Chapter One

Of Arms and the Wo/man

Introduction

This chapter would attempt to locate the chosen areas of research—literary writings representing the armed conflicts of Sri Lanka and Afghanistan—within the larger context of literature and armed conflict. Beginning with an overview to understand general conflict portraiture in literature it goes on to investigate the phrase armed conflicts in particular with a brief assessment of the changing nature of armed conflict in the twentieth century, especially in the post-Cold War period. In order to situate the primary texts within a larger milieu, the chapter studies literature and armed conflict from ancient writings to the writings of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Further this analysis is conducted within a comparative framework. Since exile is an important perspective to the research, the analysis would also attempt to show the difference in portraiture written from the immediate context of the conflict as against those exiled from it whether temporally, spatially or ideologically. The final section would briefly study how literary readings and armed portraiture that voice resistance and protest have enhanced the portrayal of armed conflict in literature.

I

The Many Faces/ Phases of Armed Conflict

From the time man began to express his thoughts, emotions and imagination in literary expressions, conflict has been the muse that has given wings to flights of his fantasy. As life’s complexities became more byzantine, these conflicts have expanded, taking on multifoliate significance, with their intensity and magnitude acquiring newer connotations than before. Whether it’s the Old Testament’s depiction of God’s conflict with evil without or the Faustian conflict with evil within, literature has flourished on the dynamics of conflict. Be it the philosophical meditations of a Prufrock or the social dilemmas of the Bennett’s or the spiritual quandaries of complacent half-men drawn into turmoil’s between reach and grasp literature has continually portrayed variegated conflicts. It has elaborated on, through the use
of different genres man’s tussle with God, society, nature and with himself. The Metaphysical wit which argued with God, the Puritanical solemnity that glorified God or the plea to resolve a political impasse in “Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”, conflict is the axle that has moved these different ruminations. The conflict of the Oliver’s who could not ask for economic mores or the Tesses who were like flies to a wanton fate, literature, has depicted the joys of man’s triumph or the sorrows of his catastrophe, the wrath of the conflict, or the despair of the struggle. Whether it was the class conflict of a Bakha or the psychological conflict of a Morell, conflict and literature have been yoked together, with or without violence.

If the modernist lamented the world of conflicting fragments, the postmodernist celebrated this fragmentation, hence conflicting meaning became an exhilarating experience. With the intrusive author’s destabilising presence be it in a Fowles novel or a latter interpretation of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, the postmodern text gave conflict a new and different tinge. Further it collapsed erstwhile binaries of high and low art, thus challenging modern asceticism as elitist. If the modernist text like Eliot’s *The Wasteland* used intertextuality to show by contrast the aridity of the modern world, a postmodernist text like Byatt’s *Possession*, fuses these in forms like the literary pastiche, a form that undermines singularity and centrality of perspective.

Over the years, representations, sometimes become re-presentations, made complex and multifarious through varied strategies like technique, perspective, ideologies, socio-cultural contexts of production and reception. The conflicts thus are no longer merely within the text but conflate myriad issues within and without the text. To this many nuances of conflict, literary theory, with its dappled hermeneutics and debates, has spiralled the several incompatibilities manifold. Further interdisciplinary studies have expanded the cartographies of literature, bringing in other spaces and disciplines like anthropology, sociology, culture studies, linguistic studies. Through its conflation of varied disciplines it has contested the perception of literature as a mere aesthetic unit that mimes life, whether to delight and instruct, or to render art for art’s sake.

Thus literary texts have portrayed myriad types of conflicts from the physical to the philosophical, from the world to the word, from structures to signs, from ideologies to identities and from texts and their worlds to the readers and their worlds. In its portraiture of such conflicts, texts have adopted varied strategies sometimes through overt depictions like
thematic conflicts, or through a character’s internal conflicts. Some portraiture resort to more subtle methods like narratology, use of multiple perspectives, symbols, and irony.

Within this spectrum of conflicts, literature has also portrayed armed conflicts, battles, strife and wars, fought for a host of reasons and leading to manifold impacts. Like the other conflicts literature has portrayed these have also been fought, to assert and sometimes to impose identities. Waged within varied power dynamics, these have been fought to gain space or sway or challenge oppressive hegemonic centres and its univocal impositions. These conflicts have contested varied enforced singularities—political, communal, racial, ethnic or cultural. Armed conflicts open out the interdisciplinary continuum of literature into disciplines like history and politics making the multipart nature of conflict in literature more composite and compound. If the other conflicts in literature are located in multitudinous spaces and are fought with conceptual and theoretical ammunitions, armed conflicts were by and large fought in theatres of war, with weaponry, arms and ammunitions.

In this transient world, where everything fades, dissolves and mutates, the one thing that has remained constant is paradoxically that which ends everything—war. From the dawn of human civilization to our own times battles and armed conflicts between dynasties, empires, civilizations and nations have impaled human civilizations. These conflicts whether they were the Crusades or the Trojan wars or the Battle of Kurukshetra, the Colonial conquests or the anti-colonial nationalist movements or the World Wars, have destroyed civilizations, created empires, erased ethnicities, thrown down dynasties, erected nations, generated leaders, tyrants, autocrats and coups. Fought for different reasons (be it territory, ideology, supremacy) and between different groups they generically vary from interstate wars to intrastate wars, from revolutions to rebellions, from civil wars that can become secessionist wars to ideological wars like the Cold War, or sudden guerrilla wars to equally sudden terrorist attacks. Dan Smith in the *Berghof Research on Conflict Studies* manual defines armed conflicts as “open armed clashes between two or more centrally organized parties, with continuity between the clashes, in disputes about power over government or territory” (3). James G. Stewart in “Towards a Single Definition of Armed Conflict in International Humanitarian Law”, states how the International Humanitarian Law distinguishes between two types of armed conflicts—International Armed Conflict, opposing two or more states and Non-International Armed Conflict between government forces and non-government armed groups. He goes on to define the latter conflicts as those where the hostilities reach a minimum level of intensity, are collective in character and non-governmental groups possess
organized armed forces (315-316). Further these forces have to be under a certain command structure and have the capacity to sustain military operations. To the use of military force in such conflicts, one can add police and paramilitary force or any state authorized structures of power that clash with non-governmental forces. While these discussions take into account conflict over territory or legislative power we can also include conflicts born out of communal politics, ethnic, racial and linguistic tensions.

Though it is possible to generalise and see all battles, war and strife as conflicts, the divergence of their causes, characteristics, and consequences make the nature of these conflicts distinct from each other. While the crusades were religious wars fought away from a home territory between people of two different faiths, dynastic feuds were fought between kingdoms mainly for territorial gain. If in the former, religious faith and the Father’s Word was the ruling passion, the latter were driven by the sceptre and the King’s command. With Colonialism the magnitude of the conflict enlarged, a new site on which the battle was situated was nation, motherland and her prosperity and protection this led to large scale interstate wars that culminated in the world wars.

In the twentieth century the intensity, frequency and the scale of wars intensified and diversified. If Churchill’s statement in his famous speech at the House of Commons, about the British Air Force’s role in the Second World War - “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few”- reflected one face of the war the Shoah reproduced another horrific aspect of the human potential for destruction. The atomic bomb detonated a new terror, magnifying the destructive force of warfare to a hitherto unimagined scale. David S. Painter in his introduction to his book The Origins of Civil War: An International History notes the role of technology in World War II and points out that the appearance of these weapons started an arms race, a significant aspect of the Cold War period (2-3). Norman Friedman comments in the introductory remarks to his book The Fifty Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War that “the atomic bomb kept the cold war cold” (xii). The Cold War, an ideological conflict between capitalistic powers in the Western Bloc led by the United States on the one hand and Communist powers in the Eastern Bloc, spearheaded by the Soviet Union on the other, created armed proxy conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, and Afghanistan.

