

THOMAS DUKES

**Desire Satisfied: War and Love  
in *The Heat of the Day*  
and *Moon Tiger***

IN PREFATORY REMARKS TO  
his recent cultural analysis of World War II, *Wartime*, Paul  
Fussell writes:

It is about the rationalizations and euphemisms people needed to deal with an unacceptable actuality from 1939 to 1945. And it is about the abnormally intense frustration of desire in wartime and some of the means by which desire was satisfied. The damage the war visited upon bodies and buildings, planes and tanks and ships, is obvious. Less obvious is the damage it did to intellect, discrimination, honesty, individuality, complexity, ambiguity, and irony, not to mention privacy and wit. For the past fifty years the Allied war has been sanitized and romanticized almost beyond recognition by the sentimental, the loony patriotic, the ignorant, and the bloodthirsty. I have tried to balance the scales. (ix)

Fussell's *Wartime* disturbs some readers because he does not address the justice of World War II but, rather, focuses on the moral and physical atrocities of the conflict which he feels should not be glossed over even if the war may be

judged just. Fussell considers the role of the novel in representing the unromanticized events of World War II and describes the novelist's difficulty in writing accurately about the war:

After scrutinizing closely the facts of the American Civil War, after seeing and listening to hundreds of the wounded, Walt Whitman declared: "The real war will never get in the books." Nor will the Second World War, and "books" includes this one. But the actualities of war are more clearly knowable from some books than from others. . . . Sensing that action and emotion during the war were too big and too messy and too varied for confinement in one 300-page volume of fiction, the British tended to refract the war in trilogies, and some are brilliant: Waugh's *Sword of Honor* (1965). . . ; Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* (1960-1965); Anthony Powell's volumes VI, VII, VIII of *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1964-68); and again Manning's *Levant Trilogy* (1977-1980). . . . [But] despite undoubted success as engaging narratives, few novels of the war have succeeded in making a motive, almost a character, of a predominant wartime emotion, boredom, or persuading readers that the horrors have not been melodramaticized. One turns, thus, from novels to "non-fiction," especially memoirs, and especially memoirs written by participants not conscious of serving any very elevated artistic ambition. . . . (290-291)

I quote Fussell at length because the narrative and thematic problems he discusses are instructive in discussing

war fiction. Fussell's salient points—the sanitization of war, the question of what constitutes the “real” war, and the problem of representing war in a single novel—bear upon discussions of modern and contemporary fiction that seek to identify characteristics and problems in the existing social order. War, at the very least, suggests that the social order is under attack; those British trilogies Fussell mentions describe that attack as coming both from outside and from within.

Despite the possible failures of the war novels as anything more than “engaging narratives,” Fussell, by specifically naming several trilogies, points to a tradition of fiction about World War II. Consideration of the issues that Fussell raises about those fictions allows us to place novels in or out of that tradition, identify major thematic, aesthetic, and moral concerns of such novels, and confront the narrative problems of length and the representation of war in fiction.

Two British novels about World War II, Elizabeth Bowen's modern *The Heat of the Day* (1949) and Penelope Lively's contemporary *Moon Tiger* (1987), merit study for several reasons. First, both novels attempt to define in imaginative terms in a single text the impact of World War II on the characters' lives. Both novels set their most important scenes in battle areas, if not the front lines,<sup>1</sup> where the physical horrors and the size of the war are readily apparent; apparent, as well, are those effects of war which emotionally damage the characters. Further, both *The Heat of the Day* and *Moon Tiger* are anomalous to much of war fiction in that they are authored by women.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the novels' chief protagonists are women, not soldiers. The female protagonists are career professionals (Stella in *The Heat of the Day* works in intelligence, and *Moon Tiger's* Claudia is a journalist). Finally, these two novels are thematically allied with the British trilogies Fussell mentions in that these novels, too, represent World War II cynically;

that is, characters on the side of "good" (the Allies) not only suffer but cause suffering. Although the cause to which the novels' "good" characters subscribe is never presented as less than right, this fact is precious little comfort to the reader as the corruption of society is shown and a number of good people are destroyed. Such ambiguity is, at once, one of the novels' major moral issues and on another level irrelevant: if the good are to survive, is there a world worth surviving for? How good are the good?

Because in his book, *Wartime*, Fussell works to expose the incompetence, idiocy, and moral laxity of the Allies, he asks these same questions of the fiction about World War II. What makes a comparison of *The Heat of the Day* and *Moon Tiger* useful are the contrasting ways in which the two novels meet the criteria Fussell suggests for World War II fiction.

