

# Writing War, Wronging the Person: Representation of Human Insecurity in War Literature

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**Abstract-** This paper presents a survey of literature written in response to wars throughout the world. The paper argues that plays, poems, memoirs and novels have been written to celebrate combatants as heroes; war literature has also been written to overcome the trauma of war while other literature has been written to underscore the effects of war and to speak out against wars. The paper also discusses the rationale for studying war literature and argues that as creative expression, literature allows us, through the imagined world of the author, to identify social trends and structures that shape the world, in particular, the factors that lead to and sustain conflict, as well as experiences of war and its long term individual and general effects. Also, literature's aesthetic quality and its capacity to engage its audience makes it easier to transmit war time experience, and hopefully the wisdom gained from that experience, from one generation to another.

**Keywords-** War Literature; Trauma; Rape; Masculinity; Heroism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

War has been the subject of numerous literary works. Many novels, plays and poems are based on actual wars that took place in history. Assuming the European origin of the novel, which is sometimes contested, the main roots of war literature can be traced to epic poetry of the classical and medieval periods, especially Homer's *The Iliad*, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, the Old English saga *Beowulf*, and different versions of the legends of King Arthur. The purpose of all of these epics was to preserve the history or mythology of conflicts between different societies as well as provide an accessible narrative that could reinforce the collective memory of a people.

Wars have long been of interest to both writers and readers and have been represented in poetry, prose, drama and other forms of cultural expression. The large corpus of literary works to which great world wars have given birth, confirms a strong relationship between literature and war. The twentieth century, which was arguably the bloodiest in human history, was at the same time one of the most fertile periods in literature. Wars such as World War I and World War II, were enormously destructive and caused many authors to respond to these conflicts. Worldwide, "authors initiated a response to this overwhelming cruelty, turning their thoughts and experiences into a variety of literary forms: poetry, drama, memoirs and especially prose (both fiction and nonfiction) based on the events of twentieth-century conflicts"

(Bogdańska, 2016). Worldwide, wars have received literary responses for various reason which have been discussed in the section that follows.

# 2. WAR IN WORLD LITERATURE: AN OVERVIEW

Traditionally, war literature was written by veterans and a few male civilians who wrote such literature to celebrate heroism, to overcome the trauma of their wartime experiences and to justify war. For instance, a work like Luis Marcelino Gómez's collection of short stories, explores the author's personal experiences as an international soldier from the Congo to Bolivia to Angola. Gómez, like many of the authors of works that recall the Angolan conflict as symptomatic of disappointment, recounts a narrative in which he is conscripted or enlisted in the military (Millar, 2012). Nevertheless, writers of war literature have increased to include civilian women and young adults. As such, it is clear that some of these writers are involved directly in the various wars as either perpetrators or victims/survivors while others may have been present as witnesses. There are still other categories of writers of war who were not present at the time or place of the war at all. Several literary works that are written by ex-combatants celebrate the soldier as a warrior hero, whose essential traits were physical strength, courage and aggression, on the one hand, but the works also display a moral dimension that seeks to justify war. According to

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Cristina Pividori, "the literary construction of the heroic masculine ideal [was what] prevailed in mid to latenineteenth century Britain and in the years prior to the Great War. The depiction of masculine traits as innate essences, unchanging and ahistorical, derived from an overemphasis on an essentialist view of male roles, the function of which was to divide, separate, and thus manage masculinities based on a binary opposition between the (heroic) self and the (antiheroic) other" (Pividori, 2014). Other war literature which celebrates heroism includes Michael Longley's poems which are explicitly devoted to the First World War. It starts with an elegy in honour of gunner William Longley, a namesake or a very distant cousin whose grave the poet visited by chance in the Orkneys. This soldier died accidentally on board the HMS Collingwood in 1918 and therefore was not killed in the trenches. His death thus represents a sort of collateral damage (Delattre, 2015). In her analysis of Graciela Mochkofsky's Tío Borís (2006) and Elsa Osorio's Mika (2012), Mariela Paula Sánchez states that these novels are examples of Argentinean writing in which the repercussions of the Spanish Civil War are readdressed and fictionalised through two Argentinean protagonists and have a tendency to exalt the heroic involvement of noteworthy (but forgotten) Argentineans. In the face of overwhelming inhumanity, it is important to seek to understand how the individual deals with extreme conditions and maintains dignity. In the case of Japan, throughout all of the violence and suffering, wartime death in *hibakusha* literature (written by atomic-bomb survivors) is associated with positive emotions generated by the experience of courage, love and friendship, rather than being associated with fear or anger. Such positive attitudes are a characteristic feature of a corpus of literary works that explore the theme of victimhood (Bogdańska, 2016). All these analyses show that celebration of heroism in war, whether directly through apparently justified aggression, or indirectly through the moral bonds forged in conflict situations, is a major focus of war literature.

