and requirement and the actual situation of the refugee in grief. In this work, it is assumed that the *Third Culture* of the refugee TCK represents a reaction to this friction: a hidden world in which the trauma is held back since there exists no safe place in the host culture to release it. The patchwork identity of the brothers is a collection of pieces – notions of British pop culture, thoughts of Vietnamese cuisine or the dense silence of the lost family – which is an essential literary tool that helps to narrow the gap between the sociological study of TCKs and the traumatic hauntology. The gap between sociological TCK studies and trauma-informed hauntology can be bridged by the inclusion of the voice of the Vietnamese brother Dao in the story. Dao does not only exist as a memory, but he is also a narrator who sees his siblings on the other side. This is a narrative decision by Pin, which highlights that the experience of refugees is never simply that of the survivors; it is also intrinsically connected with the dead. The classical TCK model tends to focus on the concept of mobility as a progressive trend. According to hauntology, however, time is disjointed as it is to the displaced (Derrida, 1994). The brothers are heading into the future- getting employment, starting families, becoming British- but they are also in a continuous stagnation between the time of the shipwreck and the time of their return. This is the *Third Culture of Trauma* that is

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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characterized by this stuckness. To expand this literature review, one needs to compare the experience of the Vietnamese experience with other accounts of refugees to determine whether *Haunted Hybridity* is a common theme. Similar themes of displacement and the bifurcated self have been discussed by such writers as Viet Thanh Nguyen and Mohsin Hamid. The Refugee by Nguyen (2017) and The Sympathizer (2015) claim that the refugee is a doubled person who has no other choice but to see himself through the prism of the host. This doubling awareness which was first described by W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) in the framework of race is worsened in the refugee TCK. They have to juggle demands of their passport culture (which is usually a conservative or traditional perception of Vietnam as it is held by the elders), as well as the host culture (a British society that favors them to be thankful), and their *Third Culture* (the space of trauma between the two). The contribution by Pin is distinctive due to the emphasis on the siblings, the children who were raised in this transition, which makes them the literal definition of the TCK concept, but deprives them of the privilege typically placed on the concept.

Research Gap

Existing scholarship on *Third Culture Kids* (TCKs) reveals a significant conceptual limitation: the near absence of the refugee child within its theoretical framework. While TCK studies recognize experiences of grief and displacement, such discussions are largely confined to relatively privileged losses such as separation from familiar places, pets, or social networks. This framework fails to account for the profound and violent ruptures that define refugee experiences, where loss encompasses deceased family members, a devastated homeland, and the erasure of a pre-traumatic self. Furthermore, traditional TCK theory is grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, which tends to frame movement as a form of cultural capital and cosmopolitan enrichment. In stark contrast, refugee mobility is characterized by constraint, illegality, and systemic violence, where borders restrict rather than enable movement, and state power often manifests in oppressive forms. Consequently, the classical TCK model proves structurally inadequate for capturing the fragmented temporality and enduring trauma that shape refugee subjectivities. This gap highlights the need for a reconceptualization of *Third Culture* through the lens of forced displacement and trauma. The novel *Wandering Souls* serves as a critical literary site to address this absence, reimagining the *Third Culture* not as a space of hybridity and enrichment, but as one marked by loss, haunting, and death.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, grounded in a rigorous and interdisciplinary methodological framework designed to explore the complex dimensions of memory, displacement, and survival in *Wandering Souls* by Cecile Pin. Rather than functioning as a conventional literature review, this methodological design establishes a philosophical and analytical foundation that engages with the unique psychological and cultural positioning of Vietnamese refugees.

The research approaches the novel as a site of theoretical synthesis and critical inquiry, treating it not merely as a fictional narrative but as a form of historical and psychological excavation. By moving beyond surface-level plot analysis of the boat people experience, the study interrogates the deeper structures of trauma that shape the characters' inner worlds and their interactions with host societies.