According to critic Hermione Lee, World War II confirmed Elizabeth Bowen's "sense that the century she had grown up with was inimical to faith, hope, and love" (156); Bowen's novel, *The Heat of the Day*, is an expression of that disenchantment and of her view of the "unacceptable actuality" of war.<sup>3</sup> Set in London during the bombing, the novel's central plot begins *in medias res*, two years after Stella Rodney has met her lover, Robert: "This Sunday on which the sun set was the first Sunday of September, 1942" (4). War is quickly the focus of the novel's action; as people enter an open-air theater for a concert, Bowen comments, "War had made them idolise day and summer; night and autumn were enemies" (3-4). The life of the novel's protagonist is also set in the war:

[Stella], younger by a year or two than the century . . . had grown up just after the first World War with a generation which, as a

generation, was to come to be made to feel it had muffed the catch. . . . [H]er two brothers had been killed fighting in Flanders while she was still at school. Since her divorce, ironically made almost at once unnecessary by her husband's death, she had been left with her son and a life to make for them both. . . . Roderick, at school when the war began, was now in the Army. . . . She was now therefore employed, in an organization better called Y.X.D., in secret, exacting, not unimportant work, to which the European position in 1940 gave ever-increasing point. (24-25)

War, and the consequent threatened destruction of society, is thus placed at the heart of the novel's setting and characterizations. Bowen stresses how the characters, particularly Stella, live largely in service to the war: Stella works in "secret" for the government; her lover, Robert, is a wounded soldier now employed by the war office; and the threat to their love is represented by Harrison, who works in government intelligence.

The action of the novel centers around Harrison's attempted seduction of Stella. In an attempt to manipulate her into deserting Robert, Harrison threatens to expose Robert as a Nazi spy. Although Stella tries to disbelieve Harrison's accusation, she nevertheless begins to suspect Robert. William Heath notes, "It is partly as love . . . that the war enters this novel as a force and elevates its concerns beyond the topical to the 'enormously comprehensive'" (118). It is primarily through the evolving relationships between Stella, Robert, and Harrison that Bowen attempts to portray the destructive effects of the war on society and on individual morality.

Harrison, although working for the Allies, and therefore ostensibly “good,” is in fact a morally ambiguous character. He sees his choices in love, and in war, as arbitrary. For Harrison, Stella is merely a woman to acquire, and he regards his means to that end, namely warning Stella that “the gist of what [Robert] handles [for the War Office] is getting through to the enemy” (35), as effective, if not acceptable, behavior. Stella, however, is outraged by such tactics and by Harrison’s daring to “ring up like the Gestapo” (33). Bowen uses Harrison as a threat to Stella’s and Robert’s love to symbolize the threat of the war to that last hold-out of European civilization, the oft-bombed London. As an example of the presence of corruption among the Allies, Harrison illustrates what William Heath describes as the “moral chaos” of the book, in which “good” becomes increasingly difficult to define.

Although Robert at first appears to be Harrison’s antithesis, he also is shown to be emotionally damaged by the war. His limp, Stella “had discovered, had like that in a stammer a psychic cause—it was a matter of whether he did or did not, that day, feel like a wounded man” (99). Robert is one of the walking wounded common to the trilogies that Fussell cites; his participation in the war represents to some degree his, and Bowen’s, disillusionment with the noble ideals of World War II and of the society that is fighting it.

Yet, Robert is not merely a wounded war hero. He is also a lover who has banished the anesthesia of war life for Stella. First encountering one another during the first London air raids, Robert is Stella’s refuge from the impending destruction of London and the social order. Because “more loss had not seemed possible after the destruction of France” (102), Stella “had had the sensation of being on furlough from her own life” (102)—Stella had become, to echo Fussell, disinterested and bored.

