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WAR AND LITERATURE: A SURVEY OF AMERICAN NOVELISTS' REACTION TO CIVIL WAR AND WWI

Furrukh Faizan Mir

Ph. D Scholar, Dept. Of English , University Of Kashmir .

ABSTRACT

This paper makes a humble attempt at pointing out as to how barring the theme of love, war has since times immemorial been the kernel of literary utterance. The paper giving definition of war on various fronts, tries to tease out the relationship that exists between literature, something that is considered to be creative, and war a phenomena which is comprehended as destructive. Endeavour is made to bring to forefront the effect that war has on literature and interestingly the effect literature has had on war. The survey in this paper bears witness to the difficulty that writers (who being more sensitive) find it utmost difficult to express the horrible experience of war. Moving from this general framework the paper surveys critically the way American novelists have reacted to Civil and World War I in their own peculiar ways.



KEYWORDS: American Novelists' Reaction , Civil and World War I , national history.

DISCUSSION

Wars are events of distress and national history. They can be boring or stimulating for those who fight, a reason of fright and mourning for the families, or even a cause of bitter argument between ideologically incompatible groups. Be it epic, poetry, drama, chronicles or even historical expositions, they right from the primordial era of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Hebrew, have been inspired by, and often revolve around war, an occurrence which Heraclitus in *The Fragments of the Work of Heraclitus of*

Ephesus on Nature (1889), calls "father of all, and king of all". The part played by the Trojan War in the whole of ancient western literature is so remarkable that it can be considered as the single most central topic of literature inherited from early Western civilization. Similarly, even in early European literature which is constituted by sagas and epics, war is the central, and in fact the only theme in its enormous corpus. There fore, to take account of a similar connection between much of non-western people's oral tradition, as it is known now and their armed strifes with nearby tribes is then to assert the near universality of war as a

subject, and also as an impelling force for songs, dramas and narratives, be it oral or written. It may be argued thus, that barring the topic of love, no other literary rendering of human experience has exerted such a substantial effect on human behaviour as has war.

In modern times as well war has been treated differently by different texts, be it literary, non literary, chronicles, histories, military, archival records or philosophical treatise. However, it is fascinating to investigate as to what distinguishes literary expressions of war from all other expressions? *Memories and Representations of War The Case of World War I and World War II* Edited by Elena Lamberti and Vita Fortunati (2009), observes that the first trademark that sets aside literature is its insistence upon the experiential dimension. For literary expressions do not merely document

the cause and the act of strife but also examines the way in which they are lived, felt, used and handled by the participants. It is this subjectiveness that readers look for in an imaginative work as opposed to histories. Literature carries a unique satisfaction which is unlike the satisfaction gained from simply knowing facts and it even bears a streak of authenticity and truth that, paradoxically more objective histories hardly accomplish. This conformity and fulfilment comes from a powerful call to the readers' imaginations due to their identification with the characters and their feelings presented. What is more, the linear succession of the plot along with the inescapable elucidation of material due to pick and choose and thus shaping of the raw material leads to a fictional rationality that is likely to overcome formlessness thus giving consent to the experience. The narratives and chants in older war texts had without failing one central objective; the setting of standards of military way of behaviour and encouraging warlike spirit. Whether the modern war literature is directed towards this end or not is questionable, but it has for sure acted on the imagination of the youth and evolved a sense of national purpose and an aggressive psyche. This activity has been embraced all the more willingly because the modern war novel is a derivation of the epic and heroic modes of earlier literature. With self at the nucleus in modern literature, war texts have kindled men to a personal challenge. Presenting war as a proving ground, there seems to be a serious invitation to military life as it gets attached to personal and gender identification, as well as to the notion of manhood. Some imaginative writings have also made war a test for sexual valour, a competition for personal conflicts and a junction for solving personal and social problems, especially of identity within the national milieu (the Jewish soldier, the Hispanic soldier, the homosexual soldier). The struggle thus becomes the struggle with one's own self more than with the rival. Lord E. Lee in *WW II in Asia and Pacific and the War's Aftermath, With General Themes: A Handbook of Literature and Research* (1998) says, that in modern times the war literature has a supplementary task of demystify war and military with its behavioural, linguistic and other codes, and to hold up pacifism. This aim of presenting the war "as it is" and not as it is supposed to be, comes from a longing of tearing away the cover of idealism from an event that decades of histories have honoured. Besides this, war literature also becomes a mode of dealing with the war experience whose reoccurring anguish must be released, reexamined and via a manifest catharsis acknowledged. This battling experience may then act as a collective catharsis, and not just a private one. The issue of historical truth vs poetic truth also crops up. The manner in which writers deal with what should be told and what not, will resolve how much and what kind of truth their work conveys and by extension the readers' reaction.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL DEFINITION OF WAR

Von Clausewitz in his classic *On War* (1911), defines war as "an act of violence intended to compel our opponents to fulfil our will", and elsewhere he emphasized the continuity of violence with other political methods: "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse, with a mixture of other means". Sorel in *Reflections on Violence* (1912), defined war as a "political act by means of which states, unable to adjust a dispute regarding their obligations, rights or interests, resort to armed force to decide which is the stronger and may therefore impose its will on the other".

THE JUDICIAL DEFINITION OF WAR

Q. Wright in his book *A Study of War* (1942), recounts war as "a legal condition which equally permits two or more hostile groups to carry on a conflict by armed force". Eagleton in *The Attempt to Define War* (1933), after quoting diverse legal definitions of war from Cicero to the present, comes to the conclusion that "the preceding discussion leaves one with a great deal of uncertainty as to the meaning of war...(and that) to define war (juridically)... would present difficulties.

THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF WAR:

A legal definition of war as presented by Stone in *The Legal Controls of International Conflict* (1959) is: "War is a relation of one or more governments to at least one other government, in which at least one of such governments no longer permits its relations with the others to be governed by the laws of peace". A more extended and less explicitly legal definition is Sorokin's *Fluctuations of Social Relationships, War and Revolutions* (1937) concept of war as "the breakdown of the crystallised system of relationships" between the States; and

Elliott and Merrill's (Social disorganization, 1961) "the formal disruption of the relationships that bind nations together in (uneasy) peacetime harmony". Fried in *The evolution of Political Society* (1967) defined war as "the...condition which... permits two or more hostile groups to carry on a conflict by armed means".

Interestingly, Q. Wright in *A Study of War*(1942) brings to our notice the psychological facet of war as in Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), juxtaposing the swing between war and peace to that of a weather: As the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together; so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary.

F. Grieves in *Conflict and Order: An Introduction to International Relations* (1977), says that Hobbes' outlook gives rise to an enchanting question for the modern students, that is can peace be interpreted simply as the absence of war (using war in the sense of actual military conflict). For this the crucial point that we have to understand is that, peace and war as facts do not differ materially but rather formally, and are recognizable by their locus and instruments rather than by their intrinsic characteristics as is human behaviour. H. Kallen in *Of War and Peace* (1939) says that Peace it seems then, is the summation of a long standing unorganised and scattered conflict, war, is on the other side, an acute, unified, organised, and concentrated strife at the edge of a society's abode. War and peace vary not in the ends pursued but in the modes used to achieve them. As R. Aron has it in *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* 1966), they both interestingly lead to the continuity of competition and the alternate use of violent and non-violent means towards goals which do not differ in spirit. Behind the phenomena of both war and peace then, lies the very dimension of power, (Barbera, *Rich Nations and Poor in Peace and War* 1973). Such formulations are reminiscent of Ambrose Bierce's sardonic definition of "peace" as: "a period of cheating between two periods of fighting" (Devil's Dictionary), or Orwell's famous statement from 1984: "Peace is War". The most vocal upholder, perhaps, of this notion is D. Well's *The War Myth* (1967), who very sharply in it declares: "Notions of some limbo between war and peace are either contradictory or unintelligible". Or, as it was put in classical age as, *Inter bellum et pacem nihil medium*.

Having briefly defined war, lets now try to tease out in detail the equation that exists between war and literature. Creative writers have always reacted to the horrors of war and fashioned narratives out of it which act sometimes as warnings and often as elucidation of macabre experience which they have witnessed or personally experienced. The result is a literature which James E. Young in his "The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning" (1993: 185) says, argues for peace and warns against armed conflict by exposing its barbarity. It records the acts of war with as much accuracy as possible, and pays tribute to the dead. It asserts that war is voyeuristic, exploitative, and sadistic; it is interestingly also tender, selfless, and comforting for those who have gone through it. It is joyous and resentful; irritating and cathartic; propagandist and zealous. It is comical as well as sad. War writers often mourn their inability to narrate the truth of armed conflict, the indescribable nature of the subject matter, the insufficiency of language, and the inefficiency of their readers to comprehend. Talking about this issue, American writer, Tim O'Brien writes:

There is no clarity. Everything swirls. The old rules are no longer binding, the old truths no longer true. Right spills over into wrong. Order blends into chaos, love into hate, ugliness into beauty, law into anarchy, civility into savagery. The vapours suck you in. You can't tell where you are, or why you're there, and the only certainty is overwhelming ambiguity. (*The Things They Carried* 1991: 78).

Paradoxically, in demonstrating what makes war unfeasible to represent, O'Brien represents it. The reversal of what he understands as the usual order of things (though the definitions and sources of "truth", "right," "order," "law," and "civility" might be enquired) is matched physically in armed combat.

O'Brien's mention of inversions comes across in a story, which in a series of textual bits details the blowing of a man's body to innumerable chunks, *The Things They Carried* (1991: 78):

The booby-trapped 105 round blew him into a tree. The parts were just hanging there, so Dave Jensen and I were ordered to shinny up and peel him off. I remember the white bone of an arm. I remember pieces of skin and something wet and yellow that must've been the intestines. The gore was horrible, and stays with me. But what wakes me up twenty years later is Dave Jensen singing "Lemon Tree" as we threw down the parts.

A number of inversions can be noticed here. A GI, Curt Lemon (a name reminiscent of lemming-like behaviour, yellowness, timid, curtailed life and things gone acidic), has been tossed to treetops from the ground:

his world turned upside down, his body turned inside-out and organs externalise. "Lemon Tree," in addition to invoking his name, refers to the Peter, Paul and Mary song of that title. With this allusion, O'Brien suggests that the GI's organs, which his colleagues must symbolically harvest from the tree, have transformed into fruit. But war's surreal inversion is not just limited to the human body but buildings crumble, personal space and private rooms get exposed to air. George MacBeth's poem *The Land-Mine* (1967) describes this effect beautifully:

It brought the garden to the house
And let it in. I heard no parrot scream
Or lion roar, but there were flowers
And water flowing where the cellared
mouse Wasall before.