Significant examples of war literature by excombatants and victims/survivors are furthermore written to overcome trauma and to reintegrate soldiers and survivors through artistic expression. According to Mark Williams, for Japanese war authors, "[w]hat we need to recall is that, for the vast majority of these writers, the war remained as a source of trauma" (Williams, 1992). According to Cristo Doherty, later accounts of the South African border war are memoirs written by "Englishspeaking conscripts who personally experienced aspects of the war on the northern Namibian border with Angola and in Angola itself. These writers seek to use their memoirs to engage with the psychic wounds of the war" (Doherty, 2015). Doherty argues that the authors of these border war memoirs "present themselves as haunted by traumatic memories of their wartime experience and as seeking to purge themselves of the effects of these memories through a process of public narration" (Doherty, 2015). These works call upon the reader to try and grasp their relevance to the present and future. This is because, left "unengaged, unconstituted and un-acted upon, such images—and the historical traumas that they reference—will, whether we realize it or not, continue to disturb us both personally and collectively, like recurrent but unregistered nightmares, haunting the present and threatening the future" (Williams, 1992). War literature is thus a way by which people affected by wars try to "work through" the trauma of war and get healing from post-traumatic stress disorders since a vast majority of people who experience war whether as combatants or as victim/survivors are traumatised and find writing a way to overcome their trauma.

Other literary works were composed to justify and glamourise the various wars they fictionalise, and to encourage participation in war. As George Orwell has claimed, the eagerness for war that led many of adolescents and young men to be enlisted in the British army between 1914 and 1916 was directly influenced by boyhood reading. Such stories "were found in publications as diverse as the historical novels of G. A. Henty, the popular press and boys' periodicals and comics" (Reynolds, 2013). As such, the single message that stories for boys produced at the beginning of the twentieth century and which was understood in the same way by all readers was that "war was an opportunity for adventure, comradeship, duty and service" (Reynolds, 2013). Likewise, in America, during the First World War, writers expressed opinions about it with the majority of them passionately supporting U.S. intervention on the side of the Allies. Thus, while "opposition to the war did find literary expression, especially during the period of American neutrality, the overwhelming majority of wartime writing supported direct American involvement" (Dayton, 2016). For instance, the literature of the American Revolution celebrates the glory of the new republic as it develops from the confinement of colonial constraints, and American readers tend to see it as a just and honorable war (Gross, 2016). This shows that war literature is also a means to declare war as inevitable, and to gather support for wars and the war system as they suggest war as smarter, swifter, nobler than other means to resolve conflict. Thus, writers use war literature to create a situation in which they can share their feelings, and persuade readers to appreciate and perhaps agree with them.

However, there are other war literatures which are less concerned with the military implications of wars but rather concerned with presenting their authors' anti-heroic individual experiences of the war. This includes literature that grapples with the effects of conflicts on participants and victims/survivors, and a reflection of the views of society on wars in general. This type of literature is multifaceted, offering multiple points of view, including the view of the soldiers at the battlefront, the view of witnesses and civilians, as well as the different views of men and women who carry out various duties in war. War literature is eventually the story of what it means to be human, "and war poetry in particular often demonstrates the sorrow as well as the belief in war as being the right

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thing to do" (Gross, 2016). In the literature of World War I, just as in West African war literature, the notion that war is extraordinarily hard on both soldiers and civilians, takes a much bigger place in war literature just as is found in several African child soldier narratives. In his analysis of All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque. a novel which was published eleven years after the end of the First World War, Gross states that the message of the novel was that the extreme stress of combat and the physical hardships endured by soldiers made it difficult for them to return to their normal way of life. Much of the literature of this period foregrounds the incredible horror of war. World War I literature thus, tends to show how war degrades both soldier and civilian alike. The literature of World War II, in America on the other hand, is mainly based on the experiences of those who lived through the war. For instance, The Naked and the Dead is based on the author, Norman Mailer's experiences in the Philippines during the war, while The Thin Red Line and From Here to Eternity by James Jones and The Caine Mutiny: A Novel of World War II by Herman Wouk, all emphasise at how people who were civilians and did not care about wars, were forever changed by the experience.

