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THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A GUERRILLA VETERAN AS A TOOL AGAINST VIETNAM SYNDROME: A CASE STUDY OF RAMBO IN TED KOTCHEFF'S FIRST BLOOD (1982)

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ABSTRACT
This article addresses the challenges endured by many Vietnam War veterans. Ted Kotcheff's First Blood, set in post-Vietnam films, gives a depiction of soldiers relating to events witnessed or experienced in the jungle warfare. The film features Rambo as a character who is scarred by his experience in combat and grappled with the trauma of war. Yet, he finds himself adrift in a society that fails to understand or support him. This wandering journey of the main character, in First Blood, reflects the larger societal issues surrounding the treatment of American soldiers. The paper sheds light on the plight of a green beret who serves his country only to return home to indifference and neglect. Rambo's resourcefulness and determination in the face of overwhelming odds serve as a powerful narrative of resilience and defiance. This study underscores the importance of compassion and understanding in dealing with the need of readjusting to civilian life. By supporting veterans to reintegrate into society is a way of healing the wounded soldier.

Keywords: Vietnam, Veterans, Trauma, War, American, Healing, Soldier.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hollywood often receives critique regarding how its graphic depiction of the war influences greatly criticism on the war. It has the deepest impact on Americans' perception of the war. Vietnam as a remote country and the public's unfamiliarity with the country initially create misunderstanding and skepticism about the necessity of American involvement. In this outlook, Clarence R. Wyatt, in Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War (1995), observes: "because of TV Americans will know how it is for Americans to die in battle and how they kill" (Wyatt 148). This assumption shows the horrible images of corpses, mutilation and torture that are by now well known to anyone who watches in post-Vietnam War films. The information that is put in an insightful pattern allows us to understand that the public's attitudes toward veterans are squarely different during the war. In the 1980s, American public memory of the Vietnam shifts a new narrative that focuses on the healing, haunting the past and trauma from violent experience. It is obviously true that Ronald Reagan wishes to come to grips with the problem of the Vietnam veteran as outsider. In his speeches, he praises Vietnam veterans' faithfulness and applauds other Americans for welcoming them home. Then, Oumar Ndongo, in his work, La Représentation de la Guerre du Vietnam dans la Culture Américaine à travers les romans et les films (2006), provides deeper insights into the revisionist perception in Rambo series. Focusing on the Reagan's valorization of veterans, Ndongo states: in speeches throughout the eighties, President Reagan valorized the idea that America did not really lose the Vietnam War and the war can be refought and rewon in places such as Grenada,

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Central and South America, the Middle East. This valorization by an extremely popular president cleared the way to profitability for a whole series of "return to Vietnam and do it right this time" propagandist fantasies in the period 1980-1986 (Ndongo 384).

The aim of Reagan administration is to do away with the negative stereotypes of Vietnam veterans. In this era, healing is an all-embracing response to a multifaceted phenomenon, including the Vietnam wound, trauma and syndrome. This healing process addresses veterans' psychological experiences, national divisions and uncertainty.

Ted Kotcheff's First Blood (1982) draws inspiration from this perception, which shifts from respect at the beginning of the conflict to disdain following the antiwar movement developing at the end of 70s. Kotcheff explores Rambo's fighting another war on homecoming. He epitomizes the sufferings of veterans who cope with readjusting to civilian life. This movie is based on these unvoiced social issues, which affect American soldiers, waging the war in Vietnam. It features Rambo as a killing machine, using guerrilla tactics to struggle for life. The problems soldiers face after deployment are still a field of ongoing concern in all societies. Taking into account these issues that result from the world's most challenging current conflicts may help have a deep understanding of what soldiers go through in the jungle warfare and back home.

The psychoanalysis theory centers on the psychology of the characters and analyzes their motivation, behavior and actions. Sigmund Freud, in his works, An Outline of Psychoanalysis (1949) and New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1991), sheds light on the realm of psychoanalysis. The literary criticism is a form of literary theory, which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis to interpret the meaning of a text in literature. It is used to explore the psychology of characters in the face of war. The Vietnam War has positively and negatively influenced veterans, so their behaviors reveal about the psychological stresses of warfare. The actions of the main character, Rambo, in First Blood by Ted Kotcheff, can be explained using theories of fear or attraction of death. The film-maker is influenced by this literary theory, which is reflected in the psychology of his characters. Rambo is depicted, in this film, as displaying psychological problems, which derive from his past experiences. We can figure out the protagonist's psyche through the lens of some psychoanalytic concepts associated with trauma, violence and unconscious mind, resulting from war experience.

This article investigates the representative of a guerrilla veteran as a way to kick the Vietnam syndrome. It is an attempt for Rambo to re-socialize when he returns from Vietnam. It is divided into three parts: The first deals with the reunification with society. The second part examines the case of Rambo as a hard-boiled hero. And the final part lays emphasis on the healing process of the wounded veteran.

2. THE REUNIFICATION WITH SOCIETY

First Blood is a portrayal of Vietnam wounded veterans. In this movie, John Rambo embodies the superhero character, but he is psychologically affected by the war experiences. He fails to prelude himself from frequent violent outbursts when he is pushed too far. The result of this barrage of images is that Americans view Vietnam as a war fought by men psychically and morally different from them. By placing the veterans in the category of outsider or scapegoat, the broader community is effectively able to assert its innocence. In this way, the denial is supported by the fact that the wound is interpreted through the character of a veteran. In First Blood, Ted Kotcheff gives a portrayal of the main character who cannot assimilate back into society. He thus creates a new ideology concerning the veteran. According to Kotcheff, Rambo

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is powerfully affected by the viciousness of war. He returns to the US rather than a triumphant hero, but as a social outcast unable to function in society. As reintegration issues are concerned, victimization becomes a hallmark of American society and the action hero inherits it. Rambo's first movie presents and solidifies this type of hero in the public experience. The veteran, being disengaged and wandering, proves himself highly skilled when he is threatened. Even though Rambo returns stateside, he is still lost in the jungle, as his sobbing tirade evidences at the end of the film. His abilities are incredibly useful in the war setting, but they disenfranchise him in a normal society.