Both Stella and Robert require the emotional contact provided by their romantic love in order to repair the emotional damage caused by the war. Ironically, “wartime, with its makeshifts, shellings, deferrings, could not have been kinder to romantic love” (109). This juxtaposition of love and war is one of what Fussell calls the “absurdities of war” that Bowen dramatizes. The ability to experience personal joy in the face of destruction counteracts the apathy and hopelessness engendered by war. Bowen indicates that boredom is central to the experience, not only of front-line soldiers, but of those who remain on the home front as well; and that heightened emotion, here represented by romance, is a natural and necessary escape. Bowen explains Stella’s and Robert’s mutual dependence by contrasting their relationship with the scenes of horror of bombed London:

They had met one another, at first not very often, throughout that heady autumn of the first London air raids. Never had any season been more felt; one bought the poetic sense of it with the sense of death. Out of mists of morning charred by the smoke from ruins each day rose to a height of unmisty glitter; between the last of sunset and first note of the siren the darkening glassy tenseness of evening was drawn fine. . . . All through London, the ropings-off of dangerous tracts of street made islands of exalted if stricken silence, and people crowded against the ropes to admire the sunny emptiness on the other side. . . . Those rendered homeless sat where they had been sent; or, worse, with the obstinacy of animals retraced their steps to look for what was no longer there. Most of all the dead, from mortuaries, from under cataracts of rubble, made their anonymous presence—not as today’s dead

but as yesterday's living—felt through London.  
Uncounted, they continued to move in shoals  
through the city day. . . . (98-99)

Bowen's description neither sanitizes nor romanticizes the war, as Fussell complains of other novelists' fictional accounts of Allied experiences in World War II, and she carefully links Stella's and Robert's love with the destruction she portrays: "For Stella, her early knowing of Robert was associated with the icelike tinkle of broken glass being swept up among the crisping leaves, and with the charred freshness of every morning" (100-101).

Their reliance on love as salvation, however, is not enough to completely insulate the characters from the effects of war; one of Bowen's themes is that the characters' emotional needs interfere with their morally correct behavior, and with their very definitions of morality. It is the presentation of Stella, Robert, and Harrison as three individuals who are, in their fashions, morally defective soldiers fighting the great enemy, Germany, that completes the novel and further defines the actual war.

Harrison accusing Robert of spy crimes renders Stella suspicious despite herself, and she insists on accompanying Robert to his family home on his next visit there to gather "research" (112). The visit to Holme Dene has been much analyzed by critics,<sup>4</sup> and there is little to add to the general consensus that Bowen makes use of the depressing house and its confined, relentlessly middle-class people to at once indict that class and to show the source of Robert's ruin. Bowen uses the puritanical embracing of discomfort—emotional and physical—to show the emptiness of this life and its destruction of the individual, who then turns against the culture that destroyed him. Robert remarks, "We have always lived uncomfortably in this house; *now* it is possible for us to make a point of doing so" (133). Bowen also puts

into Robert's mouth her most damning comment about Holme Dene: "What else but an illusion could have such power?" (133). It is the absence of life and emotion *at home* that Bowen sets at the root of Robert's (the soldier's) ruin. Holme Dene has only the "illusion" of respectability, intended to stand for the moral rot that has led to the war and has produced the Roberts, the wounded men who no longer can see anything good or rewarding in the social order.

Bowen further indicts society through Stella's sharing of Robert's despair over history and the world that has created them. Stella identifies fully with the twentieth century:

The time of her marriage had been a time after war; her own desire to find herself in some embrace from life had been universal, at work in the world, the time, whose creature she was. For a deception, she could no more blame the world than one can blame any fellow sufferer: in these last twenty of its and her own years, she had to watch in it what she felt in her—a clear-sightedly helpless progress towards disaster. The fateful course of her own fatalistic century seemed more and more her own: together had she and it arrived at the testing extremities of their noonday. (147)

Cast adrift in her own time, Stella feels abandoned. Harrison, though similarly dislocated, prefers to enforce Stella's loneliness by eroding her trust in Robert and by forcing her, as she says, to "feel what it feels like to be a spy" (156). Harrison's homelessness, his ability to make Stella suspicious of her lover, and his obsession with—not love for—her are examples of the incivility which, in Bowen's work, indicate moral corruption. The effects of

the war have left Harrison with little sense of duty, to the point where his obsession for Stella prevents him from immediately arresting Robert, even though he, as it turns out, truly believes Robert *is* a Nazi spy.

Bowen further suggests war's power to elevate personal concerns above political or moral ones. Despite her own work and her son's soldiering, Stella agrees that she does "not seem to have shown any very great patriotic fervour" (214). Her involvement with Robert takes precedence over her feelings of obligation to her country, and the feared destruction of London is significant to her primarily as the end of *her* society, rather than as the physical and political demolition of England.

