



A Bird's Eye View of the American War Literature

PREETI B. BHATT

Associate Prof.

Research Guide : Dr. Hitendra Vyas
Calorx Teacher's University, Ahmedabad
Gujarat (India)

Abstract:

If war is broadly defined as armed conflict between two conflicting factions, states, or tribes, then one would have to say that war has always been a part of human experience and is perhaps even a defining characteristic of human beings. Many people have pointed out that peace presents special difficulties. It is harder to define than war and it is more difficult to cultivate and maintain. Aside from being the absence of war, peace is often understood to include the stable presence of law, order, and justice. Law, for instance, is the product of centuries of patient human experience gained throughout the history of a given society. Justice is the fruit of reflection on the way humans relate to one another in society. A learned sense of justice cannot be acquired overnight. Social order follows from understanding, specifically from awareness that reliable, established patterns of behaviour are useful to both individuals and societies.

Keywords: American war, Human beings, Literature

1. Introduction

British literature begins in the twelfth century and provides a telling record of England's relationship with both war and peace. Early British texts praise war and the warrior's battle prowess, citing it as an opportunity to show greatness and valor. This attitude was dominant through the late nineteenth century, when technological advances changed the way war could be conducted, and therefore, how individuals responded to war. Imperialistic struggles, the world wars, and later wars in Vietnam and Iraq further distanced British literature from its earlier romantic leanings. Questions about the causes of war, the sacrifices required, and the end result of war have replaced visions of valor, bravery, and wartime adventures. The desire for peace has become as important to British war literature as war itself.

2. Premodern Britain

British literature has roots in the early Middle Ages, the period between the breakdown of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. Available sources of information about this period, from the fifth century A.D. to the fifteenth century, are often hard to interpret. They are written in a Premodern form of English, and the cultures represented in the works are frequently far removed from modern society.

The first major work of British literature was Beowulf. This poem is thought to have been composed in the eighth century A.D., but nothing is known of its author, and little is known about how it was written down and passed from generation to generation. The poem was probably recorded in something similar to its present form shortly after 1100 A.D.

The setting of the poem is the northern Europe of Anglo-Saxon, or pre-British, England. Warfare, especially on the sea, was a common fact of life. The feudal kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Anglo-Saxon England struggled to extend and consolidate their territories. They fought sea battle

after sea battle and undertook expeditions as far as to the eastern coast of Nova Scotia in North America.

It is telling that the subject of the first piece of British literature is a warrior hero. Beowulf, with its glorification of wartime heroism, leadership, and manly courage became the template for many subsequent British war tales. Hrothgar, the king in Beowulf, faces a grotesque monster, Grendel, who is destroying houses and people. Beowulf is from a different tribal group; the poem is largely concerned with his efforts to free Hrothgar's kingdom of Grendel and defend it against Grendel's equally terrible mother. After defeating Grendel, Beowulf is celebrated as a hero; he became an example of the ideal warrior for future British tales of war: "He was adventurer most famous, far and wide through the nations, for deeds of courage ... his strength and his courage."

In the middle of the tenth century, the Battle of Malden became the topic of a major Anglo-Saxon poem. This poem, like Beowulf, was saturated with military feats, and drew on inherently poetic raw material: a dramatic battle fought in 991 among the wheat fields of Essex, an English county. The attackers were led by the Viking raider Olaf Tryggvasson with some three thousand fighters. The Vikings made their camp on an island on the north side of an estuary, while the leader of the Anglo-Saxon force took a position at high tide on the south side of the estuary. A narrow causeway joined the two sides, and the Anglo-Saxons would not permit the invaders to cross to the mainland. The leader of the Anglo-Saxons eventually agreed to the Vikings' request that they be allowed to cross the causeway and fight on equal terms. A great battle ensued on level ground, and the Anglo-Saxons were defeated. Even though the Anglo-Saxons fought to the death, the Vikings triumphed.

3. Renaissance

Over four hundred years passed between the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and the next major war-related text in British literature, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485). During that time, Britain was gradually moving toward the increasingly centralized rule of monarchy and church, and moving away from feudal institutions loosely scattered over the Isles, in which lords owned fiefs of land that they then loaned to vassals. Europe and England were still predominantly agricultural societies, but the outlines of seafaring commerce, the growth of small cities, the creation of larger standing armies, and dynastic turf wars were slowly making themselves felt. Such developments, along with the buildup of an increasingly homogeneous-or similar throughout-culture, transformed the rough culture of Beowulf and Malden into the more familiar world of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.