Even though Emmett tries to explain to Sam that it is part of combat to kill people, she strongly believes that her father enjoys murder. In this way, she notes: "he went over there to get some notches on his machine" (Mason 222). Sam has the same feeling of anger towards her father as the public opinion that protests against American soldiers, calling them baby killers like Rambo in First Blood. Focusing on Emmett's experience in Vietnam, Sam perceives him as the kind of man whom Hedges describes as "those with a predilection for murder" (Hedges 9). Kotcheff's film, First Blood, examines it through the character of Rambo. This can be compared to the reaction of the public, which considers Vietnam veterans as baby murderers, and spits on them.

First Blood by Ted Kotcheff represents returning Vietnam vets as dysfunctional and changed forever by their service in Vietnam. This is illustrated by the fact that John Rambo wages a one- man battle against an entire town using his Green Beret training. Kotcheff depicts Rambo as a disturbed and isolated veteran who is unable to cope with Vietnam. In this light, he probes many central issues concerning the return of vets from Vietnam, and the difficulties they routinely face. In First Blood, Rambo is portrayed as nothing more than a killing machine. He highlights a widely held criticism of the veterans' war era that the returning soldiers are not afforded the proper tools to handle adjustments. It is conceivable for a vet to have a complex mental breakdown. In fact, John Rambo's readjustment problems derive from his wartime experiences. Kotcheff makes it clear that the attitudes toward Vietnam veterans are unsympathetic and even hostile. Rambo wins at all costs and there is no friendly civilians' mentality. His rage derives from the lack of support from the US society and his homecoming problems. That is what Rambo expresses in his speech when he states:

then I come back to the world and I see all those maggots at the airport protesting me, spitting, calling me a baby killer, and all kinds of vile crap. Who are they to protest me? Unless they've been me and been there, and know what the hell they're yelling about. Back there I could fly a gunship; I could drive a tank I was in charge of million-dollar equipment. Here, I can't even get a job parking car (Kotcheff, 1982).

Through this final monologue, Rambo unveils the enormous pressure he is under. Therefore, he is unable to function as a productive member of society. Kotcheff uses this speech not only to provide the audience with an explanation of John Rambo's actions, but also to expound on the futility many vets experience when they return home. This monologue displays the protagonist's readjustment problems associated with unemployment.

Georges Cosmatos, in his movie, Rambo: First Blood Part II, at the end of the second part of this saga, features Rambo asking Colonel Trautman (Crenna) why Vietnam soldiers return to America only to face scorn from their fellow countrymen. They realize that their heroism in action becomes an embarrassment to US politicians. While drawing on the traumatic experience of Rambo in Vietnam, Judith Lewis Herman, in the book Trauma and Recovery, underscores the importance of Rambo's speech, which sheds light actually on the development

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of posttraumatic stress disorder. As Herman delves into the phenomenon of readjustment problems, he argues "the response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma" (Herman 70). For Herman, the response that Rambo receives is far from nurturing. The feeling of distrust and isolation among veterans is intensified by the misunderstanding or frank hostility of those who surround them on their homecoming. This results in amplifying their PTSD symptoms.

In their analysis of readjustment problems based on the movie First Blood, Auster and Quart declare that First Blood is "the ultimate revenge fantasy of every Vietnam vet who was ever humiliated by the homecoming reception he did or didn't receive" (Auster and Quart 93). In this statement, Auster and Quart highlight vets' homecoming problems when they return back from Vietnam. They face injustices from civilians who ignore what they experience in Vietnam. While this sentiment is certainly a pivotal piece of First Blood, the film plays an even more vital role in the genre of coming home films.

In First Blood, Rambo has difficulties to readjust to civilian life. In search of the Pacific Northwest for his form Green Beret Squad members, he eventually finds the home of the last remaining squad member thought to be alive, but his mother tells him: "Delmar's dead, from cancer, he brought it back from Vietnam." (Kotcheff, 1982) Here, Stone alludes to the issue of Agent Orange and its impact on those who fight in Vietnam. In this context, Rambo feels disheartened because of his friend's death. As he walks through a small town, he is confronted by the town's Cheriff, Brian Dennehy. Being an unwelcome Vietnam veteran, Sheriff Teasle seeks to chase him from this place. Teasle regards him as a dangerous Green Beret. He further illustrates it when he says to Rambo: "wearing that flag and jacket, looking the way you do, you're just asking for trouble here, friend." (Kotcheff, 1982) Focusing on Teasle's words, we can say that Rambo faces hostility, wandering in the streets as an outsider. That is the reason why the Sheriff offers a ride to Rambo and proceeds to take him just past the city limits.

World War II veterans come home en masse to a grateful public and are honored with parades and great fanfare, however those who fight in Vietnam return alone. While drawing on the soldiers' treatment after the warfare, D. Michael Shafer claims: "they were reinserted into civilian life one by one as they completed their tours, just as they had been inserted into combat one by one a year earlier" (Shafer 94). According to Michael Shafer, earlier veterans are treated with respect and honor on returning to America. Although Vietnam War veterans enter the military with glamorous ideals of manhood, patriotism and heroic sacrifice, the realities of homecomings shatter these ideals of social gratitude and honor. The way they readjust to civilian world is the same as they start fighting in Vietnam.