Even though narratives of heroism in wars have mostly been written by men to glorify and expound on male efforts on the battlefield, some female writers have used their narratives to foreground women's contributions in war. For instance, whereas earlier female narratives of the Afghan war focus on the experience of a nurse or wife, later novels highlight the experience of highly trained women soldiers and the contributions and sacrifices they made on the frontlines of the war in Afghanistan. A typical example is Tzemach Lemmon's *Ashley's War*. Similarly, in *Allah is Not Obliged*, women are portrayed as warlords some of whom fight to protect children while others use child soldiers to achieve their selfish aims.

Another important function of war literature, especially those written by women, is to speak against war. Some imaginative literature puts its whole wisdom to work against war. Pacifist or anti-war literature is a big term that includes literature that presents anti-war action, literature that supports anti-war feelings as well as literature that takes positions against war. Literature that represents antiwar action includes poems, plays, songs, memoirs, fictions representing peace marches and protests, the gathering of signatures for anti-war petitions, conscientious objectors, soldiers' refusals to fight, anti-war civil disobedience, attacks on draft boards, the prison experiences of those jailed for anti-war action and self-immolations. Anti-war literature that is meant to support anti-war feelings and actions includes all texts that ever moved a reader, or were intended to move a reader, toward an antiwar feeling or action (Rosenwald, 2014). Kabi Hartman argues that most World War I novels by British women were pacifist novels. Women writers like Theodora Wilson Wilson, Rose Allatini, and Rose Macaulay published pacifist propaganda novels during the First World War in which they adopt the figure of the Christ-like and ambiguously

gendered man as a vehicle onto which to project their pacifist politics as well as their own struggles as women. When World War I broke out, many of these women became vocal pacifists and carried their mode of discourse into their pacifist propaganda writings (Hartman, 2015). Likewise, in America, not only did the First World War produce massive literature during and after, it also led to a response against the war and the traditions that supported it. "This response to the war contributed significantly to two different outcomes: first, the radicalism of the 1930s, and second, a shift in literature that widened the gap between popular and high literary culture" (Dayton, 2016). American intervention in the war met with opposition from writers. Oppositional poetry emerged from the Women's Peace Party, organised in early 1915. A poem by WPP member Angela Morgan, "Battle Cry of the Mothers," typifies poems that base their rhetoric on the belief that women must oppose the war (Dayton, 2016). Socialist and trade union organisations also generated and provided outlets for anti-war poetry. Thus, one of the main purposes of war literature is to speak against war.

More importantly, war literature records the effects of wars on society and individuals. It records how wars destroy the social, cultural and economic institutions of most countries that have experienced them. The destruction is on such a scale that no one is left untouched and writers of war literature portray these effects through their writing. In America in the early part of the twentieth century, Ernest Hemingway's response to the First World War is recorded in his poem, "Champs d'Honneur", while his novel For Whom the Bell Tolls is a response to the Spanish civil war. "Champs d'Honneur" is a short poem, suggesting that there is nothing more to say on the subject and that war is so violent and undignified that the violence and indignity done to the soldiers does not end with their deaths but is carried with them to the afterlife. This is also what we see in Chris Abani's Song for Night which portrays the child soldier in perpetual suffering even after his death. In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway presents the effects of war, including rape during war. In more recent history, according to S. Shahira Banu, looking at the experience in Afghanistan, "modern writings have attempted to bring Afghans closer to understanding the changes associated with the modern world, and especially to comprehend the destruction of their country by war" (Banu, 2016). This is true of works of a novelist like Khaled Hosseini who shows the economic and political devastations created by the endless conflicts in his native country, Afghanistan.

As can be seen from the discussions above, there are several reasons why writers write about wars. This is seen in the way literature and war have had a strong relationship over the years. In most cases, the rise of wars leads to the rise in literary works about war. Though many politicians and political scientists, historians, economists, journalists, opinion makers, and poll takers may not form their conclusions based on literary works but rather according to some 'objective' criteria, literature's role in chronicling

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wars worldwide cannot be overemphasised. The advantages of chronicling wars through literature are outlined and discussed below.

