

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE "LIVING-DEAD" CHARACTERS IN  
WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *SOLDIERS' PAY* AND *FLAGS IN THE DUST***

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**Abstract**

The present research is devoted to psychological approach to William Faulkner's two selected fictions, *Soldiers' Pay* and *Flags in the Dust*. These two novels have been examined from different perspectives. This project however concentrates on three concepts in Freud's psychological notions; Thanatos, Eros, and Masochism which are presented in his essays named "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and "the Economic Problem of Masochism". William Faulkner portrays the post-war era and delineates its influences on the two main characters of the novels, Donald Mahon and young Bayard. Furthermore their abnormal behavior after the World War I can be studied based on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The effects of war and PTSD manifest themselves through their inclination to self-destructive behavior and their death wish which Freud calls it Thanatos. Investigating these two soldiers' mental apparatus indicates Donald Mahon is an introverted character who, after war changes to an isolated, forgetful, and passive person, while young Bayard being an extroverted character, changes to an aggressive person, with masochistic behaviors. Finally, a close examination of the lives of these two main characters reveals their paradoxical condition: "dead while living" like many modern men.

**Key terms:** Sigmund Freud, *Soldiers' Pay*, *Flags in the Dust*, Thanatos, masochism, PTSD, Psychological approach

## **1. Introduction**

William Faulkner was born on September 1897 in Oxford. He is known as one of the great writers who wrote remarkable novels as well as short stories, poems, and plays. Nowadays Faulkner's works have increasingly become popular and significant. He has been read so widely that a journal is published concerning his works, entitled as The Faulkner Journal. The journal is online and scholars from all around the world study and contribute to it.

Soldiers' Pay is William Faulkner's first novel. It was published in 1926. The story is about Donald Mahon, a young pilot who has just returned from World War I. "The novel is set in April and May 1919—just after the Great War has ended and during the "cruel" mythical season of T.S.Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922): the season of false renewal, hollow Easter resurrection, and unfulfilled sexual desire" (Zeitlin 358). After publishing this novel, Arnold Bennett wrote Faulkner is a coming man. He has inexhaustible invention, powerful imagination, a wondrous gift of characterization, a finished skill in dialogue; and he writes, generally, like an angel. None of the American stars can surpass him in style when he is at his best (qtd. in William Faulkner Encyclopedia 360).

The main theme in *Soldiers' Pay* is the impact of war on people's lives, especially the war victims and veterans. The impact of war on William Faulkner was so profound that Knight said, "World War I preoccupied his imagination for the greater part of his career. It enters his poetry, his drawings, and his fiction, sometimes stylized in terms of a fin de siècle aesthetic, sometimes in contemporarily realistic tones" (443). Although he did not participate in the war, his works are affected by the Great War. *Soldiers' Pay* is not the only novel written by William Faulkner that is about the impacts of war. *Flags in the Dust* is also written about the First World War and its aftermath.

*Flags in the Dust* was originally published in 1973. The story is about young Bayard who has just returned to Jefferson, his hometown, after World War I. Furthermore, it deals with his problems that are actually the outcome of his participation in war. William Faulkner called the novel *Flags in the Dust*, but when he sent it to Horace Liveright (the publisher), he rejected and refused to publish it. Finally, the name of the novel was changed to *Sartories* and who changed the title it is not known. It is worth mentioning that, *Sartories* is shorter than the original text. According to Ruppensburg believes "*Sartories/Flags in the Dust* occupies a crucial place in Faulkner's development as a novelist. In it he displayed for the first time his true power as a literary artist" (346).

As mentioned previously, one of the significant themes in *Soldiers' Pay* and *Flags in the Dust* is the impacts of World War I on soldiers and civilians. That is why a study to investigate the mental apparatus of the main characters based on Freud's psychology is very illuminating. This research aims to examine William Faulkner's above mentioned novels. It intends to take psychological approach to investigate Freud's death theory in the life of the two main characters in the mentioned novels. This study attempts to introduce Sigmund Freud's concepts of Eros, Thanatos, and masochism, in addition it examine how these notions affect the main characters' mental apparatus. It will also study the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and examine the characters' behavior through PTSD.