In such a dreadful reversal, objects lose their character: solid turns to liquid, animals become vegetable, and the house gets a surreal, wild-like feature. On a gigantic scale, bombing, in the words of Robert Mezey's *How Much Long* (200:80) makes, "bridges kneel down, the cities billow and plunge / like horses in their smoke."

Linguistic and literary forms have always been very sensitive to the fragmenting consequences that war has on individuals, communities, lives, body, and the surroundings as a whole. What is more, writing can sometimes itself shatter very finely. An example is Jerzy Ficowski's *A Reading of Ashes* (1981:29) where individual words break into pieces like the Jewish tomb-stone :

Sandstone is good for
honing scythes
so all that is left
is a rib of stone
here a foot of stone
a tibia
there a shinbone
a bone of sto
a shank of st

The word splinters "sto" and "st" like the fragments of sandstone cannot stand by themselves: it is only through being sealed, though being uneven with other bits that they can have meaning. This issue of what happens to speech in political instability (such as war) when the inexcusable has to be excused through language renders the savagely brutal event that lies at the core of war literature. The prosecution of war, infamously, depends on a referential minimalism like "casualties," "collateral damage," "strategic withdrawal," and "displaced persons" and many more such terms to designate and avoid the intolerable. Considering this, one can say that the strongest moral assertion that the literature of war makes, lies in its strength to reinstall the catastrophic experiences that official languages hides. Even so, it gives some idea about the exceptional challenges that literary art faces—the hackneyed "unspeakable" so often associated with the experience of war is at times more meaningful than its familiarity makes it seem.

The British poet, Cecil Day Lewis, in *Where are the War Poets?* (1960) points towards an vital hurdle of expression unique to writers arising from the tussle between their general support for the war and their total disinclination to yield to the uncritical, exclusive, and restricted forms of patriotism that war tends to evoke in them. Graham Greene remarked in his novel, *The Ministry of Fear* (1943: 98), "that war is nothing if not an overturning of collective and humanistic hopes and values". The Polish wartime political prisoner Tadeusz Borowski in "Auschwitz, Our Home (A Letter)" (1976: 122), wrote: "how many men can you find in Europe who have never killed; or whom somebody does not wish to kill?" These writers are forced to articulate the unprecedentedly brutal and the senselessly cruel. Although the literature of World Wars cannot be generalised, it would be perhaps right to say that one of its widely shared disposition is the questioning of the appropriateness and capability of literature to render the enormity of what it records. "Less said the better," is the apt opening line of John Pudney's wartime elegy, *Missing* (1943: 12): "Words will not fill the post / Of Smith, the ghost". This is a poem about an airman shot down over an ocean, what is "missing" is not simply the much missed, but also the writer's trust in the capability of poetic language to express and admit that loss adequately.

Therefore the rhetoric of World War literature is essentially a kind of anti-rhetoric, and it is no less

powerful for all that. It seems at time impossible to see eye to eye with Pudney's comment, "the less said the better," especially in view of the extensive, remarkable accounts his contemporaries have left on us. Any declaration for the compensatory power of literary art has to be modest and hesitant in face of a war that extended the entire globe, destroying continents and killing millions of people; a war whose outcome the entire Europe had to bear so agonizingly and visibly for half a century, and which is rather still a part of our own lives. Martha Gellhorn, an admired American war correspondent supplies words that can serve as epigraph for any account of war literature when she launched her World War II journal, "The Second World War," (1988: 86) with an acknowledgement of failure: "These articles are in no way adequate descriptions of the indescribable misery of war. War was always worse than I knew how to say – always". In the examples listed above from O'Brien, MacBeth, Mezey, and Ficowski, the peculiar contradiction of war literature is clearly discernible. Destruction creates. Writing about war is akin to constructing or reconstructing a city. It is an act of creation, an act of clenching together. In the extracts stated above, destruction is arrested and suspended in literary form (through such devices as imagery, rhyme allusion, and juxtaposition). The literature of war, then, is both contingent on, and the opposite of, armed combat. The specimens scrutinised so far display the experimental, self-reflexive character of literature taken to its edge in the journey of representing the unrepresentable. Martha Gellhorn a pioneering American war correspondent as quoted in "Freedom Forum Europe Pays Tribute to Martha Gellhorn" (1996: 7) argues that:

If you can't change it (war) you must at least record it, so that it cannot just be ignored or forgotten. It is some place on the record and it seemed to me personally that it was my job to get things on the record in the hopes that at some point or other, somebody couldn't absolutely lie about it.

Next comes the argument for realism in war literature which emphasises that the facts must be delivered as tersely and objectively as possible, so that later on the accounts cannot be contorted. Formal embellishment and creative license have no place in this strict evaluation of truth. But what is enthralling to observe is that, the realist undertaking falters as soon as it states its terms. "fact," "accuracy," "objectivity," "truth," and "realism" itself are infinitely arguable concepts. But the realist approach has other problems. The more realistic the portrait of war's atrocities, the greater the chance of sadistic pleasure. It would be foolish to ignore the fact that war literature takes pleasure in violence. This is what David Bromwich in *Skeptical Music: Essays on Modern Poetry* (2001: 234) terms "the non-moral theory of art". Bromwich draws attention to the appeasement that can be taken in the rendition of agony and demolition, which is gained from a condoling engagement, from a "state of being held to attention by helpless feelings about someone else, who at the moment is visibly suffering." Bromwich in *Skeptical Music: Essays on Modern Poetry* (2001: 237) professes that war literature gives gratification to the reader because it fetches him or her "close to a scene of risk." The reader, safely faraway from the war territory, imaginatively experiences danger and distress and even envision terror greater than those delineated. Bromwich says that the experience may be positive, and even cheerful—and the reader does not necessarily have to be a sadist to feel so. Franco Fornari in *The Psychoanalysis of War* (1974) claims, that the war experience is in the unconscious of every individual. Moreover, the magnetism of power even when devastating, along with the actual psychological requirement to experience violence—a desire that arises from the makeup of an individual or from the violent feature of human species, may be supplemented by the honourable aspiration of not letting others do all the suffering and to make up for it through imaginary living. Just as guilt for living may prompt an ex combatant to re-experience in fiction his wartime memories, a sense of guilt on the part of those who could not fight either because of being too young or too old. This also helps in explaining the taste that some have for war literature.