In Stella's reversed priorities, Bowen avoids the sentimentality and "loony patriotic" qualities that Fussell condemns in wartime fictions and portrays the war as a personal event, the larger implications of which are, for the characters involved, unimportant. Although they are participants in a significant historical event, Bowen's characters are oblivious to the greater historical context of their lives. Bowen attempts to show not only how inseparable are people from history, but also how that history is a force far beyond an individual's control, or even awareness. In Bowen's fiction, history is something that happens to people; the characters wait for their next cues to *react*, rather than act to affect the events around them. Such historical connection anchors Bowen's wartime fiction and enables her to sidestep the conventional romanticization and flag-waving in "the cliché[d] forms demanded by Hollywood" that Fussell finds at the heart of many wartime novels.

The absence of cliché is further apparent at the climax of Bowen's novel when Robert reveals to Stella that he is, in fact, a Nazi spy. Thus: Harrison has spied on Robert and Stella; Stella has been made by Harrison to feel, herself, a

sort of spy; and Robert, who had gained our sympathies, has been an active Nazi agent all the while. Under the corruptive influence of the war, all three figures have betrayed moral principles in some manner.

When Stella asks Robert why he has betrayed England, he replies that “there are no more countries left; nothing but names” (301). Although Bowen is hardly a Nazi sympathizer, she has, by means of the scene at Holme Dene and her characterization of Harrison and Robert, damned England for its worst flaws as a society.

Some time after Robert is killed leaving Stella’s flat, Harrison appears at her new flat in the middle of a bombing raid and learns that she is to marry a cousin of a cousin. The story of that relationship concludes with Harrison and Stella waiting together for the All Clear to sound.

The presentation of war in *The Heat of the Day* is neither sanitized nor glorified. Bowen shows the “real” war as one in which the world becomes haunted by the many dead and afflicted with the emotional needs and moral failings of its people. The messiness of war that Fussell feels cannot be handled in one novel is effectively portrayed in *The Heat of the Day* in that war’s ravages are clearly and convincingly visible in the lives of the three principal characters. In its attitudes and technique, *The Heat of the Day* is very much a modern look at the disillusionment brought on by World War II. The realism of Bowen’s novel is quite at one with the British tradition Fussell has noted and acclaimed.

Penelope Lively’s 1987 Booker Prize-winning *Moon Tiger* has much in common with *The Heat of the Day*: subject matter—war and romance—and the gender of its author and primary protagonist, to name the most obvious. *Moon Tiger*, however, in its narrative form, more fully fits Fussell’s preferred model of accuracy and truth found in memoirs and other non-fictional World War II

writing. Like *The Heat of the Day*, *Moon Tiger* is conscious of its characters' places in history, but unlike Bowen, Lively employs the memoir as her narrative device to represent the facts and emotions and horrors of war. While the use of the memoir-as-frame is hardly new in fiction, such a device is important in this instance because the form allows Lively's characters and narrators to be more directly connected to history. The frequent first-person narration and the soldier lover's first-person diary entries show the immediate impact of historical events on the individual in a way third-person narration does not allow. The principal character is thus able to more clearly place her own love story in its historical context and to comment on the affair as an historical event, even as she assesses the larger events of a world war. This narrative distance distinguishes *Moon Tiger* from *The Heat of the Day* although both Bowen and Lively take care to place their characters in an historical context.

Lively's Claudia Hampton, an historian, is dying in a nursing home where she tells the nurse, "I am writing a history of the world" (1). A writer herself, Claudia has "never been a conventional historian, never the expected archetypal chronicler, never like that dried-up bone of a woman who taught me about the Papacy at Oxford time out of mind ago . . ." (3). Claudia's history of the world is, in fact, an autobiography Claudia narrates in her head; she recounts much of her life—her incestuous relationship with her adolescent brother, the later postwar relationship with a lover, her child, her career, and the relationship given the most space in Claudia's history: her wartime romance. This particular memory is first triggered when a narrator, who frequently interrupts the memoir, describes how Claudia, in a hotel room watching a wartime movie, becomes disturbed by the story with:

a third dimension . . . [that] has smell and feel and touch. It smells of Moon Tiger, kerosene, dung, and dust. Its feelings are so sharp that Claudia gets up, slams the television into silence and sits staring at the blank pane of glass, where the story rolls on. (50)

Although Claudia leads a rich, busy life after the war, it is her wartime affair that becomes the central focus of her life and her book.