William Faulkner's works illustrate different themes such as the decline of the south, racism, and post-colonialism. Also they depict different cultural, social, psychological problems. He is among the prominent writers who are skillful in demonstrating different aspects of his

characters. The characters of Soldiers' Pay and Flags in the Dust can be analyzed from many different perspectives. However the traumatic experiences that both of the two characters had, death tendency empowered in them as a result of the decline of life force (Eros) that turned them into "Living-Dead" men.

This research as mentioned above is going to investigate this death inclination in these two characters, Donald Mahon and young Bayard, after they returned home from war. Freud's theory of Thanatos which is the death drive will be helpful in having better understanding of these two characters. This investigation shows that death drive (Thanatos) in Bayard manifests itself in his Masochism and in Mahon shows itself in his hopelessness, passivity, and inactivity. William Faulkner's more famous novels such as *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *The Light in August* have been under frequent investigation. They have been examined from different perspectives including dialogic, narrative techniques, existentialism, post-colonialism, racism, and so on. *Soldiers' Pay and Flags in the Dust*, however, have received little attention in contemporary critical observations.

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Sigmund Freud is known as one of the great figures of psychoanalysis in twentieth century: "the twentieth century has been called the Freudian century and whatever the twenty-first century chooses to believe about the workings of human mind. It will be, on some level, indebted to Freud" (Thurschewell 1). Freud's concepts are influential not only in psychology and psychoanalysis but also in the realm of art and literature. They have also played a significant role in literary criticism. According to Lionel Trilling, Freudian psychology is the most significant account that is influential in the understanding of human psyche and "deserves to stand beside the chaotic mass of psychological insights which literature has accumulated through the centuries", his psychology has also been a base on "which the poet has always exercised his art" (95). According to Trilling, Freud believed that, poets and philosophers reflect the unconscious in their works, something Freud discovered as a scientific base for the study of the unconscious. As a result Freud, inspired literature and was inspired by it. According to many critics, Freud's theories have helped literary criticism to have a better understanding of the author's life experiences that inspired him to create new characters. Moreover, psychoanalytical literary criticism primarily was based on methods introduced by Freud.

Freud's notions are still among the most debatable ones; "it [psychoanalysis] provides a method for examining the hidden motives that drive even the most apparently objective undertakings, such as scientific endeavors" (Thurschwell 11). Some critics have refuted Freud's hypotheses while others have accepted and even developed them. Influenced by literary texts, Sigmund Freud innovated a new and complex way in reading and interpreting literary works. As Trilling observes: the mere experiences of authors do not necessarily enrich his works, the poetic qualities of Freud's own principles can however broaden and complicate them (111).

Freud was always preoccupied with traumatic and stressful situations in the life of his patients which were so recurring in the life of twentieth century man.

### **2.2 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Everyone during his life may experience traumatic and disastrous events, that have devastating effects on his psyche and consequently on his life. These effects can afflict him for a long time

and have different names. One of these kinds of disorder is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Barbour argues that PTSD "is an anxiety disorder that some people get after witnessing or experiencing a violent, disturbing, or extremely frightening event. The event is typically one that involves a real or threatened injury or death and causes feelings of extreme fear, hopelessness, or horror" (9). There are different kinds of symptoms which depending on the sufferers show themselves in different ways. These symptoms are divided into three categories: Avoidance, Intrusive, and Arousal symptoms. As Perica points out "It [PTSD] is a clinical diagnosis which describes a variety of symptoms that have one trigger in common: a trauma" (17).

