

The Literature of WAR

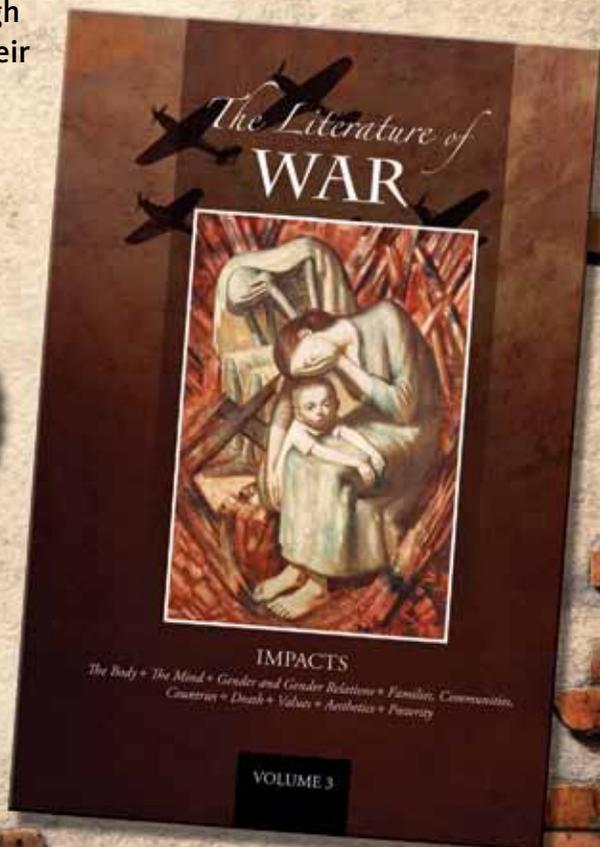
THREE full-color volumes cover:

APPROACHES: The ways we write about war

EXPERIENCES: First-hand accounts from soldiers, nurses and civilians

IMPACTS: The aftermath of war

The entries in *The Literature of War* help identify and understand themes, focus, language, psychological and social impact, and perception of war through the eyes and words of their respective authors, inviting further reading and discussion.



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COMMENTARY BY KATHERINE PLICHTA

Remembered and Reimagined: The Literature of War

The *Literature of War* is a three-volume reference set edited by Thomas Riggs (St. James Press, 2012) with contributions from hundreds of professors and specialists in various fields including writers, language experts, regional experts, and literary scholars. Its project is to analyze examples of war literature through a common framework including an overview of the work, historical and literary context, themes and style, and critical discussion of each entry. Each volume is organized around a broad subject and each chapter is broken down further into more specific subject matter. The breadth of the project is far-reaching, ranging from works written about the Trojan War to the War in Afghanistan, and conflicts in between, by authors from Sweden, Turkey, Algeria, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States of America to name a few of the many countries represented. The entries are letters, autobiographies, speeches, songs, novels, and almost every other printed genre one could think of excluding blogs or video. This exhaustive inclusion successfully depicts the complexities of war and challenges the reader to think of each conflict as its own microcosm pregnant with politics, social divisions, and raw emotions.

The greatest strength of the text is its quest and profound ability to capture war from multiple perspectives and points of view. This success is bolstered by the advisory board and editors' understanding that literature can never fully capture the truth of a battle. Kate McLoughlin, Advisory Board Chair, explains this phenomenon best in her introduction to the volumes:

The argument for realism in war literature is that the facts must be presented as accurately and objectively as possible, so that the record cannot later be distorted. Formal decoration and imaginative license have no place in this strict regard for truth. But the realist project falters as soon as it states its terms. “Facts,” “accuracy,” “objectivity,” “truth,” and “realism” itself are infinitely contestable concepts. (xii)

In McLoughlin’s estimation, the struggle for those who write war literature is to present an accurate depiction of what happened while at the same time being aware that in war, terms like “facts” and “objectivity” are never as clear as one wishes them to be. By including multiple perspectives, both literary and historical, from both the victors and the defeated, *The Literature of War* is able to put forth a more complete picture of conflict.

