

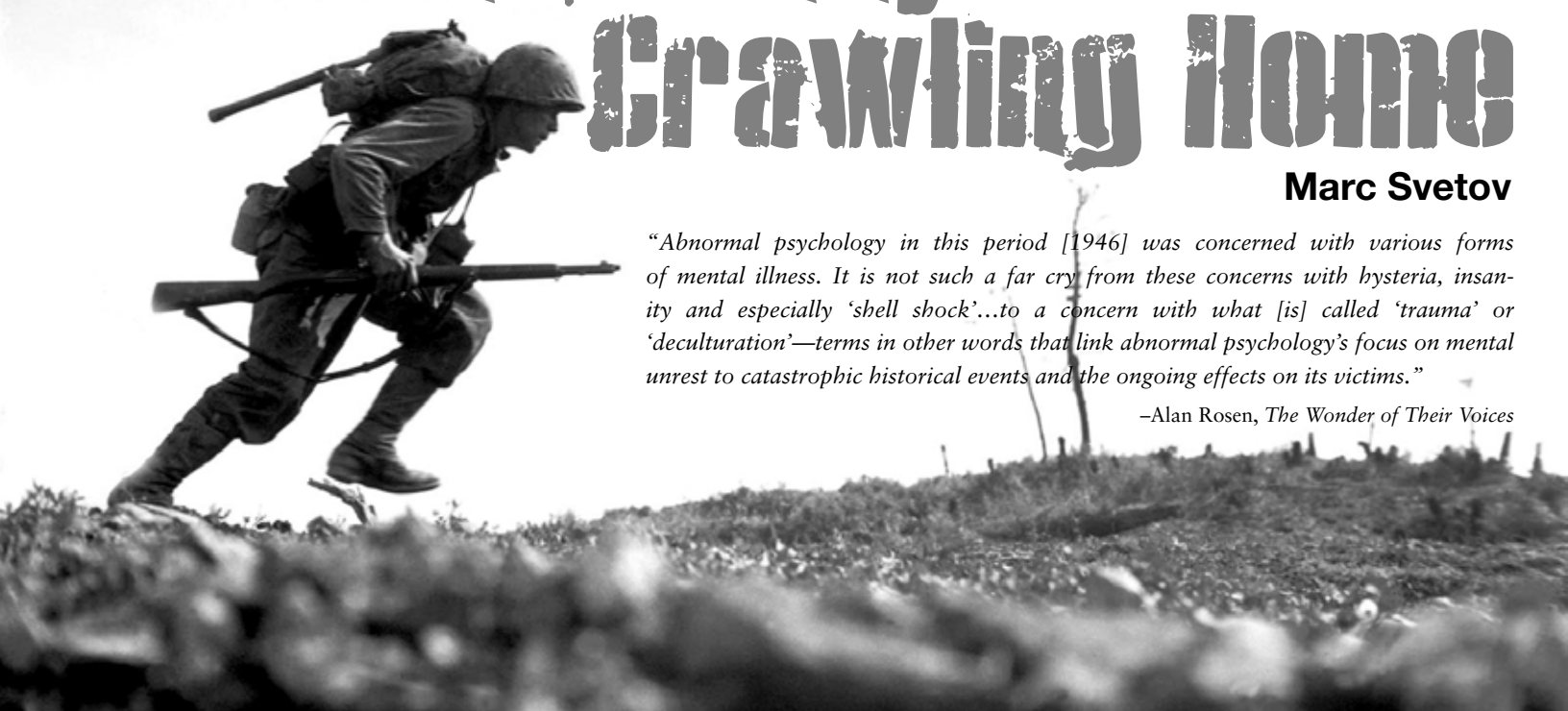


When Johnny Comes Crawling Home

Marc Svetov

“Abnormal psychology in this period [1946] was concerned with various forms of mental illness. It is not such a far cry from these concerns with hysteria, insanity and especially ‘shell shock’...to a concern with what [is] called ‘trauma’ or ‘deculturation’—terms in other words that link abnormal psychology’s focus on mental unrest to catastrophic historical events and the ongoing effects on its victims.”

