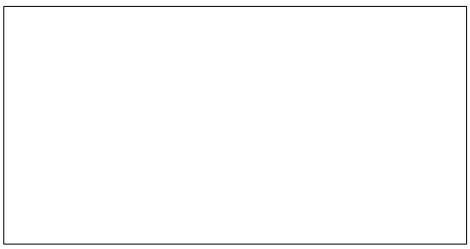

Recasting American Hard-Boiled Writing as a Literature of Traumatic War Experience.

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American crime novelist Raymond Chandler noted in 1957: "Once you have lead a platoon of men into direct machine-gun fire, nothing is ever the same again."[1] This provocative quote by one of the most distinguished hard-boiled writers of the twentieth century poses a useful vantage point from which to interpret and critically re-evaluate American crime fiction in the context of war and its impact. 'Hard-boiled' is a style traditionally linked with tough-talking and alcohol-hardened men; beautiful but deceitful women; and a mysterious noir urban environment. Yet the effects of combat upon the genre have not been seriously examined; instead readers and critics in the field have prioritized the analysis of seemingly more 'relevant' issues such as race, gender, class, and politics. However, while these two styles are divergent, they are also surprisingly complementary, similarly wrestling with notions of disillusionment, anger, and corruption.

While the impact of war upon culture and society is generally recognized and understood, it is the impact upon the individual, both author and protagonist, that is important to understanding the intersecting areas of both styles. These areas are also significant when considering crime fiction as a literature of trauma. As Kali Tal has noted:

> The symbols that narrators create to represent their wartime experiences are generated out of the war's traumatic events. They are frequently symbols for which the untraumatized have no parallels and thus are in no position to interpret correctly if they have not paid careful attention to the events upon which these symbols are based.[2]

With combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) only becoming officially recognized in 1980 this reconfiguration of the character of the detective allows us to consider characters

who, unlike the traditional stereotype, cannot simply shrug off their problems and retain their sense of respect and self-esteem. The struggle to comprehend the experiences of war is brought home with the veteran, and his attempt to make sense of his trauma in light of the society around him compounds him troubles further. It is this struggle that we witness in certain aspects of the crime genre throughout the twentieth century.

For much of the twentieth century the character of the detective in traditional crime fiction has been widely perceived as an iconic and mostly mythic individual, an "American image of heroic manhood," and a "cowboy adapted to life on the city streets."[3] He was assumed to be "tough [and] modern but also traditional."[4] Some believed that the detective needed to be a coarse and brutal figure, who had an instinct for danger. Julian Symons, for example, argued that the detective's language was raw and unrefined, "as pungent as cigar smoke," while his use of physical violence was "as natural as drinking."[5] Often operating at the very edge of the law, the detective was considered to be well connected, hard-headed, and unorthodox. Andrew Pepper states that the character was "usually violent…[and] operates out of selfish as well as selfless motives."[6] Yet, in common with many other generalizations, this notion often underestimates the inner aspects of the detective's character.

Although traditionally viewed as possessing a 'code' by which the protagonist conducts business and toils from day-to-day, war veteran detectives are bound by something far stronger; a desire for accomplishment and recognition drives the damaged characters. As the protagonist of James Crumley's detective series, C.W. Sughrue, notes in *The Mexican Tree Duck* (1993): "Some clients think private eyes have a code, something like *never quit* or *seek justice whatever the cost* or *punish the guilty whoever they might be*, but the code is probably more like *never give the money back*."[7] Yet this code displays something more than the chivalric nature of the traditional 'pulp' detective. By re-interpreting the character through the prism of war, we can view the protagonist of many hard-boiled novels as warriors; soldiers who have returned home to

find their former lives gone and the society around them disintegrating. They are characters with distinct connections to warfare; they were created by war veterans, located during tumultuous post-war eras, or characterized as former soldiers themselves. In biographical studies of hard-boiled authors the impact of war experience upon their work is generally overlooked. Combat experience has generally been considered as an event that either escapes examination or an occurrence that created a rich reserve of imagery from which to draw. However, by re-examining hard-boiled fiction in the context of war many works the display distinctive features attributable to post-combat related symptoms, such as a distrust of the state, and a deep-rooted sense of frustration and anger; none of which arise from the action taking place in the novels. The motivations for many of the twentieth century's most notable hard-boiled characterizations can subsequently be turned on their head.

Considered in such a manner, many of the most renowned works of crime fiction can be considered alongside notable American literary movements. The work of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, for example, can be considered in much the same way as the eminent writings of the Lost Generation because of the complex and self-conscious break with traditional aesthetic forms of writing. Compounded by World War One, writers in the inter-war period represented a radical shift in cultural sensibilities and struggled with a new realm of concerns brought about by, as many saw, an increasingly selfish and industrialized world. Likewise, after the Second World War, Charles Willeford and Ross Macdonald blended the anger and coarseness of the style with an increased vulnerability within the characterization of the protagonist. In a similar manner, post-Vietnam writers such as Robert Stone, Newton Thornburg, and James Crumley shifted the focus of 'war fiction' in the 1970s from the war itself to the impact of war upon the individual. Writers in the post-Vietnam era are the most explicit of these writers because of their drive to incorporate the individual and social trauma of the War into their chosen genre. These writers bridge the gap with crime fiction by taking the Vietnam War as the

exemplar of state-sponsored criminal activity. This style of crossover fiction, which blends the corresponding themes from both styles, is part of an important 'war brought home' category of literature that branches out from the traditional spheres of both the crime genre and the war genre. Other American texts that have utilized this theme include such notable works as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay* (1926), Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* (1961), Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers* (1974), Newton Thornburg's *Cutter and Bone* (1976), Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994), and James Bradley's *Flags of our Fathers* (2000). Centering upon the war veteran and his response to, and interpretation of, the society he returns to, these works demonstrate considerable evidence of the physical and psychological impact of war. Flashbacks, insomnia, anger, disillusionment, and alcoholism are a few of the indicators of PTSD that are heavily featured in post-war American literature, just as they are featured in the century's crime fiction.