The other problem that McLoughlin’s statement highlights is that the best way to explain a concept or emotion, especially about war, might be to use “imaginative license.” If an author is able to express the horror of war by inventing a situation that did not actually occur but is authentic, has that author let his readers down or been untruthful? *The Literature of War* helps to answer and clarify this question. Undeniably, those who later retell their stories drawing on personal experience will always have their memory distorted and influenced by either the blur of war or the eerie clarity of war. *The Literature of War* collects, organizes, and analyzes the narratives that rise from this chaos into a digestible, enlightening, and authentic progression.

The first volume, titled *Approaches*, begins with a section on “Theories” which rightly includes commentaries on works by Machiavelli, Tzu, Guevara, Zedong, Hart, and, perhaps surprisingly, Thoreau. This section serves as a helpful introduction to some of the most fundamental theories of war. By including Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience,” the collection provides a perspective on the Mexican American War from a civilian who vehemently opposed the war and the United States’ reasons for declaring it. Thoreau cannot be grouped neatly into the category of military theorists; however, he does present a theory concerning a citizen’s obligations as he opposes the actions of his government during war time, rejecting the notion that it is a citizen’s civic duty to support the war effort. Including this piece reminds us that war is never a uniquely military endeavor, but is inseparable from civilian life.

The next collection of works is grouped under the ambiguous label “Histories” and includes first person accounts, tales from witnesses and participants, and

interviews. Here the link between the texts is less obvious, as they range from 479 BCE to the mid-20th Century, the length of the battles vary, and the authors of each of the entries differ significantly. This section is most useful in reminding us of the significant battles that shaped the trajectory of countries and civilizations. Gina Sherriff, the contributor for this section, provides an especially enlightening critique of *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*. This limited, but significant group of battles was fought in Northern Brazil intermittently from 1893 to 1897 between the Brazilian military and the members of the community in the small town of Canudos, often called the backlands. What is shocking about these conflicts between a trained, armed military and a group of deeply religious civilians is that the backlanders won the first three battles, before falling in a final battle in which the military razed the village and its inhabitants. Euclides da Cunha, the author of *Backlands* who witnessed portions of the battle provides a detailed description of the clash between these unlikely enemies and even “draws on anthropology, psychology, and social Darwinism to explain the popular interest in the Canudos religious community and its relationship with the whole of Brazil” (39). These battles are significant in that they provide evidence of the instability and fear outsiders and non-conformists present in the new republican government.

While “Histories” introduces works about Vietnam, the Civil War, the Native American conflict, and WWII from a distance, “Eye-Witnessing” provides a closer look at many of these same conflicts. One especially successful aspect of this section is that it includes different perspectives on the same conflicts. For instance, there is a commentary on works about WWII from an Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) member, a British housewife, and a Japanese radar officer. William Sansom wrote “Fireman Flower” about the Blitz (1940-1) in London, this short story focuses on an AFS member’s search for the “kernel of the fire,” or the center of the fire, on one night during the German attacks. As Greta Gard, section contributor, explains, Sansom’s story is largely viewed through an allegorical lens in which “the kernel” that Flower tries to find represents “the human search for truth and balance in life” (151). It is fitting that Flower pursues this search in London during the war when the “truths” about military targeting that were accepted and counted on leading up to WWII were destroyed when the civilian populous in London was targeted with horrible results. Just as Sansom recounts a unique pocket of experience which is often left out of discussions of WWII, Nella Last writes about her seldom described experiences. Last was a British housewife living in England during WWII who kept a diary throughout the war. Through her diary, she expresses the

increased opportunities for women that the war created and conveys the anxiety these women experienced over their husbands and sons fighting far away.