*—Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of Their Voices**





U.S.S. Enterprise attacked by a Japanese kamikaze airplane on May 14, 1945

MY FATHER. My father Russ was in his last year of life, at the age of 84, when he met my wife and me for lunch. We were about to leave for Europe again, which made him unhappy. For some reason, I asked him about the war. He surprised me by suddenly weeping uncontrollably, saying, “You don’t know how bad the war was. All those men dying.” My mother had told me he’d had done the same thing during the mid-1970s when they’d visited Massachusetts from our home in South Bend, Indiana. My father had not been there since the war. After visiting Harvard Yard that afternoon, Russ had something to drink, which he didn’t often do, and he began crying, losing all control, telling my mother about the men he had trained with at Yard, and how so very many had died. He could not be consoled.

Otherwise, Russ never reminisced about the war. He was a Purple Heart winner, having been wounded during an attack at Okinawa on the *U.S.S. Enterprise*. On May 14, 1945, he received a severe head wound when a Japanese kamikaze hit the open flight elevator on deck. My father had been a First Lieutenant on the Fast Carrier Task Force in the Pacific. He had seen the worst, been in the very thick of it at Iwo Jima, Okinawa, the first raid on Tokyo, strikes against Kyushu, the Kure Naval Base. His citation noted that he had seen “action against major units of the Japanese Fleet.” He kept the medal and the citation all his life, but otherwise was silent about the war—except for those two exceptional incidents.

“Even the healthiest soldiers on the battlefield could be suddenly stricken by a severe mental breakdown, suffering bodily symptoms that ranged from catatonic stupor to blindness, from shaking to rigor mortis. The number of soldiers turning paranoid, hysterical and crying uncontrollably was unprecedented. What kind of illness was this?”

—Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema*

PTSD. Nowadays, we have a term for the psychological problems

veterans bring back from the war: PTSD. It took us a long time to realize that beside their physical wounds, many returnees carried heavy psychological baggage. Perhaps most of them.

After World War I, as evidenced by such films as the noir precursor *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) and *Heroes for Sale* (1933), the government and society at large felt what had happened to soldiers during the war was their own private affair; if their psyches were wounded or paralyzed, there was no care or hospitalization, no psychiatric staff available to them. They simply had “shell shock,” the term used back then. It eventually became a scandal, however, once the Bonus Army, comprised of destitute World War I veterans and their families, marched on Washington during the worst of the Depression in 1932, demanding cash payment for their services during the conflict. Under order from President Herbert Hoover, they were violently routed by troops under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. It led to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his military advisors vowing “never again” to mistreat armed forces veterans who served in any future conflicts. They’d be forced to stand by that commitment soon enough.

By comparison: During World War I in Germany, war-caused psychic injuries were referred to as “war neurosis.” The term “hysteria” was employed soon after. The latter is a psychiatric term that previously had been applied only to women; now it described the psychic ailments of returning combatants. A negative connotation was given to shell-shock victims by German psychiatrists ordered to send men back into battle—labeling these men as “malingerers.” After the First World War, Anton Kaes writes, “hysteria [was] the failure to overcome trauma,” for soldiers returning home.

More than 16,000,000 Americans served in the armed forces during World War II. Of those, 73% served abroad; 292,000 were killed in action and 671,000 were wounded. The impact was even felt in film noir: psychology, which had been an integral part of “women’s films,” entered postwar cinema as partial explanation for why vets



According to *Let There Be Light*, 20% of American casualties were of a "neuropsychiatric" nature

were behaving as they did. Men in movies hadn't needed psychology until then; depicting them as psychological wrecks was rare (the 1939 noir precursor *Blind Alley* being one exception).