At the extreme end then, there lies the danger of turning war into an aesthetic experience. Ernest Glaesar in wake of aesthetizing of politics by German writers, wrote in his novel *Jahrgang* (1902): "War is an aesthetic pleasure without compare". Marinetti as quoted by Catharine Savage Brosman in "The Functions of War Literature" (1992: 89) also wrote that: "War is beautiful, because it combines gunfire, the cannonades, the pauses the smells and the stench of putrefaction into symphony". Dealing and comprehending war literature in this fashion then turns the text into a site of rehearsal and reading becomes a task of approaching and challenging fears. Thus, the war writer acts as a knowledgeable guide to the 'scene of risk'. This is one of the main reasons why war, to a great extent requires subjective experience on the part of those who look out to depict it as compared to

other subjects (such as love, anguish, and physical torment). Eric J. Leed proposes in *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (1979: 74) that battle is "learned" through "physical immersion": knowledge of war is similar to sexual knowledge or like the skill to ride a bicycle, "acquired in the body." He further comments that in order to pen down about war and be able to guide the reader through "the scene of risk" one has to earn the right to do so. As Jonathan Shay states in *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1995: 189) that, "if the listener is predisposed to experience some of the grief, terror and anger that the victim did, the combatant feels that he is understood and begins to trust the listener".

Confining the right to write about war to those who have fought it, has denied women the entry to war zone. It has essentially been as nurses or caretakers that women have historically acquired firsthand knowledge of war. As a result of this, their writings give a restricted version as nurses or as maintainers at the home front. Privileging firsthand report of battle, however, has not dissuaded civilian witnesses from writing about war. On the one hand, we have diarist like Nella (1889-1968) who details the changes that World War II brought to domestic life in Britain on the other, we have people like Amrita Pritam (1919-2005), who in *Today I Invoke Waris Shah* contemplates on the experience of becoming an outcast in India after the partition. Such cases lead us to realise that the experience of war indeed lies far beyond the battlefield.

However, the fact remains that war texts collectively convey the transformative potential of war, which kills and wounds both physically and mentally, changes geographical borders, and often challenges the worth of age old concepts such as bravery, obedience and sacrifice. War texts also go on to show how wars bring about freedom (both political and social), and how they find new ways of creating art in times when those effected by war find old methods insufficient for rendering of its realities.

That is why Henry Green, [quoted in Mark Rawlinson's *British Writing of the Second World War* (2000: 77)], disturbed by Second World War nonetheless declared, "these times are an absolute gift to the writer". The literature of war thus created from destruction is a literature taken to its extreme, looking for extraordinary resourcefulness from those who want to represent it.

What is more, this act of recalling wars has proved to be even more demanding during the twentieth century. We all know that history and experience are read in time, both individually as well as collectively, but what is interesting is that, each time even though the fact remains the same, the past keeps on acquiring new meanings through remembrance; inevitably, it is compared to new backgrounds, to new profiles and to new remembrances. It becomes therefore impossible to propose an absolute vision of the past, especially if the event to be recollected influences both the individual and the public domain of a diversified populace, as in the case of remembrance of the two World Wars.

In his first war novel *The Path to the Nest of Spiders* (1947: 105), Italo Calvino calls memory "experience", and defines it as "the memory of the event plus the wound it has inflicted on you, plus the change which it has wrought in you and which has made you different". Thus memory, especially of painful events like war is complex, since it embeds more than just a single occurrence: it inserts sensible traces, and wounds that remain, and changes forever the identity of the individual as well as that of the nation that is reminiscent of it.

Astrid Erll in "Wars We Have Seen: Literature As a Medium Of Collective Memory In The Age Of Extremes" (2009), talks about two types of memories: Collective Memory and Collected Memory. Collective memory is a varied concept with media practices and things as varied as folk tales, monuments, historiography, ceremony, conversational remembering and organisation of cultural knowledge falling under it. Collected memory, on the other hand, refers to biological memory. It makes obvious the fact that no memory is ever completely independent, but always inherently shaped by collective circumstances: from the people we live with, the media we avail, the talk we have with our friends the books we read and places we go.

George Frost Kennan in *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890* (1979: 3), says that since the past is not given; One has to re-build and re-presented it. Thus, our remembrance (collective as well as collected) of the foregone events can differ to a great extent. This is true not only of what is recalled (facts, data), but also of the way it is remembered, that is, for the standard and meaning the past presumes. George Frost Kennan in *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890* (1979: 3) further says that there are countless ways of recalling the past: War, as an incident, which can be looked upon as a mythic event ("the war as apocalypse"), as part of political history (the First World War as "the

great groundbreaking catastrophe" of the twentieth century), as a traumatic experience ("the terror of the shells, fire, trenches etc."), as part of family history ("the war my great-uncle served in"), as a locus of ugly strife ("the war launched by the old generation, by the fascists, by men"). Such approaches of recalling are closely attached with the means of representation. Change in the modes of rendition may bring about changes in the type of memory we retain of the bygone.