A freelance journalist, Claudia arrives “in Egypt alone in 1940; I was alone when I left in 1944” (70). As is true of many memoirists, Claudia records what is unique about her role in history; Lively uses the memoir *and* the novel to achieve something of the immediacy Fussell refers to when he praises World War II memoirists. Lively tells the story of Claudia’s affair with Tom, an officer, out of chronological order so as to record the personal as opposed to the public. Claudia’s memories appear in the random, chaotic order in which the mind recalls them rather than in the clear order of historical record written by “objective” scholars. When the story begins, Claudia remarks that:

[w]hat happened there [in Egypt] happens now only inside my head—no one else sees the same landscape, hears the same sounds, knows the sequence of events. There is another voice, but it is one that only I hear. Mine—ours—is the only evidence. (70)

While of “history—there is plenty,” Claudia now feels that “none of that seems important; it has melted away like the language of then or like the baroque balconied buildings of old Cairo supplanted by office blocks and skyscrapers for tourists” (70). Thus Claudia, the historian, questions

her own field; the personal supplants the historical, even though her connection to a great historical event is what made possible the central event of her life. Romance, for Claudia, becomes central to life and her story, and war is at once what makes romance possible and what causes its demise. Like Bowen, *Lively* employs the cold facts of history to avoid sentimentality or the idealization of her characters.

Claudia and Tom are first seen together some weeks into their relationship as they are touring the pyramids. When Claudia had first been “dropped into [the] heat and dust and smells” (75) of Egypt, she had “learned to cope with it—the discomforts and obstructions and hazards” (75). Although Egypt is an impoverished wreck, Claudia is able to see that the country is also beautiful.

I saw the cluttered intense life of the fields and villages—a world of dust and water, straw and leaves, people and animals. . . . Beautiful and indifferent; when you began to see it, you saw also the sores round the mouths of children, the flies crawling on the sightless eyes of a baby, the bare ulcerated flesh on a donkey’s back. (75)

This recognition and acceptance of moral chaos and the transitory participation of people in it are symbolized by Moon Tiger, an insect repellent, which burns on the table beside Claudia’s and Tom’s bed, its “glowing red eye a companion of the hot insect-rasping darkness” (75). Claudia’s “history of the world” and the novel itself become records of what is gained and lost in life and in war; part of the real war here is trying to hold on to what is valuable in what seems an irrational and unjust world.

At Claudia’s insistence, Tom recounts his life story, and his history becomes yet another narrative within the novel’s

multiple narratives. Early in his relationship with Claudia, Tom states: "I owe Hitler for you. What a thought" (76). Although Tom's outrage at social injustice was all that once made him feel "hitched to [his] times" (79), his love for Claudia now is what genuinely binds him to his time and place. That is "the part of the story [Claudia likes] best" (79), and she begs silently that it "have a happy ending. Please may it have a happy ending" (79). But she notices that the "Moon Tiger is almost entirely burned away now; its green spiral is mirrored by a grey ash spiral in the saucer" (79).

*Moon Tiger* is conscious of itself as a story of history, of personal relations in great historical events, and the unfeelingness of history to those relations and the characters involved. When they are together, Tom does not want Claudia to think of death, but she maintains that she has to, in order to "keep a grip on things" (90). As Fussell believes the writer of war fiction must do, Lively contrasts the banality and the excitement of life in Egypt during the war:

You lived from day to day. That of course is a banality but it had a prosaic truth to it then. Death was unmentionable and kept at bay with code-words and the careless understated style of the playing fields. Women whose husbands had bought it during the last push were seen a few weeks later being terribly plucky beside the swimming-pool at Gezira Sporting Club. I remember laughing immoderately. Dancing. Drinking. People flowed into my life and out again. . . .

In the Press Corps, war was our business, of course. We hung around waiting for communiques, press releases, rumours. We pursued those close

to the moguls of GHQ, curried favor with crisp young attaches who might get us an interview here, some off-the-cuff remarks there. . . . (90-91)

Lively contrasts the fun of the city during the war—Claudia admits she and her female roommate had “a sexual field day” (91)—with life at the front. The day Claudia and Tom meet, for example, they stop the jeep and Claudia wanders to where an armored car has hit a mine:

She walks quickly down to the wreckage. The man is lying face down. His hair is fair, his tin hat lies beside him, part of his head is in black bloody shreds, the sand too is blackened, one leg has no foot. Flies crawl in glittery masses, and as she looks at all this she hears from the other side of the smashed car a noise. She steps round to see and there is another shattered body but this body moves. Its hand lifts from its chest and then falls back. Its mouth opens and makes a sound. (98-99)