In some cases, patients flash back to their past experiences and whatever they see may remind them of the traumatic event, these are called intrusive symptoms. They avoid having relationship with the people who were in the scene. These symptoms are referred to avoidance symptoms. Patients may feel angry and they cannot control their anger, furthermore, they feel all the world is against them. These symptoms are called arousal symptoms. PTSD also causes different problems including depression, anxiety, addiction, and deficiencies in communication with others even their family members.

### **2.3 Sigmund Freud's Concepts of Eros and Thanatos**

In order to have a better understanding of the problems caused by PTSD in these two novels, one of the concepts introduced by Freud, has been applied to tackle the remnant of what has been past and gone in the two soldiers' lives. In his early works Freud suggested that all activities are done to fulfill one's desires, but after a while this pleasure principle will be replaced by reality principle. Reality principle postpones the fulfillment of desire, this is because the real situations are totally different, and we should be patient to satisfy our needs and wishes. Later in "Beyond the Pleasure Principles", Freud introduced an important instinct called death instinct.

According to Freud's hypothesis, there is an instinct that tends to return and repeat primary and inorganic things or activities: "The elementary living entity would from its very beginning have had no wish to change; if conditions remained the same, it would no more than constantly repeat the same course of life" ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 44). This tendency is born by human beings. Freud concluded that if the purpose of all human is to return to their inorganic condition, then "the aim of all life is death" (44). Ira Brenner states "[Repetition Compulsion] was therefore fuelled by an innate drive for mastery, sameness, reduction of inner tension, and a movement towards ultimate peace: the eternal sleep of death" (109).

Ikonen and Rechartd claim "we think that Freud's description of the process in the struggle between fragile life and inorganic nature is a description of the unyielding desire for peace in the mind of man" (95). Freud claimed men's instincts aim to reach death, and struggle to lead him to his death, however, he thinks this is not true for all his instincts. Sexual instincts are different, they are self-preservative and they protect themselves in order to live a longer life. The sexual instincts seek to regenerate the elementary processes. Although Freud in his previous essays claimed that there is an internal instinct which leads us toward "perfection" and "sublimation".

The instincts which watch over the destinies of these elementary organisms that survive the whole individual, which provide them with a safe shelter while they are defenseless against the

stimuli of external world, which bring about their meeting with other germ-cells, so on—the constitute the group of sexual instincts (Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 46).

Later, Freud introduced and differentiated between the two instincts, those that lead the living toward death and those (sexual instincts) that try to regenerate life. Freud believed if death is something which organic entities will gain later, so the inexistence of inborn death instincts from the very beginning of life will be denied: "The person died because something inborn and inherent to human existence necessitated that he dies. It was not bad luck that brought about death, but a built-in tendency, integral to human life" (Razinsky 139). So death is something which exists within us, and born with us.

Another significant concept that Freud has discussed is the concept of masochism.

#### **2.4 Sigmund Freud's Concept of Masochism**

Elaborating an obvious explanation for Masochism was challenging for Sigmund Freud and his contemporaries; there were different debates on finding out a definition for masochism as well as its significance in human life.

In "the Economic Problem of Masochism", Freud suggested three different types of masochism: erotogenic, feminine, and moral masochism. Erotogenic masochism refers to the sexual pleasure, feminine masochism refers to the feelings that the sufferer wants pain, to be treated as a child, and to feel pain in sexual acts. Moral masochism is not related to sexual acts, what is important about moral masochism is the nature of suffering and pain itself. In this kind of masochism the sufferers feel guilty and they wait for punishment.

Generally, masochist suffers from an unconscious guilt and in order to get rid of this feeling of guilt, he desires to have pain. He chooses suffering to relieve himself from the guilt-feeling, but the most significant part of punishing oneself is that they feel pleasure out of pain.

The following part in this essay is going to examine how William Faulkner manifests the indication of mental problems in the lives of Donald Mahon and young Bayard after coming back from W.W.I.