Regarding the medium of the war novel four modes of literary remembering as mentioned by Astrid Erll in "Wars We Have Seen: Literature As a Medium Of Collective Memory In The Age Of Extremes" (2009: 338), can be named: the experiential, the monumental, the antagonistic and the reflexive mode. Experiential modes are constituted by literary forms that represent the past as lived-through experience, as in episodic-autobiographical memories of witnesses. Monumental modes as Edmund Blunden puts in *Undertones of War* (1929), are constituted by literary forms of representation that resemble representations of the past within the framework of the Cultural Memory. Symbolic systems of history, religion and myth are closely linked to the Cultural Memory. Literary forms that help to maintain one version of the past and reject another constitute an antagonistic mode. Negative stereotyping (such as calling the Germans "the Hun" or "beasts" in the initial English First World War poetry) is the most obvious technique of establishing an antagonistic mode. Prominent "reflexive modes" are constituted by forms which draw attention to processes and problems of remembering, such as by explicit narrative comments on the workings of memory (as in H.M. Tomlinson's *All Our Yesterdays*, 1930), the juxtaposition of different versions of the past (as in Edlef Koeppen's *Heeresbericht*, 1930), or highly experimental forms, like the inversion of chronology in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), as a means to represent the bombardment of Dresden.

The narratological classification presented here comprise of modes, not genres. There is, for instance, no such thing as a "monumental novel" per se, because without an experiential mode it won't be readable. There is also no absolute reflexive novel for the literary text would otherwise turn into an academic piece on the workings of cultural memory. In fact, the power of literature as a means of collective memory is based on the interaction among different means of representing the past in one single work of literature.

Having spoken about how war, a thing of demolition leads to creation of literature. Let's now discuss the untoward and immeasurable consequence war has on all creative literature. The most regretful outcome is of course the killing of a number of young literary men. Rupert Brooke, Harold Chapin, Frank Taylor, Alan Seeger, Walter Heyman are only to name a few out of the many who died. Clark S. Northup in his "War and Literature" (1917: 339) says that, the Moloch of war commands the sacrifice of the best. War does not only steal from us the large number of writers but it also immobilises those who remain. It is at once untoward in the sense that it right away ruins the writer whose imagination, stronger than that of most men to witness the terror and devastation of war, becomes deformed and inflamed so that he becomes incompetent of writing either assertively or nobly about it. The artist, as expected is the first person to suffer from war, and the last man to recuperate from it not only financially but more significantly in the matter of art as well. Northup further adds that the writer becomes so aware of the distress caused by the eruption of malice that his art gets overpowered by his feelings. An artist won't be able to put it in their writing until its memories have decreased and blurred. Thomas Hardy wrote his magnum opus *The Dynasts* (1889), some hundred years after the Napoleonic wars. A writer can't convey his feelings satisfactorily at the moment he is sensing them. Poetry is 'emotion recollected in tranquility'. It is true that one should not expect a great book too soon. Even Homer wrote his *Iliad* long after the Trojan War had become a hazy memory. Similarly, The Great Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), had taken place half a century ago when Tolstoy wrote his great epic *War and Peace* (1869).

Now let's ask another big question: What has been the effect of literature upon war? Before we respond to this let us recap in general the relation literature has to life? It is simply a record, a sketch of what has taken place? Not only this, it is to a large extent a projection of ideas into life, a warning, an incitement. Literature, then, does not tell us only about how men have or are living, but also how are they going to live in times to come if the present circumstances continue, and how would they live if these circumstances changed. St. John G. Ervine in his "The War and Literature" (1915: 92), says that literature being the work of the ablest, the keenest of thinkers, should not only a record but also inspiration. He adds that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), went a long way in defeating slavery. *The Song of Roland at Hastings* (778), helped a lot in giving victory to the Norman banners. Keeping all this

in mind, one agrees with alarm that in case of war, literature has not had a substantial restraining effect. We all admit that war is an enormous evil, of which the entire globe must get rid as soon as possible. What has literature done to restrict this evil, or to portray it in true colours? Though there are a few substantial pieces in literature which represent war in any, but ro-mantic terms. Nevertheless, as Clark S. Northup in his "War and Literature" (1917: 342) has it, the fact remains that for nine out of ten people, Napoleon is still a hero rather than a criminal who pad-dled through slaughter to his throne. Once in a while comes Lampzus with his realistic picture of the terrors of war, providing the cause of literature an incalculable service by correcting wrong notions. The call then is not that literature should be made subservient to morality; but the plea is that literature should be as true to life as Shakespeare is. So as one of the greatest assistance to peace, there should come into existence a literature of war which will treat war in all its phases, good so far as there exists any, bad as most certainly are. Let our writers then illustrate not only the magnificent exit from the battlefield, but also the anguish of the injured and the dying; not only the euphoria of the soldier's bride, but the distress of his widow and hungry kids. Only then will people get a clearer picture of war and be able to seize the truth as well as in their righteous fury ordain that the present war should be the last one. Even as modern authors seek to contest its logic, its honour and its image as a crucible of character, war continues to be a human experience, and thus is still a pri-mary subject for literature.

