

TARNISHED HEROES: FACES OF WAR IN AMERICAN FICTION

M İkbâl M Alosman*

Abstract

Phil Klay is one of many American war veterans to mould their war experience into works of literature. In his first story collection, *Redeployment* (first published in 2014), Klay employs first person narrators with diverse backgrounds and occupations to provide multifaceted perspectives and insights into war. This study examines service members in these stories within the context of the 2001 War in Afghanistan and 2003 War in Iraq and their behaviour in terms of heroism/post-heroism. Post-heroism declares the decline of heroic mindset in present wars since soldiers are less concerned with the grandeur of achievements and more obsessed with their own survival. This paper investigates two aspects of the collection's representation of war, specifically, soldiers' emotional and psychological interaction with lethal experiences in and after war in addition to impetus behind soldiers' involvement in the military. Even though Klay's stories are abundant with combat scenes, characters are preoccupied with the appalling reality of war rather than grandeur of valour. War is framed within conflicting sensitivities and motivations through twelve narrators which reflect a rather gloomy perspective.

Keywords: Iraq, Phil Klay, Post-heroism, War fiction

INTRODUCTION

Phil Klay is a Marine Corps veteran who served in Iraq as a public-affairs officer between 2007 and 2008. He is among many American veterans whose experience in the military inspired their literary works. What is unique about Klay's collection is his shrewd approach to war through diverse narrators who delve into different aspects and perspectives of their experiences in the battlefield. *Redeployment* received positive acclaim from a wide spectrum of reviewers and won the 2014 National Book Award among many other awards. George Packer (2014) describes it as “[t]he best literary work thus far written by a veteran of America's recent wars [. . .], a masterly collection” (para. 18), while Ben Fountain (2014) recommends *Redeployment* for those who want to know the real cost of war for soldiers; “These stories say it all, with an eloquence and rare humanity that will simultaneously break your heart and give you reasons to hope” (quoted in Anderson, 2014: 6). Klay's collection is “a must-read for anyone with the slightest interest in the actuality of the wars that have been fought in our names” (Docx, 2014: para. 9). It provides civilians with a visceral feeling for the distressing sense of the war as it is experienced by soldiers (Kakutani, 2014). In a review for *The New York*

Article Types / Makale Türü: Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Received / Makale Geliş Tarihi: 08.05.2020, Accepted / Kabul Tarihi: 16/09/2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26791/sarkiat.734104>

* Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Malaysia (UKM),
meqbal1980@yahoo.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3798-5347>

Times, Dexter Filkins (2014) contends that it is “the best thing written so far on what the war did to people’s souls” (para. 4). Klay’s book engrosses a large audience of reviewers and readers from diverse backgrounds and interests.

Even though Tyrell Mayfield (2016) and Roy Scranton (2015) find Klay’s treatment of soldiers as problematic, they depart from each other with regard to many perspectives. Mayfield is rather concerned that not every veteran of Iraq or Afghanistan returns dead or traumatized as represented in *Redeployment*. He claims that Klay degrades both American soldiers and locals in Iraq and Afghanistan, “the ones they were ostensibly sent to help” (3). Soldiers in Klay’s collection are acted upon as they do not have any agency over their surroundings; they are passively the victims of war (Mayfield, 2016). They are traumatized not only by their own experiences but also by combat stories they heard. On the other hand, Scranton (2015) is more concerned about Klay’s treatment of soldiers’ accountability for war wrongdoings. He argues that Klay reiterates what he calls ‘trauma hero,’ a tradition in war literature initiated through Wilfred Owen, Leo Tolstoy, Ernest Hemingway, Tim O’Brien to Kevin Power. He finds their approach to soldiers’ positions as the vulnerable victims of war problematic since that obliterates soldiers’ accountability for their transgressions in the battlefield, which contradicts Paul Petrovic (2018) claim that Klay’s stories are rather critical of American soldiers’ misconducts that are largely uninvestigated.