In a similar manner the 'war brought home' theme can be applied to American hard-boiled detective fiction despite being kept traditionally apart from other styles. However, the impact of the First World War signifies the moment in literary history where the two opposing styles begin to merge. In the aftermath of the War the division between the crime style and war genre became increasingly untenable as both forms of literature began to represent their protagonist in a very similar way, as individuals troubled by traumatic events beyond their control and grappling to make sense of their surroundings. Peter Aichinger has noted that after the war, "novels reflected the horror and chagrin of people who had tasted combat for the first time" (x), and Horsley indicates that many crime fiction writers set in motion a new phase of detective fiction emphasizing the subconscious trauma that haunted society.[8] While this is certainly true of Raymond Chandler, who reveals the distinct *alienation* of his detective, Hammett's style by contrast emphasizes a sense of *isolation* within the protagonist's environment. While Philip Marlowe craves human companionship, Sam Spade chooses seclusion. Nevertheless, Hammett

played a significant role in the evolution of the hard-boiled novel because his work displays distinct features of order, form, and structure; all key components of the desire to comprehend individual experiences and understand one's sense of 'place' within a specific environment. Coping with personal trauma, and the form by which this was represented in the crime genre, therefore became an integral part of the post-war hard-boiled style.

As the emphasis in literature altered after the First World War, the conventional description of war literature as tales of soldiers and battles became inadequate because it failed to recognize the psychological effect that war could have. This development influenced many American authors, including those whose who wrote in other styles and genres. Although 'war' is a broad literary theme, narrowing the categorization of literature considered as 'war literature' implies a separateness which, as Walsh notes: "sounds too prescriptive, as though war literature exists in a vacuum as a genre hived-off from other forms of writing."[9] Categorizing works of writing as 'war literature' suggests that it exists in a class separated from all other types of literature. Yet this is an inaccurate way of understanding how war can impact upon authors and their writings. War will influence writers no matter the genre in which they write because the term war *novel* allows "a degree of flexibility"[10] over what may be considered war *literature*. The term 'war novel,' as Aichinger argues, suggests "any long work of prose fiction in which the lives and actions of the characters are principally affected by warfare or the military establishment… [and where] war is the primordial fact dominating the lives of… the characters."[11] With combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder now recognized as a legitimate war injury Aichinger's assertion that a 'war novel' comprises of written work in which the "lives and actions" of the protagonist are "principally affected by warfare or the military," allows for the theme of war to be continued outside of the regular theatre of war. War is not solely confined to battlefields or foreign countries; it remains indelibly imprinted in the minds and behavior of individual protagonists and subsequently returns with soldiers. It is therefore unrealistic to assume that the

psychological trauma experienced by writers not normally associated with the war genre should fail to find expression somewhere in their work.

Discussing the impact of war upon American literature, Jeffrey Walsh has noted that "the apprehension of war constitutes a distinctive and central element in the modern American literary consciousness."[12] The First World War, especially, produced "a collective trauma such as the world had never known."[13] For many writers of the era the experience of war radically shattered the conviction that battle was a noble enterprise. These writers repudiated the idealistic notion that there was anything romantic to be found in battle, which they knew to be a dehumanizing and meaningless carnage, and completely rejected the idea that death in combat was a worthwhile sacrifice. Those who wrote of their experiences, including many members of the renowned Lost Generation such as Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos and William Faulkner, composed graphically realistic accounts that fumed with the horrific reality of warfare and its consequences. For those who had volunteered in search of a romantic adventure and heroism, the reality of combat quickly proved to be a shocking experience, and their view of war became one of "accidental, meaningless, [and] purely gratuitous death."[14] As Aichinger argued, "The sensation of being trapped by a huge and ruthless machine… [became] particularly horrifying to a generation that went to war as they might have gone to a picnic."[15] Stanley Cooperman asserts that, "A combination of horror, dehumanization, numbness, and absurdity is the heritage that World War I novelists brought back from their broken world of combat and military glory."[16] Combined with this was the belief that the,

> …total violence, machine civilization, futile terror, and mass death could not be…simply accepted. The impact of World War I was unparalleled; it shattered a cultural universe and in the United States shaped the literature of a generation.[17]

It was therefore, "the Great Crusade which gave to American literature an art not simply "influenced" by war, but in a vital sense created by it."[18]

It was in this context that writers such as Chandler, who witnessed the carnage of the Western Front, began arguing against the traditional form of the British detective novel. The strong literary bond that had previously linked American intellectuals and their counterparts in the Old World, symbolized by their common values and aspirations, became increasingly untenable in the post-war environment. The war had irreversibly changed America, and similarly, American crime writers began to question the traditional 'rules' of their genre, which had been established by British writers at the turn of the century. Arguing that the English mode of crime story was "too contrived" and represented what he referred to as a monotonous "Cheesecake manor"[19] style of fiction, Raymond Chandler argued that "The English may not always be the best writers in the world, but they are incomparably the best dull writers."[20] As the British clung to the familiarity of the form in the turmoil of the post-war era, American authors mounted a challenge that resulted in a decisive split from the traditional style, which no longer adequately reflected an increasingly turbulent American society. As Chandler concluded in 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1944), "American crime fiction was made up out of real things. The only reality in the English detection writers knew was the conversational accent of Surbiton and Bognor Regis."[21]