Samuel Huntington in The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, comments that the nature of conflict has changed in the post-Cold War world. The key
concepts that explain these contemporary wars were elaborated in the “Introduction” of this research. Since these conflicts form the larger chosen area of the research, the following discussion aims to evince a deeper understanding of this area of conflict. Huntington points out that in this period culture and cultural identities shape the pattern of cohesion, conflict and disintegration (20). While earlier the distinctions between people were by and large political, national, ideological or economic, the new distinctions are cultural- in terms of ancestry, religion, language, values, customs and institutions and history. He adds that in the contemporary context, where cultural communities are replacing national identities and Cold War blocs, the important questions are no longer, “Which side are you?” But “Who are we?”, “Who is not us?” and “Where do we belong?”(43)

Speaking about the characteristics of these fault line wars, Huntington points out that they are particularistic, tend to be vicious and bloody since fundamental issues of identity are at stake. They go through processes of intensification, interruption but rarely resolution. During civil war, he observes that victory for one side increases the likelihood of genocide. When fault line conflicts occur within states, conflicts are between groups predominantly located in a distinct area, in which case the group which does not control the government fights for its independence. When two different ethnic groups occupy the same geographical space, tense relations continually erupt into violence. He also comments that these conflicts can lead to ethnic cleansing using strategies as extreme as massacre, terrorism, rape or torture, since the territory at stake is often for one or both sides a highly charged symbol of its history and identity (269-272). Anthony Oberschall in his “Theories of Social Conflict” adds another important feature in what he calls these “new wars” - the blurring of distinctions between combatants and non-combatants (296).

Oberschall locates different reasons for what he terms “New wars civil wars and ethno-political violence” (296). Of the many motivations, he particularly pinpoints to the “ancient hatred theory”, theory on “identity politics” and asserts that these overrule theories like “Economic roots”, “Manipulative elites” and “Contention for power” (297-298). Political leaders manipulate these hate dynamics allowing mutual fear, distrust and hatred to feed on each other. Huntington and Oberschall add that each side “demonises” the opponent, portraying them as the prototypical other thereby legitimizing any form of barbarity. They add that in these conflicts where identities crystallize and harden into “us” vs. “them”, repositories of culture museums, libraries, religious monuments and symbols are susceptible to annihilation (Huntington 273; Oberschall 300).
Martha Crenshaw similarly differentiates between old and new “terrorism” in her essay “The Psychology of Terrorism”. She states that “in the new terrorism unlike the old one unlimited end leads to unlimited means therefore ready to cause high number of casualties, we have new means of achieving this like suicide bombers, weapons of mass destructions” (406). Moreover she comments these are no longer connected to tight centrally controlled conspiracies but are decentralized and diffuse. Therefore “institutions” and “organizations” have given way to “beliefs” and “ideology” to “inspiration” (412).

If in the global scenario World war II led to the Cold War phase, the World War also saw national and domestic developments in what were then colonies of the British, French, Japanese and Dutch Imperialists. While it accelerated the ant-imperial thrust towards independence, in the post independent state, nation, one of the powerful symbols that anti-colonial nationalist movements had used to organize themselves against colonial rule, led to fault line conflicts.

Nation states stressing on their inclusive nature could forge a sense of nation-ness no doubt during the anti-colonial struggle. But this forged identity itself was made possible through the suppression of minor identities, erasure of differences and the enforcement of a normative identity. Therefore the newly independent states repeated colonial hegemonic structures that marginalized, suppressed, subsumed, quelled peripheral identities. As a consequence the post independent state became the site of secessionist wars, civil strife, communal riots, insurgencies, guerrilla warfare and so on. Apart from these intra-state conflicts, these newly defined territories were now contested in inter-state border wars and territorial occupations.

Many of these secessionist wars, riots were a direct consequence of borders drawn by ignorant colonial rulers, who were unconscious and insensitive to the multiethnicity of some colonized lands and the numerous indigenous tribes of some or the linguistic cultural identity of some others. The Sri Lankan civil wars that have torn apart the post independent state of Sri Lanka, the partition riots that broke out with the dawn of independence of India, the subsequent territorial war between India and Pakistan that has led to the Kashmir conflict, the Khalistan movement, the Northeast insurgencies or the Biafra war that broke out in Nigeria or the Rwandan conflict are some examples of the Himalayan blunders of the colonizers on the one hand and the exclusionist politics of the hegemonic state on the other.
Even as armed conflicts have varied in their causes, scale and nature, the fallout of these conflicts whether immediate or an eventuality that happened later has been multiple and compound. While some of these impacts are common to all conflicts yet these old fall-outs acquired new complexities simultaneously these newer conflicts had their own distinct fall-outs.

The terms “Diaspora” and “exile” have the obvious overtones of the anti-Semitism that led to the Jewish dispersal across the world and across centuries. Yet in recent time’s tyrannical regimes, persecution, deprivation of human rights, political, linguistic, ethnic exclusions and cleansings have caused multiple displacements and migrations. Edward Said in his essay “Reflections on Exile” elaborates on this complex, intense and intricate experience of exile. “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience” (181). The pain of the exile, in the gap between himself and his homeland is insurmountable. The attempt to write about it can never truly overcome the loss. Said goes on to add that though exile is not unique to our time, the scale of exile is enormous owing to several factors like modern warfare, imperialism and so on (181).

From the beginnings of warfare history, woman and her body have been frontline victims of warfare. Miranda Alison in her essay “Wartime Sexual violence: Women’s Human rights and Questions of Masculinity”, elaborates the way the woman’s subalternity is exploited. She remarks, “Woman’s role as biological reproducer of collectivity, transmitters of a nation’s culture and signifier of ethno-national difference, causes them to be targeted in attempts to destroy a collectivity and assert dominance over it” (80). She later adds that being symbolic of the body politic, rape of the woman is the rape of the body of the community (80). Rape which, she notes has always been an effective weapon of war. But in the post- Cold War context it has become more self-consciously a means to demoralize and destroy the enemy (85). She also comments on male to male wartime sexual violence, which she states is meant to “humiliate and feminize” the victim’s ethno-national identity while asserting the perpetrator’s dominant ethno-national masculinity (84). Two prominent examples, Alison gives are the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Both involved mass and systematic sexual violence, often entailing very public gang rape (88-90).

Formerly known as shellshock, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) was included as a mental disorder in 1980, following the efforts of those working to help Vietnam War veterans. Since then this disorder has particularly been identified in individuals who
experience war, disasters, accidents or other extreme stress or events. Though originally “trauma” meant injury inflicted on a body, the influence of psycho-analysis has led to trauma being seen not as a wound upon the body but upon the mind. This unlike the wound on the body is not simple and healable but is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known. So it is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself repeatedly in nightmares and repeated action of the survivors. Theorists have identified and differentiated between individual, cultural, collective and historical trauma. Jeffrey C. Alexander in his “Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma” defines cultural trauma as that which occurs, “when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness marking their memories forever and changing their future identities in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (2). A. R. Denham in his paper, “Rethinking Historical Trauma: Narratives of Resilience”, comments that historical trauma is that which is experienced by various ethnic minorities, descendants of a legacy of war trauma like the descendants of Holocaust, or acts of terrorism and so on (396).

Another fall-out peculiar to the wars of the late twentieth and twenty first centuries, is the use of child soldiers. David M. Rosen begins his book *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism* with the observation “Perhaps the most disturbing aspect about child soldiers is that they confound two fundamental assumptions of society: children are innocent and should be protected, so something is wrong when children are soldiers” (1). Children are not only the new targets of violence, but many now have also become perpetrators. In more than three fourths of the armed conflicts around the world, whether Colombia, Sudan, Kashmir, Afghanistan or Sierra Leone; the use of child soldiers has added a new human rights violation to conflict.