Klay’s collection is also pigeon-holed as anti-war work due to its exposition of the despicability of war. Ashley Kunsu (2017) is of the opinion that *Redeployment* asks the United States to listen to the ugly and cruel stories its soldiers tell to revise and evaluate their involvement in recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Klay records alternate routes for Arab, Coptic American, refusing to represent the Othered subject without an embodied context (Petrovic 2018). Zara, a civilian character in one of Klay’s stories, resists war and voices uncertainty regarding the politics that make Americans comfortable with military intervention in nations who do not take part in 9/11 attacks (Petrovic, 2018). The stories question the decision to wage war against Iraq and the responsibility for destruction resulted from such involvement. Klay’s work appears to instigate varied, sometimes contradictory, perspectives and interpretations which help advance our understanding of war, its circumstances and the lives of those involved and influenced by war.

In a world full of conflicting interests and ideologies, wars, as old as history itself, are the subject of incessant argument, especially with regard to their justifications, obligations and casualties. War heroes are also present in these discussions where present-day people are more worried about the lives of their offspring. In an influential article in the *Foreign Affairs*, American strategist, Edward Luttwak, popularized the term ‘post-heroic warfare’ in 1995. He contends that as western societies enter a post-heroic era, their citizens are reluctant to tolerate sacrifices in exchange for popular sovereignty (Scheipers, 2014). They are less enthusiastic about sacrifice in war while armed conflicts are to be replaced by bloodless geo-economic rivalries (Luttwak, 1995; Scheipers, 2014). In view of the shrinking number of children per family, parents are less willing to lose their offspring in war. Casualties are not celebrated as they used to be (Coker, 2002), loss of life becomes a waste and heroes turn out to be victims; “the extent to which the assumption of a “post-heroic condition” in western societies and their aversion to casualties in war has become accepted as common knowledge in policy circles and political commentary is striking” (Scheipers, 2014: 2). In his renowned essay, “The Moral Equivalent of War,” William James (1971-originally published

1910) writes that while military instincts are still robust, they are challenged by reflected criticisms which sorely curb their ancient freedom (James,1971). Rationale of war is probed as people are more acquainted with its appalling truths and heroism has lost the glamour it used to have in ancient times (James,1971; Ryan, 2014). The battlefield is not romanticized as it used to be, and soldiers are more worried about their survival and safe return to their homes.

As one of the renowned literary works on war in recent years, *Redeployment* presents the complexities of the War in Afghanistan and Iraq through twelve stories whose narrators belong to diverse backgrounds, civilians, militants, chaplains and contractors among others. This study investigates Klay's characters in the context of the 2001 War in Afghanistan and 2003 War in Iraq and how he approaches their endeavours and behaviour in terms of heroism/post-heroism. I investigate soldiers' behaviour in war in the twelve stories, "Redeployment," "Frago," "After Action Report," "Bodies," "Oif," "Money as a Weapons System," "In Vietnam They Had Whores," "Prayer in The Furnace," "Psychological Operations," "War Stories," "Unless It's a Sucking Chest Wound" and "Ten Kiks South," which are set in varied periods of time including pre-war, in-war and post-war experiences. This paper investigates two aspects of the collection's representation of war; In the first part, 'Dubious Heroes,' soldiers' emotional and psychological interaction with lethal experiences in and after war are illustrated within the post-heroic context. Then, the discussion elaborates on the impetus behind soldiers' involvement in the military in the second part, 'Motives of War.'

1. Dubious Heroes

When Jane Addams, a Nobel laureate, visited Europe after the outburst of hostilities of the First World War, she was appalled by what she saw (Ryan, 2014). Those who narrate wars were required to adorn all the unspeakable realities of war and turn them into more heroic and idealistic versions. Soldiers used to go to war with a certain belief in romantic visions of glory, courage, and sacrifice, longing to accomplish heroic deeds. However, such dreams evaporate as they only find horror and death in the battlefield (Scranton, 2015). Before their deployment in the battlefield, American soldiers, like most American people, imagine war as a romantic field of chivalry. However, when they are involved in combat, they are astounded as they live the brutal realities of war, suffer, and cause cruel and brutalizing violence to local people and land (Scranton, 2015). In "After Action Report," Mac, who is later killed by an Iraqi sniper, believes that as soon as people sign up for the army, they "have a taste" of "Satan's asshole" (Klay,2015: 36). Before joining the military and being directly involved in war, soldiers share the romantic view of military life with the public. However, taking part in combat changes soldiers' view of the military service drastically.