The most significant effect of the First World War upon American literature is that "we are made to feel, behind the appetite for the physical world, the tragedy or the falsity of the moral relation."[22] The sense of isolation prevalent amongst the Lost Generation, who saw the war as "a soul-shattering absurdity beyond the comprehension or control of the human intellect"[23] is similarly present among the work of the era's hard-boiled writers. It is the "psychic emasculation inherent in the combat environment itself,"[24] which led to a sense of violation on the part of the writer, and which had significant results for the crime genre as a whole. It is this post-war disillusionment and social insensitivity that provides the link between the combat-related trauma of the war genre and the crime fiction genre. Both portray 'lost' individuals in a society that

cannot acknowledge the horrific consequences of warfare and the enormity of individual sacrifice. After war, many returning veterans, frustrated by society's reaction to them, referred bitterly to World War One as "The Great Unmentionable."[25] In such a society, hard-boiled protagonists such as Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe feel 'lost' and confused as they try to come to terms with the fact that they has been left behind.

LeRoy Lad Panek has argued that the work of early crime writers was not greatly influenced by wartime events: "their experience as soldiers and the ghastly, beastly carnage in the Great War in Europe never directly enter[ed] the fiction of old writers."[26] In light of contemporary studies into war's impact it is now apparent that characters in early 20th century literature would not have made their trauma known, which contrasts wildly to the overly traumatized literature of the post-Vietnam era. As evidence of this we need only consider Chandler's work, whose protagonist Philip Marlowe can be reconfigured as a veteran of the Great War if we take into account the impact of the war upon the author himself. While Marlowe is traditionally considered as a knight and his personal sense of justice and code of honor linked with the mythic and romantic qualities of *Le Mort D'Arthur* they also suggest a far more realistic warrior mentality. Aichinger argues that this was a common theme in the years following the First World War when novels "equate[d] the possibility of romantic love with heroism on the battlefield – of modern-day knight errantry."[27] Therefore Chandler's work can be reconfigured as a literature of traumatic war experience if we consider Marlowe as a veteran who has been robbed of any recognition of 'self' in exactly the same way as he had been robbed of his individuality while a cog in the nation's war machine. The detective cannot accept that his sacrifices and hardships have been for nothing and must find a worthy cause to redeem himself and to restore a sense of purpose and meaning to his life.

Observing the impact of the First World War upon American literature in general is important because many writers at the time were uncomfortable with outwardly displaying their

trauma. While many in the Lost Generation discussed the general air of discontent surrounding the war, and others wrote novels about the war itself, many did not recognize the lasting psychological effects that would significantly alter the tone, style and characterization of their work. Additionally, the Jazz Age heralded a society wished to forget the war; there was little inclination to acknowledge the considerable impact the war had had, especially with regards to its returning soldiers. The ideals for which the war was fought were dampened by society's progress and modernization, and the reintegration of returning veterans took a back seat to the advancement of American society. As one returning veteran of the war wrote,

> I know how we all cried to get back to the States.... But now that we are here, I must admit for myself at least that I am lost and somehow strangely lonesome. These our own United States are truly artificial and bare. There is no romance or color here, nothing to suffer for and laugh at.[28]

Society did not want to read about the tribulations of soldiers and their increasing difficulties upon their return, which meant that many writers used their fiction as a means of cathartically expressing their emotions, successfully tapping into the general air of literary discontent during the inter-war period. Upon returning to America, therefore, many veterans were confronted with a society that, while celebrating the so-called 'victorious' end of the war, still considered it an event that had taken place 'over there,' choosing to look forward instead of dwell on the war's aftermath. Returning veterans were faced with a society that was almost unrecognizable from the one they had left behind. Unemployment, inflation, strikes, the changed status of women in society, and for some, racism and prejudice proved to be shifts that unbalanced their reintegration and distressed them further. As we see from the later cinematic style of film noir, American society had little appetite for representations of disenchanted veterans, war trauma, and bitterness; instead mystery, crime, cynicism, wit, and sexual motivations were the popular choice. Yet like film noir, hard-boiled fiction and war noir literature in particular focuses upon

the diminished masculinity of the male protagonist, women of questionable virtue, and the dark side of human nature. War is the subliminal psychological crisis troubling film noir, much like its literary counterpart.

The shocking combination of total war combined with a distressing homecoming created a literary climate unlike any other post-war era. The post-First World War generation produced a unique body of work that is unlike the literature of any other war, and vastly different from that of the post-World War Two era. Because it is almost impossible to class the latter as a 'failure', there was little of the direct and intense anger that pervaded the writing of the post-World War One generation. Not until the Vietnam War would American literature produce a higher level of anger and frustration towards society and the government. This social and cultural jarring is seen most noticeably in the literature of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dos Passos and other the *Lost Generation* writers; writers who were trying to come to terms with the implications of modernity and the seemingly uncaring, frivolous society they encountered in post-war America. This returning 'lost' generation, as F. Scott Fitzgerald's character Amory Blaine noted in *This Side of Paradise*, spoke for American youth: "Here was a new generation… grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken."[29] These returning soldiers were men who

