

REGAINING LIFE AFTER PTSD IN THE NOVEL *SNOW HUNTERS* (2013) BY PAUL YOON

Antoni Suhermanto¹, An Fauzia Rozani Syafei²

English Department
Faculty of Languages and Arts
Universitas Negeri Padang
email: suhermantoantoni@gmail.com

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the novel *Snow Hunters* (2013) by Paul Yoon. This analysis aims to show the extent to which the contribution of fictional elements (character, settings, and plot / conflict) gives an idea of how the main character suffering from PTSD can get his life back. This can be seen from how the main character adapts and works hard in a new place for the sake of changing his life for the better. This analysis is also based on the concept of Sublimation from Sigmund Freud. The results of this analysis show that the main character with his efforts was able to regain his life after suffering from PTSD.

Key words: Suffering, PTSD, Sublimation

A. INTRODUCTION

War is one of the most dreadful things human can experience throughout their existences. The war itself has been occurred since a long time ago. Thus, the war itself is still happening until the modern era in 21st century, for example the Syrian civil war, Afghanistan Conflict, Somali Civil War, and Iraq Conflict. Numerous wars are occurred in many countries around the world, one of them is the Korean wars. The result of the war is the disunity of Korea into two sides, the North and South Korea. Many casualties from both parties, the casualties are from the soldier and the civilians and there are actually a great number of soldier that had been held by both parties as the Prisoners of war (POW).

The remaining survivors after the war especially the soldier experienced a serious damage to themselves while they were taken as the prisoner of war, they are suffer from the psychological disorder that known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to American Psychiatric Association (1994), Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a persistent and sometimes crippling condition precipitated by psychologically overwhelming experience. It develops in a significant proportion of individuals exposed to trauma, and untreated, can

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on September 2019

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



continue for years. Its symptoms can affect every life domain, in most cases the sufferer find difficulty in term of socializing with the others.

Most of the Korean wars' veterans that suffer from PTSD are struggling to get their life back. The end of the war does not mean the remaining veterans are free from the war, even after the war ended they still have to suffer from the PTSD that caused after the war. PTSD is a condition where the sufferer is seriously damaged psychologically. Thus, the sufferers of the PTSD are striving to regain their life back.

The act of regaining life refers to the efforts of the soldiers from the Korea to overcome the PTSD that aggravated their life. This act of regaining life by the soldiers also supported by the United Nation (UN), that gives choices to the soldiers whether they want to stay in their country or go overseas to another country. Some of the soldiers are choosing to leave their homeland in Korea and go abroad, they chose that way because they do not want to remember the worst part of their life during the Korean wars and worsen their psychological problem. The PTSD can be cured by doing this way, by living in another country that is much different in many ways can help them to not remembering the past and to forget the horrible things they experienced during the war and also can help them to overcoming the PTSD and regain their life back.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2018), there are some steps that can be done by the sufferer of the PTSD to gain recovery from the PTSD. The steps are: Talk to the doctor about the treatment options, engage in mild physical activity or exercise to help reduce stress, set realistic goals, break up large tasks into small ones, set some priorities, try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative, tell others about things that may trigger symptoms, expect the symptoms to improve gradually, not immediately, identify and seek out comforting situations, places, and people.

The PTSD itself can be cured by some way, such as going to a psychiatrist to have a therapy. Moreover, the PTSD also can be cured in natural ways without having to go to the therapist or psychiatrist, there are a lot of thing that can be done in order to get rid from the PTSD. By doing pleasurable activities and helping the others are the things that are very substantial in order to cures the PTSD.