When soldiers are back home, they are burdened with conflicting feelings and uneasy reminiscences. They are not impressed for being labelled as heroes; "**WELCOME BACK HEROES OF BRAVO COMPANY**" (Klay's bold) (Klay, 2015: 7). They, "worn-out Marines" (7), are more preoccupied with the inconsistent memories they carried with them from the battlefield. They tend to spend more time in bars and become more indulged in drinking habits. In the fourth story, "Bodies," the narrator, a war veteran, is initially reluctant to tell any of his war stories. Nevertheless, once he is "drunk enough" (69), he tells a guy in the bar about the worst burn case they ever have in Mortuary Affairs. Though the man expresses his respect for what he has been through, the Marine retorts, "I don't want you to respect what I've been through [. . .] So don't

pretend like you care. Everybody wants to feel like they're some caring person" (71). Veterans become lost between inerasable recollections and detached present.

'Thank you for your service' is maybe one of the most recurrent clichés used to greet soldiers and show gratitude for their deployment, though many of them are not impressed, but rather furious by such phrases, such as Bartle, the main character in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*. In "Psychological Operations," Waguih, an American war veteran who served in the Psychological Operations in Iraq, is annoyed owing to the praise he receives for his service and "Thank You For Your Service handshakes" (Klay, 2015). Most of the emails he receives are pro-war and one of them even claims that Waguih is "going to write a new chapter in history" (205); however, he is angry. Thanking a veteran for his service implies that his war experience is something he wishes to claim fully and without reservation, something to be proud of, though soldiers may have complicated feelings regarding their time in the service, such as sorrow, horror, guilt, even something as understandable as ambivalence (Booth, 2019). Many veterans do not feel that their service is something to be proud of, but rather a burden to live with.

As soldiers are freshly deployed in combat zones, they have a thirst for heroic stories experienced by their colleagues to satisfy their romantic imagination of war. "After Action Report," exposes what some soldiers consider to be a story of heroism when it is merely the cruel story of killing a fourteen-year-old kid. The new false story is retold repeatedly to the soldiers who are curious to know about Ozzie's first kill, which only takes place in his imagination to cover up for his friend's, Timhead, murder of an Iraqi kid. He claims that the guy he killed is a "hajji [an Iraqi] with an AK [a rifle]" (35), even though he knows that the whole story is "bullshit" (35). He goes,

but every time I told the story, it felt better. *Like I owned it a little more*. When I told the story, everything was clear. [. . .] So when I thought back on it, there were the memories I had, and the stories I told, and they sort of sat together in my mind, the stories becoming stronger every time I retold them, feeling more and more true [Emphasis added] (35).

It might be argued that Ozzie's claim of murder is an act of heroism in order to unburden his colleague, Timhead, who is preoccupied with his act. Yet, the way Ozzie brags about the event and exaggerates the details is meant to produce a rather sarcastic effect and, hence, repudiate the heroic inference. He could have invented a more credible story that conceal the wrongdoing and sound less offensive to the act of murder of the kid, at the same time. The story exposes the manipulation of a horrible war crime into a fake heroic narrative to serve the interest of the listeners. It also functions as a rebuke of some aspects of heroism when crimes are turned into feats.

The hero is someone who endangers his/her life for a cause which has a common good of a higher order regardless of consequences; it is, therefore, irrational and counterproductive (James, 1971; Ryan, 2014). It is naïve: "its indifference to danger reflects a general lack of self-reflection, which explains its affinities with youth, innocence and spontaneity" (Ryan, 2014: 123). In "Unless It's A Sucking Chest Wound," after being attacked, Sergeant Deme rushes to help three wounded soldiers and runs into "the kill zone to rescue his guys [. . .] [w]ith bullets flying everywhere" (Klay, 2015: 244). He grabs Vockler, who is unconscious, pulls him to safety and when he runs back to help the other two, he gets immediately shot in the face. Even though the act is brave,

it's more accurate to say that Sergeant Deme died while trying unsuccessfully to save the lives of the other two Marines in Vockler's fire team than it is to say he died saving Vockler.

