

A PSYCHOANALYTICAL APPROACH TO WAR LITERATURE IN ROXANA ROBINSON'S SPARTA

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Abstract

Psychology is a science that does not only deal with patients but also a branch of knowledge that roams the world of literature to find and interpret events and to analyze characters, their motivations or the results of their previous experiences. This study aims to shed the light on some psychological sides of one character in certain events. The study is divided into an introduction, which introduces the reader to the world of psychology and Freudian theories concerning war. It paves the way for the following fields of study, which concentrate on certain aspects of psychological disorders in the main character. It shows the connection between psychology and some novels, from pre-modern period to the 19th and 20th centuries. It also discusses Freud's interpretation of war neurosis in particular. The second section is devoted to Robinson's Sparta, which studies Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of the protagonist, Conrad. Psychological disorders can be touched in this section, such as, Recalling traumatic events, alienation, depression, anxiety, and dreams, which recurrently threaten Conrad's quietness. The last section is a brief conclusion for the study.

Keywords: War, PTSD, Traumatic events, Alienation, Depression, Anxiety, Dreams

1. INTRODUCTION

War is the management of politics in the most violent ways, such as the use of deadly machines and destructive weapons, the occupation of lands and countries, up to the killing of men, and the destruction of what they built. War has been a feature of humanity since the inception of history: wars and conflicts between individuals, from Cain and Abel to the First and Second World Wars and the international and regional wars that followed them, and even the war on so-called 'terrorism' and terrorist operations. Karl von Clausewitz in his book *On War* pointed out that war is not an independent phenomenon, but an extension of politics in different ways, "as a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies [...] composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force" (Clausewitz & Heuser, 2007, p. 30). War is a human trait that has accompanied human history. "War itself requires no particular motivation but appears to be ingrained in human nature" (Kant, Kleingeld, & Colclasure, 2006, p. 22). War has a long history of tyranny and oppression. It is the fighting and the resulting killing, destruction, displacement of people, and usurpation of property. No nation on earth has been spared its curses and scourges. Clausewitz sees that "war is a clash between major interests, which is resolved by bloodshed" (Clausewitz & Heuser, 2007, p. 100). War is a struggle of individuals, selfishness, and wills. Violence is the common denominator of every war. If violence is missing, the concept of war will be disrupted. So, war is a state

of destruction, chaos, absurdity, and madness in the absence of logic, reason, and wisdom.

The war, with its cruelty and pain, was a source of inspiration, and from it emerged war literature. War literature was considered a victory and bias for humanity, and it presents between its lines the most accurate details of its heroes and victims affected by the conditions of conflict. "What distinguishes literary expressions of war, at least in the modern period, is the emphasis on the experimental dimension" (Brosman, 1992, p. 85). Although literary works concerning war have a special world in the writer's imagination, reality has always existed and is manifested by events and heroes who lived the story before it turned into immortal literary lines. "War was the first subject of literature; at times, war has been its only subject. [...] war will also be the last subject of literature, the reality that defeats representation" (Ashe et al., 2014, p. 10).

Purpose and Importance of the Research

The purpose of this research is to make a psychological study of the protagonist of the Sparta novel. It focuses on the psychological disorders that affected most American soldiers after ending their active service in Iraq.

Hypothesis of the Research / Research Problem

This study demonstrates the futility of war. It depicts the horror of fighting and its devastating effects on the warrior himself, his family, the environment, culture, and society. It emphasizes the pathetic literary components known as 'the spirit of war,' derived from feelings of grief for those massacres, the spirits lost, and the bloodshed.

Scope and Limitations / Difficulties

This study depends on Freud's psychoanalytic theory of war neurosis. It delves into the traumatic neurosis suffered by American soldiers during Iraq Freedom operations after they were discharged from active duty. Thus, 'war literature' is a humanistic literature. This literary style is an expression of the horror of an experience in which circumstances force an individual to sacrifice himself for causes that he considers more important than his existence. The war experience carries a lot of contradictions, as the fighter seeks to prove his existence and achieve lofty goals, while the lived reality is rude and harsh.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 War in Literature

