

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

War is the most severe form of human conflict. War has traditionally been defined in the study of International Relations as the organization of the use of force by political units in the international system. In a broader sense, war is associated with concepts of crisis, and guerrilla action accompanied by occupation, threat, violence, death, conquest, and terror. According to Russell in (Dennen, 1980), war is a conflict between two or more parties, each of which tries to kill and defeat as many opposing groups as possible in order to achieve the desired goal, and the object being fought for is usually power, or in a political matters. In Yoram (2004), Oppenheim argues that war is a dispute between two or more parties who use armed force to subdue each other and impose peace on the terms proposed by the winner of the war. In his book "A Study of War," Quincy Wright defines war as a legal condition that equally allows two or more hostile groups to carry out a conflict supported by force of arms. War will be regarded as the legal condition that allows two or more hostile groups to engage in armed conflict. (Wright, 1951: 30-33). A war crime is a human act that violates or contradicts the rules of law stipulated in the condition that two or more hostile groups are engaged in armed conflict.

Based on the several definitions above, it can be concluded that war is an event in which two or more parties, including a country or political camp, are involved in a conflict or dispute, and commit an act of violence and victims are unavoidable. In its history, wars, whether wars within a country or wars between countries, but more visible in wars between countries, have always produced an inevitable destructive effect. War destroys communities and families and often disrupts the development of a country's social and economic fabric. The effects of war include long-term physical and psychological harm to children and adults, as well as a reduction in material and human resources (Murthy and Lakshmi Narayana, 2006). The impact was not concentrated in one sector, but the wider impact of war occurred in various sectors, both economic, political and social. War between countries not only causes physical injury to humans, but also causes psychological effects that are no less important. A traumatic event like war is a shocking, frightening, or dangerous experience that affects you emotionally. Whereas some of the physical consequences of war are death, injury, violence, malnutrition, and sexual violence.

Discussing further about the psychological effects of war, WHO stated that "*Around 10 percent of the people who experience traumatic events will have serious mental health problems, and another 10 percent will develop behavior that will hinder their ability to function effectively.*" During the First World War, thousands of soldiers were treated for "shell shock," a condition which encompassed a range of physical and psychological symptoms. Shell shock has most often been located within a "genealogy of trauma," and identified as an important marker in the gradual recognition of the psychological afflictions caused by combat. In recent years, shell shock has increasingly been viewed as a powerful emblem of the suffering of war (Loughran, 2010).

In the social structures, both the press and the courts may have used shell-shock as a way of explaining violence among men from the respectable classes. In this, possibly unknowingly, they were reflecting the war-time diagnosis that made officers four times more likely than their men to suffer from some war neurosis. Victorian society, often against the evidence, had categorized domestic violence as something committed solely within the confines of the rough working class. *Shell-shock* provided a means of explaining why gentlemen in particular, such as Rutherford and Redfern, acted in ways that did not conform to the expected behavior of members of their class. On the relation to literary context, In Britain, the First World War has been remembered perhaps above all through the literary endeavors of eloquent participants. It was a war fought by literate soldiers, individuals who were readers and often writers (Roper, 2009).

Nowadays, there are a variety of tv shows and movies that redefined this term, one of which is British Historic Crime Drama, *Peaky Blinders*. *Peaky Blinders* is a series about a gangster family set in Birmingham, England in 1919. They tell the story of the times after the First World War broke out. The BBC's slick historical series was first broadcast in 2013. The name '*Peaky Blinders*' itself is a weapon that all members of the Shelby family carry wherever they go. The weapon was like a small razor hidden in the hat they were wearing. The razor can be used to attack the face of the enemy. Set in Birmingham just after the first world war, the series follows the Shelby family as they attempt to grow and legitimize their criminal organisation (Caton-Coult, 2019). Throughout the series, it is the shell-sock that causes Thomas Shelby, the main character, to develop criminal behavior. The contrasting character traits of Thomas Shelby (Cillian Murphy) and his older brother, Arthur Shelby (Paul Anderson) reveal two opposing responses to war and their resultant masculine identity crises. Both men are described as different to their pre-war selves. Pre-war Tommy was noted as a happy boy who laughed a lot while pre-war Arthur was the respected head

of the family. Post-war Tommy is serious and ambitious, while Arthur is emotionally fragile and lacking self-direction (Larke-Walsh, 2019).