According to the American soldiers, homecoming is one of the most terrifying experiences. In fact, they are the generation of combatants that American citizens try hard to cross out of their memory. These veterans are not "the lost generation" as William Eastlake explains, they are the "ignored generation, the generation that was used by old people to kill young people" (Eastlake 139). Here, Eastlake highlights the sense of ignorance and sacrifice Vietnam vets face when they defend America. They remark that, even back home where they are supposed to find a safe shelter, the war is not over. The war at home becomes worse and worse day after day because of civilians' negative attitudes towards veterans. They strongly feel that the communities turn out to be their enemies. It is at the American airports that threats against veterans start. These airports become places where the vets' confusion begins to mix with pain, isolation and rejection.

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In his analysis of the readjustment problems resulting from protests against veterans, Paul Lyons states: "in the popular mythology about the return home of the Vietnam Veteran there is always an ugly incident at the airport. The G.I.is confronted by anger self-righteous protesters, usually described as long-haired and scruffy. The mal hippies often seem to be performing before their girlfriends; the females seem to take great pleasure in throwing the epithet 'baby-killers' in the vet's face" (Lyons 193). In his remark, Paul Lyons highlights the problem of the Vietnam veterans who are often met at the airports by the protesters ready to show their hostile reception. The vets are treated poorly and considered as losers. They report that the American hippies spit them on the back.

Christian Appy seems to support this reflection, in his book, Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam, when he reports a veteran's experience: "I arrived at Los Angeles International Airport… On my way to the taxis, I passed two young women in the waiting area. One of these young women approached me and, in a low voice, called me a 'baby killer' and spat on my ribbons. I was in uniform and wearing the Vietnamese Service Medal, the Vietnamese Campaign Medal, an air Force commendation Medal, and the Purple heart" (Appy 304). In this statement, Appy investigates the plight of a veteran who is treated as a criminal or murderer at the American airports. He also reveals that civilians strongly disapprove of the return of vets. This typical act of receiving the veterans badly becomes part of the substance of the stories that surround this particular post-war experience. Besides, Christian Appy gives deeper insights into the vets' adjustment back to society. In this light, he asserts: "the Veterans returned from Vietnam in virtual isolation, received no national homecoming ceremonies, and lacked adequate medical and psychological care, educational benefit, and job training" (Appy 3). According to Appy, the vets are welcome without any parades and alienated from the US society. Owing to this feeling of discrimination, they often function as strangers, aliens and indigenous. They are the unwanted, wronged and helpless Americans. They lack health care and are subject to psychological problems they cannot make out with.

Veterans manage how to gain a sense of reintegration into civilian life. Gronke and Feaver delve into vets' readjustment problems. According to them, a "latent alienation and distrust; suggesting deeper ideological and attitudinal divides between the military and the public it serves" (Gronke and Feaver 132). Actually, Gronke and Feaver underscore the perceived differences leading the veterans to believe that they cannot relate to previous life because civilians misunderstand what they have been through. This disruption heightens the divisions between them. The shifts in attitudes and values seem to be the most problematic case for veterans. This results in soldiers' feeling of alienation and misunderstanding, urging them to move away from society. The tension caused by a sense of incomprehension and disrespect is a barrier to make connections with civilians who prevent veterans from fully integrating into civilian life.

First blood by Ted Kotcheff is a portrayal of captain Trautman who attempts to convince Rambo to give himself up, stating that it is over, but Rambo has a complete mental breakdown. In this respect, he launches into a tirade beginning with the statement that nothing is over. In a moment of clarity in the film, Rambo's speech exhibits a feeling of anger through this vibrating statement: "Nothing is over, nothing! You just don't turn it off. It wasn't my war. You asked me. I didn't ask you. And I did what I had to do to win but somebody wouldn't let us win." (Kotcheff, 1982) In his declaration, Rambo shows his hatred and denounces the lack of US political will in Vietnam War. According to him, vets are not given the opportunities to win

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the war, and they raise against the US government to make their voice heard. They fight in Vietnam for a noble cause. Rambo also reveals the traumatic wartime experience he goes through in Vietnam and back home.

In Kotcheff's film, Rambo is depicted sitting alone in a cave, being out of danger, agitated and distressed. He feels lonely and betrayed by others. When Colonel Trautman, his commander and mentor, tries to persuade him to surrender, he mentions that Rambo is a threat to friendlies and civilians. However, the Green Beret reacts angrily while claiming: "there is no friendly civilian." (Kotcheff, 1982) Actually, Rambo displays his anger. Owing to a feeling of rage, frustration and injustice, he comes back to the town to find Sheriff Teasle. For Rambo, the Sheriff causes the current difficulties he contends with. Then, Rambo is confronted with a lack of recognition and US society's neglect. The Vietnam syndrome and the readjustment problems have dramatically affected his life. While responding to Colonel Trautman, Rambo expresses his anger and disappointment in First Blood when he declares:

For you! For me, civilian life is nothing. In the field we had a code of honour: you watch my back, I'll watch yours. I could drive a tank. I was in charge of million-dollar equipment. Back here I can't even hold a job parking cars! … I had all these guys, man back there. I had all these fighting guys who were my friends. Cause back here, there is nothing Kotcheff, 1982).

In his declaration, Rambo unveils the problems he copes with while attempting to readjust to civilian life. Although he fights for a noble cause in Vietnam, he deals with issues associated with unemployment, lack of recognition and the US society's neglect. According to him, the status in the battlefield is better than the one he finds on returning home. Focusing on his war experience, we realize that Rambo has to stand up for psychologically and physically to survive. And finding a job becomes part of his struggle. He bears witness to the American soldiers' problems of readjusting to life as honest and good workers. Civilians and government avoid the veterans due to their lack of experience because they are very young, and many of them have never worked before.