The ways of overcoming the PTSD in order to regaining life is also revealed in some of the literary works, for example a novel from Paul Yoon which entitled *Snow Hunters* (2013). The main issue on this analysis is the efforts of one of the Korean wars' veteran that struggling to regain life after PTSD in the new environment.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this research is qualitative, content analysis that is to analyze the text of Paul Yoon's novel. The analysis of novel *Snow Hunters* (2013) by Paul Yoon is done by through text and context based interpretation. It is done by analyze fictional device such as character, plot (conflict), and setting. These devices are related to each other. Characters and conflicts are used to reveal the way to escape the misery by analyzing character's reactions toward the conflict. Then, the setting deals with the circumstance and atmosphere during the war in Korea. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. In addition, this analysis is using the theory of sublimation by Sigmund Freud.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses the fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and setting to reveal about *regaining life after PTSD*. In this analysis, regaining life after PTSD is done by the main character. This analysis is revealing the strategies that the main character does in order to be free from the PTSD and also to regain back the life of the main character. It can be seen through two ways; by doing pleasurable activities and helping others.

There are two ways that the main character does to regain his life back. That is from doing pleasurable activities to reduce his stress and anxiety, and by helping others to clear all his negative thoughts.

1. Doing Pleasurable Activities

In order to regain his life back after PTSD, the main character is doing pleasurable activities. According to Matthew Tull (2019) from Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the University Mississippi Medical Center, the PTSD can be cured using the Behavioral Activation (BA) therapy. It is a treatment that focuses on changing behaviors to address problems the sufferer might be experiencing. The main goals of the treatment are to increase activity levels (and prevent avoidance behaviors) and help the patient take part in positive and rewarding activities for instance hobbies, games, spending time in nature, or spending time with good friend which can improve the mood. By doing that, the main character have to do the things that he desired. Working as a tailor and spending time in the nature are the things that the main character feels comfortable with and also to reduce his stress and anxiety to make him become more relaxed. Also, in order to do that, first he has to go to a new environment to avoid contact with anything that might make him remember the trauma he received during the wartime in his homeland.

The main character is slowly makes a positive change in his life as he working as a tailor, the tailoring activity is really suitable for him. The main character find pleasure and enjoyment while working as a tailor and that will help him to reduce his stress and anxiety that will slowly regain his life back. It is described in the quotation below:

At first he stayed within the borders of the Japanese community. In doing so, day by day, he grew accustomed to his neighbourhood and the people live nearby. Then, as the months passed and his energy returned to him, he began to venture further into town. He went from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, gradually, delivering clothes to older customers who had known Kiyoshi since he first came. (p. 8)

Based on the quotation above, it can be explained that the tailoring activity that the main character does is really a help for him in order to regain his life back. It can be seen from the phrase “at first he stayed within the borders of the Japanese community” and “as the months passed and his energy returned to him, he began to venture further into town.”, from these phrases it can be explained that the main character is really enjoying his job as a tailor, it can be seen by the act of the main character that slowly going even further into the town that only can be attained by doing what pleasurable to him. He finds pleasure and enjoyment in doing that and also it reduce his stress and anxiety that affect his social life. The tailoring activity connects him to the society, as he keep delivering the order to the people in that town. Also, from the phrase “from neighborhood to neighborhood,..” it also proofing that the tailoring activity is really changes the main character’s life because he is enlarging his social circle as he meet and interact with more people.

The tailoring activity is improving the main character’s goal to regain his life back. It can be seen by how the main character gradually enhances his social life by working as a tailor. He keeps get in touch about the people in the new environment that help him to cure the PTSD that affect his ability in socializing with other. The main character is a step ahead to regain his life back as he gain confident by doing what pleasurable to him.

There is another quotation that support the idea about how by doing the tailoring is helping the main character to reduce his stress and anxiety in order to regain his life back. It is shown in the following quotation:

The townspeople are no longer expected the tailor but his young apprentice, as they began to call him, with both affection and curiosity. Sometimes he received tips. When he gave it to Kiyoshi, the man shook his head, pushing away Yohan’s hand. (p.8)

Based on the quotation above, the phrase “as they began to call him with both affection and curiosity” it can be seen that the life of the main character is gradually improving his social or communication skill with others. By doing the tailoring and delivering the clothes to the people in town, he begin to feels more comfortable being around the people as he always having contact

with them. The words “affection” and “curiosity” are also the proof that not only the main character that feels comfortable but also the people themselves are also feel comfortable around the main character. Moreover, the phrase “sometimes he received tips” is also indicating that the main character is not only good at tailoring but also good at giving services to the customers or the people that only can be achieved with good communication and behavior.