Although it is true that Claudia is not in combat herself, she sees its result; no more than Fussell does Lively glamorize or romanticize war. Egypt is to Lively what London was to Bowen, except that Lively adds the front-line soldier's viewpoint. Tom describes the front line to Claudia as “so many different things. Boring, uncomfortable, terrifying, exhilarating. In rapid succession. Pretty well impossible to convey. . .” (101). As though further parroting Fussell in condemning the “rationalizations and euphemisms” of wartime writing, Tom next observes,

Wars have little to do with justice. Or valour or sacrifice or the other things traditionally associated with them. That's one thing I hadn't quite realised. War has been much misrepresented, believe me. It's had a disgracefully good press. I hope you and your friends are doing something to put that right. (102-103)

Tom's observations are, of course, a soldier's lessons learned from actual war. Whether or not Lively is as angry as Fussell about the sanitization of war is difficult to determine from the novel alone, but Tom's words certainly imply that Lively is at least aware that war is not as glamorous as it is often fictionally portrayed.

Lively, like Bowen, is much concerned with history, and her characters much aware of their place within the context of grand historical events. Lively contrasts Claudia's pursuit of history with Tom's avoidance of it. Tom, who "used to be rather keen on history," now desires only to escape it by making plans to begin farming after the war. The war has personalized history for Tom, forcing him to realize that "history is true and that unfortunately you are a part of it. One has this tendency to think oneself immune. This is one of the points when the immunity is shown up as fantasy. I'd rather like to go back to fantasising" (103). Tom's love for Claudia is as much a part of his fantasy as his desire to farm; he is convinced that he cannot personally alter world history or transform that world into a better place, so he focuses on dreams of escape to a post-war utopia with Claudia.

Lively's narrator, like Bowen's, describes how the war seems a state without end: "[I]n those static months of early 1942 war seemed a permanent condition—a chronic disease that while not life-threatening impeded progress of any kind" (119). For Claudia, the stasis is broken when Tom

is killed during the Montgomery-Rommel clash in the desert. Claudia torments herself after Tom's death by wondering how and where he died, whether instantly "or slowly, lying bleeding into the sand, alone. Too weak to fire the Very pistol. To find the water flask. Just lying waiting. Please may it have been instantly" (128). So much for the romance of valor: Claudia, one of the living, now suffers while the deads' sufferings have an end.

Although much of the rest of the novel traces Claudia's continued success with her work, her daughter, and yet another romantic involvement, she returns to the subject of the war at the end of the book. Just before her own death, Claudia turns to Tom's diary, which had been sent to her by Tom's sister shortly after his death. The diary is significant because through it Lively presents the soldier's life at the front. Tom describes "the blackness of moving out of leaguer before dawn," and the fear:

Worst always before battle. The fear of fear. . . .  
Dust in the turret so thick that we can't see  
each other's faces . . . [a] sick flop in the belly  
when one of my own troops brews up, that awful  
belch of orange then thick black smoke, and  
watching to see if anyone bales out and no one  
does, not one. (195-196)

Through Tom, Lively writes a vivid description of battle, followed by a short note on his inability to bring himself to shoot a gazelle for the meat because the beast is so lovely (197). Tom writes with Claudia in mind, so that if she ever reads it she may understand:

. . . the extravagance into which one is pitched  
by war, the suspension of ordinary common  
sense except that aspect of common sense needed

for doing what has to be done, for telling other people what to do, for moving a lot of heavy metal around and trying to kill people with it while avoiding being killed oneself. . . . (200-201)

[I am] going to want to think about it. This is as it was, raw and untreated. At some point I shall want to make sense of it—if there is sense to be made. [Claudia] asked me once—the first time I met her—what it was like out here. I found it hard to explain. Well, at one point it was like this. . . . (204)

Most importantly, however, Tom responds to Claudia's earlier request that he tell her a story. "[I] never told her the other story, in which she stars, in which she is always the heroine—a romanticised story full of clichéd images . . . in which we are living happily ever after. . ." (200). Although Tom is aware of the clichés and romanticization he projects onto a future with Claudia—the triteness Fussell recognizes as false when applied to war—he needs the vision of a love-filled, peaceful domestic life to sustain him. Lively uses the fictional, "artless" memoir to show at least one cliché in war writing: escape. Claudia, elderly and dying, rereads the story but:

cannot make sense of it, perhaps because there is none to be made. . . . All I can think, when I hear your voice, is that the past is true, which both appalls and uplifts me. I need it. . . . Because if I am not a part of everything, I am nothing. (207)

Tom's and Claudia's memoirs thus become not only records of their own stories, but assertions of their places in World War II and in history.