> ...struggled to define the relationship between their craft, their lives, and their place in society in the aftermath of the Great War... They were disillusioned by the savagery of the war and the failure of peacemaking; they rebelled against the moral provincialism and boorishness of their own middle-class upbringing; they distrusted the institutions of mature capitalism and the nation's dominant commercial culture.[30]

Judith Lewis Herman asserts that while the normal response to atrocities such as war is to "banish them from consciousness," quite often these horrors "refuse to be buried" and in time "the story of the traumatic events surface not as verbal narrative but as a symptom."[31]

In this context it is entirely possible to locate Raymond Chandler, the founding father of the American hard-boiled novel, amongst the influential writers of the inter-war years. While Dashiell Hammett is generally identified as the originator of the style, Chandler propelled crime fiction further than his predecessor by linking his work to the inner turmoil depicted so vividly by the 'Lost Generation.' Chandler's position as the archetype of the style is based upon what we know about the author and the genre; firstly, Chandler participated as an infantryman during the final years of the Great War and as such was exposed to the brutality of combat first-hand. And secondly, although Hammett created works demonstrating literary brilliance Hammett viewed his writing with cynicism, using his work to provide him solely with a livelihood. As Hammett's friend Nunally Johnson wrote in 1961, "once he had made his pile, that was all there was to it."[32]

Chandler's writing, therefore, reads more like a literature of traumatic experience if we take into consideration his personal experiences of war. Chandler's novels embody Ross Macdonald's sentiment that, "a novelist lives through his characters."[33] What is conspicuous in Chandler's work is the extent to which his characters are troubled by the symptoms of his own personal trauma. Each of Chandler's thirty-one short stories and seven novels, extolling chivalric values and valiant chivalric codes, include individuals that despite their fearlessness and courage exhibit undeniable symptoms of traumatic psychological injury. In Philip Marlowe, Chandler created a fictional character that became a vehicle for his emotions and that he could relate to. By writing, Chandler incorporated his own psychological symptoms into an enigmatic character that has captivated the minds of readers and critics for decades.

Philip Marlowe's behavioral traits clearly identify the character as a veteran because they fall into the three distinct classifications of post-traumatic symptoms: intrusion, hyperarousal, and constriction. Intrusion, generally considered the most disturbing and intrusive of the categories, occurs when a single traumatic moment creates a permanent imprint on the sufferer's mind, which Abram Kardiner described as a 'fixation on the trauma.'[34] While many of these

traumatic symptoms more notably occur in Vietnam-era crime fiction, symptoms of intrusion certainly appear in Chandler's work. Long after an event has passed, a sufferer will re-live the original event as though it is happening in the present. This symptom is exposed in Marlowe's own experience at the conclusion of *The Big Sleep* when he suffers what he calls "waves of false memory." Consistent with the symptoms of intrusion, Marlowe describes these false memories as having the feeling of being "real, like something actually happening, and for the first time."[35]

A person suffering intrusion experiences what Herman calls an 'indelible image'[36] where one particular set of memories crystallizes a traumatizing experience. These visions may continually interrupt the sufferer's life, and "the intense focus on fragmentary sensation, an image without context, gives the traumatic memory a heightened reality."[37] Scenes from Chandler's novels unquestionably resemble these symptoms, for example, in a scene reminiscent of the wartime condition trench foot, Marlowe states in *Farewell, My Lovely*, "I took off my shoes and walked around in my socks feeling the floor with my toes. They would still get numb again once in a while."[38] Marlowe's comment here resonates with the condition trench foot, an uncomfortable and painful condition caused by prolonged exposure to damp, cold conditions allied to poor environmental hygiene. When treated correctly, however, complete recovery was normal, though it often left sufferers prone to further bouts during cold or wet conditions. The phrasing suggests that Marlowe's affliction has a specific cause, and more importantly his emphasis on the word "still" suggests that it is an ongoing condition caused by a past event.

The regular violent assaults Marlowe suffers are also evidence of the indelible image concept. Chandler did not suffer a concussion or blow to the head during the war, it is likely that this brutal imagery is instead representative of a sensory response to his wartime experience, which is plausible if we consider Bessel van der Kolk's assertion that the senses are extremely fine-tuned to capturing traumatic events. Contending that under severe stress the central nervous system reverts to capturing memories in a primitive sensory of symbolic form, he argues that

while these forms of memory can be difficult to retrieve, "they can be reactivated by affective, auditory, or visual cues."[39] For Chandler, his experiences on the front line could have been sufficiently traumatic to encode the disturbing events in the form of vivid sensory sensations and images that were later projected into his stories.

By reliving his psychology through Philip Marlowe, Chandler may have been unconsciously attempting to recreate his battles in the city of Los Angeles, a 'safer' front line. The city therefore becomes a more controlled environment by which to cope with his traumatizing experiences without reliving the actual horror of the original event. For Chandler, Marlowe was the soldier in the city. However, by revisiting a traumatic event, although adaptive, it may also entail high emotional intensity. As well as creating a sense of stability for himself through his work, Chandler continued a compulsive pattern of indelible images that, like other veteran writers, would be prominent in his work until the end of his life.

A further symptom of PTSD and the second major categorization of the condition is hyperarousal, or the anxiety caused by a persistent expectation of danger. After a traumatic event, the entire system of self-preservation can go onto permanent alert, making it almost impossible for the sufferer to feel relaxed in social situations or surroundings that would normally be considered 'safe.' It is, "as if the danger might return at any moment."[40] This chronic psychological arousal often means "the traumatised person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, and sleeps poorly."[41] In combat situations soldiers often unconsciously activate a survival instinct that causes the "mobilisation of mind and body for danger, the vigilant sharpening of the senses, the tense readiness to kill an attacker."[42] A soldier must rely upon basic instinct and alertness to stay alive, and in Chandler's mind the same was true for his detective once he had returned home to the streets of Los Angeles.