Guy Westwell lays foundation for vets' reception on returning home from Vietnam. By making comment on First blood by Kotcheff, Westwell remarks: "Rambo is now differently textured, a more sympathetic hero of the new mood. His filmic representation allows the audience to identify with a persecuted veteran who has merely done his duty. Rambo, no longer, inherently violent, is now a broken hero whose final weeping symbolizes the United States' unconscious guilt at neglecting its veterans" (Westwell 71). From this reflection, Westwell investigates the US society's ignorance of veterans. Despite waging a war for America, they are despised and rejected by the US government. Rambo does not only embody the failure of vets in Vietnam, but he is also the burden of their complaints.

By the same token, Oumar Ndongo investigates veterans' difficulties to reintegrate into US society, but all the problems they are confronted with derive from a deceitful government that does not facilitate their reception. According to Ndongo, "This is one of the few wars where few would ever talk about what they had experienced because when you finally left Vietnam you were flown to the states and discharged with no bands. There was no fanfare. You almost felt coming back that were guilty of something rather than that you had served your country due to the attitudes that were prevalent at the time and since. The Vietnam veterans should have been recognized for having done their best despite the outcome. I think that is where the failing has been" (Ndongo 379). Actually, Ndongo emphasizes that vets are disillusioned and receive unexpectedly a heartless welcome on homecoming. The reunification with society is problematic and remains a major concern for many vets who fight in Vietnam. Kotcheff's film

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sheds light on the loss of the war on the home front and the shift to the stab in the back history of Vietnam. It is a portrayal of Americans who stay home and make Vets feel guilty of losing the war in Vietnam. They leave them in a state of affliction and commit acts of violence against them.

More importantly, the film itself, in Rambo's speech, gives several reasons for his misery. It features his abandonment by the military and the country at large, both in Vietnam and on his homecoming. His speech also unveils the loss of his friends, the downgrading of his societal status from elite soldier in Vietnam to drifter veteran in America. In an increasingly emotional diatribe, Rambo lays out the ultimate cause of his violence:

We're in this bar in Saigon, and these kids comes up, this kid carrying a shoe shine box, and he says, uh "shine, please? Shine?" I said no, and he kept asking, yeah, and Joey, he Said "yeah", and I went to get a couple of beers, and the box is wired, and they open up the box, fucking blew his body all over the place, and he's lying there, and he's fucking screaming, there's pieces of him all over me, just pieces, like this [rips off bandolier] and I'm trying pull him off, you know? And it's my friend that's all over me! I've got blood and everything. And I'm trying to hold him together, and put him together, his fucking insides keep coming out, and nobody would help! No one would help, he's saying, "Please, I wanna go home, Johnny, I wanna drive my chevy," I tell him, "What, I can't find your fucking legs! I can't find your legs!" I can't get it out of my head. I do these seven years. Every day I have this. Sometimes I wake up and I don't talk to anybody, sometimes a day, sometimes a week. I can't put it out of my mind (Kotcheff, 1982).

In this declaration, Rambo talks about his memories of Vietnam War. The feeling of frustration and anger at being abandoned by his country accounts for Rambo sobbing uncontrollably on Trautman's shoulder. He recalls the Vietnam experience that is closely in connection with post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome. In this speech, Rambo mourns for his friends who die heroically in Vietnam. He denounces the living conditions of his fellow men who cannot fit in society. He also copes with this societal disconnection and bears witness to the unemployment problems within the US society.

Cathy Caruth, in her analysis of veterans' readjustment problems, lays emphasis on the experience in the jungle warfare and back home. She strongly supports this view, in her article "Confronting Political Trauma," when she explains: "To listen to the soldiers' voices and to see through their eyes is no simple task; however, the truth to which they have asked us to listen concerns both the horror of war – or, in particular, the horror of a war that has not been clearly justified – and also the horror of betrayal, the betrayal of the public and of the soldier themselves by a government not willing to reveal either its own motives for entering and escalating the war, or its intentions for remaining there in a stalemate" (Caruth 179). In this context, Caruth underscores the post-war traumatic symptoms of Vietnam veterans. She examines the crisis of their identity resulting from the horror of war. According to her, the narratives produced after the Vietnam war are often based on a mix of images, memories and sufferings that usually keep haunting them. The horror of the war shocks their minds. Thus, harmful psychological effects from unpleasant traumatic experiences are established as the main characteristics of the vets' narratives in the post war period. When they return home from the Vietnam War as physical casualties with injuries such as paralysis, amputation and other forms of mutilation, they face difficulties adjusting again to society. Because of its purposeless objectives and bad policies to wage a war in Vietnam, the US government is responsible for the transition issues of vets from military service to civilian life.

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In short, Ted Kotcheff features Rambo as a Vietnam veteran who wages another war at home. He struggles to adjust again to social life and grapples with the horror of the war and societal disconnection. He is confronted with crucial homecoming problems related to his reintegration into family and society. The Green Beret contends with the antiwar protests and the deceitful behavior of the US government that need to be addressed. For this reason, reconstructing the American identity while taking into account the syndrome of the US society helps come to terms with the subversion of the western hero. According to Kotcheff, the biggest contributing factor of Rambo's difficult readjustment to civilian life is associated with the psychological problems considered as a nation trauma within the American society. We necessitate to cope with this traumatic experience by praising the heroic deeds of vets.