By doing what he loves and pleasurable to him, the main character is slowly regains his life back by having more interactions with other people. The main character ability to interact with others is slowly improves. It is affect his social life that he no longer have to fear to communicate with other people. The changes in the main character’s life are the proof that the main character is regaining his life back through doing pleasurable activity.

Working as a tailor is necessary for the main character to reduce his stress and anxiety. Moreover, there is another pleasurable activity that the main character does to reduce his stress and anxiety. Sometimes the main character ventured out of the town to spend time more in the nature. The main character is doing this to find a place to be alone and keeping away all the busy life in the town to seek pleasure and peace. It is shown in the following quotation:

He left the shop. He passed the church and entered the meadow. He continued to walk away from the town, moving under the open sky, until the land narrowed and formed a promontory high above the sea. He took the path beside it, descending the cliff.

The brightness of the low moon was everywhere. For a moment he was disoriented. He squinted, shielding his eyes with a hand. He was on a beach north of the harbour, the sand gleaming and unbroken. The shadow of an animal, a dog perhaps, retreated into the thicket. A piece of torn paper twirled past him. (p.24)

From the quotation above, it can be implied about the life of the main character that struggling to regains back his life. It is shown from the words “he left the shop, passed the church, walk away from the town, entered the meadow, moving under the open sky and descending the cliff”, that refers to the efforts of the main character in the new environment in order to regain his life back. The transitions between the busy life in the town such as “shop, church, town” into the nature such as “meadow, open sky, and cliff” are the proof that the main character want to be relaxed and reduce his stress and anxiety level. The use of the phrase “the brightness of the low moon was everywhere” is emphasizing the main goal of the main character that can be referred to a new life that he is striving to seek after regaining his life.

The acts of spending time in the nature that done by the main character is also help him to regain his life back. By spending time in the nature, it will help the main character to feel more relaxes and reduces his stress and anxiety level. Thus, by doing this the main character can be a more positive person that will affect the way he think and behave to be more positive.

2. Helping Others

The main character past experience as a veteran and prisoner affecting his social life in his new environment. The main character have trouble socializing with the others that caused by the PTSD he had. One of the things that the main character finds it hard to do is having a relationship with others. He finds it hard to blend with the other because of his past experience. He keeps remembering the horrible experience in the past that make him to think that he is different from the others. Thus, he slowly change his way of thinking about how he used to be a victim by helping the others. Helping the others give him strength to forget about how he used to think that he is powerless, hopeless and lonely.

The main character starting to helps the others within the town as soon as he began his career as a tailor. He does the act of helping others not only to get along well with the people there, but also to recover from his mental illness that give him all the negative thought about himself being powerless, hopeless and lonely that affect his social life. As a tailor he does help many people in the town, but there are some of them that he helps the most. They are the tailor, the priest, and the orphans.

There are some proofs that show how the main character helped these people. The main character intention is to get rid of the feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness and loneliness. Through helping others, the main character will develop his feeling to be strengthened, hopeful and not alone anymore. The proof showed in the following quotation:

Some days Yohan met them by chance in the alleyways. At first they fled into the shadows or stood there caught in nervousness. But soon they grew used to him and he helped them search the trash bins, sifting through the bags to find objects they could keep or use to trade with the others: a comb, a picture frame, a pair of leather shoes Santi tried on, grinning, too large for him but clean and stylish. (p. 18)

Based on the quotation above, it is shown how the main character is putting an effort to help the people in needs. By doing this, the main character is slowly getting out from his terrible life that prevent him to make contact or having relationship with others. The phrase “soon they grow used to him and he helped them search the trash bin”, it can be explained that the main character is trying to socialize with people by trying to help them out. The words “trash bin” is showing

that the main character have determination to regain his life. He helps the orphans even though it is searching the trash bin. The word “trash bin” also indicating the main character personal past experience, in the past he always thought of himself as someone useless. Thus, he wants to change that by helping people in need.

