

# The Relationship Between War Literature and Certain Specific Social and Political Realities

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**To cite this article:**

Niththijanantham Baskaran. The Relationship Between War Literature and Certain Specific Social and Political Realities. *Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 5, No. 6, 2017, pp. 206-209. doi: 10.11648/j.hss.20170506.12

**Received:** September 28, 2017; **Accepted:** October 19, 2017; **Published:** November 29, 2017

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**Abstract:** War is one of the social problems that the global society is facing today. War has plagued humanity since time immemorial. Many countries have to go through this experience at some point of the people lives. It can bring immense emotional trauma and suffering to the people left behind by the dead. This paper is committed to explore the ramifications of both inter- state and intra-state wars and its political realities which took place in different continental settings. It revolves around central figures that were lead sometimes by urge for justice and insurmountable circumstances into war and war zones. Main objective of this study is to analyse the comparative perspective on three war-related literary texts. The First, *Ivan* by *Vladimir Bogomolv*, is a story of a child who is way ahead of his age based in German. It has rightly been described as the war ensues and the fall of Hitler is imminent, lieutenant finds evidence that Ivan is killed by the Germans. The second novel *If I Die in Combat Zone* is set in war-torn Vietnam. The protagonist O'Brien is forced to join the war against his wishes. Specially, this second text shows that how the culture of his hamlet requires him to display courage and prove his mettle by fighting for his country. The third one is *Tamil Tigress* depicts the life of a teenager who joins the LTTE insurgency in Sri Lanka against the discriminatory policies of the Sinhalese government. She is moved by the injustices committed by the state apparatus on the Tamil minority. This paper attempts to engage with political reality as they have been conceptualized by the three novelists in question. Also, a large number of these three novels explore the nature of war, its stages and its effects upon the human soul in the three part of the world. This study has planned to use analytical and comparative methods. The qualitative methodology of the research will be carried out through texts, journal, and articles. Thus, this attempt to analyze, compare and contrast above the three war- related text. Through this study, it is possible to comprehend the motivation and the inspiration that the pioneer researchers and learn the techniques and devices applied in the comparative perspective with literary texts make an interesting study.

**Keywords:** Sociology of Literature, War Literature, Socio Political Realities, Comparative Politics

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## 1. Introduction

War has plagued humanity since time immemorial. War has manifested itself in various forms from "jihad" to revolution and crusades to ethnic cleansing. War can be identified not only as a primary social problem it can also be identified as a secondary and tertiary problem. History is replete with instances of impulse overriding reason and madness overpowering humanness. Man has fought, killed, and committed genocide in asserting values that he stood for which in the long run never withstood the scrutiny of time. The conquerors, dreamers, and revolutionaries had their way and so did history. Putting it simply, history recorded the

exploits in the crudest way and evoked the conscience of the readers to assess that was it really worth it?

War and conflict has always intrigued me. The clash of sovereign entities and intra-state upheavals which have degenerated into civil war has always caused musto ponder over the means and ends of war. This paper is committed to explore the ramifications of both inter-state and intra-state wars which took place in different continental settings. It revolves around central figures who were lead sometimes by urge for justice and insurmountable circumstances into war and war zones. It seldom happened to them that they achieved what they longed for. Their normative undertone often found no place in the surreptitious plans of the leaders

they tacitly or wilfully approved to follow. The central characters often question the veracity of claims of the people in command and express concern for those facing the onslaught. The conducts of the characters around which the chosen stories revolve are in stark contrast to professional military conduct

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- i. Main objective of this study is to analyse the comparative perspective on three war-related literary texts.
- ii. In the selected literary works for this study, the three writers expose and condemn the harsh and hostile social and political realities which confront the war society at different periods of its evolution.
- iii. This paper attempts to engage with political reality as they have been conceptualized by the three novelists in question

## 3. Theoretical Background

This work has been carrying out within a framework of the comparative approach. This idea that are applicable to the different societies and are applicable to the modern societies as well. Also, this paper attempt to do is basically focused on Sociology of Literature. In understanding a writer's literary work(s), one may need to probe into the writer's society as well as studying how societal elements are represented in the literature itself since it is believed that literature has certain functions to perform in contributing to the development of human societies through moral or behavior re-orientation

## 4. Materials and Methods

This study involves the qualitative method of the research as it requires gathering relevant date through texts, journals articles, magazine, internet date used for the secondary sources in this study. And also is a mainly used critical and descriptive method. "Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation...Literature represents life and life is in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation". (Berthoff, 1981, p. x-xi). Thus This study attempt to analyse, compare and contrast the war literature as the Certain Specific Social and Political Realities.