Sir Thomas Malory's (1405-1471) *Le Morte d' Arthur* is a tale of medieval romance and chivalry that includes the knights of the Round Table, the search for the Holy Grail, King Arthur's wars against the Romans, and the loves and wars of all the participants. However, *Le Morte d'Arthur* pursues all these themes from the perspective of a later age, when the "modern world" was rapidly replacing the medieval world. The work is full of knightly combat and war, but also of romanticized events, lords and ladies, and great triumphs. Like Beowulf, King Arthur is an archetype, or model against which similar things are measured. He is a warrior hero whose feats illustrate the connection between leadership and battle prowess, a theme that was to persist in British literature for many centuries to follow.

Henry V was first produced in 1599 at the Globe Theater in London. It completes the retelling of the Rebellion of the House of Lancaster, which was at the center of the War of the Roses. The War of the Roses had been resolved by the House of Tudor's accession to the throne in the late fifteenth century. In 1485, Henry VII became king, to be followed by Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth, who ruled until 1603. That is, the War of the Roses, and the struggles of King Henry V, King Henry VI and King Richard III, occurred almost a half century before Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare's main source of material for his historical plays was Raphael Holinshed, who was using fragmentary sources himself.

The result was that Shakespeare was able to draw on history, but he also reshaped it. In Henry V, one of the greatest war plays, Shakespeare depicts Henry as an idealized king, making him masculine, generous, and visionary. In Act Four of the play, the English army is exhausted and licking its wounds, about to encounter the robust French army. King Henry's job is to inspire his troops and to show his solidarity with them before the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. Like Daniel, Shakespeare describes the privilege and pride of fighting for a noble cause; in Henry's speech, participation in the war becomes a bragging right for the soldiers:

He that shall live this day, and we old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors
And say `Tomorrow is Saint Crispin:'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
And say `These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day

4. 17th Century

In the seventeenth century, Britain entered the world of scientific investigation, colonization in America, complex conflicts within Christianity, and both urban and cosmopolitan literary cultures. Queen Elizabeth's reign ended in 1603, resulting in substantial emigration from Britain to the American colonies. As the century progressed, Britain saw the tumultuous reign of Oliver Cromwell (1653-1658) supplant the monarchy, with its persecution of Anglicans and Catholics. England would see the restoration of the monarchy in the last decades of the seventeenth century. The war literature of the century reflects these changes and upheavals.

Englishman Roger Williams (1603-1683) came to America in 1630, an ordained minister and missionary eager to join the Massachusetts Bay Colony. However, his criticism of the community's Puritan beliefs and its administration led to him being banished from the colony. He went on to found his own city, named Providence for his belief in God's care and direction, and became the governor of the colony of Rhode Island. He returned to England on a number of occasions, finding himself equally critical of religious intolerance under Oliver Cromwell's policies and laws. King Phillip's War broke out in 1676; it pitted Native Americans against settlers and left Williams discouraged.

Religion was at the core of these conflicts that Williams saw and experienced, as it has been for so many other conflicts. Williams's passionately hated religious and political persecution, as one can see in the first lines of his document, *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution* (1644): "The blood of so many hundred thousand souls . . . is not required nor accepted by Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace." It is no use, he goes on to write, in taking up arms against those with differing religious beliefs, as "they are only to be fought against with that sword which is only (in soul matters) able to conquer, to wit, the sword of God's Spirit, the Word of God." He argues against a state run on religious policies, saying that "an enforced uniformity of religion throughout a nation or civil state, confounds the civil and religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Though Williams's writing may seem quarrelsome, he is defending the cause of tolerance and peace. He had ample experience with war; he was in England during the bloody period when Cromwell overthrew the monarchy and in America during various Native American conflicts and King Philip's war. These experiences, combined with those of the religiously intolerant Pilgrim community of Massachusetts Bay that banished him, led Williams into his open and pacifist position.