II

**Perceiving, Presenting and Re-presenting Armed Conflict**

Whatever the nature of the conflict, literature and armed conflict have been allies in more ways than one, sometimes arming each other through complex strategies and sometimes disarming each other in confounding ways. Whether it was the portrayal of “the broken wall, the burning tower and Agamemnon dead” (Yeats, “Leda and the Swan”) or the proliferation of the Lord’s “kindly” light amidst “heathens” and “savages” or the debate whether writing after Auschwitz was barbaric, art and artillery, have had a byzantine relationship from the beginnings of armed conflict to our own times.
Catharine Savage Brosman points out in “The Functions of War Literature” that from the days of the Greek, the Romans and the Hebrew chroniclers, epic poetry, drama and historical accounts have reportedly been inspired by and centered on war. Many oral cultures and their literatures have also been inspired by armed conflict. She adds that other than perhaps love, war has exercised an extensive influence leading to centuries of different types of literary representations, which have varied generically and have also differed in their perception of war (85). Brosman states that what differentiates literary expression from other types of writing, that have treated war, like non-literary, marginally literary, chronicles, histories, archives philosophical treatises, is the experiential dimension. The subjective element of the imaginative mode is not only seen as more satisfying but is perceived as more authentic and true than objective histories. The use of different genres and their respective stylistic devices be it rhyme, imagery, narrative, irony and so on creates an aesthetic fulfilment, a fictional rationality and thus create order out of chaos and in some cases an “anesthetisizing of combat” (86-87). This aesthetic reversal of creating literature out of violence has several functions. Noting the purport of older war literature, Brosman comments that it was meant to memorialise great military deeds, setting standard of military conduct and to inspire a war like spirit. In this she adds the literary text performed the task of representing the community’s collective ideal of valour and thus the archetypal literary hero has strong military roots (89-90). Adding to Brosman’s observation, it is noteworthy that in early literatures, whether it was The Mahabharata or The Iliad or The Faerie Queene, The Paradise Lost or The Rape of the Lock, the use of a genre like the epic, somewhat sums up the nature of its portraiture. Mostly written from the perspective of the victor these writings are predominantly poetic or mythical renderings of combats of legendary, mythical, divine and quasi-divine personas. The convention further demands elaborate description of warfare, weaponry, warriors, battlefields, kings, monarchs and victors. Janet Turner in her paper “Clatter, Clash and Contrast: Achilles’ Shield as an Element of Contradistinction in The Iliad”, points out to the significance of armour and shield in The Iliad, and adds that armours correspondingly reflected personalities (2). Tamara Neal in “Blood and Hunger in The Iliad” comments on the focus in these early writings on primarily the carnage of war and some gory accounts of blood spilling. However, she adds “Blood and blood spilling are desired consumption by the war god Ares” (15). Within the Indian ethos The Mahabharata is often seen as representing the “dharmayudha” between the “good” represented by the Pandavas and the “bad” represented by the Kauravas. One can also note the intertwining of notions of karma and conflict in the narrative verses of The
Mahabharata. Like Vyasa’s text, other literary portrayals of wars have also hinged on binaries. Readers of English Literature are familiar with the use of allegory in another national epic, The Faerie Queene, to depict conflict, between the idealised King Arthur, representing England and the English Church, and the many avatars of the Dragon, representing the Catholic Church and all the foes of England. Thus whether it was solemn verse like Paradise Lost or the light veined Rape of the Lock they are more or less open accounts of armed conflict- with embellished descriptions, posing ethical and philosophical challenges but are not stifled by quandaries about representations.

Historical fiction seen to begin with Walter Scott, added a new dimension to these representations based on myth, legends, folk lore. Elizabeth Wesseling in her “Writing History as a Prophet: Post modernist Innovation of the Historical Novel” states how this fiction is broadly defined as fictional narratives which incorporate historical matters, with additional narratological and thematic features. She comments on the development of the historical novel into the companion of historiography by portraying aspects of the past, yet distinguished itself from history both in mode and matter. She especially stresses on the particular aspect of the historical novel that has a quality of dealing with the lives of ordinary people, something history ignores (47-49). George Lukacs comments in his important work The Historical Novel, that this fiction was a direct outcome of two seminal armed conflicts in European History – the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars (70). According to Lukacs, Scott’s fiction depicts the clash between the different historical rhythm of the old feudal order and rising capitalism within the same period. In Lukacs’ analysis of the historical fiction, the representation of armed conflict acquires a new dimension. He measures in Scott’s novels the relation between empirical reality and the “extraliterary”, between socio-political events (that many times involved wars and battles) and their literary representation. Thus while a companion of historiography; the historical novel also distinguished itself from historiography through its matter and mode (72-73). Wesseling points out that the historical novel wanted to achieve dual but distinct things in their portraiture- fictionality and thus vivifying, embellishing what they saw as a rather mundane historiography. At the same time there was the constraint of needing to have verisimilitude and plausibility; further the audience should have some foreknowledge of the history (49).

While early writings more or less have valorised war, and seen it as noble and gallant to lay down one’s life for king, country and country- men, several, have directly, indirectly or subtly debunked war with its disasters, gore and violence. This was particularly so beginning
with the Literature of the First World War. The wars and conflicts of the Twentieth Century were complex in their causes and nature, magnified in proportions and fought with greater intensity. This correspondingly made the nature of representations, multipart, dynamic and problematic.

Kate McLoughlin discusses why “authoring war” (which is also the title of her book) is so strenuous and challenging, though such portraiture is a necessity. She comments:

The representation of war is inherently anxiogenic—because war resists depiction and does so in multifarious ways. Yet even as it resists conflict demands it. The reasons that make war’s representation imperative – to impose discursive order on the chaos of conflict and so to render it more comprehensible, to keep the record for self and others (those who were there and can no longer speak for themselves and those who were not there and need to be told); to give some meaning to mass death; to memorialize, to provide cathartic relief; to warn and even through warning promote peace. (8)

McLoughlin comments on why armed conflict in this context, is a “slippery opponent” when it comes to representation, for amongst all the other areas of human experience, war is specially charged owing to its scale, levels of devastation and “encompassing human behaviour in its trials and intimacies”. The extremes that are war she states carry the individual from the familiar, the ordinary, the everyday to that which is “abnormal, intractable” (9). Some of these attempts to author war are also born out of what the author sees as a “democratic act” or a “sign of good citizenship” (10). She also adds that perhaps there might in some cases be a gap between the experience of the conflict and the representation of it, this might therefore involve distortions, exploitations, “obfuscation, misrepresentation and deliberate decoys” (11). This raises questions of authenticity, the blurring of lines between fact and fiction and so on.

Robert. I. Rotberg’s essay “Building Legitimacy through Narrative” which comments on the role of narrative in building legitimacy, takes this discussion to another aspect of literary writings and armed conflict. He looks at the function of collective memory which is at the heart of narratives of struggle. Collective memories need not reflect the truth and can be “tendentious, biased, selective and appropriately distorted” (7). Collective memories can even invent narratives of particular pasts to suit the contemporary needs. Each group sees its narrative as “true” and a fundamental function of some narratives is to legitimate itself by
delegitimizing the other. Narratives also rationalize failures, weaknesses and excesses. He adds how these dual devices of narrative and collective memory act “as motivational tools, mobilizing followers, forming and strengthening the core of societal identities” (9).

To the issues of authenticity, distortion and “anxiogenic” nature of war representations in literature one must add the reason for these strategies of representation, especially within the space of the armed conflicts in the twentieth century. In such enquiries, the multiple contexts of production of the literary work become seminal. When written by those who have faced the slings and arrows, bombs and artillery fire of the enemy in the battlefront these writings become representations of an immediate experience. However the writer could also be multiply dislocated from the immediate context of the war. Sometimes written in retrospect, these accounts like survivor testimonies or narrations of trauma retell actual experiences. In some cases, added to the trauma of the experience is also the trauma of manifold losses- family, home and in many cases the homeland itself -and these might form, uniform or reform the ideology of the author. Exiled, by space and time, though not always from the ideology, many writings through narration attempt a reconstruction of their de-centred selves. In such narrations the portrayal can range from monochromatic binaries to postmodern fragmentations that destabilize Manichean opposites. Many war narratives are from this perspective of the exilic individuals, voluntarily or involuntarily displaced from their homelands on account of the war.

The following study is an overview of the different literatures that have emerged within the context and as a consequence of armed conflicts in the twentieth century. Though much writing has emerged in this space, the survey would begin with the Literature of the First World War to briefly show the change in portraiture that began in the Twentieth Century. The overview would then look at literatures that have been written in conflict domains allied and analogous to- the Sri Lankan and the Afghan wars. These would involve literatures that have portrayed fault line conflicts that involved ethnic cleansings like the Holocaust or the Biafra, religious persecutions to the point of communal tensions leading to secessionist wars like the partition or the Biafra Wars, and proxy wars of the Cold War like the Vietnam War. The chosen area and texts for research, record the narratives of soldier-author (like Shobasakthi), stories of victims and victim-survivors (like the narratives of Hosseiniand Rahimi), and these are represented from similar yet varied positions and perspectives of the exile. The following section would attempt to study these varied issues in portraiture within other literatures that have emerged in other conflict domains, like soldier-
authoring in the First World War and the Vietnam War, problems of representation in survivor testimonies and works of the Holocaust and in Partition Literature; multiple perspectives in the portraiture of the Biafra War. Further, the study would juxtapose writings from the immediate milieu of these wars with writings removed—written exiled—in time, space and ideology from the setting of war.