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

Central to this methodology is the conceptual framework of the *Third Culture of Trauma*, which redefines traditional notions of cultural hybridity through the lens of forced displacement. The study further incorporates a systematic selection of primary and secondary sources, alongside the application of critical textual analysis informed by Catherine Belsey. This approach enables a structured and layered examination of the text, ensuring coherence in the organization of subsequent analytical sections.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in a synthesized theoretical model termed the *Third Culture of Trauma*, developed to examine the complex interaction of cultural displacement, psychological rupture, and spectral memory in *Wandering Souls* by Cecile Pin. As the novel operates at the intersection of exile, interrupted identity, and ghostly presence, a single theoretical perspective is insufficient. Therefore, an interdisciplinary framework is employed to capture these layered experiences.

The first component of this framework is *Third Culture Kid* theory, originally introduced by Ruth Hill Useem in 1963 and later expanded by David C. Pollock in 2009. While this theory traditionally focuses on the experiences of cosmopolitan expatriates, the present study recontextualizes it to reflect the instability and vulnerability of refugee life. It provides a conceptual language to understand the siblings' liminal position between a lost Vietnamese past and an imposed British present.

The second component is Trauma Theory, primarily based on the work of Cathy Caruth 1996 and Judith Herman 1992. Caruth argues that trauma is not fully experienced at the moment of occurrence but emerges later through repetitive and intrusive returns such as dreams and flashbacks. This concept is applied to the fragmented narrative structure of the novel and the inability of the siblings to express their grief. In addition, Herman's work on complex trauma offers a psychological understanding of the long term effects of displacement and the breakdown of family structures.

The third component is Hauntology, first conceptualized by Jacques Derrida in 1993 in *Specters of Marx* and later developed by Mark Fisher in 2014. Hauntology explains how the past and unrealized futures continue to shape the present. In *Wandering Souls*, the character Dao, who represents a deceased brother, functions as a hauntological figure. This perspective allows the study to interpret the presence of ghosts not as a stylistic device but as a representation of unresolved loss and memory.

Together, *Third Culture Kid* theory, Trauma Theory, and Hauntology form the integrated framework of the *Third Culture of Trauma*, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the cultural, psychological, and spectral dimensions of the narrative.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study is structured into three interconnected stages that follow the chronological and psychological development of the siblings in *Wandering Souls* by Cécile Pin. The first stage examines the psychological debris of the journey, focusing on the initial rupture of the family and the traumatic sea passage, where loss is experienced as both immediate and deeply disorienting. The second stage shifts to the haunting of the British domestic space, analyzing the siblings' resettlement in London as a liminal condition in which past and present coexist, with particular attention to the spectral presence of Dao as a continuing embodiment of loss. The final stage explores the long term impact of displacement and trauma in adulthood, assessing how Anh, Thanh, and Minh negotiate grief and identity within an unwelcoming environment. Drawing on a symptomatic reading approach associated with Catherine Belsey, this phase demonstrates that closure remains unattainable, and identity emerges instead as a fragmented and ongoing process shaped by memory, absence, and unresolved trauma.

Displacement in *Wandering Souls* by Cecile Pin

The issue of displacement in the *Wandering Souls* of Cecile Pin is depicted as a complex challenge that goes beyond the element of physical displacement, by showing itself in the form of an inevitable state of emotional and cultural alienation. In the case of three siblings, Anh, Minh, and Thanh, displacement starts with the traumatic death of their parents and younger siblings on sea and the three boys make their way on to the unfamiliar, cold land of the Thatcher-era Britain as orphans. Pin reflects the ways, in which each of the siblings handles this turmoil, Anh takes over a suffocating role of maternal sacrifice, Minh struggles with bitterness and fractured identity, and the youngest, Thanh tries to adjust in a more natural, yet, still bitter way. This displacement is already implied in the title of the novel, which is a twofold metaphor of this displacement, as in both cases, the subjects concerned are referred to as *Wandering Souls* without having a proper burial or the refugee themselves who are between a lost home and a new home that does not readily accept him. Finally, Pin insinuates that displacement is an intergenerational thing wherein the ghosts of the past through the person of their dead brother Dao are still walking around with the living suggesting that the quest of finding home is more about coming to terms with the tragedy than about its ability to find a place to belong.