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) was the Assistant Latin Secretary to the Council of State, a position in which he was exposed to the operations of government at the highest level. In that position, he served as tutor to the son of one of Cromwell's generals. Due to that connection and, possibly, to genuine belief, Marvell greatly admired Cromwell. However, because of Marvell's dependency on the leader

for his job, it is hard to know what his true feelings were. In "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" (1650), Marvell praises Cromwell's military vigor in a time when war and combat were depicted as glamorous and masculine, leaders were respected for their military prowess over their policies and laws, and peace was a time of boredom:

"So restless Cromwell could not cease / In the inglorious arts of peace, / But through adventurous war/ Urged his active star."

Thomas Hobbes's (1588-1679) *Leviathan* (1651) reminds readers that even philosophy has its political consequences. The origins of his book lie in what Hobbes felt he had discovered. Like the seventeenth-century French philosopher Descartes, Hobbes was certain that science and mathematics, especially geometry, were the proper tools for advancing human knowledge. Hobbes, a strong supporter of Charles I, the king who followed James I; as Hobbes worked to refine his theories, he became a victim of Oliver Cromwell's intolerance. Exiled to Holland, Hobbes went on to develop a materialistic and deterministic theory of human nature. He denied free will and the finer human emotions such as altruism; he saw self-interest as the overriding motive guiding human beings. He espoused a Roman proverb attributed to Plautus (c. 254 a.c.-184 B.C.) *homo homini lupus est* (man is a wolf to man). Given this view of human nature, it followed that an absolute monarch was the only appropriate ruler; only this kind of absolute power could guarantee the civility essential to society. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hobbes had much to say about war, which he thought was a natural human instinct. Peace, on the other hand, could only be achieved and maintained under the power of an absolute monarchy.

Samuel Butler, in "Hudibras" (1663), wrote a savage satire on a fictional leading military figure in Cromwell's army. Living in a time when allegiances to leaders were often temporary or even deadly, Butler was eager to mock the Puritan rulers under Cromwell's reign. However, given the nation's war mentality in a time of uneasy peace, he could not write a poem critical of the reigning powers without risking his life. "Hudibras" was not published until the crown was restored and Charles II was king. This long poem reflects its author's Royalist and Anglican leanings-like those of Hobbes-and his contempt for the Cromwellians with their Presbyterian conviction of predestined and fate. The poem is a bitter assault on Cromwell's military leadership: "Styled of war, as well as peace. / (So some rats, of amphibious nature, / Are either for the land or water)"

A military victory seemed to promise future wealth to the British nation. In "Annus Mirabilis," Dryden goes on to boast of Britain's trading power, writing "That those who now distain our trade to share, / Shall rob like pirates on our wealthy coast." This theme of war as the gateway to commercial development was relatively new in British war literature. The connection between commerce and imperialism will reappear as an important theme in works about Captain Cook and Vancouver at the end of the eighteenth century.

Thus far, war has been analyzed in terms of monstrous struggle (*Beowulf*), military prowess (*Le Morte d'Arthur*), exhortation and nobility of soul (Henry V), military triumph (Marvell's "An Horatian Ode"), and the fundamental battles of the human condition (*Paradise Lost*). In Dryden, there is the frank and rousing battle cry of commercial competition and market success.

The Earl of Clarendon (1609-1674) wrote yet another kind of war literature, a historical memoir. As an elected member of the House of Commons in 1640, Clarendon was initially a strong critic of King Charles I, but eventually changed his politics and began to support the Royalists. When Cromwell overthrew the Royalist forces in 1646, Clarendon went into exile on the island of Jersey with the king and the Royalist contingent. After the Restoration, Clarendon returned to England and served Charles II as Lord Chancellor. However, in the course of providing these services, Clarendon made the mistake of criticizing the king's extravagance, and he was exiled again. While exiled, he wrote *The*

History of the Rebellion (published 1702-04). This book, based on conversations with participants in the Civil War, addresses the British Civil War in which Charles I was taken prisoner by Parliament and finally beheaded; it also discusses the so-called Roundheads, who inherited the government of Britain along with Cromwell.