Symptoms of hyperarousal are reflected prominently in the novels through Marlowe's instinctive reaction to danger and to the unknown. He often appears abnormally alert, and

unnaturally aware of his surroundings, using highly descriptive imagery to heighten the tension and encourage the reader to identify with his apprehension. Marlowe's exaggerated alertness also surfaces in *The High Window,* where the detective is even unnerved by the sound of the telephone:

> The ringing bell had a sinister sound, *for no reason of itself, but because of the ears to which it rang*. I stood there braced and tense, lips tightly drawn back in a half grin. Beyond the closed window the neon lights glowed. The dead air didn't move. Outside the corridor was still. The bell rang in the darkness, steady and strong.[43]

Marlowe experiences similar unease in *The Little Sister* where, confronting the disgraced Dr. Lagardie, the nervous detective says, "I'm just talking… Waiting for something to happen. Something's going to happen in this house. It's leering at me from corners."[44]

Marlowe's symptoms resonate with those that psychiatrists observed in veterans after World War One. These included "startle reactions, hyperalertness, vigilance for the return of danger, nightmares, and psychosomatic complaints," all of which "could be understood as resulting from chronic arousal of the autonomic nervous system."[45] In *The Long Goodbye*, for example, Marlowe illustrates that he is no stranger to these disturbing traits, explaining:

> Why do I go into such detail? Because the charged atmosphere made everything little stand out as a performance, a movement distinct and vastly important. It was one of those hypersensitive moments, when all your automatic movements, however long established, however habitual, became separate acts of will. You are like a man learning to walk after polio. You take nothing for granted.[46]

Marlowe is certainly troubled and disillusioned, and his responses suggest a traumatic suffering that resonates strongly with him being a veteran of war.

Constriction is the most obvious of the symptoms which suggests trauma in the crime genre as it identifies the sufferers need to numb themselves against the real world. Herman argues that this symptom denotes an alteration in a victim's awareness and a numbing response

to surrender where a sufferer "escapes from [their] situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering [their] state of consciousness."[47] In situations of danger, unexpected emotions accompanied by terror and rage, or conversely, detached calm can be provoked. Alterations in perception can combine with feelings of indifference, detachment, and passivity, and are viewed as a barrier against the 'pain' of trauma.[48] So while the symptoms of intrusion and hyperarousal require the absorption of traumatic stimuli through "heightened perceptions" and "hypnotic absorption," constriction is the dissociation from those stimuli which subsequently encourages a sustained emotional "numbing" or "hypnotic dissociation."[49] These fluctuating emotions are the symptoms most commonly associated with PTSD and are the most commonly observed in the hard-boiled style.

Although the biological reason for this altered consciousness is unknown, Ernest Hilgard believes the brain "may be acting in a manner parallel to morphine."[50] The constructive process helps to keep intrusive memories out of the normal range of consciousness, allowing only minor, less painful details of the original memory to emerge. Jonathan Shay argues that when the senses are "stuck in the on position and [this] persists into civilian life, the veteran may embark on a frenzied search for calm."[51] Therefore, veterans may attempt to achieve this calming state with the aid of alcohol or narcotics. Once back in civilian life, a soldier cannot simply 'switch off,' and will continue to rely on these agents for relief as a means of controlling their intrusive and hyper-aroused symptoms such as insomnia, nightmares, irritability and rage.

Many of these are symptoms similarly suffered by detectives who sought to emulate Chandler in the hard-boiled genre, and it can be hypothesized that they drew upon his disillusioned and troubled characterization of Marlowe in order to frame their own versions of the war veteran detective. Robert B. Parker especially utilized Marlowe's characterization and Chandler's eye for detail when he devised his detective Spenser, a veteran of the 'forgotten' Korean War like his creator. And the inventor of Lew Archer, Ross Macdonald, undoubtedly

made use of his experiences during the Pacific campaign between 1944-46 when a member of the U.S. Navy. Macdonald's work significantly represents a more obvious departure from the traditional style of Hammett and Chandler, because of the obvious and in-depth depiction of psychology. As Tom Nolan notes:

> [Macdonald] swapped the hard-boiled trappings for more subjective themes: personal identity, the family secret, the family scapegoat, the childhood trauma; how men and women need and battle each other, how the buried past rises like a skeleton to confront the present. He brought the tragic drama of Freud… to detective stories, and his prose flashed with poetic imagery.[52]

Macdonald's wok suggests a need to comprehend individual identity. Yet it also reveals the internal battles that take place in order to understand one's location in relation to human relationships and traumatic memories of the past.

In a similar manner to Macdonald, the work of James Crumley also marks a significant shift in the structure of the genre during the 1970s, representative of an era in which the central 'crime' committed became 'war' itself. Writing at a time when crime fiction was suffering a decline in popularity, Crumley focused his attention upon the explicit veteran characterization of his detective, corporate greed, and blistering wartime anger. In this era of 'awakening' for the hard-boiled genre, many post-Vietnam works confronted the traumatizing effects of the Vietnam War head-on by employing detectives openly characterized as Vietnam veterans in order to reveal the disillusionment and frustrations concerning the legality of the war and the subsequent treatment of American veterans. James Crumley, James Lee Burke, and to some extent Newton Thornburg, employ characters who are private investigators or characters attempting to unravel mysteries. These writers in particular expose a society ignorant of individual trauma and direct their anger towards a government that abandoned its soldiers upon their return from combat. Crumley, especially, incorporates a brutally explicit level of violence and seething underlying anger, in addition to a distinctive aggressive articulation of language which is a marked departure from the earlier works of Raymond Chandler.