As an added bit of irony, Vockler might not have even died if Sergeant Deme had left him there. Unlike the other two Marines, who were bleeding out in an exposed position, Vockler was neither in any immediate danger nor in need of immediate medical care. An AK round had smacked into the top left side of his helmet, true, but it hadn't penetrated. The force of the glancing shot knocked Vockler out and sent him sprawling backward into a relatively safe position behind a marginal bit of cover in the trash-filled alley. So it's possible Deme could have left Vockler there (144).

After Vockler wakes from injury, he is told about Deme's sacrifice and death "in the most heroic way" for his sake which weighs on him heavily (144). Despite the fact that Sergeant Deme's act is brave and heroic, the circumstances around his act are crafted in a way to diminish the total effect of heroism and to add an ironic atmosphere, especially when the narrator suggests some other possible scenarios might have given better results. Klay also shows soldiers' uninformed belief about Deme's heroism at the expense of the truth which suggests that he could have done something much better to rescue the other injured soldiers whose injuries are more serious. The heavy burden of guilt felt by Vockler for Deme's unnecessary sacrifice adds a further diminishing effect to the heroic act and tarnishes its already pristine status.

The word 'hero' has a subjective meaning which serves people's own ends at the cost of truth. In "Ten Kliks South," after the Marines target with artillery a group of Iraqi insurgents, they are excited about the number of those killed (Klay, 2015). They calculate with excitement the number of casualties among Iraqis and every soldier's share in the total number. After calculations, they find that a soldier's share of killing is zero point seven; "That's like, a torso and a head. Or maybe a torso and a leg" (272), and everyone is overjoyed with the news of his first kill. A Marine is too excited to tell his wife, "what a hero I am" (276), and the other retorts, "[t]hat's what I tell my mom every day" (276). Killing is associated with soldiers' perception of heroism in many stories in *Redeployment*, however, Klay's choice to conclude with a such ridiculous argument about soldiers' share of killing in a relatively safe means of combat like the artillery is meant to ridicule the notion of heroism in a rather conclusive effect. It also tarnishes the very idea of heroism, as a supreme human attribute, when principally associated with murder.

The romantic image of the robust and fearless soldiers is also tainted as the stories delve into their psyches and expose their agonizing sufferings. Existing in extremely hazardous conditions strains soldiers' faculties and makes them more vulnerable for stress related complications. They are not totally in control, especially those who are under imminent threat for long periods of time. In the third story, "After Action Report," Ozzie, the narrator, describes their perilous situation as they move in a convoy in Iraq; "It's a crazy feeling when your heart rate is 150 miles per hour" (Klay, 2015: 39). In such circumstances, soldiers are "scared all the time [. . .] You're just an animal, doing what you've been trained to do. And then you go back to normal terror, and you go back to being a human, and you go back to thinking" (42,43). Soldiers are obliged to take various substances such as Ambien and some other drugs under such a level of stress to obtain sleep and suppress anxiety (Golub & Bennett, 2013). When one of the service members in the eighth story, "Prayer in The Furnace," Corporal Acosta, is under the influence of Ambien, he is "like being a little drunk. Maybe he'd taken something else, too" (Klay, 2015: 137). Soldiers rely on such medications in order to alleviate the

high levels of stress and anxiety to such a degree that some of them cannot sleep without such pills while some may even rely “on drugs” (137). Rodriguez, another soldier in the same unit, asks the chaplain mockingly, “How you think any of us sleep?” Under the influence of such medicines or/and drugs, some soldiers lose their senses. One of them “was actually burning and he was running around helping wounded kids and shit” without realizing that he is one fire (137). Even with the help of medicine, soldiers are still vulnerable as they become less aware of their circumstances and that jeopardises their own lives as well as the lives of those around.