War is a rich source of many literary works. The impact of the war on literature does not stop; it was affected by the war through its impact on the human being, stirring his feelings, inciting him, and arousing his enthusiasm to participate in battles, which led to the prolongation of wars and keeping their scourge and heroism in the memory of the individual and the people. War was one of the first topics in literature. Homer's Iliad, written in the 8th century BC, is possibly the first title that comes to mind when talking about war conflicts. Through the journey of tracing war literature before and beyond the birth of Christ and also in the pre-modern period, it tries to create illusory and mythical

heroism that can be stories for entertainment. It was different from war literature that was produced in the past three centuries. All those texts lack the slightest pathetic literary element, which is “inspiring of a warlike spirit” (Brosman, 1992, p. 86). It depicts some feelings of grief for those massacres, or for the lives that were lost and the blood that was shed. Those literary works try to express a stereotyped picture of ‘national tragedy’ or the creation of heroic epics rather than an explanation of the causes of those tragedies and pains.

The nineteenth century is considered the real beginning of the emergence of war novels. Literature presents a new vision that contradicts the glorification of war. In *War and Peace* (1865) by the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, the setting of the novel takes place during Napoleon’s invasion of Petersburg in 1805. It monitors the states of war and peace, the value of life, the problems of Russian society at that time, class inequality and the luxurious life of the nobility, as well as the absurdity of war and the resulting sadness, separation, and suffering. (McLoughlin, 2009, p. 41). The American Civil War was also a topic covered by many writers in the nineteenth century. Stephen Crane in his novel *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1895, he embodied the frightening face of war and depicted images of murder, chaos, anger and blood (McLoughlin, 2009, pp. 209-218).

In the twentieth century, especially during the period of the two world wars, another role for literature has emerged that can be described as anti-war. It depicted war not merely as heroics, victories, and glorifying the combatant and leader, but rather the feelings of the fighters: their fear, the hour of losing a friend or comrade, disturbances, and defeat on and after the battlefield. It also accurately describes human questions about the reasonability and futility of wars and about the price that men pay in war, whether they are victorious or defeated. There are writers and authors who lived through the war in all its details and tragedies and wrote about it. It affected their literature in a remarkable and important way. Some participated in it as soldiers or as war correspondents (Sherry, 2005, pp. 261-266). The Russian novelist Mikhail Sholokhov, who participated in the events of the First World War with his work *And Quiet Flows the Don* in four parts. It narrates the successive developments of his country after the fall of Tsarist rule and the civil war (Boeck, 2019, p. 5). He also lived through the Second World War as a war correspondent and wrote his novel, *They Fought for their Motherland* (Boeck, 2019, p. 232). Ernest Hemingway participated in the First and Second World Wars; even in the Spanish Civil War in 1936 as a war correspondent. He wrote about war, the fate of man in it, and the tragedies it left behind through many novels, including *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Abcarian, et al., 2019, p. 1774). Erich Maria Remarque, a German author who served in the First World War, published *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928). It describes the enormous physical and mental pressures on German soldiers during the First World War (Stevenson, 2013, p. 104). The American writer Dalton Rambo, in *Johnny Got His Gun*, published in 1938, It talks about a soldier who was exposed by a shell explosion, woke up in a hospital deaf, dumb, and blind, having lost his face, and also lost his limbs as a result of the bombing. He covers his face with a mask so that the nurses are not disturbed by his appearance. The novel depicts that wars bring certain fates, which may sometimes be worse than death (Sherry, 2005, p. 405). Catch

22 (1961), by the American writer Joseph Heller, is a satirical and dark comedy about the absurdity of wars. It describes the ridiculous bureaucratic restrictions of soldiers in the Second World War. It deals with the experience of Yossarian and other pilots in the camp, and focuses on their attempts to keep their rationality to fulfill the requirements of service so that they can return to their homes (MacKay, 2009, pp. 96-97). Sebastian Faulks in his novel, *Bird Song* (1993), describes precisely the killing mechanism, the intensity of death, the piling up of corpses, and the bombs that cut men to shreds, during the Second World War (Miller & Riper, 2015, p. 193).

During the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell was the most famous writer and politician, participated and volunteered to be a soldier on the side of the revolutionaries in Catalonia in 1938. He released his novel *Homage to Catalonia*, which chronicles the horror of war (McLoughlin, 2009, p. 258). The novel *Mazurka for Two Dead Men* (1983) by Camilo José Cela, dealt with humanitarian themes of war. Vasili Grossman, in *Life and Destiny* (1980), narrates the battle of Stalingrad from the perspective of a family that suffers its consequences. It tells how some of its members are taken to labor camps and others to fight in battle, fracturing the family. This work shows the miserable treatment that was given to women and children at this time and is a crude vision of how terrible anger and hatred can be for societies (Garrard & Garrard, 2012, pp. 9–16). *Regeneration* (1991) by Pat Barker depicts a number of British officers who were accepted for the treatment of bomb shock during World War I at the Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh (Barker, 1993).