Often these soldiers were stricken with amnesia because they'd been traumatized by fear, having witnessed horrific events and having been exposed to the stress of combat. They return burdened with psychosomatic ailments, "incurable" neuroses, and even psychoses. The mind can only cope with so much; after which it shuts down, compensating for what it cannot absorb by forming defensive ailments, physical symptoms, illnesses. Losing one's memory is also a way of blocking out the pain. In John Huston's 1946 Army documentary *Let There Be Light*, it is contended that 20% of American casualties were of a "neuropsychiatric nature."

Huston's film revealed that the problems facing many returning WWII veterans were often devastating, and common enough to warrant facilities at hospitals with attendant psychiatrists and nursing staff. Their maladies might be manifested months after the traumas that had crippled them from within. These were the brothers, fathers, husbands, and neighbors of everybody in the country. The Army never released the film.

Therein lies the story of the veteran in noir—returning home partly as a winner, partly as a wreck.

MAINSTREAM. Returning home more or less psychologically intact was largely the way Hollywood choose to portray WWII veterans. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) depicted three soldiers who, despite their problems, get on with their lives fairly well; the drift of the film was optimistic, inclined to over-

look the abyss into which these men had peered and from which they might never recover. The stumps of Homer (Harold Russell), who has lost both his hands, are used to illustrate not only the cost of being a hero, but to emphasize that even the cruelest calamities can be overcome. Release of the brilliantly directed and acted film was timed to affect a public whose impressions of the war were fresh and vital, and the film's message is not bitter or negative.

"Problem films" like *Pride of the Marines* (1945), however, showed vets as having earned the right to be rewarded, and demanding of better treatment, post-war. The portrayal of veterans in such films as *Best Years*, *The Men* (1950), *Pride of the Marines* is optimistic—hope for reintegration into society is never really in doubt. In film noir, by contrast, the fate of veterans is unclear; it's unknown whether social integration or a good life will come to any of the men in *High Wall* (1947), *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), *Nobody Lives Forever* (1946) and many other noirs. In the more mainstream films of the era, servicemen are depicted as solid, functioning Americans, ready to return to society, in some cases as heroes. Film noir took a different track. It put a question mark to all of it.

"Tell me it's really happening. I can't look away from your eyes, John. If I did, you might disappear the way you do in my dreams. Let me just sit here and remember how your hand feels on my arm.... I can touch the stripes on your sleeve. I can hear the clock tick. I can see my reflection in your eyes."

—From a postwar *LIFE* magazine ad for International Sterling Tableware



The Best Years of Our Lives: dramatic and affecting, but not bitter or negative



William Bendix as the brain-damaged “Buzz” in *The Blue Dahlia*

In both *The Blue Dahlia*, in which Alan Ladd, William Bendix, and Hugh Beaumont play returning vets, and *High Wall*, with Robert Taylor as a decorated ex-pilot, it is the wife who symbolizes pre-war normalcy. The dialectic of wife and husband, of change and stasis, is key. The veteran returns a changed man, but his wife expects him to be the same. Or she doesn't expect him at all: She has moved on in her life, formed other plans, found new love and excitement. Her life did not stop while he was in a foxhole on a Pacific island or walking night watch on an aircraft carrier. For his part, the returning vet may expect a resumption of his earlier life, but even then, he has changed too much to pick up where he left off. It's an archetype—Ulysses returning to find a gang of suitors beleaguering his wife, a husband returning in disguise from the Trojan War, not even recognizing his home country. Often, the very identity of veterans is questioned: “You're not the man I married!”

In *High Wall*, Steve Kenet (Robert Taylor) is a brain-damaged war veteran turned commercial pilot in Asia; Kenet believes he has killed his wife upon discovering she'd been unfaithful, betraying him with her boss, Mr. Whitcombe (Herbert Marshall). Kenet is willing to spend the rest of his life behind the “high wall” of the insane asylum. He could be cured of his brain ailment under the care of Dr. Ann Lorrison (Audrey Totter), but he refuses—until

The thin line between killing being a war-sanctioned act and a punishable civilian crime has been at the center of moral debates since the beginning of civilization. In many films, the protagonists discuss the difference between “killing” (wartime) and “murdering” (peacetime).

he learns his son will be taken from him if he is declared insane. After Lorrison utilizes the alleged benefits of sodium pentothal as a “truth serum,” Kenet uncovers the true killer and is saved from the murder rap. His brain injury is merely a plot device, and the story doesn't tell us directly how his wartime experience affects his actions, but he has internalized the lesson of war: that violence is a solution. We see him casually threaten Dr. Lorrison, claiming he will kill her if she does not go along with him, and Kenet cannot control his rage at Whitcombe, nearly murdering the visiting man, who comes to taunt him at the asylum.