Even though it is mainly the work of historians to chronicle the various wars the world has witnessed, literature has significant roles to play in presenting wars. But the question to be answered is why do war stories matter? Can they be considered as reliable social and political documentation and a source of information? Evelyne Accad in her study "Gender and violence in the Lebanese war novel", suggests that "fiction is a significant work of social, anthropological and political documents because creative works are more appropriate than other works to be analysed and give us the 'total' picture since they allow us to enter into the unconscious and imaginary world of the author, with all the implications in hidden meanings and underlying significance, an author reflects his or her own individual vision, which is linked to the collective imaginary" (qtd in Bezhan, 2008). This means that what the author says is an image of his or her society. The tension between the individual and collective imagination adds complications and details which are not found in more direct scientific documents.

Literature also has the potential to record through the trends and structures presented, apart from its surface realism, the deep factors that lead to and sustain wars, and the effects of wars. According to Aristotle, the supremacy of poetry over history consists in poetry's higher truth and higher dignity (referred to in Remenyi, 1944). This is because the ghastliness, sadness and heroism of war are best recorded in novels, plays, and poems that have the literary capacity to distil pain and to make it emotionally legible. According to Joseph Remenyi, the "perplexed, frightened or fearless human spirit, occasionally related to a concept that suggests the perfectibility of man, finds expression in novels written about the first World-War, as, for instance, in Vicente Blasco Ibanez's The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse or in Henri Barbusse's Under Fire" (Remenyi, 1944). Remenyi further suggests that it is the creative approach to war that makes struggles in a profound psychological sense memorable. According to Susan Andrade, "novels have greater purchase on reality than other discourses including legal or anthropological" discourse (93). This makes the novel more appropriate in the discussion of trauma, since unlike sociological analysis, the novel has no limitation. Some of these authors animate particular archives to give the history of the particular wars they write about.

In addition, literature has better potential than scholarly non-fiction to transmit stories of war to future generations. Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman and James Phelan claim in their introduction to the collection of essays, *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, that "the narratives that endure, and that have the greatest chance of transmitting the story to the future generations, all possess a significant aesthetic dimension" (Lothe et al, 2012). This is due to the permanency of literary works. For instance,

works of classical or romantic value are still related with man's permanent problems, despite the time-boundedness of their subject matter. There are "examples of unchangeable human traits in Aeschylus's Agamemnon or in Virgil's The Aeneid which expressed in a poetic language, preserved for posterity a feeling of actuality, despite difference in time and space, taste and behaviour, conception of simplicity and complications (Remenyi, 1944). Even though, throughout the twentieth century, literary critics excluded war narratives from the canon of literature to which aesthetic qualities are assigned, invoking a crude notion of Theodor Adorno's famous dictum that "poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric", there exists a lot of creativity in war literature that allows it to transmit war time experience from generation to generation.

Literature also has the potential of creating understanding of a situation better than history or sociology since as "... a work of creative expression, literature conveys meaning which pragmatism might exhaust, but vision sustains.... Without this concept of creative function, it would be impossible to understand the clarity or the controlled complexity of great poetic works, thematically related to confusion, bloodshed, barbarism, lamentation, active shrewdness and slyness" (Remenyi, 1944). There is therefore no doubt that literary works teach a great deal extremely eloquently about war, violence, courage, fear, and human nature. A poet like Yehuda Amichai, one of Israel's most popular poets, for instance was respected by both Palestinians and Israelis, for his discussion of the personal nature of violence. Similarly, the literary language and aesthetics of the African childsoldier novels create better understanding of the situation of the African child soldier. With the employment in the novels of interesting plots, memorable characters, and striking expressions and imagery, these literary works are able to create better understanding about wars.

More importantly, literature has the ability to handle trauma plausibly. According to John C. Hawley, "narrative fiction may by default have the effective means to digest the poison of the past and to slowly heal from within the damage that has been done" (Hawley, 2008). This is seen when fiction employs complex aesthetic techniques to engage the reader imaginatively, emotionally and intellectually while at the same time communicating important messages. This explored very clearly in Ahmadou Kourouma's Allah is Not Obliged where the hilarious humour does not trivialise the horrors of the civil war described, but paradoxically intensifies how appalling the experience is. The patterns for describing mass death are better done through works of aesthetic value in order to work through pain and trauma. Thus, literature has the potential to record the effects of war on individuals through artistic means that operate productively with pain and horror and allow readers to read about wars and its effects on men, women and children as discussed in the sections that follow.