The final perspective from WWII in this section is completely different from the two previous works as it does not address the English perspective or focus on Germany as the main enemy. Instead, Yoshida Mitsuru, a Japanese radar officer in the Pacific, presents his memoir 1952 (translated to English in 1985) *Requiem for Battleship Yamato*. Mitsuru's memoir focuses on one mission that according to all accounts was doomed to failure from the outset. On April 7, 1945, battleship *Yamato* was tasked with attacking the U.S. Navy in order to draw their ships out thus allowing kamikaze fighters to attack them with greater success. At the end of this battle only hundreds out of a crew of three thousand survived (171). The complicating factor in this voyage and attack was that the Japanese crew knew that they were not expected to survive, a revelation that makes the moments leading into battle even more tense and leads Mitsuru to the realization that "death is not something that ought to be glorified" (172). This belief contradicts the propaganda largely espoused by the Japanese at the time. The incongruity that Mitsuru points out between the government's vision and the experiences of the soldier reminds us of the inescapable wartime tension between largely impersonal governments, and the individuals they represent.

In "Propaganda," contributors explore this oftentimes conflicting relationship between the government and the rest of society as they consider poems, speeches, novels, plays, and pamphlets which both overtly and covertly attempted to influence the populous towards an outcome during times of war. The Spanish Civil War demands extensive coverage due to concern throughout Europe about the rise of Fascism and its potential spread. This section discusses Virginia Woolf's work *Three Guineas* and W.H. Auden's poem "Spain," along with the pamphlet "Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War," in which each work represents a different take on the war which raged from 1936-9. According to section contributor Jennifer Ludwig, Auden's poem is sympathetic to the Republican government but the focus of the poem is less on which side is in the right and more about each reader's responsibility "to act according to their own moral guidelines" (262). Interestingly, Auden later rejected "Spain" and did not include it in his collected volumes as in his later years he "generally disavowed the attention to politics that characterizes his early work" (262).

Virginia Woolf, living in England during the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, takes a nuanced approach to the conflict. In her fictional epistle-style essay, Woolf denounces war and those who wage it criticizing the superiority complex

of the political leaders of the time: “Dictator...who believes that he was the right, whether given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial, to dictate to other human beings how they shall live; what they shall do” (265). In her critique, the fact that the dictator is male is significant. Woolf uses the fact that all of the leaders who were vying for position at the time were male in support of her main claim that “a patriarchal society invariably tends toward displays of power and aggression that lead to war” (266). Mark Lane, the contributor for this section, points out that Woolf goes one step further with her logic when she discusses women’s role in war: “women who do not have financial independence, meanwhile, have no choice but to support the warmongering political positions of their husbands, even though, as the speaker argues, wars are fought for reasons that are largely alien to them” (266). Following this line of thought, in Lane’s opinion, *Three Guineas* is more than a piece about the Spanish Civil War since it presents a “feminist-oriented approach to pacifism” and Woolf’s feminist beliefs (265).

The final piece in this section regarding the Spanish Civil War is a pamphlet titled “Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War” which was a compilation of the responses of 148 authors to the question “Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism?” (213). The editors of this pamphlet further emphasized the need for public acknowledgement of support for either cause with their challenging statement, “For it is impossible any longer to take no side” (213). The pamphlet, which contained commentaries from Samuel Beckett, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, to name a few, showed that Europe and the world were invested in Spain. These three different pieces of propaganda likely had differing degrees of success but all demonstrate deeply held perspectives on the war in Spain, which reveal an increasingly global interest in violent civil conflict.

In the “Satire” sections, contributor Sara Taylor explores the play *Parentheses of Blood* by Sony Labou Tansi, which is a representation of the tense and violent situation in the Congo after Belgian rule ended. Due to censorship concerns, Tansi did not explicitly name the Congo as the setting of the play. However, many of the events that occur in the play mirror the events that occurred in the Congo during this time period of transition. Early in her overview, Taylor includes an example of the absurdity and injustice that pervaded the military and the country during that time using the quest for a well-known freedom fighter, Libertashio. When Libertashio’s family says that he is already dead, the Sergeant answers “‘We’re looking for a Libertashio’... ‘We need one. Real or supposed, it doesn’t matter. In the end we’ll find one we suppose to be real’” (Tansi qtd. in Taylor 309). This desire,

not for the actual Libertashio, but for a person who could be made to represent the rebellion and what it stood for brings to the audience's attention the corruption that the local populous faced on a daily basis. Tansi also challenges the assumption that "corrupt leaders are a natural byproduct of colonial repression" (311), an alternate analysis of the usual progression of colonialism that forces a reexamination of what actions are appropriate for the everyday citizens who see foreign rule give way to violent domestic corruption.