Emotional Trauma

The emotional trauma of the siblings in *Wandering Souls* is a resonant, deep pain that outweighs the physical struggles of their voyage, and reflects as a condition of incessant wandering even once they have reached safety. The loss of their parents and four younger siblings in the sea is the trauma of disillusionment that left Anh, Minh, and Thanh as not only orphans but as the only ones to carry on a broken family history. To Anh, the trauma is further worsened by the responsibility burden that compels her to bury her grief in order to make sure her brothers survive, a factor that makes her live a hyper-vigilant and memory-suppressive life. Their coming to the military base reused in England is a literal embodiment of this internal displacement; the icy, sterile, and walled-in space is the reflection of their feeling of being unwelcome and cultural out of place. Their trauma is also distinguished by the so-called survivor guilt and the presence of their deceased brother Dao and his spectral story, which implies that their

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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souls are as unsettled and uninterred as the dead, and the host country perceives them through the spectacles of institutional apathy.

The siblings arrive in England as refugees, completely displaced from their home in Vietnam. They are cold, confused, and living in a repurposed military base. (p.79)

The position of the brothers in England can be seen as a state of complete displacement, which in the trauma theory, does not necessarily mean a mere shift in geographical location but the devastating loss of the so-called internal working model of safety. Home is the psychological source of identity, and its loss can make one have a shattered identity. To these brothers, the exile is an existential emptiness as the language, traditions and social forms that once gave them a sense of value have disappeared and they are left to exist in a condition of ontological uncertainty. Their ensuing description as cold and confused is a dual sensory and cognitive map of their trauma. The shift between the tropical climates of Vietnam to the damp, biting cold of England is physically a constant physiological stressor which maintains a high level of alertness in the nervous system. The absence of social warmth and alienation as another in a foreign land are manifested in a cold way, emotionally. They are not confused because they lack information but because their minds are overloaded with the effects of trauma. When the brain makes survival meaning, it becomes incapable of mapping new environments in an effective manner and as a result, the brain remains in the limbo state, which characterizes the refugees in which the past is lost and the future is ineffable. This is further enhanced by the fact that the base is inhabited by the military base that has been repurposed, which further introduces a sense of institutional trauma and irony. To the children who have been escaping the war-torn country, a military base, its structure of barracks, fences, and strict hierarchies could serve as a strong source of trauma. They are not placed in a soft environment to land but in the environment that physically resembles the forces of conflict and control, which they fled. Privacy and autonomy are deprived in this environment which enhances a feeling of dehumanization. Although it is supposed to be their refuge, the military base becomes the non-place that deprives them of a dignified domestic life that confines them in the constant presence of a state of transition in which they are no longer vulnerable to physical assault but still exposed to the mental assault of not knowing and not fitting in.

The Frozen Present

The frozen present in Cecile Pin, *Wandering Souls*, is a summary of the frozen, purgatory condition of both the living and the dead who are trapped in the trail of trauma and displacement. This idea can be best summed up in the ghost narrator, Dao, a wandering soul who is stuck in the present of his death as his surviving family, Anh, Thanh, and Minh, mature in a world that he could only watch. To the living, the frozen present takes the form of the limbo of being a refugee, the initial limbo of being physically locked up in the camps of Hong Kong and the subsequent limbo of being psychologically stuck in the guilt of the survivor in the UK that the traumatic loss of their parents never truly becomes the past. Pin depicts that trauma can serve as a suspension of the present, a frozen present in which the characters can no longer be able to move towards a future since their identities are still anchored in a unique, disjuncting moment of displacement, their identities still attached to a particular moment of shock, in effect blurring the boundary between the present they are living

and the past, the memory.

The refugees are waiting for the day to be over, stuck between past and future.
(p.47)