#### **3.1 The Strife between Eros and Thanatos in William Faulkner's Two Selected Novels**

Here the similarities and differences between the two main characters of *Soldiers' Pay* and *Flags in the Dust* are examined. Both characters psychologically have tendency toward death. These male protagonists suffer from traumatic neurosis. The Great War affects their psychic apparatus in different ways. Thanatos governs the function of their mind and the power of Thanatos leads the above mentioned characters to their other psychological disorders. We will see that Donald Mahon and young Bayard cannot recover from the traumatic experiences of World War I, and that the power of Thanatos makes them behave differently.

#### **3.2 The Tendency of Death in Mahon and Bayard**

The struggle between Eros and Thanatos in *Soldiers' Pay* and *Flags in the Dust* is evident, furthermore, the presentation of negative forces is more than positive forces. Faulkner tried to portray this when, thematically, he emphasizes on the impact of W.W.I and its consequences on not only soldiers, but also civilians.

As Sigmund Freud stated in "the Ego and the Id", in every human being "both kinds of instincts [Eros and Thanatos] would be active in every particle of living substance, though in unequal proportions" (3975). There is always a struggle between Eros and Thanatos, but the

mental state of characters decide which one should be more powerful than the other one. How Thanatos becomes influential and is able to control the central characters' mental processes will be discussed in the proceeding parts of this section.

It seems that both soldiers have a tendency towards death. However, analyzing the main characters of these two novels through the lens of Freud's psychology reveals the fact that both characters had this inclination to death even before taking part in the war.

Before going to the war, the Thanatonic forces are control Donald Mahon's and young Bayard's psychic events. Donald Mahon behaves differently from other characters. For example in chapter two of the novel, before his homecoming, his father and Mr. Jones are talking about one of Donald's photo when he was 18, we learn that in this photo Donald is without coat, and cravats. Although the photo was taken before he went to the war, his young face reflects death (Soldiers' Pay 56; ch. 2).

Analyzing *Flags in the Dust* indicates young Bayard's mental processes is also influenced by what he experienced before the Great War. One of the causes that empower Thanatos was the death of the loved ones. Some critics claim that writing of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" was a result of the traumatic events Freud had experienced such as the loss of his brother, his daughter, his friend and also the influence of World War I (Razinsky 148).

Like Sigmund Freud, young Bayard, before going to war, also experienced the loss of his parents, his wife, and child at the childbirth and also the loss of his twin brother, John, in the war, about which he feels guilty. These negative experiences gave way to Thanatos; as a result of which he tried hard to achieve an authority to control his emotional and intellectual procedures.

In addition to his personal traumatic experiences, and based on his experiments on soldiers who returned from W.W.I, Freud came to realize that such soldiers have tendency to repeat the traumatic events they have seen and experienced. The most unpleasant incident that young Bayard experienced occurs at the moment of his twin brother's death. As soon as he comes back and sees his grandfather, he starts talking about John's death (*Flags in the Dust* 41-43; ch. 1). The fact that he talks about his brother's death in several parts of the novel confirms Freud's notion of "Compulsion to Repeat". The shocking state of young Bayard's memory about the death of his brother makes it difficult for him to set his mind free from this sorrowful incident.

There is always a death instinct in everyman's psychic events which is aggravated by events. In *Soldiers' Pay*, William Faulkner portrays Donald Mahon as a pilot who is injured badly and returns home as a result. His behavior is affected by events he has witnessed and experienced. The first thing the reader notices about Donald is the scar on his forehead. His forehead scar indicates not only the physical pain that war inflicts on soldiers, but also his mental pain. As mentioned previously Donald's and young Bayard's homecoming also affects the lives of other characters. Donald Mahon's scar affects the way other people treat him. When Gilligan and Mrs. Powers see Donald, they worry about other people's reaction to Donald. Moreover Faulkner's portrayal of Donald Mahon's scar is again indicative of death and life in his face; They looked at his face, young, yet old as the world, beneath the dreadful scar. Even Gilligan's levity left him.