Fussell writes about the "abnormally intense frustration of desire in wartime" and how that desire is satisfied; particularly in this vein can *The Heat of the Day* and *Moon Tiger* be thought of as fictional correlatives to *Wartime*. Superficially, the two novels employ a form—the wartime love story—that may be said to have often used clichés of the very kind to which Fussell objects: A man and woman meet during the war, they fall in love, the man is killed, and the woman is left to grieve. On a deeper level, however, these two novels portray desire and romantic love as escape from the chaos of war; they are stories about characters' needs to find meaning in their lives when war threatens to make such meaning impossible. Precisely because these novels demonstrate qualities which Fussell finds lacking in most wartime fiction—intelligence, honesty, ambiguity—they run counter to the sentimentality and "loony" patriotism Fussell believes cheapens most fictional accounts of World War II.

Unquestionably, *The Heat of the Day* and *Moon Tiger* are individual character studies that cannot have the scope of, say, non-fictional accounts of battles and troop movements. Nor can these novels be said to attempt the chronology and detail that Fussell finds in the trilogies he cites in his list of memorable war fictions. Nonetheless, Bowen's and Lively's works do contain the "action and emotion" Fussell has said he believes too big for confinement in one novel. *The Heat of the Day*, for instance, features espionage, attempted blackmail, a wounded soldier's treachery, and the Blitz, as well as romance; *Moon Tiger* concerns itself with wartime journalism, the front-line horrors of the wounded and dead,

Montgomery's triumph in the desert, in addition to its central love story. While these novels may lack the breadth of a trilogy, perhaps they do not need it: they feel complete because although their stories are accounts of individual lives, the characters also clearly participate in world-altering events. *Bowen* and *Lively* connect the personal and the public by portraying characters helplessly and perhaps hopelessly trapped within history.

When Whitman said, "The real war will never get in the books," a sentiment echoed by Fussell, he may have been wrong. There are, perhaps, as many different "real" wars as there are people affected by them. In saying that World War II is too big for any one book, including his own, Fussell also might have added that individuals are seldom in a position to get whole perspectives of any war. For individuals, the real war *is* whatever they experience. Fussell actually makes such a point in *Wartime* through his own extensive use of memoirs and diaries to support his descriptions of the bungling, cruelty, and horror that went largely ignored in accounts and coverage of World War II.

Precisely because a novel—particularly a single novel—employs a personal mode of expression that lacks the sweep of historical accounts about war, it may be that such novels are in a particularly advantageous position to dramatize the very tragedies Fussell documents. *The Heat of the Day* and *Moon Tiger* bring honesty, complexity, and ambiguity to their depictions of war. That they focus on romantic relationships does not diminish them as war novels. There is more to the war novel than heroics and gore. □

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The war scene of *The Heat of the Day* is London during the bombing raids; that of *Moon Tiger* is the Egyptian desert. Whether or not bombed civilian areas constitute battlelines is beyond my scope here, but it certainly seems that those bombed would claim they are not only as much on the front lines as any soldier, but also that they possess fewer immediate defenses.

<sup>2</sup>I am aware that Fussell cites Olivia Manning's two trilogies in his discussion, but much of her writing, though by no means all, focuses on civilians who are primarily inconvenienced by the war and are far more passive than the more involved characters I discuss here. Fussell cites approvingly, if briefly, Manning's portrayal of the subaltern Simon Boulderstone who discovers sleep "could be bliss." See Fussell, 78.

<sup>3</sup>Of related interest might be Jeslyn Medoff's discussion of war in Bowen's short stories, "'There is no Elsewhere': Elizabeth Bowen's Perceptions of War," *Modern Fiction Studies* 30, (1984): 73-81.

<sup>4</sup>Two informed discussions of *Holme Dene* and its moral implications for the novel are Hermione Lee's *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vision, 1981, pp. 178-179) and William Heath's *Elizabeth Bowen: An Introduction to Her Novels* (Madison: Wisconsin, 1961, pp. 111-112).

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