Not only soldiers, officers in the Marines also suffer from stress related problems and use some substances to alleviate the symptoms. Beside the fact that Captain Boden, the company commander in “Prayer in The Furnace,” is a “lunatic” (140), he is said to be “an alcoholic as well. Possibly self-medication for PTSD. Boden’d been in Ramadi in 2004, and his unit held the record for most casualties in the division” (14-141). He has an “abnormal eye contact—aggressive staring and then quick, paranoid looks around the room. His affect was off, too, alternating between quiet periods of deep sadness and barely suppressed rage” (141). Even though they are far more experienced and have spent much longer time in the battlefield, officers, like soldiers, suffer from stress related symptoms and need medical intervention as well.

Most people do not want to hear the terrible truths about war from veterans and prefer to hear romanticised versions instead (Scranton, 2015). The battlefield in Klay’s work is not an idealized arena set for acts of chivalry, but rather a despicable and by no means comprehensible place for those who have not been there. Soldiers know how difficult it is to hear an explosion; “That could be one of my friends. And when I’m on a convoy, every time I see a pile of trash or rocks or dirt, I’m like, That could be me” (Klay, 2015: 45-46). In order to relieve some stress and anxiety some soldiers, though unreligious, resort to religion as means of treatment though the chaplain would confess that religion, “will not protect you. It will help your soul” (46). Soldiers are desperate to find any means to unburden their agonizing and traumatic state of mind. Like those in Powers’ *The Yellow birds*, service personnel are desperately concerned about their survival rather than any heroic endeavour

War for soldiers is a complicated, incomprehensible and intolerable place of eternal anguish where they feel desperate, helpless and not in control to the point that some of them try to leave for the US. It is “pointless” as they find themselves targeted endlessly and purposelessly (Klay, 2015:147). Rodriguez, a lance corporal Marine in “Prayer in The Furnace,” is desperate for a ticket out of Iraq to escape the horror of war; “It’s like, just keep going till you all die” (147). After two of his friends get killed six weeks ago, he,

[had] been having mood swings, angry outbursts. “mood swings, angry outbursts. He’d been punching walls, finding it impossible to sleep unless he quadrupled the maximum recommended dosage of sleeping pills, and when he did sleep he had nightmares about the deaths of his friends, about his own death, about violence. It was a pretty complete PTSD checklist—intense anxiety, sadness, shortness of breath, increased heart rate, and, most powerfully, an overwhelming feeling of utter helplessness (147-148).

He believes that he is sent to get himself “killed” and that his stay in Iraq is pointless (148). Despite the chaplain’s efforts to help him to go back to the US, nothing seems to work as the platoon commander, Staff Sergeant Hauptert, tells him that Rodriguez is diagnosed with “combat and operational stress reaction, which was common and not a

condition recognized as an ailment or a reason to remove a Marine from a combat zone,” and that Rodriguez performs his duties properly (149). When the chaplain raises the issue with the Combat Stress Unit, they tell him that if they send every Marine with such symptoms to the US, there will be “nobody left to fight the war” (149). It is evident that such cases are not unique or exceptional in the US military, but rather common and widespread. Soldiers seek to escape the chasms of war, survive the unbearable conditions of persistent danger and live in a more peaceful environment.

Soldiers are normal people who have their physiological needs that must be satisfied even through weird and, sometimes, rather humiliating means. “In Vietnam They Had Whores” addresses soldiers’ sexuality and means to satisfy these desires in an ironic tone. Before his deployment in Iraq, a Marine listens to his father’s drunk talk about his service in Vietnam where they used to have, “different brothels for white and black Marines” (Klay, 2015: 119). Nevertheless, in Iraq, where the Marine is deployed, there are none; “Yep. In Vietnam they had whores. I guess that’s one thing they had over us” (121). Another soldier wishes “to God he knew where the Iraqi whorehouses were, ’cause he’d get himself a big fat whore who’d let him cry into her tits” (121). Sex does not only provide instinctual satisfaction for soldiers, it also provide some reclusive for soldiers to escape everyday violence. It functions as a coping tool to numb the bad feelings soldiers have and to escape the thoughts of everyday violence (Smith, 2014). Marines are primarily human beings who need to satisfy their sexual drives, sometimes, through a rather unchivalrous means.