2. RAMBO AS HARD-BOILED HERO

In Reagan era, Films like First blood by Ted Kotcheff give a depiction of characters showing the characteristics of a western hero. They focus on a super-soldier who is invincible and indestructible and shows no weakness. In keeping with the conventions of the superhero, Rambo has prior military experience. He is devoted to his mission and has a mastery over his own body that he is in complete control of his desires and remains celibate throughout the film. Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard seem to support this reflection when they state: "the Rambo character still represents virtually every historic American right-wing fantasy: ultra- patriotism, weapons fetichishism, a return to simple frontier ethics, reversal of defeat, conquest of evil others" (Boggs and Pollard 107). According to Boggs and Pollard, Rambo' characteristics allude to the western hero ones. He is portrayed as being skillful and undefeated, and he has the will to conquer the wilderness. Rambo is the embodiment of America's most cherished and enduring dreams because he demonstrates the enduring popularity of the American frontier myth.

Besides, Rambo, in First Blood, is considered as the frontier hero on screen for a whole generation of cinema-goers. According to him, it is hard to find a better warrior that exemplifies the virtues of American military action and supersedes even the legendary John Wayne. Rambo is able to find an outlet for his violent impulses only in support of a threatened community. The physical strength, the body power and his familiarity with the wilderness are key elements that mark him as a western hero. He is an excellent shot, even at a distance; he is armed with a knife, a bow and arrows in the jungle, but he uses guns at home. These weapons function as extension of his body. In this movie, Rambo is represented as a comic book hero with all muscles and oil. This superman does not only conquer the enemy in the jungle by himself, but he is also able to overcome all the obstacles. Despite his imprisonment and torture, he finally manages to escape. Rambo's fight is legitimized as opposing a cruel enemy that still holds American prisoners. It is associated with both ungrateful superiors and ruthless enemies.

Georges Pan Cosmatos' film Rambo (1985), which is a continuation of First Blood by Kotcheff, resumes this trend. This film is a depiction of Rambo who is hassled by the Cheriff of a small town until the highly trained soldier explodes in a bloody act of revenge. The second part of the film describes the character Rambo who is judged and imprisoned as a criminal. He is asked to go back to Vietnam to find and photograph some American imprisoned soldiers-POW. Hardly does Rambo succeed in returning with an American soldier when the rescue helicopter hovers over them as the enemy approaches. Murdock as the government agent shorts suddenly the mission and the helicopter leaves. In First Blood, Rambo is depicted as a comic book hero with all muscles and oil. This superman does not only conquer the enemy in the

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jungle by himself, but he is also able to overcome all the obstacles. Despite his imprisonment and torture, he finally manages to escape. Rambo's fight is legitimized as opposing a cruel enemy that still holds American prisoners. It is associated with both ungrateful superiors and ruthless enemies and has made of him the American soldier in Vietnam. Rambo is considered as a Christ-like savior figure, he endures torture and pain to redeem the POWs. After his captivity by the Vietnamese, the tortures scenes in Rambo II film, as Kellner puts it, are "framed in the iconography of crucifixion shots with strong lighting on his Head producing halo effects, as in medial paintings, and the redder – than-Blood producing a hyper realisation …of heroic suffering" (Kellner 68). In his remark, Kellner draws a comparison between Rambo and Jesus Christ because both of them play key roles to bring salvation to humanity thanks to their sufferings. Rambo himself has accepted to endure suffering and pain to save the prisoners of war and redeem his community.

Susan Jeffords, in her book, The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War, perpetuates the masculine heroism discourse of Vietnam veterans. By analyzing Kotcheff' s film, Jeffords asserts: "Rambo literally anoints himself with mud, and his use of the elements to defeat his enemies in the jungle involves emerging from water and fire as though these are mythic rites of purification" (Jeffords 156). According to Jeffords, Rambo's mythic rites are similar to the Christian rite of baptism. She depicts the Green Beret as exorcising the demons of Vietnam that plague the US society. By performing such a heroic task, Rambo finds a path, which leads to a redemptive community.

Rambo's battle against the small-minded police force of Hope, Washington and its fascist Chief Teasle becomes nothing more than his misdirected anger and the potential critique of intolerant American society. In his analysis of the film about the praise of Rambo's skills, Michael Paris points out: "The films condemn the army for creating a killing machine-like Rambo but continually places him in situations where the audience are expected to admire his fighting skills" (Paris 25). From this outlook, Paris highlights Rambo's strength, which makes worthy

of admiration. The fighting skills he uses are basic for reconstructing the image of veterans to the level of heroic status.

Ted Kotcheff attempts to glorify the Vietnam War through the character of John Rambo. This occurs when the audience is introduced to Colonel Sam Trautman (Richard Crenna) when Teasle mutters whatever possesses God in Heaven to make a man like Rambo. Trautman makes it clear that God does not make Rambo. He makes him. In this scene, Kotcheff reinvigorates the image of the soldier as nothing more than a ruthless warrior.

More importantly, Rambo through the Sheriff's point of view, we see a dangerous criminal who is a threat to the locals and his town. Yet, Rambo is, in reality, an ordinary man who has dreams and passion. He is sadly and mentally scarred by war experience and forgets how to function in society. According to Colonel Trautman, he is trained to survive and kill. Trautman describes Rambo as "a man who's the best! With guns, with knives, with his bare hands! A man who's been trained to ignore pain! To ignore weather!" (Kotcheff, 1982) Actually, Rambo is completely stripped of his human nature and morals. He is trained into a killing machine that has no mercy. When you put this machine-like being back into normal society, he is going to have trouble fitting in, and following rules he forgets. As Rambo becomes the target of a manhunt led by Sheriff Teasle, portrayed by Brian Dennehy, he taps into his military training. He uses the tactics to evade capture and turn the tables on his pursuers. The cat-and mouse

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game that ensues is not just a tale of physical endurance, but also a testament to the indomitable human spirit.