5. 1770-1914

The century of the British Civil War ended with revolutions across Europe and North America; of direct interest to England were the French Revolution (1789-99) and the American Revolution (1774-76). While the American Revolution affected British colonies, the British were also concerned about the French Revolution. The government feared the precedent set by the taking of the Bastille in 1789 and by the bloody persecutions that followed. The resulting massacres, widespread chaos, and dread in France led British conservatives like Edmund Burke to cry out for restraint and gradualism rather than for immediate and violent revolution. Burke articulated this view in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Though conservatives criticized the revolution in France, in its earlier stages it was a source of inspiration for some British writers because of its focus on freedom and equality. However, the Reign of Terror that followed the revolution and the oppression under Napoleon caused a gradual change in literary opinion.

6. The Eternal Female groan'd! it was heard over all the Earth

Albion coast is sick, silent; the American meadows faint! Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers and mutter across the ocean! France rend down thy dungeon!

Not everyone rejoiced at the prospect of war and revolution that seemed to threaten England in the wake of the French and American Revolutions. Romantic poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Lord Byron were greatly worried about a conflict and war on British soil.

Coleridge (1772-1834), known for his criticism, his poetry, and his associations with the great figures of English Romantic poetry, was not enthusiastic about the French Revolution. In the poem "Fears in Solitude" (1798), he writes that it is easy to be a proponent of war when one is far from the actual battlefields and not feeling the repercussions: "Secure from actual warfare, we have loved / To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war! / Alas! for ages ignorant of all / Its ghastlier workings." Coleridge condemns the lust for war in a people who have not yet known the suffering it will bring.

As Britain developed into a colonial power around the world, British citizens occupied many areas across the globe. George Vancouver (1757-1798) joined the Royal Navy at the age of four-teen. At age fifteen, he sailed with Captain James Cook during the Captain's second and ill-fated third voyages. Vancouver's *Voyage of Discovery* (1798) recounts how the party of sailors reached the Hawaiian Islands. Due to some local tribal frictions and a lack of diplomacy on Cook's part, Vancouver was beaten and held captive by the islanders. This occurred only a day before Cook was speared to death after a confrontation with the islanders. Like the explorers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Vancouver and Cook met with resistance and violence in their encounters with native populations. After his experience on the Hawaiian Islands, Vancouver went on to further navigation and discovery, leaving his name as well as his influence on the Northwest Coast of the Americas. However, Vancouver's work serves as a reminder that the tension between explorer-settlers and native populations was not unique to North American and often resulted in bloody and violent battles.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was one of the great literary and cultural critics of the Victorian era, and though he was not specifically a poet of war (or peace), he took part in many of the influential events of his time. As a distinguished Oxford professor, a well-travelled school inspector, and a frequent visitor to America and the European continent, Arnold served as a kind of social conscience of his time. His poem "Dover Beach" (1867) reflects this role.

In this poem, Arnold surveys a calm sea, seeing both peace and sadness. He reflects on the tide of religious faith, which was once full, but has now receded, leaving mortals sure of nothing except their love for one another. At the end of the poem he turns to the world, which, though it

“seems / to lie before us like a world of dreams,”
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

As faith recedes and uncertainty takes its place, human conflict is unchecked. In this poem, Arnold gives a general and sweeping indictment of war. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is best known as a novelist, the author of books like *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*. He was also a poet, and expressed his view of war as it developed during the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and the World War I (1914-1918). The Boer War aimed to assure the unimpeded development of British trade in South Africa and to guarantee access to South African gold mines. Hardy's poem "Drummer Hodge" (1902) illustrates the bleak fate the Boer War delivered to British soldiers, many of whom died in a foreign country without family or friends to bury them: "They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest / Uncoffined-just as found." Though he died on lonely foreign soil, Hodge has become a part of the country he was fighting in: "Yet portion of that unknown plain / Will Hodge for ever be." There is cold comfort in the soldier's death, which Hardy seems to imply will go unnoticed and unremembered.

7. 1915-1939

The Crimean War and the Boer War were consequences of British Imperialist ambition. World War I, which occurred a bit more than a decade after the Second Boer War, was a different matter. It was provoked by something that might have seemed like an isolated incident—a Serbian nationalist murdering the Austrian Archduke. However, the war gained a volatile momentum of its own. Serbia drew its ally, Russia, into the war. Austria invited Germany into an alliance and Germany quickly accepted, invading Belgium. The British entered in opposition to Germany, as England was tied to Belgium in a defensive alliance. France was bound to Russia in a mutual defense treaty, and to England in a looser pact. This sequence of rapidly moving events collided in 1914, leaving Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire fighting a world war against the Western Allies and Russia.