Jay Winters in his introduction to Paul Fussell’s book *The Great War and Modern Memory*, states that the writings of World War I give us a perspective and framework different from earlier writers. He comments:

Instead of viewing war as an epic the way Homer did, or viewing it realistically as Stendhal did in *The Charterhouse of Parma* and Tolstoy does in *War and Peace*, the war writers did something new that has remained central to representations from the fields of action. They told us of the ironic nature of war, how it is always worse than what we think it will be and how it traps the soldier (x).

The soldier hence is no longer, the hero, like Achilles, has no freedom of action or choice in the face of overwhelming violence, where death is capricious and all over the place. These soldier-writers, Winters adds “were sentinels, standing in a long line of men in uniform, who were victims of war just as the men they and the men who died by their side” (xi).

Thus predominantly debunking the jingoistic mentality of the sentimental stay at home civilians, these poets whom Winters calls “Shellshock poets” tore away the heroic mode and the idealism of war (x). In their writings, poets like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and others replaced the earlier romantic flourishes and lush imagery with more urgent and realistic idiom to represent the nightmares of the trenches, the gory slime of the war field, the gas attacks and the agonizing deaths in the trenches. However, Brosman points to risks in such works, of including along with the obscenity and evil of war, glimpses of devotion, courage, brotherhood and the “greater love” of a soldier laying down his life for another (90). This is also true she notes of the fiction of Ernest Hemingway. Though he debunks war and motifs of the heroic soldier who goes to the battlefront as a proof of his “manhood”, in his *Farewell to Arms* and in *For Whom the Bells Toll*, Hemingway valorises individual bravery on behalf of a cause (92).

Writers of Vietnam War Literature, like the poets of the First Word War, also illustrate the irony of war, as they are always worse than expected. Hence the overriding
motif in many of their works is the theme of expectation vs. reality, as Tobey. C. Herzog illustrates in “Thematic Contexts: Vietnam War Stories”. Herzog observes that works like Philip Caputo’s A Rumour of War, Tim O’ Brien’s If I Die in Combat Zone, Michael Herr’s Dispatches, James Webb’s Fields of Fire, Larry Heinemann’s Close Quarters, are written by soldier–authors, people who experienced war first hand either as combatants or war correspondents. Hence their voices and perspective of the war “counterbalance the view of historians, governments and hierarchy and the media” (11). These works are rooted in the author’s personal experience–eyewitness accounts filtered through memory and shaped by literary devices. These writers, like the war poets, also depict battlefield camaraderie, noble sacrifice and courageous acts. However the undercurrent of homoeroticism that pervades the poetry of the war poets gives way to the military male stereotype in these writings, what Herzog calls the “John Wayne syndrome”(17). The War poets wrote from the shellshock of the war, while these narratives act as, “catharsis” since the “soldier- author and a nation work through their experience recalling, purging and understanding their feelings and memories” (Herzog, 25).

Philip D.Biedler in “American Literature : Prophecy and Context” further adds how literary myths of the frontier and frontier values like self-reliance, democratic idealism, courage and practicality, generated by writers like Twain, Melville and others influence Vietnam war narratives. Biedler adds that these latter narratives portray Vietnam as a place where these values have an opportunity to regenerate. Though there are also many war writings that undercut this myth (19-22).

While no doubt, Vietnam War Writings like the writings of the First World War destabilized earlier paradigms of heroism, valour and honour, Americans have mythologized the Vietnam War using different cultural paradigms thereby depoliticizing representations of the war and excluding Vietnamese experience of the war. Renny Christopher in her study of representations in American writings of the Vietnam war in the first chapter of her book The Vietnam War / The American War points to the “anglocentrism” of these writing and its establishing the Vietnam War literary canon as exclusively male, Euro-American and a homogenous one. Within this canon, she notes the war is cast in familiar terms- the Americans are the good guys in cow boy mode and the Vietnamese are “evil japs” or little brown brothers (10-15). Christopher also critiques the “heart of darkness motif” where the selfless G.I Joes “go fantee”. A repeated complaint of the Americans, she highlights is that the war does not make any sense. What they don’t see she points out, is that it is the
mythological framework that robs it of any sense and the deliberate exclusion of the larger framework of American history, its neo-imperialist politics and the cold war ideology. In this canon, while works of women and Afro-American writers occupy a peripheral position, the most stunning absence is that of Vietnamese American writers (17-22). Christopher analyses in the second chapter of her book titled “Vietnamese Exile Narratives, the writings of two such Vietnamese American writers Truong Nhu Tang’s, A Viet Cong Memoir, a novel by Tran Van Dinh titled Blue Dragon White Tiger to show how these writings, written mostly in exile, counter the dominant American discourses of the war.

If Truong Nhu Tang’s memoir aims to unsettle American complacency and narrow provincialism, Tran Van Dinh’s novel, explores the bicultural identity of the Vietnamese Minh, who is settled in the U.S. Minh’s story is set against the larger backdrop of the war and the Vietnamese culture. The memoir, written based on Tang’s experience as an activist and founder of the NLF, is an alternate history, which declares that there is more to the war than what America projects. Unlike the American portraiture that focus on the military experience, the Vietnamese version focuses on the political (Christopher 52-54). The novel, however, largely fictional focuses on Minh’s conflict. Initially a writer of anti-war articles under the pseudonym, Co Tung (meaning “lone pine tree”), Minh also later participates in the NLF’s struggle for liberation and its triumph in 1975. But Minh is the exile who can never fully assimilate anywhere, so disillusioned by the communist ideology he remains an individual to maintain his Vietnam culture and identity. Christopher points out that though unlike the typical war novel in being slow and reflective, without moral black and whites, the novel is however also quite unlike the memoir as it is wholly fictional (41-44). Tang’s memoir on the other hand arms itself with maps, glossary of names, documents of the NLF to present itself as a historical document. Further the memoir is not a personal experience but political manoeuvring and historic events occupy centre stage. Christopher also observes that Tang’s objectivity emerges when he is critical of both the technological American brutality and the Saigon government’s personal torture methods. Tang’s purpose is to hold up the mirror to his American readers, so that they can examine their ethnocentrism and political naiveté (54-63).

Thus the exile perspective challenges the American soldier author narrations by problematising the gaps in their representations and bringing to this space other issues like the conflict within the exiled Vietnamese of his identity and America’s Cold War, neo-imperialist policies largely left out in the American narratives.
Much literature about Vietnam is about what call Beidler “literary sense making” an attempt by authors, characters and even readers to arrive at an individual and collective meaning in the midst of the chaos and combat of the Vietnam War(20). On the other hand authors and survivors of that singular mind-numbing horror known as the Holocaust- Nazi Germany’s final Solution for the Jews of Europe- like Jean Amry, Paul Celan and Primo Levi question the appropriate moral representation of the Holocaust in narrative form. Robert Braun comments in his essay “The Holocaust and Problems of Representation History and Theory” that though survivors of this genocidal policy of Nazi Germany and humanists alike agree that the Holocaust possesses an explicit moral meaning that should be represented some having lived the reality, find any representation inadequate. There seems to be an irresolvable conflict between the experience of an event and the narration of it. Therefore Braun adds that the boundary between factual and fictional modes of representation of the Holocaust is sacred in its rigidity since to write Holocaust fiction is tantamount to fictionalizing the Holocaust (172-173). James E. Young in his chapter “On Rereading the Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs” states, how the Holocaust has stimulated an outpouring of what might be called “factually –insistent narratives”, with writers assuming the role of witnesses, thus rehabilitating the mimetic impulse rather than the aesthetic impulse. The style these writers adopt, what Young calls “documentary realism” is a consequence of the need to be credible and the narrative is akin to testimonial evidence. Young cites Primo Levi as an example to depict the use of documentary and biographical methods to narrate the Holocaust (15-16). However, Anna Richardson in her essay “Mapping the Lines of Fact and Fiction in Holocaust Testimonial Novels” points out how writings of even first generation survivors like Paul Celan, Rousset , Wiesel and some of the works of Levi render the Holocaust experience and in particular the concentration camps in dream like terms, achieving a kind of “anti-representation”. She further notes that while the historical account does not take into account the multilayered, shifting contradictory nature of the human memory this method allows for that(54).

Apart from survivor testimonies there are also surviving testimonies that narrate the stories of victims who did not survive. The narratives of Holocaust diarists, chroniclers and writers like Anne Frank, Simone Weil, Edith Stein to name a few do not reflect after-the fact-retrospection, but show resistance through writing. Rachel Feldhay Brenner in her introduction to her book, Writing as Resistance: Women confronting the Holocaust, on these victim-writers, comments that unlike survivor testimonies that could not simultaneously
witness and comprehend, the literary remains of these writers show that comprehension, foresight and witnessing at the time of the event was possible. Brenner adds that their growing awareness of their dehumanization, prompted these women to bear witness to the evolving catastrophe, of their position as victims and their connectedness with the other sufferers (6-11).