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### 3. FIGURING MEN IN WAR

War has usually been viewed as a man's business and as the people at the war front, they experience at first hand, the effects of war. (In recent decades this situation has changed with women now accepted as combatants in many national armies.) The effects of war include death, physical deformity and, after the war, the difficulties of living a normal non-military life, all of which are represented in literature. One significant effect of war on men represented in literature is the inability of the ex-soldiers to live normal violence-free lives after their experience as soldiers. In his article, "In War and in Peace: Representations of Men of Violence in Salvadoran Literature" Astvaldur Astvaldsson gives a typical example of such ex-soldiers who find it difficult to live in peace. He considers the example of the protagonist of Castellanos Moya's fourth novel, La diabla en el espejo (2000), an ex-soldier turned criminal, given the nickname Robocop by his former military colleagues. The protagonist finds it impossible to abandon violence and adapt to life as a civilian at the end of the Civil War. Peace makes no sense to him since, basically, all he has been taught is the need to exterminate the terrorists without even understanding the reasons behind the war or of the cause for which he has been fighting. All he knows is how to follow the orders to kill the "enemy": anyone he is told/hired to kill. As a civilian he is completely dysfunctional and, thus, when dismissed from the army, his only option is to turn to crime. He fights variously for opposing groups, even side by side with ex-guerrilla fighters who have turned to crime (Astvaldsson, 2012). Thus, since crime is rewarded on the battlefield, soldiers engage in crime for their actions to be prized. Violence completely engulfs them so that they find it difficult to live violence free lives even after the end of the war.

Apart from crime, death is also a way of achieving masculinity in times of war since death occurring on the battlefield has always been particularly "glorified and given a great position of honor in society" (Moore and Williamson qtd in Bogdańska, 2016). Writing with reference to Polish and Spanish culture, Olga Bogdańska states that "war-related deaths are denied a peaceful transition to the hereafter", (Bogdańska, 2016) just as is believed by West Africans and is explored in Song for Night. Nevertheless, and, paradoxically, violent and sudden death has been transformed into idealised death, that is, an aesthetic attitude toward battlefield death has developed. This trend goes back to the seventh-century B.C. Spartan poet Tyrtaeus who suggests that "it is a beautiful thing for a man to fall in the front line and die fighting for the country" (qtd in Bogdańska, 2016). It is worth noting that from the earliest times, there has been a clear distinction between those who died on the battlefield and those who died of other causes. Since men are mostly at the battlefront, death is a way of proving they are men. Throughout the world, the battlefront is almost always a way through which men's masculinity is achieved and almost all war literature portrays these masculinist tendencies. But the idea of heroism on the battlefield is also undermined. For example, the renowned female African writer, Flora Nwapa, portrays masculine tendencies in her short story "My Soldier Brother", which appears in the collection This is Lagos. In this story, Nwapa describes the developing manhood of Adiewere, who becomes a soldier in the Biafran army, and dies at the battlefront. He is explicitly a hero to his brother, who says, "I was so proud of him. I told all my friends about him and they came to see him to touch his uniform and his gun" (p. 132). However, Adiewere's aunt, Monica bursts out: "I am tired of people coming here and talking rubbish. What death is honourable? Death is death. A good intelligent boy died, and old men who should die say he died honourably. The sooner they stop talking of honourable death, the better" (134). The different perceptions of the men and women towards Adiewere's death makes us recall Virginia Woolf's anti-war tract, Three Guineas, written before the outbreak of World War II. In this tract, Wolf muses that "patriotism" means different thing to men and women. She asks;