### *The Themes of the Three Novels*

Such as Books *Ivan* by Vladimir Bogomolv, is a story of a child who is way ahead of his age. His conduct is no less than that of a war veteran whose scars display astute resilience. The boy is the lone survivor as his family has been killed by Germans, which is revealed through a sequence of dreams. He is hell bent on taking revenge. He is used as a spy by Russian military to foray into German territory. On one of his reconnaissance tours he nearly escapes death and is received by the senior lieutenant (number eight). He tries to

interrogate him but to no avail. The boy remains cold in his replies and insists on calling Number Fifty One (Chief of staff). On knowing of the kid's arrival the chief of staff directs the lieutenant to give him all he asks for and arrange for perks and privileges. Ivan longs to fight on the front. The secondary characters Kholin, Masha and the lieutenant are found to be in a love triangle. While in the meantime Ivan is exasperated by delay and awaits orders for further action. Ivan is then sent on a mission to the 'other side' (German territory). He is ferried across the river by Kholin and lieutenant. As the war ensues and the fall of Hitler is imminent, lieutenant finds evidence that Ivan is killed by the Germans.

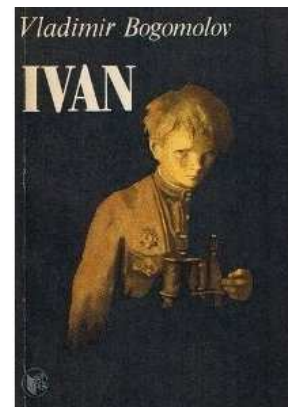


Figure 1. *Ivan*.

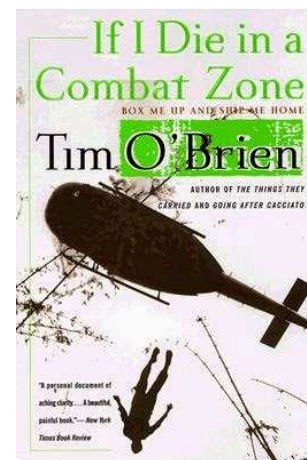


Figure 2. *If I Die in a Combat Zone*.

The second novel *If I Die in Combat Zone* is set in war torn Vietnam. The protagonist O'Brien is forced to join the war against his wishes. The culture of his hamlet requires him to display courage and prove his mettle by fighting for his country. He is an unusual soldier who has read Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. He is moved by the idea of justice, values and morality. Purity of means is the kernel of his sensitive conscience. He also attempts to flee America as a deserter to Sweden but is blocked by his love for his peers. At last he joins the war. He is posted under Alpha Company. Unlike any other fellow he is moved by the miseries of the Vietnamese people. He depicts an unbiased account of the

collateral damage inflicted by the war. His conscience also leads him into frequent arguments with his seniors who at last succumb to his logic. This however does not end the war as men are reduced as pawns in the hands of statesmen sitting in the ivory tower. He returns home and sees that the loss inflicted by the war far outweighs the 'geo-strategic' gains of the war, only if any?

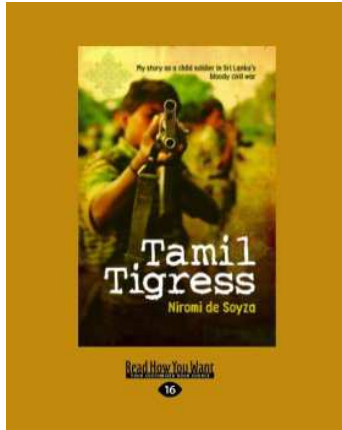


Figure 3. *Tamil Tigress*.

*Tamil Tigress* depicts the life of a teenager who joins the LTTE insurgency in Sri Lanka against the discriminatory policies of the Sinhalese government. She is moved by the injustices committed by the state apparatus on the Tamil minority. As a result of which Niromi and her family are forced to move to Jaffna from Kandy. The charismatic rise of Prabhakaran and the enigma of local leaders such as Thileepan, Muralie, and Theeban, attracts Niromi and her friend Ajanthi towards the movement. They join the movement as 'female tigers'. As time progresses, the hardships of guerrilla life takes a massive toll on her both physically and emotionally. She is shocked to see that the foot soldiers are under wholesale regimentation of the elites. Finally the cold blooded murder of Shantanu, a fellow comrade-in-arms by Mahathaya, second in command after Prabhakaran, leads her to desert the movement for better and return home.

## 5. Result and Discussion

The three novelists are war veterans themselves.