The first global conflict in history was the result. Military strategy and the science to support it had evolved, making this war, with its trench warfare, poison gas, and shell shock, the nastiest on record. Some of the most innovative and introspective literature about war ever written came out of World War I; the modernist movement in literature and art was a response to the devastation of World War I. The violence and inhumanity of the war penetrated throughout it and throughout the countries involved. Artists and writers felt that meaningful communication of this horror required entirely new forms of art and literature. This war generated an outburst of distinguished lyric poems, once again reminding readers of the relationship between war and creative energies.

The British, however, fed the violence of resistance and the power of Yeats's poem. Many of the rebellion leaders were executed, shocking the Irish public. Yeats addresses the "terrible beauty" of this turn of events in "Easter 1916," one of literature's most compelling commentaries on power and suffering in war. After celebrating several of the beloved Irish individuals who fell victim to the rebellion, Yeats sums up the mission of his rebellion poem, and extends his praise to those who fell:

I write it out in a verse-MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse Now and in time to be,

Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly
A terrible beauty is born.

The "terrible beauty" is the beauty of sacrifice for the ideal of independence. As in his poem on the Irish airman, Yeats finds a kind of beauty in war, a beauty that may depend on its futility. This profound perspective does not appear in any of the other texts assembled here.

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) joined the British forces in World War I, but only served one day of limited action, during the British retreat from Antwerp in Belgium. He died in 1915 on his way to fight in the Battle of Gallipoli, not from war wounds but from blood poisoning. He was buried on the Greek Island of Skyros. In contrast to Hardy's Drummer Hodge, whose burial on foreign soil was depicted as bitter and alienating, the soldier in Brooke's "The Soldier" (1915) considers falling in a foreign country to be a point of pride; it is an honor to make such a sacrifice for his country: "If I should die, think this only of me: / That there's some corner of a foreign field / That is forever England." Fred Thomas, like Orwell and many other English intellectuals in the thirties, served in the British anti-tank battery of the 15th International Brigade in Spain. He was there to join the battle against Franco. Thomas, too, went off to war for ideological reasons and soon found the conflict to be more complex than he had anticipated. Thomas was wounded in action twice, fighting in heavy battles at Brunete, Teruel, and on the Ebro River, and he spent long periods recuperating in the hospital. Furthermore, Thomas, like Orwell, found that, in practice, the ideology of the anti-Franco forces was not what he wanted it to be. His diary of this struggle, *To Tilt at Windmills* (1996), offers intimate glimpses of the Spanish war in the late 1930s. The title of the memoir recalls Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) and its main character's quest for the romance of war and chivalry in a world where it no longer existed. Thomas is less abstract than Orwell and presents a compelling picture of daily suffering in the war. He also captures the ultimate frustration of fighting a war on foreign soil, where one remains a stranger to the end even though one is committed to the cause.

8. From 1940 to the Second Half of the 20th Century

The Spanish Civil War, the growth of the Nazi ideology in Germany, and the consolidation of Communist power in the (former) Soviet Union all cast a shadow over the Western world, a shadow that suggested imminent disaster to many. The catastrophe came in the form of a Second World War characterized by a systematic human brutality that dwarfed that of the First World War. From the extermination of six million Jews in the concentration camps to the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, World War II took the horror and destruction of war to a new level.

In the four novels of "The Raj Quartet" (1966-75), Paul Mark Scott (1920-1978) takes readers out of the world of Western wars and into the military and colonial atmosphere of post-Independence India. Scott places his extensive fictions in this setting; he also uses it to frame his broad understanding of cultural differences and the intricacies of colonialism, so much of which derives from the simple exercise of military power. In "The Raj Quartet," Scott carefully analyzes the social tensions in military and administrative circles in India during the last five years of the British colonial occupation (1942-47). This period of occupation was commonly called the Raj. The theme of these long novels is the way British power in India was stifled by obstacles such as the powerful resistance headed by Mahatma Gandhi.