Besides, Rambo is shown and admired as a hard muscular, courageous, fearless and almost invincible killer machine. In Kotcheff movie, he is also portrayed as a mentally disturbed soldier who has difficulties to readjust to civilian life after coming home. He experiences traumatic situations he cannot handle at home. That is the reason why he does trouble things back in Vietnam. Rambo is a highly skilled Green Beret who fights for his country. However, no gratitude waits for him after returning. Taking into account the efforts and suffering for his country, he ends up facing hostility and distaste that frustrate his hopes. First Blood sheds light on the death of veterans in Vietnam. Rambo bears witness to his friends' loss during the war. When he comes back from the lost war where he sees his friends dying, he becomes lonely and wanders aimlessly. He feels unwanted and misunderstood. For example, he is a hero during the war whereas back in the USA, he realizes that his heroic deeds are ignored. He is not only haunted by these traumatic Vietnam memories, but he is also a victim of PTSD dealt with in the final scene of the film. In short, he feels the pain of defeat. Ted Kotcheff's film reflects the nation's struggle to mourn the deaths and military loss in Vietnam conflict. Vietnam veterans like Rambo are demasculinized by the death of fellow soldiers and forced to deal with the weakness and vulnerability of mourning. Reagan's strategies used to re-write and re-fight the Vietnam change the way the American soldier is perceived because they praise his heroic achievements. The remasculinization of these servicemen is the bedrock of the Vietnam War literature. The endeavor to change the filmic discourse gives way to the healing process.

3. HEALING THE WOUNDED VETERAN

The difficult reintegration of veterans into civilian life after deployment leads film-makers to seek a way to come to terms with it. Post-Vietnam war films highlight the need to learn the right lessons from Vietnam. This becomes increasingly connected with the suffering of veterans at the hands of US government and domestic society. The war causes disunity and disagreements within the realm of US society. A Vietnam vet is allowed to fight for his cause at home and not in the jungles of Vietnam. According to Devine, the dismissal of First Blood most often occurs because the film "espoused the less overtly political belief that the war was wrong because the soldier was not allowed to win" (Devine 215). Actually, Devine gives the main reasons for the soldiers' failure in Vietnam. He sheds light on the US aimless decision to conduct a war; its loss has an emotional collapse perceived as a national trauma. In First Blood, Rambo epitomizes this sense of defeat in Vietnam because he is not allowed to win the war. He still fights by defending enemies at home. Devine conveys to us that traumatic stress disorder syndrome is felt at all the levels of American society.

According to Omer Bartov, fallen soldiers can glorify the nation and "endow the nation with deeper meaning because they had given their lives for it" (Bartov 15). Here, Bartov suggests a way of dealing with the Vietnam syndrome. For him, the glorification of nationhood much depends on the recognition of Americans' sacrifices in Vietnam. The physical and psychological wounded soldier needs to be made glorious by bestowing honor, praise or admiration since he is willing to give everything for America. The United States is considered as more than a nation. It has changed into a city upon a hill. John Winthrop first introduces this idea in the Sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" in which he presents the United States as an example of the rest of the world to look up to. So, these undermined values embodied by

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the American soldier, in post-Vietnam war, have to be redeemed by praising and glorifying veterans.

In Vietnam War movies, a new concept emerges, transforming the dangerous characters of American boys during war. At first, Reagan era films instill a sense that veterans with PTSD are ruthless loners capable of wrongdoings and even crazy. This stereotype often implies the necessity of ending the war. Then, this shift can help to transfer the blame for the consequences of the war from the soldier to the government. Such a move enables arguably Americans to come to terms with the lost war. According to Guy Westwell, these movies "provided a therapeutic aid in the aftermath of the divisive and traumatizing experience" (Westwell 1). In this regard, they present an image of the Vietnam veteran that persists in current representations, ultimately that of a victim afflicted with PTSD symptoms. PTSD provides a common ground where pro- and anti-war speakers can meet to care about the soldiers who are psychologically broken down by the Vietnam experience.

In the Reagan's era, America begins to turn to the right. Along with the electoral victory of Ronald Reagan, the United States starts a new phase, a period of reaffirmation of national pride reflected in many attempts to recover from the syndrome of Vietnam War. The US intervention in Vietnam, for its part, is still a field of on-going cultural and political concern. Vietnam War movies try to give deeper insights into the rehabilitation of the veterans and the acceptance of the war itself. Reagan's tactics of re-fighting, rewriting and denial are all predominantly pitched at addressing the basic military aversion aspect of the Vietnam syndrome and the increasing feeling of shame. They also denounce the need for the Vietnam syndrome as a psychological burden. The idea of re-fighting the war, as Paris notes, gives Americans the chance to "restore military self-respect" (Paris 26), something lost in the humiliation of their defeat to a Third World Country.

In the first half of the 1980s, Vietnam on the silver screen took the form of the superhero action film. This character promotes the idea that America does not really lose in Vietnam because the war can be re-fought and won again in places such as Grenada, central and South America, or the Middle East. This rewriting or reconstitution of the Vietnam War is epitomized by characters like Sylvester Stallone or Chuck Norris, and it materializes in such films as Rambo: First Blood Part II (1985) by George P. Cosmatos, or the Missing in Action (1984). Ted Kotcheff attempts to glorify the Vietnam War through the character of John Rambo. He reinforces the image of the soldier as nothing more than a killing machine. Many films deal with the case of veterans who face difficulties after coming home from Vietnam. However, they present new stereotypical images of mental wounded veterans. In First Blood, Kotcheff aims to rehabilitate the vets. In this light, there is an evident change in the perception and depiction of the American soldier in films. Besides, readjustment problems can be minimized with the social support on homecoming if returning veterans are greeted enthusiastically in their homeland. The best way to restore the image of the Vietnam veteran is to convert it from violent, sometimes rapacious warrior to that of an actual victim of war PTSD. Therefore, this healing process is shaped by a particular cultural context that is motivated to modify the perceptions and memories of the war and its soldiers. The recognition of PTSD as a mental disorder is also necessary for healing the cultural trauma of the Vietnam War for American society, including veterans and civilians. This shift in the perception of veterans can also be seen in the cinematic representations of PTSD among combat veterans.