- Bogomolov fought for Russia in the Second World War (strong anti-fascist)
- O'Brien's - He is too philosophical to fight he is a philosophical anarchist
- Niromi De Soya - vision of a democratic-republican "Tamil Eelam"

Bogomolov fought for Russia in the Second World War. Tim O'Brien also had large scale war experience and so did De Soya who felt the brunt of civil war in Sri Lanka. Russia fought the Second World War under the auspices of Stalin and his version of war communism. This in turn prognosticated the ill fate of the Russians. It is indeed true that the Russians, in a desperate bid to halt the German

blitzkrieg ended up on the winning side, the war and its repercussions did not go along well with the intellectuals, Bogomolov is one of them. In Ivan he clearly displays the hardships of the troops as well as the life of a kid which is fraught with drudgeries of war. Bogomolov is clearly against the means through which the Russians are gaining intellectual inputs. He is against employing Ivan an eleven year old to for reconnaissance. At the same time he does not decry war completely because the war is against fascist aggression. By all means it can be asserted that though he had his reservations for war at the same time he had strong anti-fascist credentials.

O'Brien's political allegiance is neither to the democrats nor the republicans, two main political parties of his country. He confesses that there is no difference between the policy and programmes of both the parties. This comes from his experience in his town and the unchanged policy of America on Vietnam even after witnessing change of government thrice and the presidential baton passed on from Democrats to the Republicans. He is neither a communist as it is evident from his debate with a Vietnamese lieutenant in Czechoslovakia. His apathy for communism also stems from his views on the modus operandi of the Vietcong. He is too philosophical to fight a war even if it is in the name of his country, he is a philosophical anarchist. According to him, war brings forth destruction and mayhem for the innocent civilians whereas the statesmen enjoy the exploits from an unassailable distance. He is anti-establishment whereas promotion of war is considered. O'Brien is committed to the notion of peace and prosperity through peace.

Niromi De Soya has carved a niche for herself. Through her novel she has displayed love and empathy towards the sufferings of Tamils in Sri Lanka. She herself being a part of the Tamil diaspora, understands their dilemma at a very personal level. As the Sinhalese government endeavours, by means of violence, to purloin the life and property of Tamils, De Soya exhibits revolutionary tendencies. She admires CheGuevarra and wants to emulate the Cuban revolution which successfully overthrew the Fulgencio Batista, the military dictator of Cuba. After witnessing the hardships of guerrilla life she tends to shift towards more subtle and non-reactionary left. Her vision of a democratic-republican "Tamil Eelam" explicates her admiration for representative democracy and constitutionalism. She is also a vociferous critic of the discriminatory policies of Sri Lankan government which were poised to undermine the identity of minorities. This establishes her belief in the notion of equality and equality of opportunity against the affirmative action of the government. The degeneration of military apparatus into hounds of justice often leads to unprecedented carnage and lack of tolerance on their part. Men at war become less susceptible to emotions and are driven by urge for power which masquerades as justice. All the authors are unequivocal in condemning war as a socio-political malady.

They have also put a collective onus on the means through which justice has to be delivered. Lastly, they share a collective political view which essentially consists of faith in

representative democracy and egalitarianism. On the other hand, the novelists also share a good degree of dissimilarities with regard to their dispositions. De Soyza appears to be moved by the ethnic onslaught pursued by the government which shows her interest in intra-state conflicts over inter-state wars. This stands in exact juxtaposition to the interest of the former authors. War for Bogomolov is justified if it is employed against greater evil, fascism, whereas O'Brien is vehemently against any form of transnational aggression as he longs for trans-continental peace. The three authors are also distinct from one another in terms of central characters employed by them in the plot. Bogomolov focuses on a child who is left orphan due to German onslaught, O'Brien writes about a young soldier who is haunted by the idea of killing an unseen enemy who has perpetrated no harm on him whereas De Soyza sees the exploits of war through the eyes of a teenager girl who is poised to question the excesses committed by her own organization. This thin generational gap distinguishes the central characters in terms of conscience, logic and stimuli.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, war seeks to devastate the social fabric which binds humanity. It seeks to annihilate human conscience altogether and puts to test the much celebrated 'reason' of human beings which distinguishes us from beasts. It is a sordid reality that political history of empires and nation-states is precisely a tale of conquest and war especially if one engages himself in a comparative study of erstwhile empires and modern nation states. Also, a large number of these three novels explore the nature of war, its stages and its effects upon the human soul in the three part of the world. War literature is a perennial source for comparative scholars to understand reasons and ramifications of war across time and space. It is a sordid reality that political history of empires and nation-states is precisely a tale of conquest and war especially if one engages him in a comparative study of erstwhile empires and modern nation states. As it seeks to provide personal insights of the authors on wars which are both sublime and unadulterated. Also, War literature is a perennial source for comparative scholars to understand reasons and ramifications of war across time and space.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the members and reviewers to the IPURS 2016 in the University of Peradaniya, Sri Lanka, and Editors of the Journal for the

many valuable comments on the previous version of the paper which has improved its quality and content to the present state.

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