After the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, many new stories and books have been written in America. There are two types of American war novels: those written through psychological and emotional interaction with war victims without their actual participation in the conflict and those written through actual participation in the conflict, such as the 2005 novel *My War: Killing Time in Iraq*, written by American soldier Colby Buzzell about his participation in the American war against Iraq in 2003 and 2004, after which he became insane. In *War Porn* (2016) by Roy Scranton, the novel consists of evidence of the most horrific war crimes committed by the US forces against the people of Iraq (Scranton, 2016). Helen Benedict's *Sand Queen* (2011) is about the suffering of one of the soldiers, Kate Brady, who hoped to do a service to her people by joining the army. Instead, she found herself confined to a desert patch in southern Iraq, guarding Bucca prison. She does not only face the dangers of armed clashes, but she also faces the risk of sexual harassment by their comrades (Mohammed, 2015, p. 114). Michael Pitre's *Five and Twenty-Five* (2014) offers a range of perspectives on the complexities of the conflict and the social reintegration of these veterans, for whom daily life has become a hell of banalities and who can no longer be understood by anyone except their section members (Pitre, 2014). Billy Lynn's *Long Halftime Walk* (2012) by Ben Fountain describes how private Billy Lynn, a nineteen-year-old, and his seven fellow recruits gained fame when Fox News TV reported on their fierce battle in Iraq. They are honored by being sent home for two weeks to participate in the famous Thanksgiving soccer game. The festival was in a surreal setting, mixed with the hustle and bustle of life and the nightmares of death that haunt them in Iraq (Kunsa, 2017, pp. 63–67). *Sparta* (2013) by Roxana Robinson tells the

story of Conrad, a U.S. Marine officer returning from Iraq. Conrad finds it difficult to adapt to civilian life. He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. He is haunted by painful memories of war, feels isolated, is addicted to alcohol and sleeping pills, and attempts suicide (Robinson, 2014).

3. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

1. Method of the Research

This study traces the psychological disturbances through Freud's psychoanalytic theory and shows the psychological disorders in Roxana Robinson's *Sparta*. The novel is analyzed according to Freud's psychological theory, and some of the psychological concepts have been applied to it. This study highlights the traumatic events that afflicted the soldiers with war trauma and shows the symptoms of psychological disorders.

Psychoanalytical literary criticism is a way of analyzing and interpreting literary works that depends on psychoanalytic theory. Sigmund Freud developed the theory of psychoanalysis to explain the way the human mind works. He saw that all psychological phenomena, whether conscious or unconscious, whether normal or pathological, are issued by fundamental dynamic forces known as instincts, and they are the source of all life's phenomena. Freud initially tried to explain all psychological phenomena by assuming that there were two basic groups of instincts. The first group is 'sexual instincts,' which are issued by a special energy called libido, and they always aim for gratification and pleasure. The second group is the ego instincts, and its task is to work on self-preservation, taking into account the outside world and the requirements of reality on the one hand and suppressing sexual impulses that contradict the requirements of reality or the functions of the ego instincts on the other. These instincts work according to the pleasure principle. In fact, the instinctive impulse is the product of a state of stress that results in a sensation of pain. The instinctive impulse aims to reduce this tension, and when this tension decreases, the feeling of pleasure occurs, and Freud took the pleasure principle as a basis for explaining the various psychological phenomena as well as the neurotic symptoms. After all, the symptoms are alternative compromises aimed at de-stressing and avoiding pain (Freud & Gay, 1962, pp. 37–47).