James E. Young in his essay “The Holocaust and the Vicarious Past” speaks of a new generation’s attempt to depict the Holocaust. This generation born after Holocaust history into the time of its memory is a media-savvy generation of artists (667). This post Holocaust generation cannot actually remember the Holocaust, all they know is what the victims have passed down to them in their diaries, memoirs, the countless histories, novels and poems they have read, the photographs, movies and video testimonies they have seen over the years. Thus coming of age after, but indelibly shaped by the Holocaust this generation does not portray the actual events but instead they portray their own, “hyper mediated experiences of memories” what Young specifically calls “vicarious past” (667). Young goes on to add that what distinguished this generation’s writing from the survivor writing is their single-minded knack for representing just this vicariousness, for measuring the distance between history as it happened and their post memory of it. Such writings like Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* is model of what Young calls “received history”, a narrative hybrid that interweaves both events of the Holocaust and the way they are passed down to us (668).

Art Spiegelman’s *Maus I and II* blurs the boundaries of genres-like biography and autobiography, earlier rigid lines between fact and fiction in multiple ways. Born out of history, remembrance and comic strip drawings, it alternately presents itself as a transparent vehicle for representing the past-replete with diagrams of hideouts, barracks and bunkers. As Vladek, the father’s autobiography, *Maus* depicts the survivor speaking into a tape recorder. *Maus* also shows an awareness of the complexities of trauma narrative, narratives that are complex and incomplete since they depend on what is remembered and the perspective adopted. This gap which Testimonials try to swathe in order to achieve verisimilitude of history is made explicit in narratives like *Maus*. Through the untold story of the mother Anja and the closure Vladek achieves to his story, Spiegelman marks the boundaries of testimony-memories shrouded in muteness. He also makes it clear that *Maus* takes place not just through Vladek’s witnessing but also through Art’s listening. Thus Art as the second generation of the Holocaust, spatio-temporally exiled from the Holocaust, bears witness to the witness.
If *Maus* problematises testimonies and the gaps in such narrations, fictional works which Richardson classifies as “fictional testimonies”, that is works that pretend to be testimonies take the interplay between fact and fiction to a different level.(56). One such is Solinski’s *The Painted Bird*, published almost twenty years after the Holocaust. Written in the first person and supposedly based on Solinski’s life, the seemingly semi-autobiographic form caused the book to be received favourably as Survivor Testimonies. But subsequent research proved that the work was largely fictional. This has led to a large negative response to the book and has been accused of turning the Holocaust into fiction.

Like Holocaust Survivor Testimonies that find witnessing difficult, early writers of Partition Literature find voicing the violence of the Partition of India and the communal riots that ensued on either side of the border difficult. Thus on the one hand if these early writings showcased brutal violence there is also the shock of the spectacle that renders writers and witnesses speechless. The promise of the new dawn that was never realised, the disillusionment, the shock and the trauma of partition moved many writers from both sides of the border to capture these conflict ridden times and their fallout. First generation partition writers like the Pakistani poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sadat Hassan Manto capture the despair and disappointment at the dystopian dawn of freedom. For this generation the partition was primarily a lived reality which became a metaphor for human depravity. Manto’s stories like “Siyah Hashiye”, “Gurumukh Sing kiVasiyath”, “Mozel” with their black humour scathingly highlight the physical and psychological impact of violence, abduction, migration and resettlement. The leitmotif of madness in partition writings of this generation communicates a sense of incomprehension as they perceive the unfurling carnage and the viewing of the violence as collective insanity. Vijaya Singh in her essay “The Dance of Death on the Highways of Steel: Reading Train Journeys in Partition Stories” comments on another metaphor in partition which becomes the central trope in the works of first generation writers, like Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*- the train and journey by train (88). In these early accounts the train is paradoxically a site for killing and a means of escape. Singh remarks that trains were also narrators, carrying with them not just bodies but rumours and horror tales (90). Alok Rai, in his paper on the survey of stories written in the aftermath of partition, terms the unreflective portrayal of blood, gore and barbarism the “pornography of violence” (qtd in Ravikant and Tarun K Saint, xv).

However, in the writings of later generation of Partition writers, Ravikant and TarunSaint locate the distinct strain of nostalgia without slipping into the sentimentalizing of
Many of these writings, critics comment also explore the fall-out of the conflict- dislocation, the struggle to rebuild lives, the post partition trauma- while the partition recedes into the backdrop as the primordial cataclysm(Saint, xix). Second generation writers like Bhishan Sahni with the distance of time acquire certain objectivity in their viewing of the blood bath, and the evil mobs of the early partition writings for instance are replaced by communal heads. In Sahni’s novel *Tamas* (1971), for instance, the title suggests the darkness prevailing during the time of partition and a darkness that is at the heart of our contemporary issues of communalism. Moreover, the darkness depicted by the novelist is not just of the environment, but it is the darkness of human mind and soul. The novel while answering the question of eruption of the communal violence makes it clear that the root cause of the communal violence are political figures like Murad Ali, god men like Vanprashthijii and Pir Saheb. In destabilizing binaries of “us” vs. “them” and in depicting both communities without bias, Sahni shows his objectivity, simultaneously making the people of India conscious to the ever present danger of communalism.

Written from the other side of the border and from a multiply exiled space is Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man*. Written by a Parsi Pakistani Diasporic writer in the 1990s, the novel explores the tumultuous times through the perception of a compositely dislocated Lenny. These myriad dislocations become evident as the portraiture shifts from the objectivity of a second generation to subversive destabilizing tropes in Sidhwa’s fiction. By offering histories from below the literary historiography challenges mainstream historiography and its historical constructs of mainstream politicians, who at many points are reduced to caricatures. A feminist text it further destabilizes gender binaries by portraying men as either ineffectual and weak or violent and ruthless while simultaneously using many of the tropes of early partition-like the rape of Ayah, the trauma narrative of Ranna and the bloodbath of partition, to achieve this debunking. Ranna’s story especially complicates “witnessing” and “hearing the witness”, like Vladek’s narrative to Art. While, like the narratives of Manto, Sidhwa too foregrounds the narratives of the subaltern, like her other postmodern contemporaries’ view of conflict she dismantles many paradigms and structures.

Even as the partition writers from either side of the border and across generations have recorded the communal conflict and its fall out, the Biafra secessionist war also called the Nigerian civil war between Nigeria and the new nation of Biafra, regarded as the watershed in Nigerian literary as well as political history produced writings from both sides. Writings by Igbo and other writers like Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, and John Pepper
Clarke were a direct consequence of the war; hence the lines between fact and fiction are extremely unclear.

Chinua Achebe, the acclaimed Nigerian writer, in his essay, ‘The African Writer and the Biafra Cause” makes explicit what should be the role of the Biafra writer in the Biafra war.

It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant- like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames (78).

Keith Booker inThe Chinua Achebe Encyclopaedia comments on how Achebe’s involvement with the Biafra cause affected the form of his writing significantly. Achebe’s artistic imagination he states entered a new phase moving away from the genre of the novel to a more contemplative and meditative state that produced his first collection of 30 poems(4). Achebe’s Beware, Soul Brother and the short story collection, Girls at War and Other Stories were a direct response to the war. Achebe did not produce another novel till 1987. His poems, written during the period of the four years of military coup, are Achebe’s literary reaction to the literal experience of war. The poems are a vivid picture of the troubled times. Poems like “The First Shot”, “Air Raid”, “Refugee Mother and Child” and “Christmas at Biafra”from the anthology Beware, Soul Brother, show a strong preoccupation with the fighting, the many innocents who died with arms and ammunitions becoming a metaphor for thought less human action.“Girls at War”, “Civil Peace” and “Sugar Baby”, three stories in the short story collection, Girls at War and Other Stories directly deal with the impact of the war, especially as experienced by ordinary people, like the postwar economic sufferings of the people, the denial of basic things required for everyday life. Craig Mcluckie in his critical reading of these stories in the essay “Chinua Achebe’s Critical realism: Girls at War and Beware, Soul Brother” refers also to the significance of the story, “The Madman”. This story though not about the civil war, through the harshness of the “savage parable”, Achebe comments on the insanity of the war and the politics behind the war (395-396). Madness, like in partition narratives becomes a dominant motif to comment on the irrationality of the war. While most of these writings show a more or less realistic portrayal, an important device that Achebe uses to make his comment explicit is reversal and irony. This is evident in the story “Girls at War” and the poems “If a History” and “RemembranceDay” from the
“Girls at war” condemns the exploitative government official, while “If a History” comments on historiography as the centre’s discourse, wherein the victors write histories and the victims live with it, and “Remembrance Day” questions the reader’s callousness regarding the dead soldiers and Ironically reflects on the shallowness of march-pasts and memorials to mourn the dead.