On top of that, even if the war writer is denouncing, implicitly orexplicitly the war expe-rience that he has faced or observed, one may say that, his potential to see the war critically itself is a function of war—that only those who practically as well as psychologically qualify the trial of courage offered by war see the tribulation accurately, even if their perception is sarcastic. For those who note down sarcastically the experience, war as a means of search for self-identity can acquire a value corresponding to it held as a testing ground in the ancient tradition. This carries the war novel back to its epic and heroic inception as an authorized mode of understanding, even if militarism it-self no longer holds the place of honour and integrity in the changed times.

As already discussed, warfare as early as Homer's *Iliad* has always been a principal literary theme and American literature seems no stranger to this. Beginning with James Fenimore Cooper, what would America's literary legacy be without *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), or *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). America has witnessed the greatest wars of all times namely, The Civil War (1861-1865), World War I(1914-1918), and World War II (1939-1945). It is quite well known that all of them have had an overwhelming effect on both the Ameri-can society as well as its literature. What is more, the resultant literary engagement regarding them persists to effect the present notion of war and its nature. David Lundberg in "The American Litera-ture of War" (1983), says that beginning with the Civil war, even hundred and nineteen years after its culmination, and the four wars that followed it, Civil War still maintains the record of being America's most expensive combat in terms of loss as well as physical casualties. Though no doubt, in return it did terminate slavery, placed America on the path of industrial supremacy and generated a new national identity. As an inevitable consequence, it also kindled a number of outpourings, mainly in the form of histories, biographies, and memoirs. However, these accounts didn't have a charm about them. They were forgettable and soon forgotten.

James Dawes in "The American War novel" (2009), observes that the only tantamount lite-rary rendering with which a majority of Americans associated Civil War was Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, a novel written in 1895, by an author born as late as 1871, therefore, having only a second hand knowledge of it. Thus, for much of this period Civil War literature went unat-tended. One had to wait till 1962 when Edmund Wilson came up with his *Patriotic Gore*, which continues to remain a marvellous introduction to the literary response of the Civil war. Blending history, memoir and literary criticism, it gave a fresh evaluation of some well known writers as well as some unnoticed writers. It is an intriguing biological thesis about the genesis of the Civil War. Wilson observes in it that the Civil War was an unfair strife, the result of North's inborn desire to extend and eventually control the continent. Nonetheless an outstanding consequence of this war according to him was the subduing effect it had on the style of American prose.

Another thing that we notice during this period is that, those who participated in the Civil War wrote about it in a new functional style, whereas those who just observed it from afar like Hen-ry Jamesand Henry Adams indulged in ambivalence, prolixity and irony, that went ahead in mirror-ing the dearth of self confidence and unassertiveness and also acted as a device of self-defense. This is well supported by Daniel Aaron's *The Unwritten War* (1973), although it is more disapproving of the Civil War as compare to Wilson. Aron's book offers a

systematic, detailed evaluation of some three dozen writers both from North and South, clustered under such captions as "The Malingerers", "Drawing Room Warriors" and "Combatants". What Aron finds after this detailed analysis is that most of the literary handling of the Civil War is disappointing, mechanical and frivolous making Aron ponder as to why did such a paramount national conflict fail to create a masterpiece of the status of *War and Peace* (1869). He wonders as to why didn't writers present the 'real' war of killing, starvation and ailment. As S.P. Dhanavel in *Critical Perspectives on American Literature* (2008), puts there could be a number of reasons behind this: lack of confidence in realist mode in literature, emotional and intellectual refusal of the unpleasant and possibly competition from field of journalism and photography. As far as Aaron is concerned he gives no clear cut answer to the query he raises, nevertheless, for him the Civil War "was not so much unfelt as un faced", its quintessence remained as the heading of his book propounds, largely unwritten.

To the point, yet more extensive ranging than the works mentioned above was Thomas Leonard's *Above the Battle: War-Making in America from Appomattox to Versailles* (1978). Leonard's survey is in agreement with that of Aaron, he observes that with hundreds of narratives about the Civil War published towards the end of nineteenth century, none supplied a graphic illustration of the physical terrors of the conflict. Not a single of them notices Leonard (1978), "confessed any confusion, hatred or fear in battle", "None dared suggest that the North or South had made any empty sacrifice". Almost all of the accounts were gratified with dwelling on gallantry and valour of the fighters, on their courage and tolerance.

Aaron and Leonard on the one hand, appear absolutely right in distinguishing the Civil War literature as mechanical and shallow, but on the other hand perhaps they are expecting too much from those who fought in the war. We have to understand that perhaps the union and federal soldiers were following the literary traditions of their age in choosing to subdue the repulsive facets of their war experience. The mid century American writers were indeed following the convention of being reserved about war misfortunes whether faced on the border or in the battlefield.

Thus, the literary realist of the postwar period, like John De Forest, Ambrose Bierce, and Stephen Crane, do put forward a harsh and often scary prospect of the Civil War. Yet they don't do it for any pacifistic grounds. As Leonard puts it, the realists' glowing account of warfare were meant to magnify the position of those who lived through the fighting, not to criticise the combat or the violence that went with it. For them then, as for almost all the Americans, war stood as the highest test of virility; it was something appalling and horrifying but still a means of demonstrating one's worth.

Since most of the literary versions of the Civil War presented it in a flattering light, it is not astonishing that no repulsion against the war itself emerged after 1865. Retired soldiers took a look back on their war years with endearment, remembering it as a period of unity, idealism and selfless dedication to their principles. One sees such an outlook mirrored even in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1887), William James's *The Moral Equivalent of War* (1910), and greatly in Theodore Roosevelt's zealous engagement in the Spanish-American War. Thus, during the early twentieth century, war was considered by a good number of writers to be a majestic and an illustrious phenomena. This perception however played a significant role in the literary response to World War I.