Soldiers’ obsession with sex is further accentuated to show soldiers’ instinctive rather than heroic qualities. Soldiers in “In Vietnam They Had Whores” have doubts that their colleagues from First Platoon visit a “brothel” in secrecy (Klay, 2015: 122). When they inquire about the information, “They all looked at the ground and their faces turned red, and after a while one of them finally admitted, “Doc. Ain’t no whores. We been sharing a pocket pussy”” (122). When soldiers see a female after being deprived from such a privilege for a long time, the narrator goes, “I smelled first. The whole table of us, at the chow hall at Al Asad, and the smell of her short-circuited our collective brain and the conversation stopped and we all turned to her at once and she walked right by” (123). Then they converse about what they would like to “do to her,” and compete with each for “the dirtier thing” (123). The whole story is allocated to address soldiers’ sexuality in a rather realistic and obscene language to emphasize their human qualities.

War veterans also find sex as a method to relieve the burdens of undesirable memories they accumulated in their service (Smith, 2014). Though soldiers are considered “war hero[es]” by the public in the US, the narrator does not “feel like a war hero,” especially after the memorial service for three of his colleagues who are killed in Iraq (Klay, 2015: 124). They say farewell to their friends and, “[e]verybody got drunk afterward [. . .] Whores was the whole purpose of the trip” (124). Sex and alcohol serve as means to temporarily obliterate soldiers’ painful memories they cannot stand.

Veterans, who are believed to be war heroes by the public, are more susceptible and less vigorous than most people know. Once soldiers are back home, they spend some time in confusion trying to re-establish their lives due to the huge gap between their violent past in the battlefield and the peaceful present (Klay, 2015). At the social level, there is also an ocean of misunderstanding of what soldiers have been through. They are left recklessly between two choices, either to tell their stories and relive the horrifying experiences or to keep these memories for themselves, which is also painful. Some veterans “close the door,” unwilling to “to open it again” as they feel strangers in their

hometowns and among their families (12). People in the States are safe and not aware of that perilous part of the world, Fallujah, Iraq. Given the fact that their whole lives are “at white,” safe, non-combatants will,

never get even close to orange. You can’t, until the first time you’re in a firefight, or the first time an IED [improvised explosive device] goes off that you missed, and you realize that everybody’s life, everybody’s, depends on you not fucking up. And you depend on them.

Some guys go straight to red. They stay like that for a while and then they crash, go down past white, down to whatever is lower than “I don’t fucking care if I die.” Most everybody else stays orange, all the time.

Here’s what orange is. You don’t see or hear like you used to. Your brain chemistry changes. You take in every piece of the environment, everything. I could spot a dime in the street twenty yards away. [. . .] I think you take in too much information to store so you just forget, free up brain space to take in everything about the next moment that might keep you alive. And then you forget that moment, too, and focus on the next. And the next. And the next. For seven months (12-13).

Back home, though soldiers are no more in battle zones, a soldier “startle[s] ten times checking for it [his weapon] and it’s not there” (12). Moving to safety does not mitigate veterans’ stressed mental state where they are exposed to prolonged periods of vigilance like those in the battlefield. They struggle to overcome the long-term psychological repercussions of their traumatic experiences in the battlefield and reach white, the ordinary state of life.

The impact of veterans’ experience in the military continues to affect the livelihood of many of them passively. A small, but significant, percentage of war veterans become involved in criminal activities after leaving service (Short et al., 2018). In “Prayer in The Furnace,” many veterans are involved in “crimes and drug use” (Klay, 2015: 162); One veteran helps his friend to kill his wife, “then mutilated her body trying to get it into the too-small hole they dug” (162), another, “high on cocaine, shot at a nightclub with an AR-15 and seriously injured one woman” (162), while another two, Beilin and Russo, commit suicide. The burden of their service in war appears to have long-standing influence on service personnel in the US Army. As they leave the army, their military experience surpasses their own lives and affects those around them in a negative, and sometimes lethal, way.