Along with Newton Thornburg who brought his own version of hard-boiled to the table in his 1976 novel *Cutter and Bone*, Crumley's hard-boiled and war-traumatized protagonists, combined with the unforgiving social environment, produced a unique convergence of the war (or post-war) story and the crime novel. Although crime fiction has, on a basic level, been connected to war, the post-Vietnam style of hard-boiled writing absorbed the anger, discontent, and brutality of both genres to a far greater and far more explicit degree. These raw feelings and actions were unmistakably directed towards two key areas to a level previously unseen in the genre: an unsympathetic society, and a corrupt state. By doing so, hard-boiled crime fiction revealed the utter despair of it characters. Disillusionment and anguish stemming from the war is explicitly represented in many post-Vietnam crime fiction in the way that detectives (and by implication, authors) highlight the nation's hypocrisy and the state's corruption. Consequently, the era's hard-boiled novels represent a brutal and progressively realistic representation of the American social landscape depicted through the eyes of traumatized war-veteran detectives.

Associating himself with Chandler's earlier fiction, Crumley located his detective series in Montana and later Texas. He said: "We cover some of the same ground, his dark streets in LA, my twisted highways in the mountain west. But because of the events surrounding the Vietnam War, my detectives are not as comfortable with traditional morality as Philip Marlowe seems to be."[53] Crumley's novels paint a harsh portrait of American society in the wake of Vietnam: his private eyes Milton "Milo" Milodragovich and C.W. Sughrue trawl a lawless frontier where the authorities are either corrupt or drowning in unsolved crimes. It is a society where, as Milo notes, "divorce, suicide and alcoholism rates... embarrass[...] the national average," and kids "had begun to kill themselves with pills, speed and needles."[54] Crumley describes a government that does not care for its citizens, is overrun with crime, ignores the pleas of its veterans, and is rotten to the core; every character we meet is either a 'wino', a drug addict, a war veteran, or a dubious authority figure.

An aspect of post-Vietnam fiction that is significant is the explicit characterization of the detective as a veteran of war. Although the earlier fiction of Mickey Spillane depicted his protagonist Mike Hammer as a veteran of the Battle of Guadalcanal and a former U.S. Marine, the war veteran characterization of the detective would become far more significant after the socially damaging consequences of Vietnam. By the 1970s the impact of the war began to blur the generic boundaries, creating a form of writing that holds an important position in American literary history. The quagmire of Vietnam, escalated between 1963 and 1969, with the deployment of U.S. ground troops in 1965, began to draw attention to the concept of 'crime' itself. Consequently, writers angered and confused by media images of the war in Indochina began depicting more explicit representations of 'crime' as well as more overt depictions of war-traumatized protagonists. Newton Thornburg's protagonist Alex Cutter similarly demonstrates the disillusioned and deeply troubled characters emerging during the 1970s.

Both war and social reaction are crucial and influential aspects of Crumley's novels and both of his detectives Milo and Sughrue suffer the catastrophic effect of witnessing and participating in traumatic acts during their time in combat; Milo in Korea and Sughrue in Vietnam. As Philip D. Biedler notes:

> "the best writing about Vietnam…[has] a commitment on the one hand to an unstinting concreteness – a feel for the way an experience actually seizes upon us, seizes all at once as a thing of the senses, of the emotions, of the intellect, of the spirit – and on the other a distinct awareness of engagement in a primary process of sense-making, of discovering the peculiar ways in which the experience of the war can now be made to signify within the larger evolution of culture as a whole."[55]

Although writing upon Vietnam literature in general, Biedler raises an important point here that connects to post-Vietnam crime fiction. The troubling events that many of the era's detectives witnessed in war have given a concrete 'feel' to the way the style incorporates war and the hard-boiled genre, in addition to educating the reader to the importance of the events within American culture generally. Drug addiction, alcohol dependency, nightmares, and flashbacks haunt the

post-Vietnam detectives. Confronting head-on the traumatizing effects of combat, Demonstrating Biedler's argument further, Crumley uses his war-veteran protagonists to develop the hard-boiled style by making war the central aspect of the character's lives, and thereby driving the plots. Despite his detective series spanning 30 years, from his first detective novel *The Wrong Case* in 1975 to his last novel *The Right Madness* in 2005, the social and psychological impact of the Vietnam War is always what drives the Milo and Sughrue series. The war is detailed in every novel, and over time Vietnam becomes not simply a 'place'. It instead adopts a 'meaning' that thirty years worth of trauma and disillusionment has given it.