If Achebe wrote about the sufferings and struggles of the labouring Igbo’s, John Pepper Clarke, a non-combatant, a committed federalist and one not directly involved in the hostilities captures in his poem “Casualties” the many casualties of war, a good number well outside the “ravages of wreck and the war”. Michael Sharp in his essay “A Lament for the Casualties: The Nigerian War and the poetry of John Pepper Clark – Bekederemo” comments that the operational subject of the poem is that we are all casualties of war not only those who died fighting. The position of the writer is that all categories of Nigerians were originators, facilitators and victims of the national tragedy (271-272). His poetry lies in the disgust of war and the disappointment at the actions of the best, which are too full of conviction. Critics like Murk Ighile in his essay “Literature as Poetry in J.P.Clark’s Casualties” have read “The Casualties” as referring to Achebe, bitterly critical of his propagandist role in being “the emissaries of rift who beat.. On the drums of the human heart, draw the world/ into a dance it does not know” (qtd in Ighile 53-54). Ighile sees the poems as prophetic of an uneasy future for Nigeria (54). Iyabode Omolara Daniel in his paper “John Pepper Clark – Bekederemo – The Weeping Poet” comments on the image of the overburdened bus that drags along the hill and then rushes headlong into the ditch, in the poem “The Lagos –Ibadan road before Shagamu”. The overburdened bus driven by the marijuana induced driver is the image Daniel points out of the post independent state dragged along by power drunk politicians who plunge the nation into the ditch of war (153).

Though different in their ideological positions, the poets are similar in their portrayal of the savagery of the war. However, Clarke’s poetry takes on a note of prophetic warning since he views it from the distance. While Achebe’s ringside view rips through the superficialities of the dividing line between imagination and the excavation of reality.

The third generation Nigerian writers like the second generation partition writers interrogate the past, with special significance on the Biafra trauma, to make sense of the present ethnic tension and strife in their country. Madhu Krishnan in her paper “Biafra and the Aesthetics of Closure in the Third Generation Nigerian Novel”, observes, that the third
generation’s literature is an example of a tradition in contemporary Nigerian fiction—“it represents a younger generation’s desire to remember the trauma of the past and to forge a sense of kinship and identity through their shared connection in community” (187).

Hugh Hodges in his paper “Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction” notes the acknowledgments in the beginning of Chimamanda Adichie’s novel Half of a Yellow Sun, to her parents and to thirty odd books all concerned with what Biafra went through. These acknowledgements suggest another example of writing based on received history. Even though she might not have experienced the trauma first hand, she still remains profoundly affected by the events (5-6). Hence Adichie is a secondary witness- a witness to the act of bearing witness. In his PhD thesis, Writing Marginality: History, Authorship and Gender, Emmanuel Mzomera Ngwira comments on how Half of a Yellow Sun is an example of contemporary trauma fiction which does not concentrate on those at the centre of the conflict – like soldiers etc, but on the effects of the traumatic event on the lives of civilians (5). He also points out that Half of a Yellow Sun is a Historiographic Metafiction that exhibits self-reflexivity and employs mise-en-abyme scenes of writing (60-62). The thesis observes how the book also privileges the perspective of the marginalised, whose story is not a univocal one but a heteroglossic text where we hear a plethora of voices, diverse social types (Ngwira 64-69). Women are shown as frontline victims of wartime rape or their bodies are traded for favours from Biafra soldiers. The rapists range from soldiers to a priest to the marginalised protagonist himself thus Ngwira comments that the text destabilises binaries like victims and perpetrators (89-91). The deliberate lack of closure at the end of the novel is to imply, according to Ngwira, that questions of history, identity and community remain in constant state of negotiation in post independent Nigeria (104).

Buchi Emecheta’s Destination Biafra is another instance of what Madhu Krishnan calls “daughterly texts” texts that foreground the daughter figure who has for a long time been an absent member of the family as represented in Postcolonial African Literature (187). Not only does the novel offer a gendered, exilic perspective of the war in retrospection, like Sidhwa’s fiction, but like Adichie’s novel, here too the approach to the historical is postmodern. Where Sidhwa and Adichie privilege the marginal, this text invites a consideration of the historical discourse as constitutive, than being objective. Emecheta’s protagonist Debbie Ogedembe is similar to Sidhwa’s Lenny in that she is at once pivotal and marginal. Like Ice-Candy-Man we see in Destination Biafra the protagonist occupying a paradoxical position of omniscience and victimhood and the birth of a new nation is
represented in allegorical terms. Jago Morrison comments in her paper “Imagined Biafras: Fabricating Nation in Nigerian Civil War Writing” that Emecheta’s text clearly does not offer either nation or community as viable national projects, but reasserts that nation and community as uncomfortable and unanswered questions and in the context of the conflict none of the formulations can be imagined as liveable solutions (19-25). Thus texts of exilic writers like Emecheta and Adichie move away from the earlier writings of the civil war that dealt with themes of human suffering, loss and waste. These works through the distance of its perception look beyond the documentation of the suffering and offer a more political and ideological analysis of the armed conflicts.

III

Contemporary Renderings

Since the 1990s even as the nature of conflict has changed with fault line conflicts having become the predominant kind of conflict, the relation between conflicts and portrayals has changed in its dynamics. This is primarily because many of these portraiture deals with conflicts that are immediate to the portraiture, so earlier dynamics that operated in the portrayals of conflict now become blurred or problematic. For instance, gaps between witnessing either first hand or through a vicarious imagination, trauma and retelling of trauma, or use of nostalgia to write about a historical past now become complex. Contesting lines between fact and fiction, between testimonial fictions and fictional testimonies, perspectives like the retrospective–exilic perspective, writing based on received history, these zones of depiction no longer work either because they have been scorched and burnt with overuse or the chasm of time necessary for some of these approaches to work, is no longer available. Many of these writers use used strategies to depict new conflicts or use older conflicts as a narrative device to comment on recent conflicts. New strategies of subversion are attempted to deal with new stereotypes that have emerged within these contemporary fault line conflicts.

A contemporary, representative Tibetan writer who has drawn the world’s attention to the Tibetan question is Tenzin Tsundue. The occupation of Tibet, by the Chinese and the subsequent cultural genocide led to the exile of millions of Tibetans. Tsundue belongs to this group which has lived, he says, in his seminal work Kora, “Thirty-nine years in exile” (49). Tsundue’s witty, ironic, and passionate poems and short stories titled Kora, express this “tragedy of being a Tibetan in the world” (33). This collection of stories and poems, takes its
name from an allegory on Tibet’s half-century long struggle to break free from Chinese control. In poems like “space-bar / A PROPOSAL” Tsundue explores the home/ homelessness conundrum of the Tibetan exile. Poems like “Refugee”, “My Tibetanness”, “The Tibetan in Mumbai” explore the position of the Tibetan in India- never a foreigner with his hyphenated identity in his passport claiming “Indian –Tibetan” yet with an R(for Refugee) between his eyebrows, his identity is unclear. They are “the world’s sympathy stock” always blending with “assimilating cultural hegemonies” (Kora, 13). Like the Tibetan who sells sweaters in summer at Parel Bridge or cooks at Chinese take away, they are always identified as something other than Tibetan. In some poems, like “I Am a Terrorist”, “Desperate Age” and “Betrayal”, Tsundue’s activist voice can be heard, expressing the need to fight and take back what is in fact theirs. These also express the ethical conflict whether to be the passive-Buddhist Tibetan or the active-nationalist Tibetan.