But the educated man's sister - what does "patriotism" mean to her? Has she the same reasons for loving England, for defending England'? Has she been "greatly blessed" in England? History and biography when questioned would seem to show that her position in the home of freedom has been different from her brother's; and psychology would seem to hint that history is not without its effect upon mind and body. Therefore, her interpretation of the word "patriotic" may well differ from his. (qtd in Bryce, 1991) Masculinity is also the driving force for the representation of war time rape in literature. Commenting on the incidence and history of rape in America, Clark Darlene Hine notes that rape is closely associated with economic oppression, racial animosity, class tensions, and male domination (Hine, 1989). This view resonates with Hazel V Carby's views that rape "has always involved patriarchal notions of women being, at best, not entirely unwilling accomplices, if not outwardly inviting a sexual attack" (Carby, 1989). In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun, Ugwu, who, developing under Odenigbo and Olanna into a responsible man, is enlisted into the army where he dents his image by his involvement in gang rape. He takes part in this gang rape just to prove to his fellow soldiers that he is a man. This is because, in his reluctance, the other soldiers had teased, "Target Destroyer [Ugwu's nickname] is afraid" and "Target Destroyer, aren't you a man?" (458). Ugwu's involvement in a gang rape just to prove his manhood shows that he "was not living his life; life was living him" (Adichie, 2006). In the same way, in Emmanuel Dongala's Johnny Mad Dog, Johnny, a child soldier who proudly takes the name Johnny "Mad Dog", is pleased with his record as a violent rapist who, together with his militia, has raped many internally displaced people. In some war novels especially in Johnny Mad Dog, rape is raised to the level of an initiation rite and child soldiers' acceptance into the militia is linked to their ability to rape more victims. This

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makes them engage in substance abuse that will numb their conscience to enable them to rape because as adolescents, they see in rape the opportunity to exhibit their manhood and convince others that they are no longer boys. Thus in wars, it is men's bid to prove their masculinity that leads them to rape women.

# 4. WAR ON WOMEN, WOMEN IN WAR

Traditional accounts of war by soldiers and male civilians have mostly portrayed women as unscathed and untouched by war. For instance, in war novels like Chukwuemeka Ike's Sunset at Dawn and Eddie Iroh's Forty-Eight Guns for the General which draw directly on the involvement of a male protagonist in the events of the Nigerian/Biafra War, there is an intrinsic and inevitable distancing of women. Novels that represent the suffering of women and children are mostly written by women who seek to highlight the effects of wars on women and emphasise healing for war-affected women. For instance, Gertrude Stein's major concerns in her novel, Mrs. Reynolds, her fictionalised experience of World War II, revolved around domestic needs like foraging for food, rather than securing shelter from aerial bombardments, though Stein was familiar with bomb shelters. For Stein, "war translates into problems for the managers of the home: food scarcity, curfew, and limited luxuries. The quotidian concerns of civilian life in wartime are given primary focus" (Goodspeed- Chadwick, 2011). Also in Afghanistan, according to Faridullah Bezhan, women writers like Spozhmai Zaryab and Maryam Mahboob wrote fictionalised accounts of what happened in Afghanistan in the past three decades and their stories are strongly grounded in their countrywomen's experiences. What we read in these "women's works of fiction are accounts of war, of what was happening or at least of what might have happened. These accounts are not based on political gain or propaganda to please one side of the conflict or the other. They are based on the experiences of ordinary women caught up in the war, the very ones who are victims of the war "(Bezhan, 2008). These works often use highly literary narrative strategies to communicate the intensity and disruption of the war experience for women even though they may not have been at the battlefront. Zaryab, for example, uses modernist techniques such as stream-of-consciousness to narrate the story. An example is her novel, 'Moza-ha dar Hazya n' in which the whole narrative process unfolds in the mind of a sick woman who was injured in the fighting and burning with fever. Zaryab is able to "show the depth of the tragedy and its wider implications with the help of stream-of-consciousness" (Bezhan, 2008). Women's writing on war especially foregrounds issues such as rape, abduction, torture and death. In analyzing the representation of war time violence Salvadoran literature. Astvaldur Astvaldsson foregrounds Castellanos Moya's portrayal of violence against women. In La diabla en el espejo (2000), referred to above, Robocop ruthlessly guns down an upper-middleclass woman, Olga Marı'a, in front of her two young daughters as they arrive back home, leaving them traumatised (446 – 447). The focus of the novel is on Moya's violent men's relationships within the community, as well as on how they relate to and treat women (Astvaldsson, 2012). Also, in *Waiting: A Novel of Uganda at War*, Kaaka, a woman who is helping another woman deliver her baby is shot by soldiers who come to her house demanding "women, food, and money" (*Waiting* 37) for disobeying their orders. This body of literature represents the death and suffering of women in time of war.