As veterans have been trained to kill, they possess the potential for violence and mayhem. Such men are seen in *Cornered* (1945), *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), *Till the End of Time* (1946), *Crossfire* (1947), *Dead Reckoning* (1947), *Act of Violence* (1948), *The Crooked Way* (1949), *Backfire* (1950), and *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955). It doesn't mean they will actually wreak havoc, only that they could. The thin line between killing being a war-sanctioned act and a punishable civilian crime has been at the center of moral debates since the beginning of civilization. In many films, the protagonists





A celebratory drink among soldiers leads to the murder of a Jewish civilian (Sam Levene, right) in *Crossfire*

discuss the difference between “killing” (wartime) and “murdering” (peacetime). In *The Big Red One* (1980), the Sergeant (Lee Marvin) is haunted by having killed a German five minutes after the war had ended. Jeff Warren (Glenn Ford), a Korean War veteran in *Human Desire* (1954), spells it out: “Well, there’s a difference. In the war, you fire into the darkness, something moving on a ridge, a position, a uniform, an enemy. But a man coming home, helpless, drunk.... That takes a different kind of killing.... It takes somebody who doesn’t think about anything but himself. It takes somebody who has no conscience and decency.” The individual soldier, as well as society at large, stand on a slippery slope where such convenient differentiation and moral relativism are concerned. Such relativism can dislodge a man’s moral compass; some find they like killing, while others are consumed by quiet guilt and despair. A civil society often doesn’t know what to do with the unlucky “heroes.” The culture often must protect itself against the men it has trained to kill. Their skills are no longer needed, but skills aren’t easily unlearned. Always intuitive and sometimes explicit, this awareness pervades all films about troubled veterans.

The nation needed to cope with 12,000,000 demobilized servicemen in late 1945 and early 1946, of whom 7,600,000 had been stationed abroad. What to do? In *Crossfire*, an ex-soldier dressed in civilian attire who had been wounded at Okinawa, Joseph Samuels (Sam Levene), explains to confused young Corporal Mitchell (George Cooper) about this “problem”: “I think it’s suddenly not having a lot of enemies to hate anymore. Maybe it’s because for four years we’ve been focusing our minds on one little peanut. The win-the-war peanut. That was all. Get it over. Eat

that peanut. All at once, no peanut. Now we start looking at each other again. We don’t know what we’re supposed to do. We don’t know what’s supposed to happen. We’re too used to fighting. But we just don’t know what to fight. You can feel the tension in the air. A whole lot of fight and hate that doesn’t know where to go. Guy like you maybe starts hating himself. Well, one of these days, maybe we’ll all learn to shift gears. Maybe we’ll stop hating and start liking things again, huh?”

Being demobilized has left Mitchell “at sea,” and the audience soon learns another aspect of his problem—acute loneliness; he’s longing for his wife. We feel sympathy for him, but in witnessing how another GI, the anti-Semitic Montgomery (Robert Ryan), beats Samuels to death, the viewer can only hope that this is not what the armed forces has trained its men to do. We need to believe that Montgomery is a misfit.

Dixon Steele (Humphrey Bogart) is a screenwriter in the classic noir *In a Lonely Place*. Steele’s day-to-day demeanor is a convincing semblance of normalcy, albeit that of

a very cynical man. The audience accepts his weary misanthropy—except when Dixon Steele is crossed, in which case he gets violent, whether to victims of his road rage or to his nearest and dearest, Laurel Gray (Gloria Grahame), whom Dixon wants to marry. She learns she cannot trust him, as does his loyal agent Mel Lippman (Art Smith), a bit of a masochist who is even manhandled by the writer.