Besides this, Freud also saw that the pleasure principle was not enough to explain some psychological phenomena. He saw the existence of an instinctive motivation called 'repetition-compulsion.' He considered it an instinctive motive, more primitive and innate than the pleasure principle. It contradicts the pleasure principle because the patient does not get any pleasure from the repetition of old painful experiences (Freud, Strachey, Gay, & Zilboorg, 1975, pp. 26–27). During World War I, Freud saw a new phenomenon that supported his opinion of the principle of 'repetition-compulsion.' He saw in traumatic neurosis another phenomenon that opposes the pleasure principle. It has been observed that soldiers who have been severely traumatized during combat always repeat these painful experiences in their dreams. "The dreams of patients suffering from traumatic neurosis lead them back with such regularity to the situation in which the trauma occurred" (Freud et al., 1975, p. 26). Freud regarded dreams as a means of satisfying repressed

motives, and every satisfaction leads to pleasure. But there is no pleasure in repeating the painful experiences that appear in the dreams of soldiers with traumatic neurosis. These punishment dreams work to replace forbidden desires with appropriate punishment, i.e., they satisfy the desire to feel guilty, which is a reaction to outcast tendencies. (Freud et al., 1975, p. 7).

Sigmund Freud, in his essay Introduction to the Psychoanalysis of War Neurosis, asserted that the cause of war neurosis is an ego conflict, assuming that in the course of traumatic war neurosis, the landscape of psychological conflict has changed between trauma and symptoms. He explained that in war situations, the conflict arises between the old ego of peacetime and the new war ego of the soldier. This conflict becomes “acute as soon as the peace ego is faced with the danger of being killed through the risky undertakings of his newly formed parasitical double” (Ferenczi et al., 1921, p. 6). The old ‘ego’ protects itself by escaping into traumatic neurosis from life-threatening danger, or it defends itself from the new-ego, which is recognized as endangering its life. In war neurosis, the ego defends itself against a threat from outside or embodied in the form taken by the ego itself. Thus, the ego is afraid to be destroyed by external violence (Ferenczi et al., 1921, pp. 5-9). “Traumatic neurosis [...] attributes aetiological importance not to the effects of mechanical violence but to fright and the threat to life” (Freud et al., 1975, p. 25).

Roxana Robinson, in her novel *Sparta*, tried to draw attention to the suffering of returning soldiers, which is the difficulty of integrating them into civilian life or suffering from so-called post-traumatic stress disorder, which has been the cause of the high rate of suicides among returning soldiers. Conrad is a young man who volunteered in the US Army and later became a lieutenant in the Marine Corps. After serving in Iraq, he returns home and finds himself alienated, even by the people closest to him, and he finds that the landscape he was used to before joining the army has changed. Conrad has difficulty dealing with civilian life or returning to it, and as a result, he suffers from alienation, anxiety, depression, nightmares, anger, and severe headaches, so he uses alcohol addiction and sleeping pills to overcome these symptoms. His family is trying to help him, but they are making things worse. This narrative summarizes that America is doing well to make tough warriors but cannot bring them back to human life.

2. Discussion and Findings

Before joining the army, Conrad had a normal life. He specialized in classical studies. He was an intellectual and compassionate man. One day he decided to join the Marines. He thought that he would join the real and bigger world. His reason for joining was his belief in serving the country. He did it “for the uniforms [...] the white gloves” (Robinson, 2014, p. 111). He decided to serve for four years in the army. Then he will continue his studies after that, and his life will go on. “He was thinking of himself as different, better, more powerful, and more effective. He would enter a state of moral clarity” (Robinson, 2014, p. 112). Joining the army will give him a greater sense of who he is. He met his girlfriend, Claire, during the first year at Williams. They were sharing a seminar on Homer. The two started loving each other. When he first told Claire about joining the Marines, it was an

irreversible step, abandoning all his friends, family, his girlfriend, and everyone he knew. It was a decision to resign from the world. “The military is not normal life; it’s like the priesthood” (Robinson, 2014, p. 111). After four years of military service, what will he do next? He will have stopped living the life he lives.

After ending his active service in Iraq, Conrad had civilian life, his family, his house, his college studies, and his girlfriend Claire. Everything was real, which represents ‘the old ego of peace time.’ He had the other life, the life of war and fighting, and he was part of that world, the world of war and improvised explosive devices, and seeing his comrades in arms killed, dead Iraqi civilians, and the scorching sun and the Anbar desert, which represent the new war-ego of the soldier. Conrad finds it difficult to adapt to civilian life. He feels that he is a stranger in this place and does not belong there. He feels alienated towards his parents, siblings, and girlfriend, Claire. His new self had no attachment to his previous nature. Here is Conrad the warrior, the land of Iraq, guerrilla warfare, explosions, RPGs, car bombs, suicide bombers, dead Iraqi children and women, and that Conrad, a university student, in the midst of his loved ones and his peaceful university life.