A similar contemporary writer who has written about an earlier conflict is Temsula Ao, the Naga writer. Though not a refugee or an expatriate, she is removed in time from the context of the conflict. Many of the short stories in her collections These Hills Called Home and Stories from a War Zone is about the turbulent 1950s when the Naga secessionist wars raged the North East. In these stories the actual struggle remains a backdrop focusing on how the struggle changed the Naga psyche forever. Many of the stories like “The Last Song”, “Soaba”, and “The Curfew Man” record the small voices of history giving the subaltern’s fallout in the conflict. “The Jungle Major”, “Shadows” and “An Old Man Remembers” narrate the life of the guerrillas, the betrayals and the escapades, the attitude of the Indian army, while “A New Chapter” captures the exploitation and corruption that the high idealism and romantic notions of fervent nationalism have dwindled into. Like Said’s “intellectual marginal”, being temporally exiled from the conflict Ao is able to capture the many dimensions of the conflict, though she does not romanticize the conflict, yet one can sense the nascent optimism with which it began. Similarly though suffering is not sentimentalised, there is a simple compassion for those who are wantonly victimized in the fray.

Many contemporary literary works in India such as Mahesh Dattani’s Final Solutions or Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines, deal with the complex communal fragments of the contemporary Indian nation where old conflicts are revisited and magnified to fuel the present tension. Reema Moudgil’s Perfect Eight and Shashi Tharoor’s Riot are contemporary Indian fiction that portrays the communal conflict continuum in India.
Reema Moudgil’s *Perfect Eight* the story of a young girl and her mother, a partition victim, reiterates that the unrelenting chain of communal violence in post independent India has its roots in the 1947 genocide. The novel uses first person narrative to see the action predominantly through the eyes of the young girl who remains nameless till the climactic moment when we identify her as –Ira. Though, primarily the focus is on the personal, the personal identity is framed subconsciously by the political. Yashoda Nanjappa in her paper “Postmemory, Identity and Narrative : Reema Moudgil’s *Perfect Eight*” comments that the “post memory” of Ira’s mother’s posttraumatic stress, reflected in her mother’s suicide attempts and her fear of happiness makes Ira feel that she was “dysfunctional” and her dysfunction was “gene deep”- in her loss of identity, sense of exile and so on (75).

Further, like Ira, Nanjappa suggests, India also reels under the post memory of that violent legacy. The restlessness and insecurity of Ira has its objective correlative in the terrorist attacks in Punjab, the Khalistan movement, the Hindu- Sikh riots that break out in Ira’s neighbourhood in Patiala, as Bhindrinwala rises to power working on hate dynamics between Hindus and Sikhs (76). The novel also one can add toys with the majority–minority binary in several ways at several points. Mother and Ira’s position becomes more threatened and alienating after Operation Blue Star, the subsequent Mrs. Gandhi’s assassination and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. As the novel draws to a close, in the background is the Ayodhya conflict, with its broken Masjid, burning hatred and thousands raging and screaming for blood, while Ira wonders where she belongs in a land of conflict between the so called majority and minority.

Shashi Tharoor’s *Riot* is set in the milieu with which *Perfect Eight* ends, where India is still grappling unsuccessfully with the many armed conflicts that are a direct consequence of the Hindu-Muslim tensions. A multilayered narrative, it takes the history of the Hindu-Muslim divide as its base, while the novel’s principal action is based on a riot that took place in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh and an episode of racial violence in South Africa, which claimed amongst its unfortunate victims, the life of an American girl working with an Indian NGO. The plot of the novel starts with the death of Priscilla Hart, during the sectarian violence in the wake of the Babri Masjid agitation. Though overtly it hinges on a whodunit axis to discover Priscilla’s killer, the narrative and the bureaucratic mayhem suggest that this will perhaps remain unsolved in the public space. The narrative is a literary pastiche of the interview manuscripts of Randy Diggs, the American journalist, Priscilla’s diary entries (which like Vladek in *Maus*, Laxman circumvents and takes possession), Laxman’s
poetry, Priscilla’s letters to her friend, newspaper account of the killing, minutes of meetings are used contrapuntally to underpin the plurality of perspective to the conflict and the impossibility in such immediate contexts to ascertain what the truth is. Randy Diggs’ interview manuscripts become one of the mediums to record polyphonic views of the conflict, with each side legitimizing its account. These meta-narratives of cultural/religious purity stifle other contending mini narratives of people like Prof. Sarwar, about the richness of Indian identity and erode the vibrant plurality of Indian ethos.

In the words of Laxman, Tharoor raises the question whether there are any univocal histories.

But who owns India’s history? Are there my history and his and his history about my history? This is, in many ways, what this whole Ram Janmabhoomi agitation is about- about the reclaiming of history by those who feel that they were, at one point, written out of the script. But can they write a new history without doing violence to the inheritors of the old?(Riot, 110)

Meenakshi Raman in her essay “Shashi Tharoor’s Riot: A Showcase of Multiple Perspectives” comments that the novel reveals that passive recognition of compound identities and plurality is not very effective in dismantling the insidious arrangement of cultural violence; in fact, the cracks along the fault lines of mosaic identity widens at the times of conflict, rendering it vulnerable to the structures of violence (230). So the novel seems to suggest that for a stable and safe society, the people who cohabit in it should be in harmony with their multiple perceptions and complex roles within, to appreciate and tolerate truly the same outside.

If Shashi Tharoor and Moudgil deal with communal tension in India, Basharat Peer and Salman Rushdie however offer an insight into the ever brewing, uneasy conflict in Kashmir., Sumantra Bose speaking about the Kashmir conflict in the introduction to his book Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace, notes a major change between the 1970s war and the conflicts since 1990s in Kashmir. “Before 1989, India and Pakistan fought over Kashmir, since 1989 it is Kashmiris who have done much of the fighting” (3). Since the 1990s, Bose notes “protracted low intensity warfare in the interior of IJK between thousands of guerrillas and hundreds and thousands of Indian Security forces” has “transformed the conflict into a much more multidimensional problem.”(3).
Peer, a Kashmiri journalist records this conflict in his book *Curfewed Nights*, which is partially an autobiography and partly the story of survivors of massacres, rape, torture and the homeless and exiled Kashmiri Pundits. Narrated in straightforward journalistic prose, Peer’s book is alternate history that challenges the hegemonic Indian discourse on the Kashmir conflict. The book traces the different dimensions of the Kashmir conflict and the Indian Armed forces’ response by repression and retaliation; retaliation, not just against armed militants, but against “disloyal” civilians that aided and sheltered the rebels. The tyranny and comeback of the army severely intensified the guerrilla attacks. The book recounts how bus loads of Kashmiri youth went across the border and returned as trained militants, armed with Kalashnikovs, hand grenades, light machine guns and rocket launchers, issued by Pakistan, these in turn trained other militants in Kashmir.

The narrative recounts how the Indian state is viewed and still viewed in Kashmir- as the colonizer, the oppressor and the army as the builders of check posts and bunkers, destroying the “jannat” that was Kashmir. Clearly written from the Kashmiri perspective, the thin line between the martyr and the militant, the rebel hero and the terrorist subject is erased. The gun becomes an instrument of power and being in possession of one is being in control, not subjugated to an external occupier, in this case India. The “us” (Kashmiri) vs. “them” (India) emerges at several points in the text, a telling phrase is “We call it Kalashnikov, they call it AK47” (Peer, 54). Though an honest personal and a claimed factual account of a Kashmiri who has seen this heaven on earth become in every sense “an unweeded garden gone to seed, with things rank and gross” (*Hamlet*) possessing it merely, the version does not throw much light on how the “azadi” movement became jihadist, nor does it locate the causes that led to the exile of the Kashmiri Pundits, the massacres and vandalism during this killing spree.

Though it is neither an insider’s account of the conflict nor a detailed portrayal of it, Rushdie’s *Shalimar, the Clown* is relevant to the study as it attempts to understand the motivation and the psychology of the post 9/11 creation -the jihadist terrorist, within the Kashmir context. Rushdie’s ex-centric outsider’s position is evident in the ambivalent portrayal of the jihadist. It is important to interrogate Rushdie’s need to locate the motives of a jihadist in personal revenge and betrayal, than in religious ideology. Anderson Bastes Martins in his paper “The Origin of Terror in Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar, the Clown*” analysing the origins of terror in Rushdie’s novel answers this query as Rushdie’s way of humanizing and hence reversing the Western construct. Rushdie, Martins claims
wishes to show that a terrorist need not always be the brainwashed, irrational fanatic the Western media portrays and that many join jihadist groups not necessarily for ideological reasons (55-60). But in the process the insight into the position and perception of the ideological militant (or martyr? as Peer questions) gets diminished. Neil Murphy in his essay “The Literalisation of Allegory in Salman Rushdie’s Shalimar, the Clown” analyses the use of allegory in the novel. Murphy locates the slippage of characters between the tropological and the literal. He also notes that the novel makes an allegorical statement on what happens when a thing of beauty like Kashmir is sullied by encroaching Western poison (352-353).