Nevertheless, WW I soon broke out in Europe in 1914. But what is interesting to note is that as John Ellis has in *Eye Deep in Hell* (1976), that even before the war began there already existed a widespread discontentment amongst people against the consumerist America. As such disillusioned young men became enthusiastic to embrace war which served as a means of fulfilling their ideals, adding aim, adventure and meaning to their existence, as well as for attaining manhood on the battlefield. As soon as the war broke out, the French, the English, and the German armies began to settle in trenches. It became quite obvious that it was a conflict unlike any other. Its magnitude scaled down all the foregone wars. What is more, battles began to be decided by weapons, not by mere numbers, success was achieved not by independent acts of courage but by resorting to machines, weaponry, guns and tanks. It is the shock of this realization which occupies the majority of subject matter in the American literature of World War I.

Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) points to 1916 as a watershed in the history of twentieth century. In just a period of four hours on July 1, some thirty five thousand were injured and more than twenty thousand Britishers were killed. No one was ready for the kind of slaughter that took place. The massacre was so prodigious that survivors could not communicate it in traditional terms. The outcome was an atypical

literature both from poets and novelists alike. This literature, as Wen Zhou and Ping Liu have in "The First World War and the Rise of Modern American Novel: A Survey of the Critical Heritage of American WWI Writing in the 20th Century" (2011), eschewed all the soaring sentiments that pumped up eloquence, that exalted war and consecrated death. War was now painted as terrible and nonsense. Suffering and disaster were described in an ironic, satiric and detached fashion. A spirit of bitterness and fury ran through all these writings. The emotional, intellectual and economic impact of war however never felt so severely on America as it did on Europe. The reason being that from 1914 to 1918 Americans at home were kept away from the realities of the war in France. In a period prior to radio and television, war appeared somewhat faraway and theoretical. The news of war strained through French and British censorship, was distastefully illustrious of the actual situation. Though works like Lord Bryce's *Alleged German Outrages* (1915) incorporated macabre accounts of children and women execution. Yet these acts were taken as apparent and unavoidable outcomes of modern armed conflict.

Charles Genthe's *American War Narratives 1917-1918* (1969), provides a bird's eye view of war books made accessible to American readers. His discoveries are in sync with Leonard's *Above the Battle* (1916). Both of them reveal that nearly all narratives from 1917 to 1918 concealed the true nature of fighting in France under a haze of romantic prose. They not only portrayed this war as a filthy, bloody matter, but also as a virtuous and noble enterprise that confers honour and cleans those who fight and strengthens their resolve to vanquish the detested Hun. One cannot help but to wonder whether the views of soldiers overseas about the war matched with those of ordinary people at home or not. Since not many American fighters had to suffer through encounters and spend good number of hours in trenches, followed by a triumphant ending of the war, they had no ground for interrogating the meaning of war or the resolution of their commanders. David Kennedy in his *Over Here* (1980) observes:

Not only did many doughboys accept without reflections the official definition of the war's meanings, but perhaps more important, they translated that meaning into their understanding of their personal experiences, and described those experiences in language transported directly from the pious and inflated pronouncements of the spokesmen for traditional culture. That language pervades all the vast "literature" produced during the war by members of the AEF.

The next stage in American literary response to WWI as put by Frederick J. Hoffman in his *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (1962), comes the phase of America's collective disappointment with WW I. Novels like John Dos Passos's *One Man's Initiation* (1920) and *Three Soldiers* (1921), E.E. Cumming's *The Enormous Room* (1922), *Ernest Hemmingway's In our Time* (1925) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) inaugurates this response. In them war is portrayed as detached, unheroic and savage. In Thomas Boyd's *Through the wheat* (1923) and *Passo's Three Soldiers* (1921), soldiers become mere insignificant cogs in a war machinery destroyed by machine guns, they became individuals who were at the clemency of situations far beyond their comprehension or authority, making courageousness an absurd notion. *Dalton Trumbo's Johnny Got his Gun* (1939), validates a sharp predicament of the hero and his stand for personal liberation which reveals him to be powerless in a world that hardly has any sense. What is more, as Philip Hager and Desmond Taylor observe in *The Novels of World War I: An Annotated Bibliography* (1981), that prior to World War all the western people including Americans saw the twentieth century as the golden era with its quick technological developments in industry, energy sources, communication and all modes of travel. Still beneath this gusto ran a streak of dissatisfaction. There was a certain yearning for the old conventional values, but they too came with a feeling of boredom. This feeling was oddly varied with intense idealism which ignited a desire for adventure and an impulse to accomplish something heroic and grand. This in turn led young men to participate and serve in the war under one or the other capacity. Nonetheless, it didn't take men long to understand the real truth of WW I, as Paul Fussel puts in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), "The next stage in American literary response to WWI as put by Frederick J. Hoffman in his *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (1962), comes the phase of America's collective disappointment with WW I.", it culminated the notion of progress and put an end to a world where concepts like honour and prestige were lasting and dependable. As a matter of fact, war led to an end of idealism for all those who were stuck and heady with it. The well admired opening lines of *Farewell to Arms* (1929) sums up the disappointment felt by many:

There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity.

Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage or hollow were obscure besides the concrete names of the village, the names of roads, the names of rivers, the names of regiments and the dates.