In this study, three international journals of previous research related to *Peaky Blinders* are included. The first journal is *'The King's shilling': How Peaky Blinders uses the experience of war to justify and celebrate toxic masculinity* (2019) by George Larke-Walsh. This journal examines how Thomas Shelby justified his experience of war to normalize his violent acts, which shows his toxic masculinity side. Throughout the story, the context for every fight the Shelby family got into may be justified in the narrative, but the level of violence and callous self-destructive behaviour involved can be argued as a representation of toxic masculinity. As the leader of the gang, Thomas is really ambitious, he will always find a way to win over fight with several other criminal gangs even if sometimes his decision might give the women, the Shelby family women oppression. They need to do whatever he says, because he has these undeniable leadership traits which made everyone subservient to him. This behaviour of oppression of others is something that is considered as behaviour deemed necessary to succeed in a corrupt world. In other words, the series engages the audience by showing that Shelby did not create the rules of the game; they are simply using the rules they have learnt in order to gain their own advantages. It must also be remembered that the Shelby are considered working-class heroes, or marginalized outsiders, are distractions from the main thrust of the narrative that saw them as self-serving individualists. The series, like so many examples of cultural and political discourse, normalizes male violence and the celebration of those who are strong enough to fight their way to supremacy. By focusing on the two brothers, Tommy and Arthur, they were shown as the destructive force of toxic masculinity, but also its strengths as a feature of heroic leadership. It is evident that Arthur is representative of toxic masculinity as a destructive force, but he is just a distraction from Tommy as the most attractive, powerful and thus potentially scarier example of toxic masculinity as heroism.

The following journal is *Class, Place and History in the Imaginative Landscapes of Peaky Blinders* by Paul Long (2017). This journal examines how the producer, Steven Knight, uses the social class, the setting of place and historical background to normalize the Shelby family action. In imagining the Shelby family, working-class characters with complex interior lives, motivations and desires, Knight offers a critical take on a historical place and time. While most soldiers might get the physical scars of war, some of them appear to bear at least various mental scars that have affected them, and distinguish them from those they left behind. Brother John (Joe Cole) points out at one point when assessing

whether a younger family member might be allowed to join the family on a potentially risky business trip that at his age he'd killed a hundred men and seen a thousand die. In recruiting a local youth to the gang, a fantasist who carries a wooden revolver and styles himself 'The Digbeth Kid', Arthur complains: 'Kids these days'. Tommy comments in uncharacteristic sympathy of this type that, 'they didn't fight, so they're different: they stayed kids'. The war certainly explains Tommy's cold-hearted and fearlessly reckless disposition. As Polly Gray, their aunt, tells him: 'Damn them for what they did to you in France'.

Furthermore, Evan Smith in "*Brutalised' veterans and tragic anti-heroes: masculinity, crime and post-war trauma in Boardwalk Empire and Peaky Blinders (2019)*" stated that the idea of the traumatized soldier returning from the front, unable to reintegrate into civil society and drawn to the realm of organized crime, violence, and political extremism, is one of the lingering motifs from the end of the First World War. This made the argument that Thomas Shelby's exposure to battle in such close quarters deeply upset him and contributed to his aggressive nature upon his return to Birmingham. Thus, it is also portrayed how the conflict forever altered those who fought and forced them to confront humankind's savagery. Upon their return, they struggled to reintegrate into regular society and turned to the criminal underworld where they could make use of their violent pasts. Thus, in *Peaky Blinders*, Thomas Shelby attempts to utilize violence and illegal activity to advance his social position. To support this argument, Emsley (2010) redefined these returning soldiers as 'the brutalized veteran'. Emsley stated that few men might sustain catastrophic injuries while serving in the military, which has led to worries about potentially violent veterans in the years after many conflicts. The concept of the returned soldier as a wounded individual, brutalized by war, ready to turn to crime and violence to elevate their social status and constrained by pre-war social standards.