Suddenly (1954), features two WWII veterans: Tod Shaw (Sterling Hayden), the sheriff of the titular small town, and John Baron (Frank Sinatra), an expert marksman out to kill the president of the United States. Baron takes a local family hostage, along with the sheriff, who admonishes Baron by saying, “Don’t play God just because you’ve got a gun.” “But you see, Sheriff,” the sniper explains, “that’s the way it is. The gun gives you the power of life and death. It’s a funny sort of feeling to have control of life and death. You must have



Veterans face off in “peacetime”: Frank Sinatra and Sterling Hayden in *Suddenly*



The war has permanently changed former confidence man Nick Blake (John Garfield), who falls for his mark (Geraldine Fitzgerald) in *Nobody Lives Forever*

had it during the war. You could miss a man if you had a mind to or you could kill him dead in his tracks. And that made you a kind of God. Without the gun, I'm nothing. First time I got one in my hands, I was somebody. You're wrong about God and the gun. Without the gun, you would never have spit on me. But because of the gun, you'll remember me as long as you live."

"Where were you during the war?" the sheriff asks.

"All the way through the Kasserine Pass," says Baron. "I earned a Silver Star. Where were you?"

"Normandy to the Elbe by way of the Bulge. You get up into Germany?"

"No. I killed more Jerries than any five officers put together. I did some pretty good chopping during the war."

"Like I said before: You're a born killer."

"Yeah, they taught me how, and I liked it...."

"Tell me one thing, Baron. How come you missed Germany?"

"My tour was finished."

"Your tour? In the infantry? Are you kidding? Why, you finish your tour in the infantry when they plant you in a box. Tour? That was for the Air Corps. You probably went over the hill. You know, Baron, you got the yard look. You look yard bird to me. Big shot with the yard birds. Come on now, were you court-martialed? What was it for? Rape? Naw, not rape. Killing—killing, that's what you liked. Maybe shooting down unarmed PWs."

"Without the gun, you would never have spit on me. But because of the gun, you'll remember me as long as you live."
—John Baron, *Suddenly*

Nobody Lives Forever, *Somewhere in the Night* [1946], *Undertow* [1949]), having served in the Army or Navy signifies redemption. The vet returns to his old haunts and old friends, but things inside him have been altered. In *Nobody Lives Forever*, Nick Blake (John Garfield) goes back to his pre-war profession as a con-man exploiting rich women—only to discover he can't do it anymore. He has been reformed by his military service. In a key scene, Nick goes into an old Spanish-style church with his intended mark, Gladys Halvorsen (Geraldine Fitzgerald), with whom he is falling in love. Nick is agitated, but we don't know why; a children's choir sings in the distance. Blake is lost in thought, then suddenly says he wants to leave. Gladys, watching his face, says "Nick, I wouldn't know you."

"I got to thinking of Italy," Blake intones, dropping his slick façade. "That place back there reminded me of some the churches we saw, except they were all wrecked. Holes in the roof, statues all over the floor, paintings ripped to pieces, everything smashed." "I'm sorry," says Gladys. "It's all right," he says. "Maybe I forgot about what we saw too easy."

In *Undertow*, Tony Reagan (Scott Brady) returns to Chicago, where he had been a hoodlum working the rackets and was a known undesirable to the law. He meets his old crime partner, who urges Tony to pick up where he left off, but Tony sees things differently now. "You got to be away for a while to realize how little this all means," he explains. The war changed him. Like Nick in *Nobody Lives Forever*, Tony can't go back to his old life.

Nightfall (1956), directed by Jacques Tourneur, pits the vet James Vanning (Aldo Ray) against two criminals who have framed him for a murder. When he faces off against them, Vanning shows a very cool fatalism, a blasé attitude in the face of impending mayhem. This may have been true for many men who'd seen action in the war—what could gangsters do to a vet like Vanning after what he'd been through?