The final section of Volume One, "Experiment" is one of the most interesting because it includes groundbreaking works like *Gravity's Rainbow*, *The Things They Carried*, *The War of the Worlds*, and even a revamped *Antigone*. Jean Marie Lucien Pierce Anouilh's *Antigone* (1942) retells the story of the stubborn and committed Antigone through her struggle to honor her brother in death with burial even if it means defying the new king, Creon. As Sara Taylor explains, Anouilh's play is very similar to the original play by Sophocles with some important exceptions, including the absence of Tiresias, the blind prophet. Taylor cites literary critic Murray Sachs who deftly points out that in the original myth Tiresias represented Creon's blindness but in his version, Anouilh strives to emphasize that Creon is "completely lucid" (345). This revision to Creon's character leads to a different interpretation of the play's central message. Anouilh wrote *Antigone* in France during German occupation in the 1940s. In a time when it was essential for one's well-being to "play it safe," Anouilh risked quite a bit with his play. However, *Antigone* received positive reviews from both those sympathetic to the Nazi's cause and those who supported the French Resistance. Anouilh remained silent on what side he intended that his play support; regardless, his adaptation brought renewed interest in the balance between one's moral obligation to his country and his own beliefs.

Whereas Volume One focuses on different methods for approaching war, Volume Two, entitled *Experiences*, explores the effect of those who fight, wait, and hope for their loved one's safe return. The volume begins with a section on "Combatants" which at times clarifies and at other times complicates what that term means. One selection that examines the motivations of combatants is Janet Moredock's commentary on Sebastian Junger's 2010 *War*. Junger uses his experience as a journalist to fully capture the story of U.S. troops in the Konrenal Valley in Afghanistan during 2007-2008 (100). By taking a close look at the soldiers during combat and times between fighting, Junger is able to examine how the soldiers are dealing with the battle and the moments without enemy encounters. *War* also discusses the difficult issues soldiers experience upon their reintegration to

civilian life. Moredock captures the problematic reality that “readjustment is often difficult not because of the negative experiences of combat but because the men miss the ‘good stuff’: the deep trust in their comrades, the exhilaration of surviving an attack, the pleasures of wielding powerful weapons—even killing” (101). Junger elucidates the complex and potentially disturbing realization as he takes a close look at the science behind the soldier’s survival behaviors. Moredock aptly points out that Junger’s psychological discoveries could help to shed light on combatant’s experiences in many wars, not just the War in Afghanistan.

Perhaps equally intriguing as the psychological complexity of post-war reintegration is the section dedicated to “Woman at War.” Not only have women’s roles in war been well documented, there is enough literature about women’s experiences with war to warrant an entire section. However, this excitement is quickly replaced with disappointment as the majority of works analyzed in this section either focused on nurses or women in a war torn country and their relationship with male soldiers. While both of these subjects of course deserve attention, such a treatment of women’s contributions to war seems narrow-sighted as women have had an integral role in the military history of several countries ranging from Deborah’s offensive against the King of Canaan in the 1100s BCE to the contributions women have made in the last decade.

Sitt Marie-Rose, by Etel Adnan, is one of the more interesting selections which deals with one woman’s interaction with groups of opposing males from Lebanon. Adnan’s novel captures the tensions and violence present in this divided country during the 1970s. The titular character, who is Christian, but has ties to the Palestinian relief effort, is captured, tortured, and killed by Christian Lebanese militiamen for her persistence in living her life as she chooses without regard to established divisions within religion and especially gender. *Sitt Marie-Rose* has been read simultaneously as a feminist resistance piece and an example of postcolonial complications. The narrative derives its strength from both the complexity of the situation it presents and from the credibility of Adnan’s actual life story. After she published her novel, Adnan was blacklisted when she attempted to return to Beirut after the war and continue her work as a journalist (169). Just as Sitt Marie-Rose’s voice was silenced with her murder in the novel, so too was Adnan’s as she was rejected by the newspaper she had worked for before the war for her controversial views.