James Fenton's (1949-) poem "A German Requiem" was written thirty-six years after the end of World War II, and serves as a reminder that war does not end when the fighting stops. In this poem, Fenton is engaged with the issues of historical guilt, memory, and imagination as they play out in the minds of victims and survivors of wars such as the one that engulfed Nazi Germany. World War II haunts its survivors and fills them with horrible memories that they can-not forget. Yet the things they

can no longer remember cause the most terrible pain: joy, personal recollections, and life before the war.

It is not what they built. It is what they knocked down.
It is not the houses. It is the space between the houses.
It is not the streets that exist. It is the streets that no longer exist.
It is not your memories which haunt you. It is not what you have written down.
It is what you have forgotten, what you must forget.

Many cite World War II as a war waged with moral certainty. In other words, the evil in the situation--Hitler, the Nazis, the concentration camps, the bombing of Pearl Harbor-- was easily and clearly identified. It was easy to define the roles in "us versus them," a division at the heart of all successful warfare. Most Allied soldiers and citizens (French, British, and American) believed that World War II was just and essential to ending unrestrained oppression and genocide. The wars that followed in the twentieth century, however, often lacked that feeling of moral certainty. The Vietnam War is a prime example of this difficulty. The United States entered a war on vague terms and fought an enemy that blended seamlessly with civilians. The U.S. government concealed information; thousands of soldiers lost their lives in a cause that became increasingly unclear; and the war became known as a quagmire, a situation from which there was no easy exit.

Throughout the world, people protested America's military presence in Vietnam. Poet Adrian Mitchell (1932-) wrote the poem "To Whom It May Concern" (1965) as a protest against the war, which would last for another ten years after the poem was written. "I smell something burning, hope it's just my brains. / They're only dropping peppermints and daisy-chains / So stuff my nose with garlic / [...] / Tell me lies about Vietnam."

World War II presented huge challenges to the civilized world as Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan threatened the Western democratic tradition. Though this challenge had been building for several decades, there is powers' threat exploded into every aspect of the Allies' public life in the late 1930s. Military, social, and economic life was all focused on defeating Hitler and the Japanese. World War II commanded global attention from 1939 to 1945, from Pearl Harbor and the German invasion of Poland to the atom bomb over Nagasaki. By the end of the war, a fatal split emerged between the former Allies as Russia followed its own path into a kind of communism and the Western Allies attempted to reconstruct their badly defeated former enemies. In this devastating setting, Roosevelt and Churchill were called upon to articulate their power, sympathy, and resolve. Whole peoples needed to be inspired and encouraged.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, there are occasional notes of lyrical patriotism or military enthusiasm. Samuel Daniel praises Henry VII, the first Tudor King, for his prowess in battle; Shakespeare, in *Henry V*, gives brilliant expression to British patriotism; and Andrew Marvell, in his "Horatian Ode" on Cromwell's victory. This kind of patriotism is not much in style today, but earlier writers expressed less ambiguous attitudes toward war and military victory. Consider a World War I poem like Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier." The patriotism of that poem will sound naive and insincere to readers brought up with the Vietnam, Korean, and Iraq wars.

By the nineteenth century and on through World War I, compassion for the ordinary soldier becomes an important literary theme. This note is more elegiac and less strident than the full-scale assaults on war which will emerge in the novels of World War II. Consider Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade," Hardy's "Drummer Hodge," and Wilfred Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth." These texts are sad and compassionate, reflecting the sentimentality that was a defining element of the Victorian Era in England.

There is a sharp contrast between these sentimental views and the attitudes expressed by World War II and Vietnam-era writers such as Mitchell, Fenton, or Auden. War as they knew it is almost devoid of humanity; as a result, the soldiers fighting it were cut back to the bone of mere existence.

In the last century, some writers have turned to reflection on war, sometimes engaging in war as part of an ideology. Traces of the intellectualization of the military enterprise appeared long before this time, but its strength as a theme shines forth in this period. Vancouver, Hardy, Scott, and Doyle were all involved in England's colonial endeavours, and Orwell and Thomas fought-and wrote-for the cause of the Spanish Civil War.

War and peace are facets of humanity; as such, they will always find a place in literature. The evolution of British attitudes toward war will continue in the face of future conflicts. England's war literature-and increasingly, peace literature-will change as well, recording the country's shifting perspective on these subjects.

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