In post-traumatic stress disorder, memories are a very frightening situation, and the person tries to avoid them by escaping or suppressing them. Freud pointed out that “the repression which underlies every neurosis is a reaction to a trauma and an elementary traumatic neurosis” (Ferenczi et al., 1921, p. 9). In the novel, the U.S. Marines are trained to suppress sad feelings and inspire passion. The aim was to create tough warriors who would adapt to killings, destruction, and scenes of blood. “The whole Marine ethic is that you’re tough.” You can take anything. You don’t ask for emotional help. “That’s the one place you’re on your own” (Robinson, 2014, p. 291). This has transformed the human bodies into human robots programmed to obey any and all orders and carry out the most brutal combat, offensive, and dehumanizing operations. They were trained to suppress any sensation or feeling or to bring out any emotion to create a regular army whose goal is to achieve victory without caring about human potential. The lethal force of the marines was, “Marines can’t say they’re in trouble. Not if they still think of themselves as Marines” (Robinson, 2014, p. 291).

The new war ego was generated at the beginning at the officers’ school in Quantico, Virginia. The training lasted only ten weeks. It was a reconditioning aimed at devaluing everything that was in civilian life to create a new body and a new mind to look at the world in a new way of thinking. Everything familiar was taken away. They marched for hours at a time, repeating singsong marching rhythms: “Go to the market where the women shop, Get out my machete, and I start to chop, Go to the park where the children play, Get out my machine gun, and I begin to spray” (Robinson, 2014, p. 56). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) refers to a psychological reaction to a severe traumatic event, especially when life is threatened. In the case of Conrad, the trauma related to direct combat operations in a dangerous Iraq war zone. The symptoms that Conrad felt upon his return from Iraq include: extreme anxiety, recurrent memories of war moments, a sudden paroxysm of rage, fear, sleeplessness, nightmares, headaches, a raised pulse rate, breathlessness, confusion, isolation and feelings of disconnection, and sexual impotence. What he was not able to think about or describe were bloody scenes, the

killing of innocent civilians, phosphorus bombs in the Fallujah war, camel spiders, the deaths of comrades in battle, suicide operations, car bombs, IEDs, sniper operations, and RPGs. Conrad repressed his feelings and couldn't "admit to any of this while he was still in the service. There was no way forward once this had been let loose into the spoken air. Everyone felt fear. No one mentioned it. Admission of fear was a betrayal of trust" (Robinson, 2014, p. 217). Loyalty and trust are the focus of everything. He had to trust everyone, the superior officers, and the mission's importance. "Pride was the prize for never admitting to these feelings, the award for holding the mission above yourself. Pride was the prize for loyalty. Shame was the punishment for breaking trust" (Robinson, 2014, p. 217).

3.1. Recalling the Traumatic Events

A person with PTSD can't get rid of the memories, sights, sounds, and feelings that come from the traumatic event. The horror memories experienced by Conrad make it difficult to focus on various aspects of his civic life. He was often overwhelmed by painful memories of the Iraq War and had severe alienation to erase from his thinking. Conrad suffered horrific nightmares related to traumatic events. Memories of war repeatedly flood his thoughts in a phenomenon called 'flashback,' 'photo retrieval,' or 'revival' of the event. Reminders of the event can cause physical reactions such as sweating, a rapid heart rate, and muscle tension. These 'interventions' usually evoke deep distress and sometimes other emotions such as sadness, guilt, fear, and anger. He tried to forget the scenes of war.

Everything changes. It's like being in a vacuum tube. All the air is sucked away, and everything slows down. [...] the Humvee was sliding sideways, we were tipping over on a flat road, [...] I couldn't move. You feel zapped, too, shocked, as though you've just run into an electric wire. You're surrounded by noise. The sound is too big to understand. The whole world is black noise, and you're floating in it. You can't move or speak, and you may die (Robinson, 2014, p. 71).

Conrad could never forget some of the things that happened to him and around him during the war. Despite his endless efforts to cast them away, he failed. These remembered events threaten his serenity. His memory is full of the horrible scenes of war, which are not selective and shake Conrad's sanity. He was thinking about his parents and his girlfriend, Claire. He must prepare himself to see them. Because he was not the person they expected. He felt committed to be the person they knew, but he did not know how to change himself. They don't want this new person, the person he is now, but he cannot remember who that other person was. Even if he remembered, he could not become again. He was trying to be the person he was four years ago. He cannot remember exactly how every person was—his parents, his brother, his sister, and his girlfriend, if Claire is still his girlfriend. He wondered if this was part of what happened in Iraq.