'My God, it makes you sick at the stomach, don't it? I wonder if he knows how he looks? What do you reckon his folks will say when they see him? Or his girl—if he has got one. And I'll bet he has' (*Soldiers' Pay* 25; ch. 1).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, before examining soldiers, Freud believed all men's mental activities and processes are done to satisfy their desires and are based on the pleasure principle. But the people who fight in war do not see any kind of pleasure in it. In *Soldiers' Pay*, the characters who have participated in the war experience the reality and the actual nature of the war and as the result, they find no glory and honor in it. William Faulkner portrayed the world as a worthless place to live in through the eyes of Donald Mahon and young Bayard. According to Faulkner "Donald Mahon, knowing Time as only something which was taking from him a world he did not particularly mind losing, stared out a window into green and motionless leaves: a motionless blur" (*Soldiers' Pay* 126; ch. 4). Both characters take part in the war to find peace, something that they cannot find in the modern society and their surroundings, but they are not successful in achieving what they are looking for.

As it is clarified by Hodgkin due to the fact that young Bayard is traumatized by the events he had seen and experienced, he wants to change the world into a better place. He wants to fight the agony of post-war modern era (651). Because he fails to achieve his desired result, he comes back home, and starts to think of another way which is more tangible and will bring about a peaceful mind, that is death. In fact homecoming, the only thing that haunts his mind and whatever he does, is an internal tendency towards death. Furthermore, his return disrupts the life of other characters who feel differently about death. They think of death as an external notion, as an issue that will not happen for them and it is just for others, but for the soldiers who return with PTSD and shell-shock, like Donald Mahon and young Bayard, death is a palpable and becomes an inevitable and familiar issue of life.

Donald Mahon and young Bayard realize that life is devoid of affection and a sense of belonging and they feel no conformity with other characters. In *Soldiers' Pay*, the people who come to visit Donald talk about everything but him. He on the other hand shows no association with them. As a veteran he does not receive the gratitude and respect that deserves.

There is another reason that shows the force of Thanatos in Donald; loneliness. While there are people around him either to visit him or take care of him, he cannot understand them and does not feel comfortable with them and is therefore reluctant to communicate with them. As a result of all these, he feels lonelier, abandoned, and dissatisfied, which indicates the triumph of Thanatos over Eros.

So is the case with young Bayard, who refuses to communicate with other characters and prefers to be alone and not to talk with others. For example when Miss Jenny and Narcissa are sitting in Miss Jenny's living room, young Bayard comes and Miss Jenny wants him to join them and talk with them, but he pretends that he does not know Narcissa and shows no interest to stay and talk to them (*Flags in the Dust* 74).

Thanatos and Eros are two forces in people's subconscious. Although men are not completely conscious of their existence, they have authority over people's mind. Donald Mahon and young Bayard come back home like Zombies; physically alive, but mentally dead. Their state of mind is indicative of Freud's claim about the coexistent of Eros and Thanatos in men's psyche, "The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death; and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends" ("The Ego and the Id" 3974). The conflict between life and death instincts is obvious in Donald Mahon's and young Bayard's state of mind. All their actions and behaviors show the domination of Thanatos. Although the family members of these two

characters try to reduce the mental obsession of them, they fail. In other words, not only is Thanatos powerful in them but also any attempt to empower Eros fails.

### **3.3 Failure to Empower Eros in Donald Mahon and young Bayard**

Other characters try to help young Bayard come back to normal life and hence empower Eros in them. But, unfortunately they fail in such attempts. Likewise, in *Soldiers' Pay*, Mrs. Powers and rector try to persuade Cecily to visit Donald and to make him feel better. They want Cecily to serve as a life force for Donald. Ironically however what Donald thinks about and is after is the eternal peace which comes with death. Donald's father is a hopeful character, evermore; Eros is more powerful than Thanatos in him.