Crumley's first venture into writing, the war novel *One to Count Cadence* (1969) laid a solid groundwork for the reconfiguration of the form of crime fiction and its themes. Set between the Philippines and Vietnam, the novel bears a far greater resemblance to Vietnam literature than to crime fiction. Yet, there is certainly a darkness to *One to Count Cadence* that bridges past war novels by the likes of Normal Mailer and Joseph Heller, with Vietnam chroniclers such as Michael Herr, and later crime fiction writers such as James Lee Burke. The manipulation of the truth by those in charge of the war, combined with the inability of soldiers to understand their place within the conflict, results in a dark and paranoid text about the early years of the Vietnam War. Consequently, Crumley is worthy of consideration *alongside* the likes of Herr and other chroniclers because they all similarly write about criminal activities. Taking the war as the ultimate in state sponsored 'criminal activity' these writers, as Haut says, "gravitated towards a form – be it memoir or its fictional variant – on which they could overlay their disordered experiences."[56] Crumley's work therefore represents a backlash against the state in the wake of Vietnam, and he used the crime genre in the 1970s to formulate a crime literature that takes its place alongside the war novels and chronicles of the time. Forcefully incorporating war-traumatized protagonists into the disillusionment of the post-war era, Crumley's detectives

cannot escape their war experiences. As Sughrue states on one occasion, "I was supposed to have come home from the war years ago. But sometimes it follows you home like a bad dog."[57]

Just as Crumley utilized the war in Vietnam as the major 'criminal' inspiration for his novels, James Lee Burke has successfully tapped into the 'war brought home' style of hard-boiled fiction in his Dave Robicheaux series. Despite writing his fiction almost a decade after the Vietnam War ended, Burke's novels display another significant example of the war veteran detective, and draw upon the impact of war trauma once soldiers are returned home. Explicit in the Robicheaux series, much like Crumley's novels, is the extent to which alcohol and narcotics play a role. The detective's appreciation of alcohol is nothing new to the genre, Chandler's Philip Marlowe, for example, kept a bottle of whiskey in his office and regularly admitted to "bang[ing] myself to sleep with a bottle"[58] believing that alcohol "is like a peak into a cleaner, sunnier, brighter world."[59] However, the detectives' addiction to alcohol is not a simple past-time. Instead, a predilection for alcohol or narcotics among soldiers can often lead to a severe dependency once removed from the combat environment, thereby crossing into the realm of the 'war brought home' theme. Judith Lewis Herman notes that the soldier "escapes from… [their] situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering… [their] state of consciousness."[60] This they do by using alcohol "to obliterate their growing sense of helplessness and terror."[61]

War has had a profound effect upon detective fiction, and the novels that emerged after the Vietnam War especially were, as Woody Haut notes, "so authentic as to reinterpret the national narrative."[62] Crumley's work represents a significant, but rarely studied, example of war's traumatic influence upon crime fiction. Crumley developed a brutal representation of not only the traumatizing effects of warfare but also the impact of society's rejection of the veteran and the veteran's rejection of the state. In this manner he was instrumental in elevating the crime genre to a whole new level of authenticity and brutality which allowed for the open expression of dissatisfaction, anger, and trauma.

Accurately summing up the 'feel' of Crumley's work, Haut described how, emerging from the turbulence of the 1960s hard-boiled writers

> …would be deeply affected by the Vietnam War and the political atmosphere surrounding it. Dividing the nation, the war instilled an atmosphere of paranoia, a condition exacerbated by government secrecy, inflexible policies, and the effect of drugs on the political consciousness of numerous dissidents.[63]

It is an era where law enforcement are called "turkeys,"[64] and the FBI stands for, in Sughrue's words, "Fucking Bureaucratic Idiots."[65] The "Vietnam War Games,"[66] as the detective describes it, means that "People like us... never get to be civilians."[67] Recounting tales of society's rejection, of being called 'baby killers,' the level of cynicism and disillusionment is palpable. As Sughrue ponders:

> ...I wondered what had happened to that teenager who couldn't wait to get to war, who had raised his hand to swear allegiance to country and Constitution and commander-in-chief. I also wondered what had happened to said country, Constitution, and president that had left the sullied and aged remains of that teenager feeling as if he possessed some of the last bits of moral integrity in this troubled world.[68]

In the post-Vietnam period, therefore, Crumley's work is a hard-boiled style born of war, trauma, and criminal activity - a hard-boiled 'war noir'.

Although not technically crime fiction in the traditional sense, Newton Thornburg's 1976 novel *Cutter and Bone* similarly displays many of the features that identify his work as 'war noir' - a style where, the protagonist is just as likely to commit suicide as he is homicide. Thornburg's Alex Cutter says in the novel: "Lately I been thinking of killing myself, Rich. You got any advice?" When asked "why" by his friend Richard Bone, Cutter responds:

> "I don't know. It's not the goddamn eye, or the arm and the leg – some list, huh? They don't help, Christ knows. But they're not it, not the real problem. No, that's in here," he said, tapping his head. "And I can't fix it. Can't change it.[69]

Along with Crumley's detective novels, George Pelecanos argued that "Newton Thornburg's *Cutter and Bone* seemed to challenge the very foundation of the traditional crime novel when it was first published in 1976."[70] By incorporating the obvious signs of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, Thornburg similarly manages to capture the disillusionment of the era and once again the trauma suffered by Vietnam veteran Cutter is explicitly recounted. Noting that Cutter "lived constantly at the edge of rage,"[71] Bone (who is not a veteran) is aware of his friend's daily struggle. Recounting how "everyone did his little part" in the atrocities that were committed in Vietnam, Cutter explains how as a consequence of his experiences: "I get out of bed every day like it was Armageddon."[72] No longer does he feel his former patriotism, instead he says simply: "I hate America."[73]

Both Crumley and Thornburg created imperfect and paranoid characters traumatized by the government's ambiguous war and corrupt politics. As Sughrue scornfully states in Crumley's 1993 novel *The Mexican Tree Duck*:

