War Trauma and Addiction in The Hurt Locker

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The Academy Award-winning film ‘The Hurt Locker’ is a film related to war and its addiction. The filmmakers claim it is not a political film but rather just the story of what goes on in war and its detrimental effects on men at war and on society as a whole. The last century was probably one of the deadliest centuries in human history, but the end of the century does not indicate the end of war.

The Iraq War and Addiction to Combat

The film The Hurt Locker is set against the backdrop of the Iraq War. The United States of America was attacked in 2001, and this was the backlash that the Middle East and, most importantly, the American people, particularly soldiers, had to face. The war completely obliterated the fabric of society. The claims of weapons of mass destruction were never proven right. The American government thought they would be hailed as the saviors and liberators of the land, but this was never the case. The film depicted the dangers of war: once a soldier went to war, he was never the same again. Instead of running away from all the violence and deaths, he wants it more than ever after making a tour. War is an addiction that is hard to overcome.

Cinematic Realism and the Adrenaline Rush

The movie presents an exaggerated and embellished form of reality. No disrespect to any of the veterans and their experiences in war, but the depiction of war and the way they move and plan attacks was nowhere near similar to what the movie showed. Even though the director’s intention was not to portray a false image of the war, there were probably not enough people with first-hand experience of war to apprise them of the reality. The director gave the audience the experience the soldiers went through, and the technique of shaking the camera gave a realistic feeling. However, the way the bomb squad operated and the uniforms they wore were not the same as in reality. The state of Baghdad is abysmal. The film quite realistically depicted the life that existed in Iraq at that time. Buildings are destroyed; no normal human being is seen; in short, there was no life, no human, and they were just zombies ready to be killed by anyone. The film, from the beginning, gives a sense of paranoia. It suggests that the main character of the film might just be hallucinating about different things. But it was not a hallucination, as the director quite diligently examined every aspect of war. She wanted the audience to go through every facet of war as if they were on the field. This was

demonstrated when James, the lead character, was going to defuse the bomb, and his two other members watched the streets and balconies. They see a distant figure video-recording their activities. And after a few moments, a lot of people started watching them. The scenes from the shaky camera give a sort of realism. The director shot scenes inside the helmet of the soldier to let the audience know what it feels like or sounds like inside it. It is interesting to note that there are no drugs used in the movie, but the drug that the movie indicates is the adrenaline rush. The addiction is to facing death every day. James is addicted to that feeling. James is just an example; by extension of it, many soldiers are addicted to it. That is why, at the end of the film, James signed up for another tour after being sent home for his reckless behavior just to taste the adrenaline rush. The film shows that James is sent home, but he is not the same anymore. He could not stay at home because he was missing that drug that kept everything exciting. At home, he was living a normal and what someone calls a boring life. He could not deal with the monotonous life and wanted that same rush that he had got addicted to during the war. War changes people, and that is why there are numerous cases of post-traumatic stress disorder. The director of the film seems rather ambivalent about the subject of war and whether to end the war or continue with it (Bennett and Diken).

War Addiction and Drug Addiction Compared

The movie 'Traffic,' released in 2000, was, without a doubt, one of the most beautifully crafted movies of the year, with its subject touching on the politics of drugs. The movie is quite relevant to the Hurt Locker. Both films, i.e., Hurt Locker and Traffic, do not impose their ideologies and views on the audience but instead leave what the audience thinks about the subject matter to their discretion. Hurt Locker was about war and its addiction, whereas Traffic was about the war on drugs and cartels. Both of the films suggest that these conflicts ruined the fabric of society. War and drugs are addictive once a person gets embroiled in them, and it is extremely difficult to get out of the addiction. One of the messages both films subtly tried to convey was that it is a never-ending war. Traffic and Hurt Locker are based on reality. Even though Traffic is a fictional film, the story depicts the reality of drugs that have consumed everyone in their fold. Both films, however, convey the same message to the viewers, and that is, there are no winners when it comes to war and drugs. No matter how much one tries, it is futile to consider anyone who can come out as a winner. We all lose in this battlefield.

Works Cited

Bennett, Bruce, and Bülent Diken. "The Hurt Locker: Cinematic Addiction, 'Critique,' and the War on Terror." *Cultural Politics*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2011, pp. 165–88.