In his analysis of issues related to the rehabilitation of the Vietnam veterans, Patrick Hagopian claims: "The image of Vietnam veterans shifted from the 'psycho' stereotype of the mid 1970's

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to the more complex and sympathetic portrayals of the mid-1980" (Hagopian 230). Actually, this shift, coinciding with changes in American society, is more and more responsive to traumatized veterans and perceives them with more sympathy. Veterans are seen in a more heroic way.

Films such as First Blood by Ted Kotcheff and George P. Cosmatos' film First Blood Part II (1985) feature characters as strong heroic figures. Some of them, in these popular movies, come back to Vietnam to free prisoners of war. And this time, they win and make Americans victorious. Most film commentators convey the message that America is right in Vietnam, and the fact it loses is not the soldiers' fault but the bureaucrats. They do best for their service in Vietnam, yet there is no chance to win even if they are there for defending a noble cause. Rambo series appear as they do during the Reagan years. They seek to reverse the perceived feminization of the nation in the wake of America's embarrassing loss in Vietnam and in the face of what is seen as meek response by President Carter to the 1979-80 Iran hostage crises.

In attempting to restore the broken soldier, they value the ideology of masculinity in the form of muscular and resilient America male heroes.

By the same token, Samuel Freedman examines the phenomenon of Vietnam veterans' rehabilitation. From this reflection, Freedman claims: "it is difficult to say which came first – the conservative upsurge or the rehabilitation of the Vietnam veterans but each trend nourished the others" (Freedman 55). In this statement, Freedman highlights that the view of the war is dramatically different from the one that the antiwar movement has in the sixties and early seventies. Focusing on Freedman's words, we remark that the notion of rehabilitation is key in terms of understanding the attitude of the film industry as well as the general artistic world in the eighties. Unlike the films depicting vets as losers of the war, the Green Berets by Wayne seeks to revitalize the hearty patriotism. From this point of view, Freedman remarks that it is time for William Alexander to assert: "there is a need to show we have the will and the character we had before Vietnam. …a need to re-think ourselves to the basic American guys" (Freedman 55). In this outlook, Freedman brings to light the valor of American soldier as a heroic character. For him, it is an attempt to reconcile Americans with their past and restore the ideology shattered by the war.

Ted Kotcheff's film Uncommon Valor (1983) is a depiction of this conservative view of the war. It features the vanguard that claims the American rightness in undertaking this action. This is illustrated by the fact that the father of a M.I.A, determined to rescue his son many years after the end of the war, enlists his son's Marine friends to help him in the mission. In that sense, he points out: "there is a lot of unfinished business over there," (Kotcheff, 1982). He underscores that soldiers fight on the right side, as their leader confirms: "No one can dispute the rightness of what you are doing." (Kotcheff, 1982) The American intervention is not definitely only moral, but it is also considered as a divine mission to save people under threat.

In his analysis of Rambo's series films, Fernandez Santos emphasizes that the producers of Rambo, Stallone and Kotcheff do not intend to an adventure movie, but their intention is to produce a film, which appearance of adventures hides an ideological relief. While relying on this one, Cosmatos and Stallone bring to the above-mentioned conservative sectors a consolation. And they suggest that if victory cannot be achieved in the battlefront, the screen serves to relieve the bitterness as an "illusory and balsamic revenge" (Santos 31). Vietnam War films, which try to rehabilitate the veteran, take an adventure of turnover. They are able to transform the shameful military defeat into a heroic saga. In fact, the veteran is portrayed not

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only as a hero, but also a very special one who fights for an ungrateful country. Because of the traumatic experience in Vietnam, the image of this hero facing a dreadful enemy on behalf of a government needs healing. Rambo's conversation with Colonel Trautman illustrates this since veterans like him realize that they are led astray when it comes to Vietnam. After being released from prison, Rambo asks Colonel Trautman if they are going to let them win this time. Focusing on Rambo's request, we can say that the hero illustrates President Reagan's strategy of blaming on the other politicians for the defeat in Vietnam.

Ali Wimmer lays foundation for the healing process of Vietnam veterans. In fact, he points out that Rambo, after having purged the camp of enemies and returned to the CIA base in Thailand, "redeems America by searching out and destroying even greater sins and sinners" (Wimmer 189). Actually, Wimmer evokes the way Rambo uses to regenerate America while drawing on the biblical story about Jesus throwing the money-lenders out of the temple. Rambo's heroic actions aim at restoring the inversion of western hero broken down by the Vietnam War. The notion of redemption is highlighted in First Blood: Part II by Cosmatos. When Rambo returns to the jungle to free the POWs, his role is to win this time. By performing this heroic task, he releases American society from the burden of understanding the historical, political and moral implications of Vietnam, in particular, the conduct of the US military in that conflict.

Cosmatos' film gives a hilarious portrayal of the veteran who is absolved of any responsibility for Vietnamese civilian suffering. It is about the veneration of the veteran who becomes the central focal point of US memory about Vietnam. Focusing on the movie First Blood, Studlar and Desser note that there is a shift regarding the question "were we right to fight in Vietnam?" with the question "what is our obligation to the Americans veterans of the war?" (Studlar and Desser 11). According to Studlar and Desser, the issue surrounding the disillusioned veteran is a major concern for American society. Instead of despising and rejecting veterans, the US society needs to come to terms with the traumatic experience soldiers undergo in Vietnam. This is what Studlar and Desser bring to light while changing the discourse of the narrative film.