This frozen present is a powerful description of the psychological and temporal suspension of life in transit of the refugees had to leave their native land in Vietnam. The exhaustion of this frozen present is especially peculiar and condensed in the line of the poem that states that one is waiting until the day is over. In a healthy temporal life, the present is filled with purpose since it is geared towards a future point - education, career or family development. Nevertheless, to those caught in the middle between refugee camps, the future remains an empty possibility determined by the bureaucracy and international restrictions. The present does not give one a chance to move forward but is instead a bloc to be lived or killed. This being disappeared between the past and the future is indicative of the identity fracturing that takes place in Vietnam where the past is commonly a place of trauma or a loss of belonging, with the future remaining a phantom that never can become a reality. This is a state of temporary status, which may take years, making the temporary a permanent state. The frozen present is therefore a kind of time mute silence, in which the story of one's life is frozen until it can come back to life again beyond the camp boundaries. Additionally, the monotony of camp life, the food lines, the absence of privacy and the awaiting of news daily, also contributes to this feeling of stasis. The fact that a day is a reflection of the previous one does not allow the stockpiling of memories that normally provide the sensation of the passage of time this similarity makes the present to be frozen a desire that the next attempted cycle can bring the thaw of being in a permanent home.

Stagnation of Displaced

A stagnation of the displaced is an animation suspended; in which life is not led in the same way that it is lived in an eternal meantime. . It is the psychological and sociological burden of living in between the nonexistent home and the impossible future where one cannot find a career; build a home or a family because the border policy and the legal backlog prevent taking even the first steps to a new life. This imposed momentum does not simply stop the chronicle of a human being; it introduces a deep-seated meaning void that takes away the feeling of agency and self-identification. In the event that a person finds no ground to stand, all the days spent in waiting is not the progression of time, but the gradual robbery of a life that never even began.

She desperately wants her life to begin and a place to call home (p.91)

Considering the *Wandering Souls* by Cecile Pin, the words represent the painful conflicting nature of the existence of the refugee and his/her survival. The main character, Anh, is suspended in the state of non-existence, in a waiting period, in a governmental bureaucracy, in the sterilized walls of transit camps. She is lamenting about the loss of the agency when she desperately wants her life to start; she is weary of being a person to whom things happen and wants to be a person who does something. This is an indication of a deep time displacement in which the past is a place of trauma and the present is just a waiting room and the future is a far, flickering mirage. The desire of having something to call home is not limited to the necessity of

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having a physical shelter. To a wandering soul, the term is based on the Vietnamese belief that spirits that die outside home or without being buried to rest are destined to spend their time in the earth, the term home, therefore relates to peace of the spirit and the ancestors. To the living characters, displacement has destroyed the root system of their identity. Home is not merely four walls, but an indication of the conclusion of the nomadic wearying of the refugee experience and the restoration of a name, a community and a sense of permanence. These lines together present the duality of displacement; it is not only about losing geography, but about losing time, implying that one cannot develop or progress until they are attached to a place, in fact, they are considered to be not born into the world.

Racial Hierarchy of Displacement

This racial hierarchy of displacement operates based on the racial and cultural proximity of the refugee to the host country where some are assailable and others cannot. The individuals who were displaced are classified into desirability levels with white or European descent being deserving and the non-white population viewed in terms of social threat. After all, these hierarchies show that the alleged right of universal right to refuge is increasingly depending on a racialized understanding of national identity and belonging.

She admitted that she would rather welcome white refugees 'such as Rhodesians, Poles and Hungarians, since they could more easily be assimilated into British society. (p.93)

The given quotation, given in a confidential cabinet meeting in July 1979 by Margaret Thatcher, displays how British policy regarding refugees has placed race and perceived cultural proximity as the central priorities in selecting refugees in Britain. It is also true that the pressure on the British government at the time to accept 10,000 Vietnamese boat people who were fleeing communist repression was fueled by a particular conception of British national identity that placed racial homogeneity above the duty of universal humanitarianism. Thatcher was using a historical and ideological construct of what she believed were acceptable refugees by specifically referring to Rhodesians, Poles and Hungarians. Poles and Hungarians were the victims of Soviet communism who were racially white and culturally European which Thatcher and her contemporaries thought would enable them to merge into the British population with least social friction. Rhodesians, in their turn, were white settlers of an ex-colony (present-day Zimbabwe), who were essentially perceived as kin and blood wretched members of British diaspora coming to a mother country to which they were culturally and racially part of. The purpose of such statement is in the idea of assimilation, which is a term that indicates a unidirectional process in which the new-coming absorbs the culture of the host nation completely. The use of the word by Thatcher is based on the idea that the social cohesion is reliant on a high level of uniformity. When claiming that the non-white refugees would have been more difficult to assimilate, she was putting the racial difference in its proper perspective as a natural barrier to social peace. This internal feeling conformed to her external discourse last year, namely, her 1978 swamped interview, in which she said that people were quite terrified with the fact that this country might become quite swamped with people with a different culture. Moreover, the lines bring out an imminent separation of political and humanitarian refugees. Although the Vietnamese