Most military characters in *Redeployment* do not consider themselves heroes and they are even infuriated when thanked for their service. Instead, they try to detach themselves from their pasts in the battlefield and disown their memories through means of sex, alcohol and drugs. They are primarily human beings, rather than fearless warriors, who might be vulnerable to fear, stress and anxiety. Although some behave in a heroic way, the efficiency of their heroic endeavour is questioned and ridiculed. Most of themaspire to readapt to their old civil life and get beyond their traumatic experiences after their redeployment.

2. Motives Of War

For the reason that soldiers are essential for wars, they require a solid foundation to take part effectively. As diverse as Hobbes, Locke, Hegel and Kant, these intellectuals consider the motives for which soldiers go to war are substantial; “They must cohere with the other kinds of reasons that motivate them as rational individuals, and they must cohere with the other kinds of roles they occupy as members of society” (Ryan, 2014:

131). What justifies soldiers' deeds in war starts with the reasons that justify their nation going to war. They must take themselves seriously by questioning the motives on which they act upon and if they are compatible with their own self-respect.

Young people join the military for various reasons depending on their financial conditions, sense of patriotism for their country and some other self-oriented motives. Some American soldiers go to war though they are not "patriotic" nor "aggressive" and, sometimes, they even do not comprehend their decisions (Klay, 2015: 56). The narrator of "Bodies" thinks that he is in Iraq because he wants "somewhere that would definitely make [him] a man" (59). While in "Psychological Operations," Waguih, a war veteran from Coptic-Egyptian origins, believes that joining the US Army would help, "Be All That You Can Be?" [. . .] growing up" (191). Serving in the US Army also helps to obtain sponsored university education, as if they say to young Americans, "You Can't Afford College Without Us," which serves as the best slogan for the Army (192). Before they are old enough to make such big decisions, young people are attracted to join the army by means of self-enhancement, free education and other personal interests, rather than patriotism or the belief in the righteousness of war.

Before wars, an atmosphere of patriotism pervades social milieu and that creates an added incentive for young people to join the army. Wars, such as the 2003 war on Iraq, have been planned and sold by a successful propaganda campaign which influenced American audiences to be in favour of war (Altheide & Grimes, 2005). Once Waguih finishes basic US army training, he notices how proud his father is of him when he is not used to doing so (Klay, 2015). All those around him make him feel gratified; "All this pageantry. Uniforms and flags and everybody telling everybody over and over how brave we were, how patriotic, and what great Americans we were. You can't resist hundreds of people feeling proud of you" (198). After experiencing the rapture of being part of the military and the patriotic atmosphere, Waguih signs up for the US Army where he receives his father's "patriotic e-mails [. . .] and speeches about 'the troops' that talked about them like they shat gold. I was eighteen, I ate it up. But I was also learning how to do propaganda in our classes" (199). At such a young age and with no proper experience or knowledge about the reality of war, people are tempted to join the military and take part in conflicts when they lack maturity to make such a crucial decision. They are enchanted by state propaganda which conceals the dark side of war and highlights some exaggerated narratives of heroism that appeals to youths. They go to war with their gilded dreams of heroism and chivalry to discover and get appalled by the despicable truth of war.

CONCLUSION

War in the realms of Klay's stories is chiefly coupled with prolonged agonies that seek to be heard and recognized. Most military service personnel in these stories decline to be called heroes and some of them are even enraged for being thanked for their service. They alternately seek to disconnect from their military pasts and disclaim their encumbering memories by resorting to sex, alcohol and drugs. Klay's soldiers are chiefly human beings, rather than fearless warriors, who are sometimes susceptible to fear, stress and anxiety. When one of them behaves heroically to save his comrade's life, it turns out that his effort is unnecessary and inefficient. Soldiers go to war misled with gilded dreams of heroism and chivalry and return home with traumatized psyches and exhausted bodies. When they are redeployed in the US, veterans aspire chiefly to readapt

to their old civil life and get beyond the distressing experiences of war. In these stories we have many traumatized victims of violence and hardly any surviving hero.