In Africa, almost all war novels by women explore women's experience of war by highlighting their suffering as well as their resilience. A novel like Goretti Kyomuhendo's Waiting: A Novel of Uganda at War, referred to above, explores the atrocities that ordinary people experience during wartime by placing emphasis on the private suffering and humiliation inflicted on women in the domestic space of the home. In her article, "Visible Wars and Invisible Women: Interrogating Women's Roles During Wartime in Goretti Kyomuhendo's Waiting: A Novel of Uganda at War, Lynda Gichanda Spencer argues that "even if women do not actively feature on the battleground, they are still inadvertently drawn into the war, which has an adverse impact on their lives" (Spencer, 2015). In Waiting, Kyomuhendo portrays issues and concerns that directly affect the women characters. For example, in her depiction of Mother, the mother of Alinda, the thirteen-year-old girl protagonist, she explores some of the difficulties that pregnant women go through in the midst of war. When Mother dies during childbirth, Kyomuhendo illustrates how this traumatic experience affects her daughter, Alinda, who witnesses her death. She also demonstrates how women come together to take care of Mother's new-born baby and the way they reconstruct the community after the conflict is over.

In his article, "The things they carried: Vietnam War literature by and about women in the secondary classroom", Francis E. Kazemek, offers a good example of literary representation of women's experiences in wars. These novels and poems refer to the experiences and after effects of veteran women reveal that most of the women were so traumatised that they tried "desperately to shut out the world" in a variety of ways while for others it was the world that shut them out making them feel alienated. These horrific experiences of the women made some of them turn to drinking and drugs in order to block out the daily horrors of the war. The after effects of war on women combatants as well as civilians are also represented as very difficult moments for them. According to Kazemek, the most difficult part the women's experiences to read about is what happened to many of them on their return to the United States. These women were often scorned, reviled, or simply expected to get on with their lives as if nothing unusual had happened to them. And even when friends tried to help, they often made things worse. The silence was the worst for some of the women. Friends and relatives did not ask about

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the war, and the women felt that they could not talk about their experiences. What most of these novels reveal is that the women veterans suffer alienation, emptiness, anger, pain, and loss.

Of all the atrocities that women suffer in war situations, rape is arguably the most disturbing. Rape as a dimension of the achievement of masculinity has been discussed in the foregoing section, and here rape will be considered from the vantage point of the woman. Representations of rape in war situations dates as far back as Greek mythology. Even though Greek warriors and medieval knights were perceived as noble, a writer like Stanley John Weyman, for instance, ridicules Olympian heroes for the way they treated women as property or war booty (Tarr, 1996). In classical war literature, especially in the *Iliad* and other Greek tales, women are seduced, betrayed, raped, enslaved and made victims of not only mortal men but of gods as well. Examples are the great Greek god, Zeus, who abducts and rapes Europa and Hades who abducts and rapes Persephone. Likewise, in the modern world, war time rape has been recorded throughout history and across the world in historical works, religious texts, literature, and art for different purposes. For instance, during the Sino-Japanese war, fiction writers were asked to write down immediately what really happened, mostly the atrocities committed by the Japanese in China, so as to arouse the Chinese people's consciousness of the crime and mobilise them to resist the Japanese (Xie, 2014). As discussed above, rape is a way men try to prove their masculinity and it is represented in literature as a damage beyond redemption, something that is inscribed on the victim's body and can never be washed away. As a result, in the literary works that include images of raped women, these victims are portrayed as being incapable of surviving emotionally after their ordeal. In Luo Feng's The Bleak Village, for example, the woman protagonist becomes insane after being raped by a Japanese soldier (Xie, 2014). Also, in Zimbabwean Chenjerai Hove's Bones, Janifa becomes insane after being raped by Mayepo, a cook to a settler farmer while in compatriot, Yvonne Vera's, Under the Tongue, Zizha, who is defiled by her own father, is so shocked by the crime that she remains for a long time an aphasic and a mental patient. Thus rape, which men view as a way of proving their manhood, is one of the most gruesome wartime atrocities recorded and is represented as having a lasting damaging effect on women. According to South African writer, Credo Mutwa, since "African society is basically matriarchal and women are considered to have two souls, one in their head and the other in their womb, the rape of a woman is an attack on her womb and therefore, unforgivable" (qtd in Asaah, 2007). From prehistoric times to the present Information Age, "soldiers have always seen in women a source of ready booty. That it seems natural for men to believe that war time situations and militarised conditions give them more ground to rape the weak underscores the basically violent nature of the crime" (Asaah 2007). Rape is thus a war on women that is a dimension of the general war. Raped women are then at war with themselves since they carry the children of their enemies; they carry the enemy within which leaves them traumatised. And, as if this is not enough, they are rejected by their communities as dirty people. The experience of raped women is as disturbing as that of the child soldiers. While the raped woman is a symbol of the victim carrying her enemy within, the child soldier represents abnormal personal development.