The previous three studies above examine the issue of *Peaky Blinders*, and how the Post-War effect it had on the character Thomas Shelby later shows his potential violent acts and how Steven Knight as the creator, uses place and social background as one of the reasons that causes Thomas Shelby to behave like a criminal. This psychological impact on Thomas Shelby is also supported by Sigmund Freud's conflict theory, and its relation to Robert Agnew's criminology theory suggests that this study is interesting to be discussed. The researcher discovered that such questions regarding the Post-War Psychological Effect on the emergence of criminal behavior have not been explored.

With its final season that released less than a week ago, *Peaky Blinders* is the first series to receive financial support from the Yorkshire Content Fund, part of Screen Yorkshire. The series received positive reception, mainly because it brought up another side of Britain that was rarely exposed and received less attention. The series was also praised for its cinematographic style, selection of background music, and characters. The performances of the actors and actresses in *Peaky Blinders* also received praise, especially for Cillian Murphy, Sam Neill, Annabelle Wallis, and Helen McCrory. With series one gaining an average of 2.4 million viewers for each episode, BBC Two Supervisor Janice Hadlow and BBC Overseer, Drama Commissioner. This series has 5 series (Season) with 6 episodes per episode, first aired on 13 September 2013. The 5th series first aired on BBC One on 25 August 2019 and finished on 22 September 2019. The 6th series will be aired soon on June 10th on Netflix. Netflix, under an agreement with the Weinstein Company and Endemol, have acquired the rights to broadcast *Peaky Blinders* in America and around the world. Based on the data from imdb.com, *Peaky Blinders* has gained several international awards, such as BAFTA AWARDS' Best Drama Series in 2015 and 2018, as the most 'Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography in Episode of a Series for Non-Commercial Television' from American Society of Cinematographers, USA in 2019, as the 'Most Outstanding Drama - International from ASTRA AWARDS in 2015', and many more.

Peaky Blinders is a series that's hard to forget; its stylish production and outside-the-box creative choices make it stand out amongst other western series. With its smoggy, industrial Birmingham setting, unpredictable characters, and very specific style, *Peaky Blinders* is nothing short of a mood. It was then until Netflix started to buy *Peaky Blinder's* streaming rights, the series became a famous hit, many people watched it and started to have *Peaky Blinder's* character, mostly Thomas Shelby, as their role model. Thomas Shelby has everything that makes him a perfect antihero. His bravery, his stoicism, and his ambitiousness throughout all seasons portrays of how far a working class can go. The writer finds it important to acknowledge that behind all of Thomas Shelby's acts of bravery in expanding his business, it was his traumatized self that causes him to develop such criminal behavior. Although *Peaky Blinders* and Thomas Shelby may be a fictionalized version of a brutal moment in the Post-War era, the psychological impacts of combat are still very much a concern until now.

1.2 Research Question

How does Post-War Effect or PTSD portrayed by Thomas Shelby on Peaky Blinders justified his criminal behavior

1.3 Purpose of The Study

This study aims to analyze:

1. The justification of Thomas Shelby's Post-War effect on his criminal behavior in PeakyBlinders

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on Thomas Shelby's story in Netflix series Peaky Blinders season 1-6. The reason why the writer chose Thomas Shelby is because he is the main character that plays an important role throughout the whole series. His character development, his personal background, his family, his love-life, his involvement in war is interesting to be discussed.

1.5 Significances of The Study

The writer hopes this study would be useful to be a reference study or further research in examining the psychological change as the result of post-war effects. This study is also expected to raise the awareness that traumatic events will cause such big impacts in someone's life.