The feeling of sympathy for the orphans affect the main character own feeling. By observing the orphans, the main character thought of himself in the past. After getting a new career as a tailor in the new environment, the main character want to help the orphans as he is now already have strength within him. By helping the orphans, it help him to get rid the feeling of powerlessness because he is now have power and able to help people.

There is also another supporting quotation about the main character helping the orphans that shows how the main character is really putting efforts just to help them. It is shown in the quotation below:

He remained silent. He opened his bag. He took out the food he had brought with him, wrapped in newspapers, and handed it to her. Then he lifted the child's coat, unfolding it. He held it up for her to see and he took Bia's arm and slipped it into the sleeve. Then the other. When it was on her he smoothed the collar and checked the buttons. It fit her shoulders though it was a bit short for her; the hem fell above her waist and the cuffs revealed her wrists. Still, Yohan buttoned the coat and Bia blushed, avoiding his eyes. (p. 43)

From the quotation above, it can be seen about how the main character is care for the orphan. “He took out the food he had brought with him, wrapped in newspapers, and handed it to her” this phrase really shows the act of the main character to help the orphan. He do this because he had experienced the horrible things in the past and suffer for a long time because of it. Also, the phrase “still, Yohan buttoned the coat” is proofing the good intention from the main character to help the orphan. The act of giving a coat to the orphans also can be explain that the main character also want to protect the orphan as he is now feeling more confident with his life.

The feeling of powerlessness within the main character is gradually vanished as he is helping the orphans. The act of helping the orphans by the main character is showing that the main character is now having the strength to help the powerless people. In the past, the main character is always thought about himself of being a useless and powerless person. In order to get rid of that, the main character helps people that shares similar condition with him. By helping people that are powerless will affect the main character in psychological ways that is to make him realizes that he is now not powerless and useless anymore.

The next negative feeling that the main character want to vanish is the feeling of hopelessness. The things he had been experience in the past make the main character have no life goals. The main character only thinking about how desperate his life have been because of the war. It has already become a habit to him not to seek a bright future for himself. After given a new chance to live in another country and start a new career, the main character gradually removing the thought of how hopeless he is. He is starting to feel that he might have a chance to change his life, thus, he work hard alongside with the tailor to attain the quality of life that he had never been dreaming to become true.

The act of helping others is also involved in order to vanish the feeling or thought that the main character is hopeless. It is as shown in the quotation below:

Yohan kept busy at the shop, measuring the men for their new suits, making alterations and adjustments. He now knew who wore what. When they came for their clothes he was able to hand them over before they spoke. He know most of the neighbourhoods now, knew the names of the streets, and he continued to make deliveries.
(p. 21)

According to the quotation above, the main character is now successfully adapted in that town. He no longer need the help of the tailor because he does most of the work now. The presence of the main character is really a big help for the old tailor because he now able to take more rest amd let the main character runs his shop. The phrase "He now knew who wore what." is emphasize about how the main character has already get along really well with the townspeople. But not on that, it is also become a proof that the main character also becoming a professional in his job.

Helping the tailor as his apprentice is proofing that the main character is no longer affected by the thought of himself of being hopeless. He is also a step ahead to attain the quality of life he had been striving to get before. At first he arrived in the new environment, the main character still burdened by the thought of being hopeless, but as soon as he help the tailor in his shop, he begin to seek a bright future ahead because he is now able to make money and living on his own.

The feeling of hopelessness that the main character used to feel is now entirely vanished. As he is now has already make a huge advancement in the shop. It is proven that by helping others will help the main character to get rid of the thought of being a hopeless person. There is a quotation about how the main character has already vanished that negative though;

There were new customers now, new storeowners and new wives and husbands and new styles for dresses and suits, but there were also the people who had come to the shop over a decade. He delivered clothes to the woman with the pet bird, listening as she had conversations with

her dead husband. Children whose church outfits he used to tailor were older now but they came, as did a government man who had retired five years before. (p. 54)

From the quotation above we can now that the main character has been a tailor for over a decade. The words “new customers, new storeowners, new wives and husbands and new styles for dresses and suits” are indicating that by helping the tailor is improving the life of the main character. After spending time for years working alongside the tailor, the main character is influencing the tailor shop, it now becoming a better shop because of the main character. Moreover, the main character also dealing with the old tailor’s customers. It is can be seen from the word “but there were also the people who had come to the shop over a decade.” From that phrase it is can be explained about how the main character have a successful career, it is also a sign that the main character is no longer a foreigner in that town anymore, he is now already become the part of people who live there. The important thing about the main character is that now he is now already attain the quality of life and no longer become a hopeless war’s veteran with PTSD.