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were likewise escaping communism, an ideology that Thatcher had devoted her career to oppose, their racial and cultural background showed more weight than their ideological matching in her direct computation of the interests of the nation. She did not like white refugees just because it was a logistic or economical choice; she simply practiced a radicalized politics of belonging. She was worried that non-white refugees would cause riots in the streets and social unrest hence attributing any prospective conflict to the presence of the refugees, not intolerance conditions within the country. Finally, these lines are an important part of the evidence that can be used to comprehend the overlap of race, identity, and statecraft in late-20th-century Britain. They recommend that the refugee was not a universal category of suffering by the leadership of the day but selective with the degree of pity being based on how well one resembled the current image of the British citizen. This discussion reveals a contradiction between the global perception of the UK as a sanctuary of the persecuted and the gatekeeping, which was not based on race but on the inside.

Hunted Hybridity in the *Wandering Souls*

This phenomenon also comes about as a result of the fractured spaces of displacement whereby the hybrid figure is neither of the past nor the present, but an unsettling element where the fragmented past refuses to be erased by the new order and needs to be always present in the social life of the nation.

Identity and Belongings

The idea in *Wandering Souls*, where Cecile Pin explores the process of identity and belonging as a process that is constantly and painfully shrinking instead of being a destination, is the image of the school uniform with sleeves already too short to fit the sixteen-year-old arms of Anh before she even leaves Vietnam. To the refugee, fitting in somewhere it no longer suits them or a new nation which is uncooperative to them is a lifetime of custom-making. As Anh becomes a displaced child, a seamstress in London, her work is an extreme metaphor of her own life: she cuts, stitches and bends the cloth of her life to make it fit the world that had not been made to her size.

Anh wears her old Vietnamese school uniform, but it no longer fits her body. How do you belong to a place that no longer fits you? (p.13)

The picture of Anh with her school uniform in *Wandering Souls* is an emotional metaphor of the passage between childhood and the enforced maturity. The sleeves of her white shirt are too short to fit her sixteen year old arms before she even leaves Vietnam, which is an indication that she has grown beyond her previous life and the comfort of her childhood home and even before she is physically moved. The uniform is a reflection of herself as a student, daughter, a sheltered child, which is already growing old. By taking it on the boat, she is not merely carrying a piece of clothing; she is trying to save some sense of identity which the surrounding world already tries to break down. The main conflict of the refugees in the novel is their inability to belong to a certain place that is no longer theirs to belong. Vietnam is no longer home to Anh since it is the place of trauma and lost hopes; however, neither is Thatcher-era Britain, with its coldness, racism, and the anguish of being the model minority and assimilates. Pin indicates that belonging is not an experience of fitting in, but is a process of constant change. This is actualized later on in the life of Anh in London where she takes the job of a seamstress. Her occupation is highly allegoric: she has to

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work all day sewing, hewn, and altering clothes so that they could be used by new bodies. This is a reflection of how she internally rearranged her memories and expectations so as to match the reality that never happened to fit her.

The psychological space occupied by the *Wandering Souls* the dead that could not rest and the living that are still in no place is also known as the 'fit'. Anh loses the life of his younger brother Dao who dies in the sea and becomes a literal wandering soul following his siblings. He symbolizes that element of their history that will never fit in their lives in the new English world, but they cannot do away with. The uniform that Anh eventually no longer needs at any point is symbolic of the inability to go back to a state of innocence. Finally, according to Pin, the analysis of belonging will be that belonging is not a place that the displaced will discover, rather something that they will sew up with the hodgepodge of what they were able to carry with them. By learning to live in the seams, the space in between the culture you left and the one that grudgingly accepted you, you are out of place. The outcast now is the designation itself; Anh cannot fit in again by making herself smaller and smaller in the little school uniform, but by creating a life where the too-short sleeves are always left uncovered.