Just like the rector in *Soldiers' Pay* who wants to assist Donald not to think about death, old Bayard in *Flags in the Dust* has the same function. It is evident in Horace's and Narcissa's words that old Bayard hates automobile, but in order to help young Bayard to change his self-destructive behavior, whenever young Bayard wants to drive his car, old Bayard goes with him (*Flags in the Dust* 162; ch. 3. Old Bayard's accompaniment however, cannot strengthen Eros in young Bayard.

Another factor that plays a significant role in defining and understanding Eros, is the libido and sexual instincts. As Freud asserted in his early works self-preservative instincts refer to those instincts by which all men keep their beings safe from any destruction and harm, and sexual instincts are those by which human beings procreate and assure their species' survival.

The sexual instinct does not have any function for Donald Mahon and young Bayard. They do not show any sexual inclination to the women who are around them. The sexual life and activity for them has ended and they do not seek the pleasure in it. Donald shows no love and sexual inclination toward Cecily, Margaret, and Emmy, whom he used to like. Likewise, Young Bayard does not show much affection toward Narcissa or the child that will be born.

The psychological wounds of Donald and young Bayard inflicted by W.W.I and modern life cause them to seek peace and hope in another life. Even marriage does not kindle any hope and life force in them. On one side of the marriage brings joy for others. For Donald and young Bayard however there exists a hidden shadow of death. For them Eros is not active. The effects of the Great War lead them back to their inorganic state of mind which death is. In fact, Thanatos nullified their lives. Accordingly, in the last chapter of *Soldiers' Pay* William Faulkner describes two important factors in men's life:

SEX and death: the front door and the back door of the world. How indissolubly are they associated in us! In youth they lift us out of the flesh, in old age they reduce us again to the flesh; one to fatten us, the other to flay us, for the worm. When sexual compulsions are more readily answered than in war or famine or flood or fire? (*Soldiers' Pay* 246; ch. 9).

Death instinct is reflected differently in the two characters. In young Bayard in his masochistic behavior and in Donald Mahon in his passivity. This issue will be examined in the following part.

### **3.4 Bayard's Masochism (Self-Destructive Tendency)**

Young Bayard returns from war without his twin brother. Although he is not responsible for John's death, he feels a sense of guilt for not being able to save him; a feeling he cannot get rid of. As mentioned in chapter two, in "The Economic Problem of Masochism", Sigmund Freud

introduced three different types of masochism, the third kind of which is moral masochism. It is not related to sexual pleasure and satisfaction, but to the guilt-ridden unconscious, i.e. a person feels guilty, without knowing why. In such a case, a sufferer seeks punishment and suffering in order to free himself from this feeling.

The sense of guilty because of his brother's death does not leave young Bayard alone. Rather, it leads him to a self-destructive behavior, a behavior that can be studied through Freud's term "moral masochism".

Once he comes back home and sees his grandfather, the first words he says are about his twin brother;

'I tried to keep him from going up there on that goddamn little popgun,' He said at last with brooding savageness. Then he moved again and old Bayard lowered his feet, but his grandson only dragged a chair violently up beside him and flung himself into it. His motions were abrupt also, like his grandfather's, but controlled and flowing for all their violence (Flags in the Dust 41; ch.1).

And as Katherine C. Hodgin claims "Bayard, just as the Byronic hero, suffers by learning guilt for grievous crime" (650). The feeling of guilt which Bayard repressed leads him toward suffering, the type of suffering that Freud called moral masochism.

In order to reduce his unpleasant feeling, young Bayard goes to Memphis and buys a car. The car becomes an appliance for his masochistic behaviors.

Bayard drives his car recklessly and puts himself in big trouble; something that he keeps doing. As discussed in chapter two, masochism can be a result of death drive. And one of the features that manifests the destructive and harmful motives in man's behavior is the repetition compulsion. Gedo points out that "In everyday discourse, we tend not to take primary masochism into account; we are more likely to speak of masochism when we encounter repetitive maladaptive behaviors that strike patient and observers alike as motivated by a need to seek pain or loss" (139). Bayard's repetitive masochistic behavior is apparent in Narcissa's speech about young Bayard; "'Yes. But he's here. He's got a racing automobile and he spends all his time tearing around the country. We are expecting every day to hear he's killed himself in it'" (Flags in the Dust 161; ch. 3).