REDEMPTION. In a few films (*The Crooked Way*, *John Payne is a wounded veteran suffering amnesia in The Crooked Way*

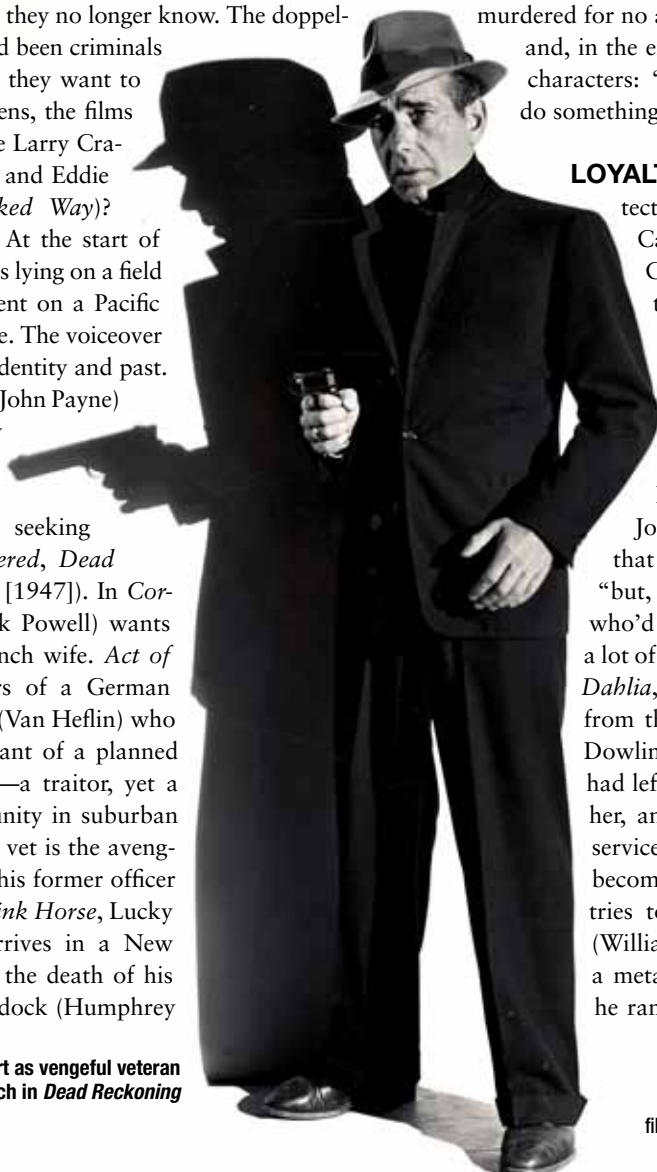


Richard Conte portrays WWII vet Nick Garcos, who finds a new enemy on the homefront in the form of corrupt produce broker Mike Figlia (Lee J. Cobb) in *Thieves' Highway*

In *The Crooked Way* and *Somewhere in the Night*, it is amnesia that leads to redemption. Both films feature vets as protagonists searching both for themselves and for a past they no longer know. The doppelgänger theme is obvious. They had been criminals before their military service; now they want to go straight. But before that happens, the films pose the questions of just who are Larry Cravat (John Hodiak in *Somewhere*) and Eddie Ricciardi (John Payne in *Crooked Way*): Who were they before the war? At the start of *Somewhere in the Night*, Hodiak is lying on a field cot, bandaged up in a hospital tent on a Pacific island. Cannons fire in the distance. The voiceover tells us he has no memory of his identity and past. In *The Crooked Way*, Eddie Rice (John Payne) undertakes a voyage of discovery to find himself, his former life, and, eventually, redemption.