### 5. WAR LITERATURE AND THE CHILD

The twenty-first century has continued to see children enmeshed in violence between opposing combatant forces, as victims of terrorist warfare and perhaps, most tragically of all, as victims of civil wars, where conflict in the nation may be read as conflict within the family that is supposed to nurture the child. According to John Pearn, in an African context, "children have also been deliberately targeted victims in genocidal civil wars in Africa in the past decade and hundreds of thousands have been killed and maimed in the context of close quarter, hand-to-hand assaults of great ferocity (Pearn, 2016)."

Over the last 500 years, the world has experienced more years of war than of peace in Europe, Africa and Asia: "In the last decade, there have been between 14 and 21 major conflicts each year" (Rieder and Choonara, 2012). Although this may be a relatively small number in comparison with the number of countries in the world, the impact of war on children is staggering: "It is estimated that more than one billion children were living in areas in conflict or emerging from war in 2006. Three hundred million of these children were under the age of five years" (Rieder and Choonara, 2012), while an estimated 300,000 children are used as child soldiers worldwide. These statistics show how war affects children worldwide, hence the numerous literary responses.

Literary representations of children in war tend to depict them mostly as innocent victims who are traumatised. Even those texts that feature children who have ostensibly absorbed violent and destructive ideologies, for example, Nazi indoctrination, continue to insist on the Romantic myth of childhood as the embodiment of a prelapsarian past with a redemptive potential for the future. But there are also more complex representations where children are shown as complicit. In her analysis of childhood and youth in Lisa's Ist Paul Schuldig, Debbie Pinfold argues that for a text produced in this early post-World War II period, and from a position in exile, the novel avoids both evasion and excessive condemnation, in that it presents an adolescent protagonist who is old enough to have been implicated in the Nazi regime, yet too young to be held responsible for it. To her, the novel uses images of childhood to enable understanding of and empathy with this representative of the perpetrator nation, but without presenting him as a mere victim. This shows that not all children are innocent victims of war but may also be portrayed as agents of violence. Nevertheless, in the final analysis they may still

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be excused as victims of structures bigger than themselves where they do not have the moral experience and power to extricate themselves.

Literature represents children in war situations in three stages: their lives during the war, their lives as refugees and their lives as settlers in different countries. The protagonists of these stories are children who suffer various atrocities attendant upon war and the different ways through which they manage their personal and social difficulties in these environments. The representations of children in international literature, together with literary representations of children in Africa, indicate that recent literature is never able to glorify war the same way that traditional war literature featuring men does. Boys may simulate being men but this masculine behaviour is always radically undercut by the narrative.

Literary works that portray children as combatants in various wars are mainly found in Africa, especially in West Africa. These works portray children as soldiers in various wars in which they commit many atrocities as well as suffer abuse at the hands of adult commanders of their armies. Most of these child-soldier narratives represent the child soldier as one who suffers from hunger and substance abuse and who is made to perform atrocities under the influence of drugs. As child soldiers, they are obliged to follow every order of their commanders who take advantage and even, in some cases, sodomise them. Representation of children as combatants which is prevalent in African literature may be due to the fact that these novels are literary responses to the wars in Africa: the wars in Uganda, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone which became synonymous with the use of children as combatants.

# 6. CONCLUSION

This paper presented a survey of literature written in response to wars throughout the world and has argued that these plays, poems, memoirs and novels are written to celebrate combatants as heroes. Other works of literature are written to overcome trauma while still others are written to bring out the effects of war and to speak against wars. The effectiveness of studying war through literature has also been outlined. The paper has also made it clear that even though there are common effects of war on men, women and children, there are some effects of war that are peculiar to men and unique to women. But these adult experiences may be distinguished from the experiences of children, most strongly when children are combatants.

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