



THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Gulmira Juraboyeva¹, Dinara Saydullayeva Lutfulla qizi²

¹ Student of Samarkand state institute of foreign languages,

² Student of National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4968208>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 01st June 2021

Accepted: 05th June 2021

Online: 10th June 2021

KEY WORDS

English literature, society, scientist, writer, masterpiece, genres.

ABSTRACT

generally, literature can function as the mirror that reflects the society. The world has been a subject to a large number of wars and battles. Specifically, the Second World War was a major destructive conflict that has left its effects on the international level. Since war existed, there have been many writers trying creatively to explore it in a way of turning the battlegrounds into influential narratives. In this regard, numerous British authors of post- WWII era have been attracted to respond to the Second World War in their post-war fiction in order to portray its barbarism and devastation.

Introduction

In fact, in the aftermath of World War II the British society witnessed a series of social changes that dramatically lead to general feeling of disillusionment and uncertainty. Consequently, post-WWII British writers took it upon themselves to create narratives that investigate in sometimes a philosophical manner the damages of war and its impact on individuals. Among the writers of post-WWII era is William Golding who is one the greatest contemporary authors. After the end of World War II, Golding published his first work entitled *Lord of the Flies* (1954) which is considered as one of the significant novels of the twentieth century. It is written as an allegory of the Second World War in order to depict the flaws of society and its collapse. It also deals with the evil and savagery of the human nature. Undoubtedly, war and literature are

inseparable. Numerous literary texts were written in order to respond to the wars and to trace its impacts on the individual's sense of existence. Most importantly, the British literature after World War II was not only for the aim of portraying the brutality and the devastation of the war, However, it came to declare the collapse of civilization and the triumph of evil over good. In addition, the present study will rely on a set of approaches. In the main discussion, the socio-historical approach will be used in order to explore the impact of World War II on the British literature and the literary response to it. In the analysis, the novel will be read as an allegory of World War II focusing on how the writer associates fictional characters and events with actual people and incidents. In addition, this study will focus on analyzing the impact of World War II on William Golding and his view of the end of civilization.



This research will be divided into three main chapters. The first chapter will discuss some information and general background of English literature. The second chapter explores genres in literature during that time, as well as Golding's *Lord of the Flies* as an allegory of the Second World War. The third chapter will conclude all information in literature.

Methods

Brief history of English literature

The outbreak of war in 1939, as in 1914, brought to an end an era of great intellectual and creative exuberance. Individuals were dispersed; the rationing of paper affected the production of magazines and books; and the poem and the short story, convenient forms for men under arms, became the favored means of literary expression. It was hardly a time for new beginnings, although the poets of the New Apocalypse movement produced three anthologies (1940–45) inspired by Neoromantic anarchism. No important new novelists or playwrights appeared. In fact, the best fiction about wartime—Evelyn Waugh's *Put Out More Flags* (1942), Henry Green's *Caught* (1943), James Hanley's *No Directions* (1943), Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947), and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949)—was produced by established writers. Only three new poets (all of whom died on active service) showed promise: Alun Lewis, Sidney Keyes, and Keith Douglas, the latter the most gifted and distinctive, whose eerily detached accounts of the battlefield revealed a poet of potential greatness. Lewis's haunting short stories about the lives of officers and enlisted men are also works of very great accomplishment.

It was a poet of an earlier generation, T.S. Eliot, who produced in his *Four*

Quartets (1935–42; published as a whole, 1943) the masterpiece of the war. Reflecting upon language, time, and history, he searched, in the three quartets written during the war, for moral and religious significance in the midst of destruction and strove to counter the spirit of nationalism inevitably present in a nation at war. The creativity that had seemed to end with the tortured religious poetry and verse drama of the 1920s and '30s had a rich and extraordinary late flowering as Eliot concerned himself, on the scale of *The Waste Land* but in a very different manner and mood, with the well-being of the society in which he lived.