Following “Women at War” is the section “Prisoners, Refugees, Exiles” that addresses e.e. cummings’s 1922 novel *The Enormous Room*, which retells his experiences in a concentration camp during World War I. Jennifer Ludwig, author

of this section, points out that this novel is very different from most WWI novels because “Cummings was not a soldier, and he does not describe the horrors of the trenches, the effects of poison gas, the brutality of trench warfare, or the large number of dead and dying soldiers... He highlights the way the atmosphere and rules of war place power in the hands of individuals and the ways such individuals deploy and are deployed by power” (212). Cummings was an ambulance driver in France who saw the physical effects of the war and was ultimately imprisoned, not for his actions, but because he was viewed as a threat due to his pro-German correspondence with a friend. In the novel, Cummings is suspicious and accusatory of the way that those in power subvert language and he tries to defy this abuse by changing common writing conventions, especially capitalization (213). As critic Modris Eksteins argues, Cummings attempts “to retain language as a medium for truth and truth finding” (Eksteins qtd. in Ludwig 213). What seems to be unique in Cummings’ novel is that although the focus is on the improper abuse of power by the Allies, the same claims of abuse could have equally applied to the Axis powers.

“The Home Front,” the next chapter in Volume Two, details the impact that many armed conflicts had on the civilians who lack firsthand battlefield experience. This chapter points out the damaging changes in the men and women who stayed home, but were nonetheless negatively affected by the war. For example, *The Sea and the Poison* by Endō Shūsaku is one such text that discusses how one group of doctors committed reprehensible offenses during WWII in Japan against American soldiers. Although the novel is not an exact retelling of events, contributor Greta Gard explains that it is based on “the actual vivisection carried out on American pilots of a B-29 that crashed on the island of Kyushu on May 5, 1945” (309). Gard focuses on Endō’s critique of Japanese culture. She explains that, in the author’s view, the mentality of the doctors “was all too common in Japan” (310) and that, in fact, “although the abuse of American prisoners is the central crisis of the novel, Endō clearly indicates that it was merely a symptom of a larger cultural problem that was exacerbated by the war” (310-1). In his evaluation of his own culture, Endō reveals the dark side of human nature and keeps alive a piece of history that would otherwise be little-known or forgotten.

The final chapter in Volume Two titled *Change* discusses myriad changes that have occurred as a result of battles and conflicts. In Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel, *Persepolis* (2000, translation 2003), not only does she examine the social changes that occurred as a result of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, but she does so using the emergent genre of the graphic novel. One unique aspect of Satrapi’s work is that she narrates it through her perspective as a ten year old girl living in

Iran. According to Greta Gard, section contributor, the graphic novel's point of view "underscores the difficulties of dealing with such intense issues at so early an age" (372). Through the character of Marji, Satrapi depicts the alternate moments of confusion and understanding that she had experienced as a child. The oppressive "reforms" of the new government come as a shock to both Marji and her mother who were used to Westernized clothes and music. But more upsetting than this are the events that happen to members of her family and their friends: imprisonment, torture, and execution. These are just some of the most significant consequences for those who opposed the new Iranian regime. Despite the death and oppression she experienced, the lasting message Satrapi hopes her readers take away from *Persepolis* is that the country of Iran should not be judged by those who operate in extremes and violence (372) and that they are, in fact, the minority of the Iranian populace.

