

Abstract

Historically, the psychological wounds of war have been subject to a rite of emergence and burial. This cycle is multilayered and paralleled in different levels of experience: society, governmental administrations, institutions, families and individuals. The collective failure to witness the survivor's wounds, is yet another traumatic experience, adding to the cumulative trauma of the soldier. Psychoanalysis, a field paradoxically concerned with that which is hidden, is no exception to this deployment of repudiation. This paper explores the contributions and trajectory of Chaim Shatan, a forgotten Vietnam-Era psychoanalyst whose work was paramount in the psychiatric recognition and publication of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, in the Third Edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of The American Psychiatric Association in 1980. Shatan worked closely with Vietnam veterans as a psychotherapist, a rap group member, an advocate, and an anti-war colleague. Furthermore, he developed a theory of Vietnam trauma, weaving military madness, personality transfiguration, stoicism and slaughter. In 1972, he published an Op-Ed titled The Post-Vietnam Syndrome in The New York Times, where he outlined, among other symptoms, hyperalertness, terrors, mistrust, bloodthirst and challenges with intimacy. A scholar, clinician and activist, Shatan's efforts to reveal military malady permanently changed the way we think about trauma today. Despite his crucial role, he was left to suffer the same fate of the ignored survivor; his name for the most part unheard of in psychoanalytic circles. This project focuses on contextualizing, critically reviewing and demonstrating the contemporary relevance of Shatan's trajectory and work.