Veterans might also return seeking revenge (*Act of Violence*, *Cornered*, *Dead Reckoning*, *Ride the Pink Horse* [1947]). In *Cornered*, a Canadian war vet (Dick Powell) wants to avenge the murder of his French wife. *Act of Violence* concerns two survivors of a German POW camp. One is an ex-officer (Van Heflin) who informed the German commandant of a planned escape by his fellow Americans—a traitor, yet a respected member of the community in suburban Santa Lisa, California. The other vet is the avenging angel who can't forget or let his former officer escape punishment. In *Ride the Pink Horse*, Lucky Gagin (Robert Montgomery) arrives in a New Mexico town to get revenge for the death of his wartime buddy, Shorty. Rip Murdoch (Humphrey

Bogart) in *Dead Reckoning* looks to settle the score for his buddy, a fellow paratrooper and Medal of Honor winner, viciously murdered for no apparent reason. Bogart avenges his buddy and, in the end, paraphrases a line from another of his characters: "When a guy's pal is killed, he ought to do something."



Humphrey Bogart as vengeful veteran Rip Murdoch in *Dead Reckoning*

LOYALTY. In postwar-noir America, vets also protect one another. In *The Guilty* (1947) Mike Carr (Don Castle) and Johnny Dixon (Wally Cassell) have stuck to each other through thick and thin, Mike having been a corporal during the island-hopping Pacific conflict, while Johnny was a lieutenant. Now it is two years after V-J Day and they are roommates in a very gloomy, penumbral dump of a city. Detective Heller (Regis Toomey) queries Mike about Johnny, who's suspected of murder. "Not that I wanted any part of him," Mike explains, "but, well, I guess that's the way it is with guys who'd been in the war together. You put up with a lot of things without knowing why." In *The Blue Dahlia*, Johnny Morrison (Alan Ladd) returns from the war to his cheating wife Helen (Doris Dowling), who is soon found murdered. Johnny had left his pistol in their apartment after leaving her, and he is accused of the crime since a .45 service automatic is the murder weapon. Johnny becomes a fugitive. In a climactic scene, Johnny tries to protect his war buddy Buzz Wanchek (William Bendix) from false suspicions. Buzz has a metal plate in his head due to a war wound; he rampages at the sound of "monkey" (swing)



John Payne plays another persecuted vet in *Kansas City Confidential*

music, and the fits are followed by blackouts. Earlier, Buzz and George Copeland (Hugh Beaumont) had shielded the innocent Johnny from the police. Tried-and-tested war buddies cannot be made to betray one another. Similarly, Joe Rolfe (John Payne) is helped in *Kansas City Confidential* (1952) by his friend Eddie (Paul Dubov), the owner of “Winky’s” diner. Joe Rolfe needs to find out who’s framed him for an armed robbery. Eddie hands Joe a wad of cash and a hot lead, murmuring, “Take it easy, Joe.” After Joe has left the diner, his older brother asks Eddie: “So that’s the guy who saved your life at Iwo Jima?” Eddie nods silently. The veterans’ shared war experience has forged their loyalty; they have a standard to live up to, one that separates them from civilians.

DECENCY AND SELF-ESTEEM. Former Army Major Frank McCloud (Humphrey Bogart) stands up for common decency, and against a vacationing gang of hoodlums, in *Key Largo* (1948). In *Thieves’ Highway* (1949), truck driver Nick Garcos (Richard Conte) learns he must defend his rights, and avenge his father, against the crook running a San Francisco produce market. However reluctant, these vets are “avenging angels,” who stand for the good things in the polity that they’d just fought for. And the vets do indeed know how to fight. In the 1950s, such hostage noirs as *The Night Holds Terror* (1955) and *The Desperate Hours* (1955) show veterans as the guardians of postwar American family life, standing up against criminals who take their families hostage. Here, the vet is a good man who fights for justice and sets an example; he redeems himself in a corrupt world of which he is not a part. In Japan, there is more ambiguity: returning veterans are seen as capable of going either way. Detective Murakami (Toshiro Mifune) in *Stray Dog* (1949) still remains a young hot head but has chosen to obey the laws and customs of postwar Japanese society; he is helped along by the older Detective Sato (Takashi Shimura), while Detective Murakami’s *doppelgänger*—a