Klay's stories are overshadowed by the despicable scenes of all that is despised and loathed by humans. Nothing seems to be virtuous about wars as they consume the lives, exhaust the psyches of all those involved and leave them with eternal and unobliterated wounds. In America's recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, hundreds of thousands of innocent lives were extinguished and millions displaced for fraudulent purposes. Because lives matter, more serious endeavours should be made to curb, or rather end, wars by deliberately demonstrating their immeasurable and catastrophic consequences on human and nonhuman life.

KAYNAKÇA

Altheide, David L. - Grimes, Jennifer N. "War Programming: The Propaganda Project and The Iraq War". *The Sociological Quarterly* 46/4 (2005): 617-643.

Anderson, Donald. "You Can't Come Home Again: Phil Klay's Redeployment". *WLA; War, Literature and the Arts* 26 (2014): 1.

Booth, Allyson. "Thank You for Your Service: Negotiating the Civilian-Military Divide in Phil Klay's Redeployment". *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 61/2 (2019): 168-192.

Coker, Christopher. *Waging War without Warriors? The Changing Culture of Military Conflict*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002.

Docx, Edward. "Redeployment by Phil Klay Review- 'Incendiary Stories of War'". *The Guardian*, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/26/redeployment-phil-klay-review-incendiary-stories-of-war>

Filkins, Dexter. "The Long Road Home". *The New York Times*, 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/09/books/review/redeployment-by-phil-klay.html>

Golub, Andrew - Bennett, Alexander S. "Introduction to The Special Issue: Drugs, Wars, Military Personnel, and Veterans". *Substance use & misuse* 48/10 (2013): 795-798.

James, William. *The moral equivalent of war, and other essays*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Kakutani, Michiko. "The Madness of War Told in the First Person". *The New York Times*, 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/books/redeployment-iraq-war-stories-by-phil-klay.html>

Klay, Phil. *Redeployment*. New York: Penguin, 2015.

Kunsa, Ashley. *Reconstructing the War in Iraq: Post-9/11 American War Fiction in Dialogue with Official-Media Discourse*. PhD Dissertation, Duquesne University, 2017.

Luttwak, Edward N. "Toward Post-Heroic Warfare". *Foreign Affairs* 74/3 (1995): 109-22.

Mayfield, Tyrell O. "Reflections on Redeployment". *WLA; War, Literature and the Arts* 28 (2016): 1.

Packer, George. "Home Fires: How Soldiers Write Their Wars". *New Yorker*, 2014. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/07/home-fires-2>

Petrovic, Paul. "Beyond Appropriation: Arab, Coptic American, and Persian Subjectivities in Brian Turner's *Here*, Phil Klay's *Redeployment*, and Elliot Ackerman's *Green on Blue*". *War, Literature & the Arts: an international journal of the humanities* (2018) 30.

Powers, Kevin. *The Yellow Birds*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013.

Ryan, Cheyney. "The dilemma of cosmopolitan soldiering". *Heroism and the changing character of war: toward post-heroic warfare?* Ed. Sibylle Scheipers. 120-141. New York: Macmillan, 2014.

Scheipers, Sibylle. "Introduction: Toward Post-Heroic Warfare?" *Heroism and the changing character of war: toward post-heroic warfare?* Ed. Sibylle Scheipers. 1-18. New York: Macmillan, 2014.

Scranton, Roy. "The Trauma Hero: From Wilfred Owen to *Redeployment* and American Sniper". *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 2015. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/trauma-hero-wilfred-owen-redeployment-american-sniper/>

Short, Roxanna - Dickson, Hannah - Greenberg, Neil - MacManus, Deirdre. "Offending Behaviour, Health and Wellbeing of Military Veterans in The Criminal Justice System". *PLoS one* 13/11 (2018).

Smith, Erica. "Pornography and Sex Addiction in the Military". *Addiction Hope*, 2014. <https://www.addictionhope.com/sexual-addiction/pornography-sex-addiction-military/>