Young Bayard is an example of many soldiers who took part in different wars and witnessed many disastrous and unfortunate events such as the death of their loved ones or other soldiers. Young Baard acts masochistically to reduce the unpleasant feeling he has, and to relieve his conscience of the guilt he feels. The succeeding section of this essay is going to investigate the significant impact of war on Donald Mahon.

### 3.5 Mahon's Inactive and Passive Personality

Donald Mahon is portrayed as a character who rarely speaks in the novel, in fact his characteristic and behavior is revealed through other character's ideas and speeches. Donald behaves in such a way that indicates he has no tendency to change, and suffers from "Repetition Compulsion" according to Freud.

His manner and actions shows he is ineffectual, indifferent, and does not care about anything. Faulkner describes Mahon through the eyes of another character Mrs. Powers:

She [Mrs. Powers] could hear Mahon's breathing and she found a light switch with her fingers. Under his scarred brow he slept, the light full and sudden on his closed eyes did not disturb him.

And she knew in an instinctive flash what was wrong with him, why his motions were hesitating, ineffectual (Soldiers' Pay 31; ch. 1).

Donald has no role in the decisions that other make for him. Gilligan and Mrs. Powers accompany him in order to take care of him, but he does not seem to care. All other characters try to help him. They even make decisions for him, for example his father and Mrs. Powers decide for his marriage. His father thinks the only remedy for him is the marriage, and Mrs. Powers decides the only thing that he wants is marriage without asking his idea about it. Besides Mrs. Powers and the rector try to choose a wife for him. He is not interested in anything that happens around him. After his marriage, his talk to Gilligan shows his disinterestedness and his passivity.

Mahon said:

'Well, Joe, I'm married at last.'

'Yes,' answered Gilligan. His careless spontaneity was gone. Even Mahon noticed it in his dim oblivious way. 'I say Joe.'

'What is it, Loot?'

Mahon was silent and his wife took her customary chair, leaning back and staring up into the tree. He said at last: 'Carry on, Joe.' (Soldiers' Pay 231; ch. 7).

Both Mahon and Bayard experienced painful situations that made Thanatos conquer Eros, the dominance of death instinct over life force. One more point should be taken into consideration that is the two different ways these two characters confront with death tendency. In Bayard's case manifestation of death instinct showed up through his masochistic behavior and in Mahon's case it appeared in a passive and inactive manner. Despite the fact that Thanatos instinct was active and more powerful in Donald's and young Bayard's subconscious before going to the war, the effects of the Great War made it stronger and caused their PTSD which will be discussed in the succeeding part.

### **3.6 PTSD in Donald Mahon and young Bayard**

Most of the soldiers, who experience war, undergo a change in character and behavior. William Faulkner created Donald Mahon and young Bayard to illustrate the impact of the war not only on soldiers but also all the people around them. Accordingly, both soldiers in the mentioned novels suffer from the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD symptoms however, show themselves in these characters' mental apparatus and activities differently.

PTSD patients do not love and enjoy what they used to love and enjoy any longer. Donald Mahon used to love Emmy, but after his homecoming he does not even remember her. He used to walk home from school with Emmy, go out of the country, and to folk's houses, when they were younger. They had a swimming hole in a creek and went there every day, (Soldiers' Pay 104; ch. 3), but after war, he is isolated and he does not care about anybody or anything.

Another symptom, in people with, is being unable to remember the events before their traumatic experiences. When Donald comes back, he does not even remember his father, a day after his arrival, when he saw his father, he thinks "That's my father? Sure, Loot. That's him" (Soldiers' Pay 90; ch. 3).

Such patients are incapable of remembering what exactly happened to them. They forget the details of the traumatic event that they have just experienced and caused their PTSD.