Results and Discussion

Writers have long drawn on the experiences of war to examine themes such as race, power, democracy, and human behavior under conditions of stress. Partly through addressing these and similar issues with unprecedented candor and realism, U.S. war literature matured during and after [World War II](#). Hundreds of war novels eventually appeared, some of outstanding craftsmanship. Many American poets did impressive work, and wartime journalism and postwar memoirs often exhibited a new subtlety and clarity. Only the most popular or original works and writers can be described here.

[World War II](#) novels comprise the most varied category in U.S. war literature. Harry Brown tells of small-unit combat in *A Walk in the Sun* (1944). John Hersey's *A Bell for Adano* (1944) suggests that the integrity of most Americans abroad will ultimately outweigh the arrogance and cruelty of a few. Hersey also wrote *Into the Valley* (1943) and *Hiroshima* (1946), both reportorial



classics, as well as the novels *The Wall* (1950), about the Warsaw Ghetto, and *The War Lover* (1959), a Freudian tale of bomber pilots in England.

[Saul Bellow's](#) *Dangling Man* (1944) ends disturbingly before its draftee protagonist goes overseas. Life in North Africa and Italy beguiles the GIs in John Horne Burns's *The Gallery* (1947). Like many novels, *The Gallery* features self-seeking officers, decent enlisted men, and kind-hearted foreign women, but a chapter about gay Allied soldiers was controversial. [John Hawkes's](#) surrealistic *The Cannibal* (1949) portrays occupied Germany as a landscape of gothic horrors, and Jerzy Kozinski takes a macabre view of Nazi-occupied Poland in *The Painted Bird* (1965). William Gardner Smith's *Last of the Conquerors* (1948) shows black soldiers in occupied Germany as better treated by German civilians than by fellow Americans. John Oliver Killens's *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1962) dramatically portrays a comparable social contradiction in wartime Australia.

Three ambitious, more or less pessimistic, novels appeared in 1948. Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* unites the fates of three infantrymen, two American and one German. Shaw emphasizes that the [United States](#) has its racists and tyrants as well as Germany; here, however, they have not yet gained the upper hand. German expatriate Stefan Heym's *The Crusaders* spotlights a psychological warfare unit; while endorsing the Allied cause as just, Heym criticizes American hypocrisy and naivete in Europe. In his deeply pessimistic *The Naked and the Dead*, [Norman Mailer](#) mixes realistic details of the Pacific war with profound fears about

the future of democracy. In this novel, war has given frightening power to autocrats like General Cummings and sadists like Sergeant Croft. Only chance and heroic endurance, embodied in Private Ridges and Private Goldstein, offer a glimmer of hope in a dark human and natural landscape.

The vivid and moving *Mask of Glory* (1949), by Dan Levin, offers a leftist perspective on Marine heroism in the Pacific. Though disdained by critics as cliched and superficial, Leon Uris's *Battle Cry!* (1953) was enormously popular. Richard Matheson's *The Beardless Warriors* (1960) shows teenagers coming to grips with battle. *Face of a Hero* (1950), by Louis Falstein, dramatizes the bombing of southern Europe, and Edward L. Beach's *Run Silent, Run Deep* (1959) does the same for the sub-marine war.

Questions of discipline and psychology distinguish Herman Wouk's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Caine Mutiny* (1951). The tyrannical Captain Queeg's irrationality leads a handful of officers to seize command during a typhoon. Once a court-martial clears the alleged mutineers, their own attorney angrily upholds Queeg, whose service helped protect America even before [Pearl Harbor](#); few then were willing to accept that responsibility. Many readers find this last-minute vindication of Queeg unconvincing.

James Jones published the best-selling *From Here to Eternity* in 1951, describing the life of the rebellious Private Prewitt in Hawaii before [Pearl Harbor](#). Considered shocking in language and detail at the time it was published, its brutal depiction of army life angered some skeptical critics. But Jones's ability to write powerfully and insightfully



about soldiers was confirmed in *The Thin Red Line* (1962), an outstanding combat-oriented novel. In the sex-charged *Whistle* (1978) Jones writes bleakly of returned veterans of Guadalcanal.