Undeniably, on 9/11 human nature and perception changed. Religion, ethnicity, religious markers all became metonymies to define identity. Post 9/11, popular American discourse has concerned itself, with the construct of non-western and Islamic cultures such as those of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. This construct-a figure of decrepitude is available in the many images of the non-western, Islamic, bearded, turbaned, radical jihadist conjured in popular media, to give credibility to American lives. In the post 9/11 circumstances western Orientalist ideology has created this new monster: “the terrorist”. In this context the position of the Pakistani migrant became doubly threatened, as a Muslim and as a supporter of Taliban (and hence the Al Qaeda). While the media prevalently constructs the figure of the terrorist with the accompanying markers of illiteracy, fundamentalism, hatred, and violence, this figure is challenged through the exilic perspective in contemporary Diasporic fiction, by producing the disempowered refugee, the disillusioned immigrant, and the dissenting citizen.

Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist stand Naqvi’s Home Boy are two such narrative representations of 9/11 by Pakistani Diasporic Writers. The novels portray the fallout of 9/11 for the Pakistani migrant in America. His conflicting and problematic question of identity, the need to search for a new parameter to define self—of being a Pakistani, a Muslim and yet not be constructed as a terrorist This is the conflict of both Changez (in The Reluctant Fundamentalist) and Chuck (Home Boy). The novels show their need to assimilate and become ‘home boys’ in America but are instead constructed, much to their reluctance, as fundamentalists, hence terrorists. The novels aim to dismantle these post 9/11 stereotypes that cover Islam and, thus challenge the West’s construct of Islam.

The narration of The Reluctant Fundamentalist starts in medias res, as the autodiegetic and overt narrator, Changez, a Pakistani who spent some years of his life in the U.S., meets the overt narratee, an American tourist (as it seems), and begins to reflect about his student
life at Princeton University and later work life in New York City. In a reshuffle of contemporary political hierarchy, the Pakistani speaks and the American is silent. The narrative recounts Changez’s identity crisis in America, activated by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 which then leads him to have anti-American sentiments. On his flight back to the United States from Manila, where he had seen the attacks on television, Changez is strip-searched and flies back “uncomfortable in my own face” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist, 73). It is this dual identification, both as victim and attacker that initiate Changez’s dissatisfaction with his American life. The narrative defies the expectations and undermines the American stereotype, the fundamentalist. Changez the supposed fundamentalist is modern, secular, educated, a privileged Pakistani elite, rather than a regressive, illiterate, and intolerant jihadist. Unlike a terrorist who is usually torn in conflict between his rational mind and his fundamentalism, Changez’s narrative has an assurance and a quiet confidence. A refusal to be fixed by the imperial or western gaze is central to Hamid’s narrative. After 9/11 and after finally realizing his personal (Pakistani) identity; Changez feels the need to return to Pakistan to see his family. An important process in his shaping his newly found Pakistani identity seems to be growing a beard just like his father and his older brother. Changez knows about the symbolism of his beard, especially with connection to 9/11, and already expects that his immigration back into the U.S. will be problematic. However where he could earlier blend in the American melting pot, the features of foreign / middle-eastern appearance, a beard and occasionally a turban are associated with “the” group of terrorists. Correspondingly, as Changez’ outer appearance does in some way conform to the image of the stereotypical terrorist; Changez himself is seen as suspicious.

The novel ends on an ominous note, hinting at violence but enacting none. The story thus conveys a feeling of ambiguity and confusion, because it does not explicitly tell the reader who the good or the bad guy is and whom to believe: the narrator or the narratee? One could argue that this is the central question and point of the novel; that it tells the reader not to jump to conclusions from already acquired stereotypical knowledge.

Like Changez, Chuck, the first person narrator in Naqvi’s novel identifies with the cultural openness, the hallmark of the American dream. Though he is clearly pro-American early on in the novel, he feels drawn to his Pakistani identity as well. As social structures change, Chuck’s identity conflict both collective and individual deepens. This conflict reaches its crisis when he and his friends are beaten by a gang of bar brawlers and disparagingly called Arabs. The media, the novel shows, plays its part in this othering process in projecting dehumanizing stereotypes Asma Mansoor in her paper “Post 9/11 Identity Crisis
in Naqvi’s *Home Boy*” states that this post 9/11 labelling has created a new identity among the expatriate, Diaspora Pakistani community- the resistance identity (10).

Chuck’s “resistant identity” emerges after his arrest by the F.B.I and the gruelling interrogation with the white American’s syllogism that since Chuck is a Muslim whether or not he prays five times a day, he is nevertheless a terrorist. Neither does Chuck adopt a pro-west approach nor does he opt for a radicalized Islamic identity, nor does he resort to external markers of protest. But he discards his opportunities to remain in America and become a bonafide American citizen. Having been a victim of America’s war on terror policy, he refuses to be integrated into a system that was morphing into an exploitative system. America, to him states Mansoor, is no longer a land of dreams but has become a policestate (11). Finally the over simplistic generalization of all Muslims as terrorists compels Chuck to turn away from America and return home.

While “armed” no doubt means combat, rising in arms and ammunition against one’s opponent, resistance and protest have taken other forms than warring with weapons. Many clashes like the American Civil Rights Movement, the feminist movement, the Dalit movement have armed themselves with ideology, civil disobedience, protest writing and acts of resistance and rebellion. These are also fought along the fault lines of culture and identity be it caste, gender, race or class. If arms and wo/man have found space in literature, literature has also ‘armed’ wo/man with a space to voice their protests and sometimes a page has won greater wars than weapons and artillery. Armed in thought with militancy in ideology, the page has been a stage to assert, arise and articulate. Many literary texts are protest narratives, waging wars at different oppressive structures that dominate in the name of caste, class, gender or race. In recent years, writings like Feminist writing, Dalit literature, Afro – American writings, have recorded trauma, pain, resistance, protest and social change. These narratives proceed from a lived experience of poverty, slavery, rejection, exclusion and suffering. Such writings intersect with writings on armed conflicts through their natures of portraiture be it fighting notions of centrality and hegemony, or in recovering gaps, or contesting meaning as singular, absolute and fixed.

The overview that this chapter had attempted finds that writers whether soldier-authors, victim-survivors, or second and third generation writers who are inheritors of multiple stories of compound losses and myriad dreams, have all recorded recovered and registered armed conflict in literature. However even as faces of armed conflicts have changed, portraiture have all changed correspondingly. Earlier preset and rigid notions have become more fluid. Alternate perspectives challenge and re-present suggesting through their
re-presentation that what was accepted as constant is in fact variable. Closed and complete annals have been reopened and in recovering gaps, narratives imply the impossibilities of closure and the possibility that there is a story somewhere, unrecorded and unheard. Resounding with the clash of civilizations and empires, the shelling of cities, the silence of gas chambers, the crying child in a deserted war ravaged village, the dismemberment of nations, the anguish of the dislocated refugee, the anomalous terrorist, the many faces of conflict finds expressions in the pages of literary narratives. With these ravages of armed conflicts its many fall-outs like, the loss of identity- individual and collective- post traumatic stress, multiple alienations have also found expression in different writings.

It is within these multilayered contexts and connotations of ‘armed’ conflicts that the research locates the primary texts chosen for study. These texts have been written within the domains of significant recent conflicts like the Sri Lankan Civil Wars (also called Eelam wars) and the Afghan wars (from the Soviet occupation to the Talibanisation of Afghanistan to the fall of the twin towers and the consequent war on terror). Perceived by the exile, some of these accounts are a ringside view of theatres of conflict while some are from the outsider’s distanced view of the conflict, some written from the ideology of the struggle, some from the ambivalent idealism of exile. These narratives take on different frames to view and portray the conflict- the survivor-exile, the child-soldier-exile, the victim-resister, the ambivalent –exile or the intellectual –marginal-exile. The accounts recount loss of identities, post traumatic stress, alienation, the experience of subalternity, the collective memory of the conflict. Within the larger frame of war, these narratives also give space to protest and resist, to assert minor identities, challenge centrality of meaning, the univocal history of Grand narratives and the discourse of the’ panoptic’ state. The ensuing chapters will analyse the portraiture in these two spaces of conflict.