Interestingly, as Corelli Barnett has it in "A Military Historian's View of the Literature of the Great War" (1970), the combatants coming back from France in 1919 were neither disappointed nor pessimistic. They felt satisfied that they accomplished what they had gone to do that too at the low-est cost possible. In their brains they were a long way from the "Lost Generation" living in a world devoid of sense or aim. The exuberant spirit of American legion better conveys their state as do the characters in *The Sun Also Rises* (1929). Stanley Cooperman's *World War I and the American Novel* (1967), expresses that both *Willa Cather's One of Ours* (1922) and Edith Wharton's *A Son at the Front* (1923), reiterate the wartime hackneyed notions about the honour and prestige of combating the allied cause. This is more illustrative of the American attitude in early twenties than the outlook of the so called "Lost Generation" novelist. Unlike the English novelists, most of the American no-velists like Dos Passos, Cumming or Hemingway did not participate in the war, all three of them drove ambulance and their occupation was confined to merely carrying the injured from the trenches to secure places. However, their anti war response cannot be credited exclusively to these experiences, but to the response of most of the intellectuals and writers of the twenties which was a part of the greater cultural uprising which had got launched even before 1914. This "innocent rebel-ion," as Henry May narrates in *The End of American Innocence* (1959), set in as a refusal of the complacent hopefulness and impounding moral values of the nineteenth century. The war not only acted as a fuel to this revolt but also tempered its exuberance. It made many young men as Charles Fenton's "A *Literary Fracture of World War I*" (1960), has it distrustful about the possibility of a future salvation. For them, war, demonstrated beyond doubt the intellectually and morally dishonesty of their elders. War for them became a symbol of all that was not right with the western society. Ezra pound recounting this perspective in Hugh Selwyn Mauberly (1920: 78), talks about fighting for war as "An old bitch gone in the teeth, (for) a botched civilization...(for) two gross of broken statues...(and) a few thousand battered books".

Henry May in his *The Discontent of the Intellectuals: A Problem of the Twenties* (1963), shows how a lot of American writers were for sure effected by the war in a similar fashion but inte-restingly it did not by itself instil this sense of disillusionment in them, but rather the war paced up their doubts and apprehensions about the prevailing cultural norms of American society, doubts that existed even before United States took part in the war. In the later years of 1920's, the anti warfare perspective of Dos Passos and Hemingway held by a small number of "disillusioned" writers and intellectuals, started gaining extensive national acceptance. As the war years started to pass the pas-sion cooled down, and WW I was no longer thought of as the "Great Crusade". Hartley Gratten's *Why WeFought* (1929), *Walter Milli's Road to War* (1935) and *Charles Tansill's America Goes to War* (1938) all advocated that America was fooled into fighting. As late as 1930s, with the arise of fascism in Europe, with the Great Depression and Japanese hostility in Asia, led to a widespread feeling that WW I was a meaningless conflict and had generated more troubles than solved. Allen's *It Was Like This: Two Stories of the Great War* (1940) delineates that much of the war literature produced in 1930s like William March's *Company K* (1930), *Humphrey Cobb's Paths of Glory* (1935), and especially *Dalton Trumbo's Johnny Got His Gun* (1939) recapitulated the view that WW I was worthless. All of this went very well with the individual attitudes of the period. Interes-tingly enough, though the sources and objectives of the war were disapproved in 1930s, the feeling of national integration and commitment to a common cause amongst the civilians and the soldiers alike was singled out for admiration. What is more, William Leuchtenburg in his *The New Deal and the Analogue of War* (1964), exhibits how Franklin Roosevelt and his promoters consciously used war correspondences to encourage their endeavour to fight depression. They thought that just as America had conquered all adversaries in wartime through organization and management, so would they beat depression with identical approach and perseverance.

In the end, no doubt the postwar era was given its character by the convergence of skilful writ-ers, it is challenging to differentiate all of them. Neither can any simple categorisation of them be persuasive, nor would it be wise to pronounce a final judgment on each of them. In fact, this loose, factual distinction is helpful in preserving the identity of each novelist, and also indelineating roughly their formal literary responses towards their war experience.

CONCLUSION

This paper establishes that right from the time literature was transmitted orally war has been at the centre of man's literary expression. Barring love, no other experience has had such a drastic effect on human beings as has war. It shows how peace and war as facts do not vary materialistically but rather formally, and are identifiable by their locus and apparatus rather than by their inherent attributes. The paper answering the query about the effect that war has on literature delineates that no doubt war snatches the best literary minds from us, it also in turn being a phenomena of demolition leads inevitably to literature a phenomena of creativity. Answering as to what effect literature has on war in return, the paper establishes that literature hasn't done much to stop this evil called war. For stopping wars from happening in future literature will have to portray war not in romantic terms, glorifying it but portray it as it is, gruesome and painful. Coming to Civil war, the paper establishes that the Civil War didn't evoke the kind of response which is expected from a war of such calibre. Even then barring a few, majority of works regarding Civil War portrayed it in heroic colours. Moving to WWI, the paper goes on to show as how Americans who were already dissatisfied with the consumerist America even before WWI began, they found WWI as an ideal ground for realizing their ideals, adding sense to their lives, as well as an appropriate opportunity for attaining manhood on the battleground. The next stage in American literary response to WWI was Americas collective disappointment with WW I wherein war as seen as absolutely useless and nonsense. Finally, the paper doesn't enunciate a final judgment on novelist of the Civil and WWI, but is only a humbly attempt at roughly sketching their literary responses towards the war experience.

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