Through helping the tailor in his shop, the main character is slowly regaining his life back as he is now have start a new career that will brightening his life ahead. The old tailor is not only being helped by the main character but also become a big help to the main character. The main character sees opportunity while helping the tailor, the feeling of hopelessness is vanished as he is now can live on his own and also have a good career as a tailor. The act of regaining life from the main character is successfully achieved because he is now has a better life in the new environment.

Loneliness is the last thing that the main character wants to disappear. Being a war’s veteran and also a prisoner of war makes him losing his friends at war and relatives that also passed away because of the war. He became traumatized to have a relationship because of it. He is afraid to build any new relationship because he fears that he will lose them again.

In the new environment, the main character is getting along very well with the priest since he often visit him to deliver the orders and sometimes he just want to have a chat with him. Both of them are close to each other because of the priest has understanding with the main character. He knows about his background and what he experienced in the past.

The quotation below shows how the main character is close to the priest:

Peixe was forty-one years old now. They had begun to see more of each other. A pair of reading glasses stayed around his neck at all times, tied with Yohan’s packaging twine. His hair was graying and he liked to joke about it.

He said, --alfailate, you’re looking at your future self, and he laughed as they walked the rows of his garden,

watering the plants and the vegetables, tossing fertilizer onto the soil(p. 57)

Based on that quotation, it shows how the main character is really close with the priest. The phrase “they had begun to see more of each other” is showing about how by helping with the deliveries at first will turn out to become friends after that. The main character is finally has a friend to talk and have fun. It is hard for the main character at first because of the trauma he had before, that he always think that in the end he will ends up alone. Because of that, the main character is separating himself and not making any friends at all. But by the time they spent together and the priest also understands the state of illness that the main character have, they become friend in the end. That summarize the main character is no longer feels lonely anymore as he is now able to socialize and well accepted by the townspeople.

The main character is successfully regains his life back, he is already getting rid of all the negative thoughts in his mind. By helping the people in the new environment, the main character is vanishing the feeling of being powerlessness, hopelessness and loneliness. Through helping the orphans, the main character is developing the feeling of having power or strenght. By helping the tailor, the main character is getting rids of the feeling of hopelessness and through helping the priest, the main character is finding someone that he could talk to and becoming not alone anymore.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The novel entitled *Snow Hunters* (2013) by Paul Yoon analyses the issue of regaining life after PTSD. Regaining life after PTSD in this analysis refer to the effort of a person that suffer from the mental illness called PTSD who struggle to regain the life back. It is revealed through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, setting, and conflicts. It is represented by a Korean man who is also a Korean war’s veteran that going abroad to a new environment to cure his mental illness and also to regain his life back. Thus, he works hard to regain his life back by doing two things; doing pleasurable activities and helping others.