> Thanks to the vested unfairness of the Selective Service Act, [and] ...because the American military and political establishment used the war for their own benefit, then manifestly displayed all the meretricious mendacity of a Mafia don or a Hollywood whore, a huge number of kids ended up on the bush who should never have been allowed to leave their hometowns.[74]

Referring to those in charge of the war as "white devils," Sughrue fumes that "they were too often blessed with equal parts of greed for "career development and simple stupidity."[75] Like Milo and Sughrue, Cutter's attitude towards representatives of the state is just as bitter and his articulation is just as angry and violent. When asked to justify his certainty in J.J Wolfe's guilt, Cutter's response is once again explicit and full of anger:

> I don't like this motherfucker Wolfe and all the motherfuckers like him, all the movers and shakers of this world, kiddo, because I saw them too many times, and I saw the people they moved and shook. I saw the soft white motherfuckers in their civvies and flak jackets come slicking in from Long Binh to look us over out in the boonies, see that everything was going sweet and smooth, the killing and the cutting and the sewing up, and then they'd grunt and fart and squeeze their way back into their choppers and slick on back to Washington or Wall Street… and say on with the show, America, a few more bombs will do it, a few more arms and legs... one fact was always the same, *is* always the same – it's never their ass they lay on the line, man, never theirs, but ours, *mine*.[76]

Like Crumley's detectives Milo and Sughrue, Thornburg's Cutter and Bone are not wise-cracking know-it-alls in the traditional crime fiction mould. Instead they are psychologically scarred individuals of a morally ambiguous world who realize that people are capable of perpetrating any and every sin. Crime fiction after the Vietnam War sought to confront personal traumas head-on. With the aftermath of the war in Southeast Asia such traumatic characterization was made openly symbolic of the discontent and psychological trauma that war could inflict upon the individual and society. Cynicism and anger towards the government is especially noticeable. As Sughrue cynically states in Crumley's *The Mexican Tree Duck* (1993): "Money counts with bureaucrats. When Dan Rather makes more money than the President, who the fuck's really in charge?"[77]

Recognizing the traumatic consequences of warfare, crime writers during and after Vietnam no longer felt compelled to keep trauma hidden and managed to successfully articulate their anger and resentment. Personal expression played a significant role in the development of a style that became ultimately a backlash against the state. This resentment is perfectly summed up by the very last words of *The Mexican Tree Duck*. Giving Milo a loan to buy a bar, Milo asks Sughrue "How am I going to explain to the government where this money came from?" To which Sughrue calmly states "Fucking lie about it... They don't mind lying to you." By articulating traumatic suffering and resentment towards the state, Crumley reaches a new level of authenticity in the crime genre in which the protagonist's psychological trauma is crucial.

Crumley's portrayal of flawed protagonists portrays the emotional complexity at the heart of contemporary society and also 'war noir'.

While the early pioneers of the crime genre created a style of writing in which acts of violence came to symbolize the ugliness of society and frustration towards a corrupt state, Crumley takes this brutal reconstruction of physical violence and depravity to a far higher level. The key difference in hard-boiled fiction after Vietnam is the explicit and savage 'articulation of violence' as well as the 'violence of articulation'. The language is harsh, gritty, and full of expletives that significantly alter the tone and texture of the hard-boiled novel, marking a significant departure from earlier styles of crime fiction and demonstrating once again the evolution of the hard-boiled style as a consequence of war.

The detectives of Crumley, Thornburg, Burke and many other writes of the era are imperfect, flawed, hostile, and aggressive, but they are also attempting to cope with individual traumatizing experiences that cultivated in them an unashamed pragmatism and that fashioned their distinctive sense of reason and justice. Their alienation stems from a fundamental incompatibility between their moral ideals and the chaotic reality of the world they live in.

Although war's impact upon American culture has been commonly recognized, it is the impact upon the individual that is important to understanding how war has significantly altered the form of hard-boiled fiction. With combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder only becoming officially recognized in 1980 this reconfiguration of the hard-boiled style and characterization allows us to consider characters who, as Andrew Pepper noted, "can*not* simply brush off his or her 'few scratches' and unproblematically retain his or her 'self-esteem, popularity and respect.'"[78] However, it is inaccurate to suggest that war noir as a style originated as a response to the Vietnam War. Many of the era's greatest crime novelists and critics give credit to an earlier school of writers, and Chandler in particular. In the years since Chandler's death several writers have attempted to emulate Chandler's work and style, picking up on

various subliminal indicators that have hinted at something more complex than simply Philip Marlowe's chivalric code and sense of honor. With the resurgence of interest in the crime genre in the 1970s, writers since Vietnam have bypassed the traditional perceptions of Chandler's protagonist in favor of a multifaceted interpretation of Marlowe as something more than simply a knight.

The key difference with hard-boiled fiction, especially in the post-Vietnam era, is the extent to which the protagonists *recognize* that war is the underlying factor affecting their ability to function socially and emotionally. As Chandler himself noted, the psychological foundation for the popularity of the murder and crime novel was a topic that had never been fully considered. In 1943 he hypothesized that,

> There is a lot more to this subject than most people realize… it is just possible that the tensions in a novel of murder are the simplest and yet most complete pattern of the tensions in which we live in this generation.[79]

In this respect Crumley made one of the most significant revisions of crime fiction by notably transforming and furthering the genre in the post-Vietnam era. In doing so he created a hard-boiled noir style deeply entrenched in war and which significantly blurs the boundaries between two popular and complementary genres.

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