The veterans’ shared war experience has forged their loyalty; they have a standard to live up to, one that separates them from civilians.

vet named Yusa, who has stolen Murakami’s pistol—has chosen a life of crime. Detective Murakami can see the ways in which Yusa and he are linked by similar war experiences. Sato, in turn, urges the young detective to forget about Yusa: “Take a look out the window at the world. There’ll be all sorts of cases under those rooftops today. And a few good people will fall victim to someone else like Yusa. Forget about Yusa. You’ll forget all about Yusa, naturally.” ■



Stray Dog: Toshiro Mifune (left) plays a police detective in postwar Japan who has as much in common with criminals as he does with his fellow police officers

Returning Home

The theme of returning soldiers with their bottled-up violence and disturbed minds can be seen in films such as: *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Rolling Thunder* (1977), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Cutter's Way* (1981), *Rambo: First Blood* (1982), *Desert Bloom* (1986), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Ulee's Gold* (1997), *Rushmore* (1998) and many more, plus the recent TV series *Homeland*. A reality check, however, shows that most of the horrific shooting incidents in the United States are to be ascribed less to war veterans than to disturbed, isolated young men, many still living with their mothers.

Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) is a returning vet whose mind has gone terribly wrong in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. The Bickle character is also a reflection of the doubts in the public's mind, as well as the film's creators, about the Vietnam War. World War II didn't evince such doubts in American society. Travis Bickle is an archetype for the over-the-top "dangerous veteran," especially the Vietnam variety.

Herman Blume (Bill Murray) is a benign presence, even a good man, by contrast. Wes Anderson's affectionate portrayal of a Vietnam vet in *Rushmore* is decidedly not that of a psychopathic killer.

Ulee's Gold features Ulysses Jackson (Peter Fonda), a Vietnam veteran and widower raising two grandchildren alone; his son is in prison and his daughter-in-law is a drug addict. *Ulee's Gold*

has connections to the Hostage Noirs; the vet Ulee holds together his family—including both his paroled son and his sobered-up daughter-in-law—and protects them from a pair of very mean criminals. Throughout the film, Ulysses is plagued by depression. The theme of Ulysses returning from the Trojan War (Vietnam) is a guiding metaphor for the depiction of domestic difficulties that must be overcome by Ulysses (Jackson) as a *father*, not as a husband. He succeeds, as his namesake did in Homer's tale.

Jack Chismore (Jon Voight) in *Desert Bloom* runs a gas station in Nevada in the early 1950s. He is an obvious candidate for therapy: a paranoid, bottled-up man who cannot emotionally connect to his wife and children—or connects only through anger and rage. He suffers from PTSD. He would dearly like to establish rapport with people, but is lost in his own emotions and memories, where nobody else can go. This is perhaps one of the more realistic portrayals of a veteran cut off from those around him. It isn't revealed why Chismore has been traumatized; he vents his rage on his step-daughter Rose repeatedly—she is like a lightning rod for all that ails him—but in the end, it is his daughter to whom he feels the closest emotional ties. Chismore is abusive, aggressive, but Voight is able to convey the personality of a man who is not merely a monster but is trying to be a good stepfather and husband. He is simply too screwed up in his own soul to be the person he would like to be. (The end implies that he'll try.)

In the neo-noir *Cutter's Way*, drunken veteran Cutter (John Heard) is a crippled knight fighting evil. His amputated leg is meant to demonstrate what it cost to be a "hero." Despite the great acting, the film is too bitter and negative, even misanthropic. Its ending is simply unbelievable, even though Heard's character does suggest the model for Heath Ledger's Joker in *The Dark Night* (2008). —M. Svetov



Taxi Driver: the archetype of the "dangerous" vet (Robert De Niro)



John Heard and Lisa Eichhorn in *Cutter's Way*



Peter Fonda plays a Vietnam vet who must rescue his family from criminals in *Ulee's Gold*