He should think about his parents and Claire. [...] He felt an obligation to be the person they'd known, the one they were expecting, but he didn't know how to change himself back. They wouldn't want this new person, the one he now was, but he couldn't remember what that other person was like. Even if he could remember, he couldn't become him

again (Robinson, 2014, p. 15).

3.2. Alienation

It is a feeling of isolation from oneself or others that can cause a chill in an intimate relationship with someone or a separation. It is both his sense of isolation in the world as well as his desire to isolate himself from others. Memories of the traumatic event are very disturbing. Psychologically disturbed people tend to avoid events, situations, and people that evoke the memory of the trauma. It can help him temporarily forget painful memories, but it also makes him feel as if he does not belong in his social environment. He loses his feelings of love and joy for those close to him, as well as the difficulty of doing activities that used to be simple and enjoyable. This leads to isolation, depression, and consequent family problems. Therefore, he is estranged from himself and society, resulting in difficulty integrating into society (Seeman, 1959, pp. 788–789).

According to Freud, alienation is the result of the civilization that the individual has built. It came in opposition to achieving his goals and desires. This means that alienation arises as a result of the conflict between oneself and civil controls, or civilization, as the individual generates feelings of anxiety and distress when confronting civilizational pressures with their various teachings and complexities. Consequently, this pushes the individual to resort to repression as a defense mechanism that the ego resorts to as a solution to the conflict arising between the individual's desires and the traditions and controls of society that the ego resorts to, which may lead to more feelings of anxiety and psychological alienation (Freud, 2004, pp. 64–74).

Conrad frequently forces himself not to think about or discuss events that happened in Iraq with his parents, Marshall, Lydia, Jenny, and Ollie, as well as his girlfriend, Claire. He always tended to isolate himself from the feelings associated with the memories. He separated himself from his family and even from his girlfriend, and he became less active. This may help get rid of some painful memories. But on the other hand, it made him feel that he no longer belonged to his family and society. He began to find it difficult to adapt to the academic and university atmosphere that he had enjoyed before the war. Conrad no longer feels such natural feelings as love and joy, even towards those close to him. These reactions led to depression, feelings of isolation, and family problems. Conrad often had difficulty making decisions, helping himself, and even doing activities that he previously found easy and enjoyable. This led to feelings of detachment, an inability to express emotions, and difficulty conceiving the future.

3.3. Depression

Freud states that depression involves “a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding [...] in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (Fiorini, Bokanowski, & Lewkowicz, 2009, P. 20). Depression refers to a general condition characterized by low morale, a loss of pleasure and excitement in activities previously enjoyed, low self-esteem, self-condemnation, self-aggression, and a desire to commit suicide. Its states can be very severe and lead to

complete separation from others and emotional dullness. Conrad feels that life is not worth living. It is associated with guilt. He experiences deep feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse.

“I guess you killed someone. Or a lot of people. But you were meant to. You had no choice. You were trained as a soldier. It was your job to ... do that [...] whatever you did is okay [...] You had to do it. [...] You did it for a reason. You were there to protect the Iraqi people” (Robinson, 2014, p. 213).

These feelings relate to the fact that you survived the traumatic event while others lost their lives or to the actions he had to take to save their lives. War rarely presents ideas acceptable to people. All options are as bad as the killings that govern behavior in the context of war in light of civil society norms. Guilt and shame are very annoying to Conrad and prevent him from recovering from trauma. The common symptoms of depression are feeling frustrated, sad, worthless, helpless, losing sexual desire, having insomnia, having problems with concentration, having thoughts of committing suicide, and dying (Hendin & Haas, 1991, pp. 586–591). Conrad thought of many ways to commit suicide and get out of this world. He thought of a sleeping pill overdose. The asphyxiation involves attaching the metal end of a vacuum cleaner hose to the exhaust of the car and inserting the other end through the back window, taking a sleep pill, turning on the car, and then getting into a deep sleep forever. He thought about how “hanging would be faster, and it would be certain. Shooting would be the fastest” (Robinson, 2014, pp. 317–319).