'I should think so, yes. But what happened to him? How did he manage to turn up like this?'

'He won't talk about it. A friend who came home with him assures me that he doesn't know, cannot remember. But this happens quite often, the young man—a soldier himself – tells me, and that it will all come back to him some day. Donald seems to have lost all his papers save a certificate of discharge from British hospital' (Soldiers' Pay 94; ch. 3).

As Margaret Powers in answering the rector's question responds to the question about Donald says, "nothing definite, expect that he remembers nothing that happened before he was hurt. The man that was wounded is dead and this is another person, a grown child" (Soldiers' Pay 97; ch. 3). All these symptoms are indicative of Donald's suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. As mentioned before, such is the case with the protagonist of *Flags in the Dust*. However, the symptoms in the later are different.

Young Bayard is a veteran who cannot escape from his traumatic memories. Psychiatrists observe that one of the important symptoms PTSD patients have is addiction either to alcohol or some kind of drug. In order to free himself from the burden of traumatic event he had seen, young Bayard becomes addicted to alcohol. A day after his homecoming, as soon as he gets up he asks Miss Jenny for a drink (*Flags in the Dust* 46; ch. 1). In the chapter two of the novel, young Bayard has an accident but even after his accident, he does not stop drinking: As Suratt states in *Flags in the Dust* the best way to solve the problem and to reduce the pain is drinking; "Yes, sir," Suratt repeated. "I always find the best cure for a wound is plenty of whisky" (*Flags in the Dust* 135; ch. 2). Thus, in order to relieve his grief over his brother's death, Bayard is addicted to alcohol and has been constantly drunk.

One of the indications of 'Arousal Symptom' is anger. In many parts of the novel young Bayard is shown as an enraged person. For example: when he arrives home and describes the traumatic moment of his brother's death, he gets angry and he raises his voice. However old Bayard warns him to be quiet (*Flags in the Dust* 42-43; ch. 1).

According to Barbour one of the most significant symptoms of PTSD is the tendency to commit suicide. In this regard, "experts agree that PTSD is one factor driving more soldiers to take their lives" (Barbour 67). Young Bayard's self-destructive behavior, the way he drives, for instance is indicative of his tendency to commit suicide. Regarding the fact that he has always been drunk throughout the novel, it is interesting to note that this is the only time and exactly at this time, when he is invited to drink, he refused. He wants to go toward death while he is not drunk (*Flags in the Dust* 391; ch. 4).

All these examples make it clear that Donald and young Bayard have symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This disorder as mentioned before, manifests itself through their indifference to the people around them, the activities they used to love, their hopelessness, and their detachment from the world.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Comparing the condition of life of the two main characters in William Faulkner's two novels, *Soldiers' Pay* and *Flags in the Dust* proves Faulkner's significance as an anti-war critic and a psychoanalytic writer. Freud's theories of Eros and Thanatos are compatible with the abnormal behavior of the protagonists in these two novels. The great pain and trauma of the war experiences of the two soldiers have been projected through their abnormal reactions. In *Soldiers' Pay* Donald Mahon manifested his misbehavior in his nonconformity, passivity,

sluggishness and his preference to be an isolated individual, and in *Flags in the Dust* young Bayard shows his abnormal behavior in his aggression, addiction to alcohol, masochistic inclination and suicidal tendency.

In the light of psychoanalytic revelations, the readers find out that Faulkner sees the root of these abnormalities in two strong impulses in man's unconscious realm: Eros and Thanatos. Faulkner criticizes the war-mongers of his contemporary society, by the portrayal of the suppressed impulses expressed overtly through his protagonist's misconductions. Faulkner with his skill as a psychological writer, created his main characters as helpless victims of war who have to bear the burden of a life as "soulless objects" or "living dead". Having no urge from Eros, and dominated by Thanatos, both of the soldiers returned back home, look forward to an existence which may not be worth living.

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