The final volume in *The Literature of War* collection is *Impacts*. The first two sections of Volume Three deal with the visible and hidden wounds that war can cause to "The Body" and "The Mind." Surprisingly, "The Body" only contains five works and is the second shortest section in the entire collection. Conversely, "The Mind" is quite long. This disparity speaks to the recent increase in interest concerning the mental effects of war on soldiers both in battle and as they return home. One of the most shocking texts from "The Mind" is *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak* (2003, translation 2005) by Jean Hatzfeld, a nonfiction account from ten Hutu men serving prison sentences for their actions during the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Jenny Ludwig, section contributor, describes the work as a narrative that answers questions Hatzfeld asked the prisoners in interviews mixed with chapters "dedicated to Rwandan geography, culture, and political history" (51). Hatzfeld argues that the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide are very similar due to their division along ethnic lines and the fact that the decision to commit genocide "was made and implemented from above" (52). The main difference between the two genocides that Jenny Ludwig identifies is that in Rwanda the killing was "low-tech" (52). Although it would seem this "close-in killing" would make it much more difficult to execute, the most shocking aspect of the book is the way that the men speak about killing other humans as if it was an everyday job (52). Perhaps by hearing from the perpetrators of these violent acts, humanity can be aware of what patterns of behavior to look for and prevent this type of tragedy from happening again.

In the next section titled "Gender and Gender Relations," Sara Taylor explores the impact of Martin Sherman's play *Bent*, which tells the lesser known story of the prosecution of homosexuals during World War II (WWII). Taylor's

analysis exposes the plight of homosexuals in Nazi Germany and the continuing discrimination against homosexuals following WWII. Max, the main character in the play, and his lover, Rudy, are imprisoned under Paragraph 175 of the German penal code “which criminalized both participation in and promotion of homosexual acts” (75). Max and Rudy are taken to a concentration camp where in a shocking scene “Max denies his homosexuality, beats Rudy to death, and has sex with the body of a young Jewish girl to ‘prove that he is not queer’” (75). All of these actions were Max’s attempts to be reclassified as a Jewish prisoner as opposed to a homosexual prisoner, an effort in which he is successful. However, later in the play, Max is able to reclaim the part of himself that he denied when he enters into a relationship with another male prisoner, Horst. Critical reception of the play has been positive overall but there has been some controversy over the implication of *Bent* “that homosexual suffering was greater than Jewish suffering” which “obfuscates the real philosophical issues the Holocaust raises” (Goldfarb qtd. in Taylor 78). While this is a valid concern, *Bent* merely illuminates a lesser known history of the Holocaust without deemphasizing the suffering that all Holocaust survivors and victims experienced.

Following this look at gender’s effect on societies at war, “Families, Communities, Countries” discusses how war can change, inspire, and destroy these different levels of association for an individual. The 1970 (translated into English in 1995) novel, *The Naked Tree*, examines the effect that the death of brothers has on their sister and their mother; it further explores how the Korean War changed South Korea. Kyong-a, the only remaining child of the Lee family, narrates the novel and chronicles her experience during the war, especially with respect to “the disruption of her country’s traditions by both the communist invasion from the North and the influx of American culture and capitalism” (173). Here, Greta Gard, this section’s contributor, explains how Kyong-a is suspicious and resistant to American influence throughout the war, but how she herself later falls for an American soldier. In the end, Kyong-a’s caustic relationship with her mother – who laments the fact that she is only left with her daughter as opposed to her sons – and her passionless marriage to T’ae-su – a Korean man who is very taken with the Western life—leaves her unsatisfied and forever changed by the war.

While Kyong-a’s narrative conveys how inevitably death changes families, “Death” receives its own section in the third volume. Sara Taylor analyzes *The Freedom of the City*, a play by Brian Friel about the Irish Troubles, specifically Bloody Sunday. In his play, Friel changes the time and circumstances of the events that occurred on Bloody Sunday but leaves the play recognizable as being inspired

by the tragedy which left thirteen unarmed protestors dead and many others wounded (246). Interestingly, Friel's play was criticized by Clive Barnes in the *New York Times* as being unrealistic due to the massive amount of force that was levied against unarmed civilians. As Taylor points out Barnes was "seemingly unaware of the production's basis in reality" and his misstep actually brought awareness to the gravity of the events (248). Besides showing the important role that literature can play in raising awareness of past events, Friel's play also brings attention to the unfair court proceedings that occurred after the event. The result of the trial was that "none of the soldiers [were] convicted of criminal misconduct" (246). However, the awareness that Friel's play brings to this attack by the British on unarmed men and women prompted British prime minister David Cameron to apologize "on behalf of the United Kingdom" (247), proving that death, even long after it occurs still levis power over the living.