While trying to regenerate the status of the wounded American soldier, Reagan considers Vietnam veterans as true patriots and gentle heroes. They praise, as he notes, "the devotion and gallantry, with which all of them ennobled their nation as they became champions of a noble cause."1 He highlights that no one should doubt the nobility of the effort they make, their loyalty, courage, dedication and valor. Vietnam combat veterans reflect the best in US society and much of the nation's new strength deriving from the forgiveness and healing love they have shown. As far as the readjustment problems are concerned, Reagan argues that Vietnam service is recognized as a badge of pride. He further illustrates this phenomenon of reintegration when he states that as Vietnam veterans "take their rightful place among American heroes, it appears to me that we have healed."2 According to Reagan, the re-assimilation of veteran into civilian life is a way to heal the trauma at home front. By coming to grips with reintegration problems, the unjust stereotype is restored. Similarly, George Bush deals with the veterans' war experience in Vietnam and their readjustment issues to civilian life. From this standpoint, he declares: "the brave boys who went to Vietnam had to endure two wars. The first was that one waged in the swamps, and the jungles abroad, and the second was fought for respect and recognition at home."3 In this declaration, Bush accounts for the veterans' problems on the battlefield and on homecoming. They do not only face the horrific and traumatic experience in the jungles, but they also have to fight for the way back to civilian life. Soldiers have to be treated with respect and recognition at home. They value freedom and human dignity. These

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1 Ronald Reagan, 'Remarks at the Veterans Day Ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial', (1988b), 11 November, available online at http: //www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=35155, accessed 3 August 2010.
2 Ibid.
3 George H. W. Bush, 'Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Dallas, Texas', (1989c), 11 November, available online at http: //www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17790, accessed 3 August 2010.

vets have something to teach the rest of the US public about duty, courage and love of country. In accordance with Reagan about the lingering impacts of the Vietnam War, Bush argues: "however history may judge its execution and outcome, these individuals deserve a hero recognition and thanks."4 In this outlook, Bush seeks to rehabilitate the unjust stereotype of Vietnam veterans. They need praising, recognition and gratefulness for the efforts made in Vietnam.

In the same way, Walter H. Capps, in his work, The Unfinished War: Vietnam and the American Conscience, explores the new interpretations of the Vietnam veteran's image, which emerges under Reagan era. In this light, Capps confirms: "Blame for the failure to win shifted from those who created the war to anti-war protestors" (Capps 149). According to Capps, by renewing the wounded American soldier can only help rehabilitate his character. Instead of laying the blame on the US government for their failure in Vietnam, veterans rise up against the political leaders and the public opinion in society. This shift in discourse aims to value their existence as American citizens who should worthily adjust back to the civilian world. Michael Kimmel also underscores the experience of the veterans and their unkind reception by the US society, and he endeavors to change the discourse of defeat. While drawing on the film First Blood: Part II, Kimmel gives a depiction of Rambo who dares to ask Trautman, "Sir, do we get to win this time?" (Kimmel 211). Actually, Kimmel explores the discourse of defeat and failure that is a major concern for veterans' perception within the US society. The best way to kick off the Vietnam syndrome is to resort to the phenomenon of rehabilitation that can be made possible through victory. All of this helps regain the ideology of masculinity of vets that founds the US society. Reagan's endeavor to re-write the Vietnam experience is a means to restore military self-esteem. Ted Kotcheff advocates these religious and cultural ideologies on the basis of myth-making. Rambo embodies the burden of all wounded veterans and redeems them through his heroic achievements.

4. CONCLUSION

The memories of Vietnam War take up permanent residence in the minds of the veterans. The combat, with all its victories, failures and fear provide the benchmark of their past, present and future lives. Ted Kotcheff, within the daily interactions of warfare, provides a depiction of Rambo who becomes aware of his readjustment problems in society. And this feeling of recognition and identity permits to have a distinct and powerful self-image. Vietnam, as the larger context of the combat experience, gives a notion of the social roles that are available for them to play. This phenomenon comes through in the filmic narratives of their lives after Vietnam, particularly in their tales of failure and betrayal. In First Blood by Kotcheff, Rambo returns as a social orphan and adrift, desiring the same admiration and respect as earlier veterans have received.

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Despite supporting the moral, cultural and political values of his country, American citizens make the Green Beret live on the fringe of society. Rambo can never get back into civilian life

4 George H. W. Bush, 'Proclamation 6506 - Vietnam Veterans Memorial 10`n Anniversary Day, (1992b), 10 November, available online at http: //www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=47433, accessed 3 August 2010.

because of the opponents who keep on protesting and calling him a baby-killer. The American public opinion only contributes to a sense of failure and unattainable manhood. Rambo inflicting violence on the Sheriff and his men derives from a lack of supportive cultural ideology he attempts to bear witness in Vietnam. The psychoanalytic theory is used to provide deeper insights in the psychology of the main character. Rambo still fights another war at home and tries to contend with his war experience. In an attempt to deal with the psychological problems of characters, Kotcheff's film sheds lights on the phenomenon of re-socialization, requiring veterans to settle into a new identity as veteran- civilian. Yet, there are much more challenges to overcome. By coming to grips with these problems, vets like Rambo struggle for a suitable place between military and civilian life. This quest for readjusting to society functions as a healing process of the wounded veteran. Allowing veterans to win another war at home rehabilitates the broken soldier. They deserve recognition, appraisal and a pat on the back to reconcile with civilian life.

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