3.4. Anxiety

Sigmund Freud explained that anxiety is a disordered feeling that arises automatically whenever the soul is overwhelmed by a barrage of intense stimuli that cannot be controlled or eliminated. “It is a reaction to a situation of danger” resulting from one’s awareness of an imminent danger threatening him, so anxiety in this case has the function of preparing the individual to meet this danger by avoiding it or following defensive methods towards it. It is provoked by the realization of the ego in a stimulus that forms an objective danger, such as animal phobias or agoraphobia. “A phobia generally sets in after a first anxiety attack has been experienced in specific circumstances, such as on the street, in a train, or in solitude.” Whereas neurotic anxiety, in which the cause of the fears is unknown and the individual is unable to diagnose or identify a specific reason for his anxiety (Arbiser & Schneider, 2013, p. 48–55). Conrad faced his fear of crowded, enclosed, and open spaces; sounds similar to gunshots or explosions; and when the cat, Murphy, touched Conrad’s feet in the darkness inside the kitchen of the house, it triggered a scary scene of the camel spider that was a source of terror for American soldiers in the Anbar desert, as well as white sedan cars in the streets that resemble the cars that have been used by Iraqi insurgents. These events evoked his anxiety as if he were at war.

Conrad did not exist in this world, and he was torn within his own. He faced fatal circumstances. So his vision of a secure and just world and his belief in the profound good of mankind collapsed. His sense of security faded after the traumatic event had passed. He is aware of danger everywhere, and the idea of danger does not leave him. He is constantly tense and on guard. This condition leads to excessive awakenings, concentration problems, and sleep disturbances. He is irritable and loses his temper with himself, his surroundings, and the world in general. He feels neglected and abandoned by others. He believes he was betrayed by the way he was treated by different people when he returned home after the war. This feeling often translates into bitterness and anger, such as verbal anger or physical and violent aggression towards people. He loses control over his anger and becomes intimidated, often feeling deep remorse afterwards. These symptoms caused problems with his family and friends.

3.5. Dreams

“Dreams in traumatic neurosis have the characteristic of bringing the patient back to the situation of his accident, from which he wakes up in another fright” (Freud et al., 1975, p. 7). The function of neurosis’ dreams is to return their owner to a point where he can overcome the stimulus by sending out the alarm, which is the cause of trauma neurosis.

The whole place was black, [...] he could feel the explosion starting, the moment when his body lost control, [...] the sense of drift and terror. The shock wave of the explosion coursing through his system, roiling the blood in its vessels, [...] the sense of being weightless and blown away. He found himself in a different darkness, a kind of patterned light on a wall, an awful divide between shadow and shining, something soft twisted in his hands, and someone was screaming (Robinson, 2014, p. 220).

This dream refers to there being in two places: here, at home, and there, in Iraq. He tried to distinguish between this darkness—sleeping relaxed on Claire’s bed—and the other darkness, the day the IED exploded on Olivera. He felt angry. His heart thundered. He knew he was here, at home in peace, but he felt he was there. The roaring wind through his body and the sound around him lift him to an unknown place. The mixture of past reality and dreams still haunts Conrad’s quietness. During the nightmare, his body is disturbed; he sweats profusely and behaves badly, and the dream was a real-world war tragedy. He is still worried and unable to get rid of the woes of war. They repeatedly haunted him in his sleep, causing him to develop a clear psychological disorder.

CONCLUSION

Robinson’s *Sparta* tells the story of what happened to some American soldiers during the Iraq Freedom Operations War. The novel describes events that took place during Iraq Freedom Operations and how they affected Conrad and made him suffer from different psychological disorders after he left Iraq, or what is called ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’. This includes flashbacks, alienation, anxiety, depression, and nightmares, all of which are the result of traumatic wartime events. In Robinson’s *Sparta*, the settings are in the streets between houses and crowded cities. The soldiers witnessed the deaths of civilians, where different kinds of people, including old, young, women, and children, were killed in

addition to the soldiers. The novel is a direct exploration of how war trauma brutalizes a generation of young people. Many victims of the trauma caused by the war had physical and psychological consequences. It was depicted with great sensitivity by the author, who provides insight into the wounds caused by the war not only on the bodies but also on the personalities of the survivors. The novel explores an anti-war theme in depth by describing its tragedies. Finally, far from the psychological realm, there is no winner or loser in war. Victory and loss may be material, but the biggest loss is the loss of lives and those who, because of war, became psychologically or physically handicapped, the walking dead. Thus, war is the biggest loss of humanity.

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