At the supermarket, Anh is told to buy English fruit instead of longing for Vietnamese fruit. What does it mean to have your cravings your very tastes rejected by a new country? (p.104)

Cecile Pin in *Wandering Souls* makes a seemingly ordinary activity such as grocery shopping a combat zone of identification and a place of deep cultural rejection. When Anh is instructed to purchase English fruit, rather than missing Vietnamese fruit, it is much more than an eating plan it is a command to completely fit in on the sensory and psychological level. To an immigrant, and in particular, to a refugee as Anh is, cravings and tastes are the remaining bits of a lost world. To see them not accepted in a new country is to be informed that even one's own body, the memories holding on to it, does not belong where it is. This rejection is the Othering of the immigrant life, whereby the banal nationalism of the host nation requires the denial of the inner life of the refugee, in exchange of unstable and contingent toleration. Taste is a primitive sense, which is closely connected with memory and the notion of home. In the case of Anh, Vietnamese fruit symbolizes the warmth, sweetness, and brightness of the life pre-trauma. These fruits are not merely food, but sensual remindance anchors to her parents and land, which she was brought to leave. Conversely, English fruit represents the utilitarian, cold and surface-level nature of the Thatcherite Britain. In a sense, Anh is symbolically violated in that she is policed on the level at which her cravings are. Her personality is rejected in her tastes and this indicates that her heritage is a burden or a hindrance to proper integration. It means that she has to reprogram her neurological reactions to the world in order to be a good citizen in the new country, and not only to learn the language and the laws of this country. Her hunger is classified as inconveniency and her desire is denied as inability to move forward.

Moreover, this exchange brings out the nature of power disparity inherent in the experience of refugees. The order to pick English fruit is usually issued in what is perceived to be a benevolent manner: a social worker or an official guide, at any rate, but it is a restraint. It turns the immigrant into a rehabilitation project instead of a person. By refusing the cravings of an individual, the host country denies the validity of the inner landscape of the immigrant. This brings about a situation of sensory

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displacement and the person is physically present in a different geography, yet is emotionally and biologically oriented to a different one. Rejection of taste is therefore the rejection of right of the immigrant to grieve. Finally, the need to be recognized more as English fruit is used as a metaphorical way of seeing the bigger picture of what the model minority is supposed to be like: only palatable to the host culture. The hardships of Anh to balance the desire with the need to conform to the surrounding reflects the untenable Choice made by most migrants- to withhold the self of the heritage so as to satisfy the needs of assimilation. It is to be reminded that in the new country, one may get a house, but not a home yet, since a home is a place where one can have his or her cravings acknowledged and his or her past can be sampled.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the classical framework of the *Third Culture Kid* is inadequate for understanding the identities of children shaped by forced displacement. Through a close reading of *Wandering Souls* by Cecile Pin, the research establishes the concept of the *Third Culture of Trauma* as a more fitting model, one defined not by cosmopolitan flexibility but by what can be termed haunted hybridity. Unlike traditional *Third Culture Kids*, who navigate cultures with relative fluidity, the refugee siblings Anh, Thanh, and Minh occupy a liminal space marked by loss, memory, and persistent trauma. Their identities emerge not as a harmonious blend of Vietnamese and British influences but as fragmented constructions shaped by grief, violence, and displacement. External forces, including state policies and gendered expectations, further obstruct their integration, reinforcing a condition in which mobility becomes traumatic, hybridity becomes a coping mechanism, and liminality evolves into a permanent state rather than a transitional phase.

The findings of this study carry important theoretical and practical implications. On a theoretical level, they call for an expansion of cross cultural identity frameworks to include the realities of involuntary migration and trauma driven displacement. On a practical level, the analysis highlights the limitations of integration policies that overlook psychological and collective trauma. The case presented in *Wandering Souls* suggests that dispersal strategies intended to facilitate assimilation may instead intensify isolation by disrupting communal support systems essential for processing grief. Ultimately, the study concludes that for refugee subjects, the notion of home cannot be confined to geographic or national boundaries. Rather, it exists as a fragile and often spectral construct shaped by memory, loss, and the enduring presence of what has been left behind.

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