Fittingly, following "Death" is "Values" a section highlighted by Jean Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, a series of commentaries on the Gulf War. Baudrillard's contentious title does not question that a "military operation" took place, rather he claims that "the operation cannot be called a war" (285). Unlike perhaps any war before, the Persian Gulf War unfolds in front of extensive media coverage, leading Baudrillard to claim that this coverage shaped the conflict itself. As Mark Lane, author of this section, explains "the real-time coupling of military action with media depictions of that action made it impossible to determine which diplomatic objectives were being achieved through force and which through the dissemination of information and images" (285). The Gulf War ended with the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, but it did not result in any change in the leadership of Iraq. Therefore, although United Nations forces achieved their main objective, the region was still vulnerable to the whims of the Hussein regime. According to Lane, "Baudrillard understands the postmodern world as one in which classical distinctions between true and false, real and imaginary, and original and counterfeit have lost their analytical power" (287). *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* holds true to these beliefs, since Baudrillard challenges the world at large to look more closely at the cause and effect of the media's role in shaping public opinion.

Highlighting the "Aesthetics" section of Volume Three is Takeyama's work *The Harp of Burma*, whose plot keeps returning to the function and power of music in Burma during World War II. Greta Gard aptly explains one of the key points of the novel: "The men's appeal to music in difficult times is an example of one of the novel's predominant themes: that despite the devastation wrought by war, those

who fight have the power as individuals to transcend its horrors. Music provides one of the major vehicles for this transcendence” (347). The main character, Mizushima, is a soldier who often acts as a scout because of his ability to use his harp to transmit messages back to his unit. When the unit comes into contact with British troops and its members are subsequently taken prisoner, Mizushima is not with them (345). His fellow soldiers see him again at the conclusion of the novel (345). However, to their surprise, Mizushima decides to remain in Burma “to carry out what has become for him a religious duty, burying the bodies of slain Japanese soldiers” (345). Through the character of Mizushima and the positive portrayal of the Burmese people, Takeyama criticizes the militarism of Japan and extols the unassuming and peaceful culture of the Burmese.

The final section titled “Posterity,” includes the work *My Grandmother: A Memoir*. In this memoir, published in 2004, Fethiye Çetin tells the story of her grandmother who at the age of ten was separated from her Armenian family and adopted by a Turkish family who raised her as a Muslim. This jarring transfer comes as a result of the Armenian Genocide which took place in 1915 (397). Çetin is unaware of her grandmother’s past until later in her life when her grandmother asks her to track down her family. Interspersed with her grandmother’s story, is her story of discovery and the effect that her grandmother’s revelation had on her life. Pamela Toler, author of this section, explains the controversy that surrounds the Armenia Genocide to this day: “For the better part of the century, the Turkish government denied that the massacre occurred” (398). This shocking bit of information makes Çetin’s story all the more powerful and moving as it shows how we all can be changed by the experiences and histories of our relatives.

As the above précis make clear, *The Literature of War* is extensive; it provides accurate and detailed information on over three hundred works. This three-volume set is essential for those who teach war literature or those who are interested in hearing the experience of war from its earliest beginnings. Undergraduates, Masters, or PhD candidates in History, English, and Military Studies would all benefit from the critical gaze these texts provide. The volumes are not intended to be read straight through, but instead should be read with attention to the categories they fall under. These texts also provide alternative perspectives valuable for research on a specific battle, or useful in sparking multi-faceted discussion of the different perspectives available on each topic, which can be further explored in the suggested additional readings listed at the end of each section. In sum, *The Literature of War* is a rich collection that captures crucial and diverse facts and narratives of a topic integral to the fabric of humanity, past, present, and future.

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