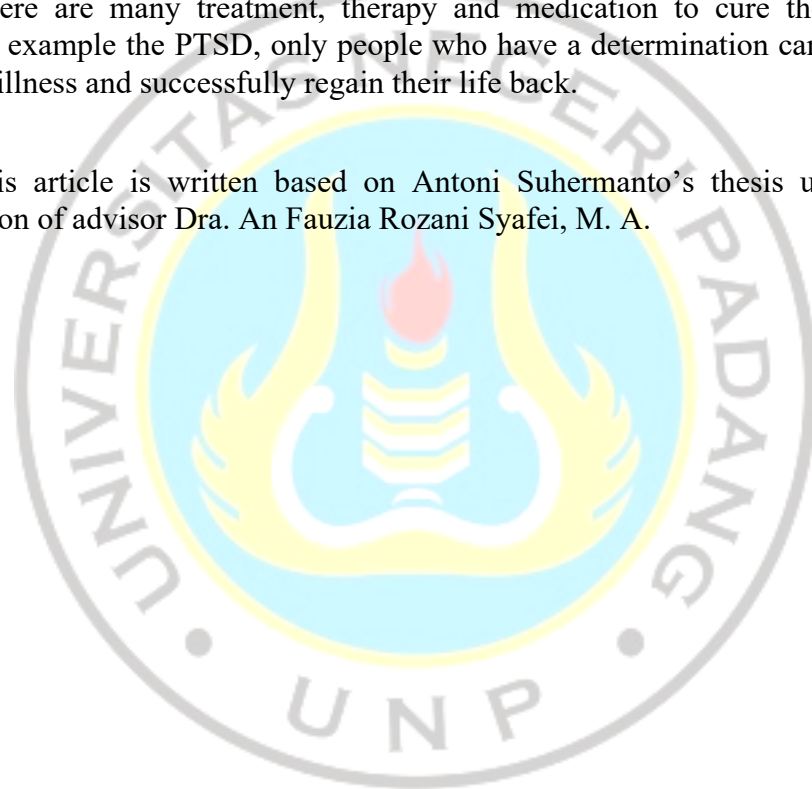
The first efforts from the main character to regains his life back is trough doing pleasurable activities. The main point of doing pleasurable activities is to make him become more relaxed and to reduce his stress and anxiety level. Being a war’s veteran that suffers from the PTSD make him cannot living his life peacefully. He does find pleasures in tailoring and spending time in the nature. He does this to keep calm and always be a positive person. By doing what pleasurable to him, gradually he develops a peaceful mind that help him to regains his life.

The sufferer of PTSD is having trouble in socializing with other people. It is because the sufferer always thinks of himself as a powerless, hopeless and lonely person. The main character is struggling to get rid of these negative

thoughts by helping others. The internal conflict is shown clearly in the main character's life as he did not want to have any relationship with other people. Thus, he is gradually makes changes in his life to develop the feelings of strengthened, hopeful and surrounded by people that care for him after helping others.

No matter what the reason to conduct a war, the results will always terrible. The war itself can impact many things in humans life, one of them is the mental illness that caused by a serious trauma from the war. The people who are suffers from mental illness is having a hard time to regain their life back. Even though there are many treatment, therapy and medication to cure the mental illness for example the PTSD, only people who have a determination can recover from that illness and successfully regain their life back.

Note: This article is written based on Antoni Suhermanto's thesis under the supervision of advisor Dra. An Fauzia Rozani Syafei, M. A.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Massachusetts: Earl Mcpeek.
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Edwards, Paul M. (2010). *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War*. Scarecrow Press. p. 129.
- Eperjesy, John R. (2016). *Psychological Warfare and the Representation of Korean War POWs in Ha Jin's War Trash and Paul Yoon's Snow Hunters*. Kyung Hee University.
- Fitria, TiraNur. (2014). *A Psychoanalysis Approach in the Main Character of Novel Anna Karenina Ego Defense Mechanism*. Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.
- Freud, Anna. (1965). *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. (1920). *A General Introduction to Psycho analysis*. Vienna.
- Freud, Sigmund, (1961) '*Civilization and Its Discontents*' (1930) in The Standard Edition Of *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud – The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey (Hogarth Press; London), vol. XXI, 79–80.
- Freud, Sigmund (1953-73), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*. 24 volumes. London: Hogarth Press.
- Klages, Mary. (2006). *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Continuum.
- Peter Child, r. f. (2006). *the routledge of literary terms*. New York: routledge.
- Yoon, Paul. (2013). *Snow Hunters*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- ___. "Definition of life" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/life>. 2018. Web. Retrieved on 14 October 2018.
- ___. "Definition of after" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/after>. 2018 Web. Retrieved on 14 October 2018
- ___. "Definition of posttraumatic stress disorder" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/posttraumaticstressdisorder>. 2018. Web. Retrieved on 20 October 2018.
- ___. "Definition of regaining" <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/thesaurus/regaining>. 2018 Web. Retrieved on 14 October 2018