The U.S. Army Air Force in [Joseph Heller's](#) *Catch-22* (1961) is a world of caricatures and tortured logic. But beneath the slapstick, *Catch-22* satirizes greed, gullibility, ambition, corruption, and complacency. Captain Yossarian is at the mercy of corrupt and inept bosses and colleagues. He finally rejects a system that demands infinite loyalty despite its cruelty to the individual. Heller's theme is that of the individual in an irrational, impersonal society, but during the [Vietnam War](#) many readers eagerly endorsed military idiocy as the book's actual message.

In *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), [Kurt Vonnegut](#) shuttles Private Billy Pilgrim between 1945 Dresden, a future America, and a zoo on the planet Tralfamidor. Hardly a straightforward "antiwar" novel, *Slaughterhouse Five* seems to counsel resignation in the face of the world's horrors. Also influenced by [science fiction](#), [Thomas Pynchon's](#) avant-garde *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) focuses on Nazi development of "vengeance weapons" near the end of the war.

Although critics do not generally regard them as being successful as literature, Herman Wouk's epic-scale *The Winds of War* (1971) and its sequel, *War and Remembrance* (1978) employ enormous historical research to substantiate the war's tragedy and the influence of history on the individual.

The best war poetry was personal and understated. War poets included [Howard Nemerov](#), [Louis Simpson](#), Karl Shapiro, Phyllis McGinley, John Ciardi, [James Dickey](#), [Lincoln Kirstein](#), and others. Anthologies of war poems often include Richard Eberhart's "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment," [Randall Jarrell's](#) "Eighth Air Force," and Winfield Townley Scott's "The American Sailor with the Japanese Skull."

Outstanding American overseas journalists included [Ernie Pyle](#) (whose newspaper columns frequently personalized the ordinary GI), Richard Tregaskis, John Hersey, [Margaret Bourke-White](#), Quentin Reynolds, John Steinbeck, and Martha Gellhorn. CBS radio correspondent Edward R. Murrow became famous for the economy and impact of his written as well as his spoken words.

World War II is the subject of many distinguished memoirs and other nonfiction accounts. *The Longest Day* (1959), by Cornelius Ryan, is an early example of [oral history](#). *The Warriors* (1958), by former intelligence officer J. Glenn Gray, ponders the psychology of men at war. Senior officers' memoirs, such as General Dwight Eisenhower's *Crusade in Europe* (1948), are complemented by the works of junior officers and enlisted men; some notable examples are James Fahey's *Pacific War Diary* (1956), Eugene Sledge's *With the Old Breed on Peleliu* and [Iwo Jima](#) (1981), Samuel Hynes's *Flights of Passage* (1988), Raymond Gantter's *Roll Me Over* (1997), and William A. Foley, Jr., 's *Visions from a Foxhole* (2002).

Conclusion



American writers on the subject of World War II created a body of work unsurpassed in quality by the literature of any other American war. Novels, autobiographies, and poetry explored the effects of war on individuals. Unlike the disillusionment that characterized the literature of [World War I](#), in general World War II literature was neither pessimistic nor antiwar. Instead, it presents war in its complexity as a tragic but perhaps inevitable part of the human condition. Reflecting the views of their own

generation, authors writing about World War II generally accepted the justness of that war and the necessity of ridding the world of Nazi totalitarianism and Japanese militarism. World War II literature helped to make that war, later called the "good war," a defining moment in affirming America's democratic values and the nation's identity as a moral people. Later in the century the literature of the [Vietnam War](#) would take American war literature down a starkly different path.

References:

1. Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000. Web.
2. *Reporting World War II*, 2 vols. [New York](#): Library of America, 1995.
3. Smith, Malcolm. *Britain and 1940: History, Myth and Popular Memory*. London: Routledge, 2000. Web.
4. Shapiro, Harvey, ed. *Poets of World War II*. New York: Library of America, 2003.
5. Taylor, Richard A. *Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature: an Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2016. Web.
6. Walsh, Jeffrey. "Second World War Fiction"; "Second World War Poetry." In *American War Literature 1914 to Vietnam*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.