

Life Writing And Displacement In Thanhha Lai's *Inside Out And Back Again* And Kim Thúy's *Ru*

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Abstract

Within the realm of postcolonial literatures, it is interesting to look at the differences between first- and second-generation immigrant works. The work of refugee authors such as Thanhha Lai and Kim Thúy offer something unique to readers; both authors' experience of displacement play a key influential role in their writing, notably in the books that will be discussed in this article, Lai's *Inside Out & Back Again* (2011) and Thúy's *Ru* (2009). Within these texts, I will explore the consequences of displacement on motherhood and mother-child relationships, as well as how the refugee experience affects one's process of identity making, and how daunting an adaptation to new environments can be for young children, especially in traumatic contexts such as the ones lived by these characters (as well as the books' authors). Analyzing these books through a perspective grounded in a combination of Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1991,1244), as well as motherhood, literary and refugee studies allows for a richer understanding of the healing potential of these stories for their authors (Lombard, 2022, 2). *Inside Out* and *Ru* empower Lai and Thúy to revisit childhood memories of their mothers with a new perspective, which in turn makes them reconsider how they perceived their mothers and how this perception might have been warped by their trauma.

Keywords: post-colonial-literature, life-writing, displacement, Vietnamese-literature, motherhood