



A Trauma Artist: Tim O'Brien and the Fiction of Vietnam

Mark A. Heberle

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A Trauma Artist examines how O'Brien's works variously rewrite his own traumatization during the war in Vietnam as a never-ending fiction that paradoxically "recovers" personal experience by both recapturing and (re)disguising it. Mark Heberle considers O'Brien's career as a writer through the prisms of post-traumatic stress disorder, postmodernist metafiction, and post-World War II American political uncertainties and public violence.

Based on recent conversations with O'Brien, previously published interviews, and new readings of all his works through 1999, this book is the first study to concentrate on the role and representation of trauma as the central focus of all O'Brien's works, whether situated in Vietnam, in post-Vietnam America, or in the imagination of protagonists suspended between the two. By doing so, Heberle redefines O'Brien as a major U.S. writer of the late twentieth century whose representations of self-damaging experiences and narratives of recovery characterize not only the war in Vietnam but also relationships between fathers and sons and men and women in the post-traumatic culture of the contemporary United States.

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