

A Novel Approach to War Journalism

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Abstract: Certain kinds of novels, novels such as Kafka's *The Trial* and Camus' *The Stranger*, reveal an understanding of self and its relationship to political morality. Analysis of narrative fiction written by war journalists about imaginary war journalists reveals similar themes and raises similar moral and ethical questions. What is the war journalists' self-perception as he goes about his work; how does he/she relate to society in general? How does she/he react to censorship, pervasive propaganda, and the darker truths of war? There are only a handful of novels written by experienced English-speaking war journalists in which the main character is a war journalist. In this paper I will analyze the narrative fiction of three war journalists. Gil Courtemanche, a Quebec journalist, is the author of *A Sunday by the Pool in Kilgali*, a fictionalized account of the Rwandan genocide written from the point of view of a journalist. Oakland Ross, the former Latin American correspondent for The Globe and Mail, is the author of *Guerrilla Beach* a collection of short stories based in Central and South America in which many of the main characters are journalists. Martha Gellhorn, an American journalist, authored *A Stricken Field* a fictionalized account of a journalist witnessing Nazi oppression in Czechoslovakia just before the outbreak of the Second World War. War journalists' representations of war in the news media are integral to modern society's understanding of war and its political and social consequences. This fiction provides a valuable perspective of the war journalist and his/her responsibilities not only as a journalist but as a citizen and member of society.

Novels such as Kafka's *The Trial* and Camus' *The Stranger* provide insight into the inner-self and its relationship to political morality (Dolan, 1976; Horton and Baumeister, 1996; Keren 2003). Through the narrative fiction the world's imperfections are viewed from the sphere of the private individual who must contend on a daily basis with the messianic redemption promised by the grand forces of the twentieth century (Keren, 2003). The individual's reactions to these forces, to the conventional wisdom of the day, and to people around her are central to the narrative and pull the reader into a world of new possibilities. Thus, through the artistic form of imaginative literature readers see and in some ways experience the world as a different place than they are used to: they see themselves as actors in the modern world, rather than as simply the acted upon. They see others in new ways, as perhaps defying or challenging stereotypes imposed on them.

Whenever one encounters a work of narrative fiction written by a journalist one wonders why a journalist trained to report with factual accuracy would turn to fiction as a means of representation. In her study of five newspaper journalists who became leading literary figures in the United States, Shelley Fishkin (1985) suggests that these journalists are all too aware of the limits of conventional journalism: "the subjects that were excluded, the superficial, formulaic treatment of subjects that *were* discussed, the lack of connection to any time but the present, the extravagant claim to authoritativeness, the failure to challenge the reader to think for himself..." (p. 8). As artists they could rearrange familiar events and facts into larger contexts thereby casting them in a new light. By doing this, she asserts, they not only challenge a reader's comfortable habits but often move her to weigh society's laws against the laws of her own conscience.

Fishkin's study does not focus exclusively on war journalists and their fictional representations of war as this paper does. But this paper poses a question similar to Fishkin's: what does the form of imagined narrative provide for the representation of war that journalism cannot? Some war correspondents wrote book-length memoirs in an attempt to more fully explain their experiences but these accounts often glorified both war and the war correspondents. "The impression that war correspondence is the most glamorous branch of journalism stems chiefly from these memoirs," writes Howard Good (1986) in *The Image of War Correspondents in Anglo-American Fiction*. But fiction about war correspondents, especially fiction written in the past 40 years, tells a different story: it "seems intended to serve as a necessary corrective to the insane notion, implicit in the colourful autobiographies of journalistic adventures, that war is fun" (p. 2).

There is always so much at stake when journalists report from a war zone. People are being killed and injured and yet the truth of who is doing what to whom can be difficult to determine because the journalist can see only part of the picture. Journalists are also under extraordinary pressure to create a version of events that coincides with the version offered by government and military authorities. What the journalist eventually produces is often the result of many conflicting demands:

Journalists are expected to function variously during war: to be present enough to respond to what is happening, yet absent enough to stay safe; to be sufficiently authoritative so as to provide reliable information, yet open to cracks and fissures in the complicated truth-claims that unfold; to

remain passionate about the undermining of human dignity that accompanies war, yet impartial and distanced enough to see the strategies that attach themselves to circumstances with always more than one side. (Allan, Zelizer, 2004, p.4).

War journalists who make us see things in a different way than what the propaganda of government or the military urges upon us, who lead us to think about a conflict in terms of history, context and the human cost go beyond the simple recording of factual information from the front; they are also reporting from their own zone of morality.

Journalists face different pressures and dilemmas when they report civil conflicts such as Bosnia and Kosovo or when they find themselves confronted by the genocide in Rwanda. The pressure to put their personal ethics of honesty and conscience above their professional ethic of objectivity and impartiality, to make a clear moral choice between reporting the facts or taking sides and pleading a cause, is one some reporters can withstand and others cannot. (McLaughlin, 2002, p. 5)

All serious journalists contend with the constant juggling of ethical values and conventional journalist practice. But the requirement for objectivity in the face of violent conflict is particularly disquieting for journalists, as are questions of allegiance, responsibility, truth and balance (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p. 3).

Geraldine Muhlmann (2008) argues that war journalism by its very nature severs the relationship between journalist and audience: she sees the perpetrators and the victims portrayed in journalistic accounts as 'others' in relation to the public:

All those who 'are there', whatever their role in this violence, whether they are perpetrators, victims or eyewitnesses directly exposed to the traumatic situation, constitute an otherness in relation to an exterior public. This is why violence presents the journalist with a terrible challenge; if it means an irreparable breach between those who are there and those who are not, is it even possible to envisage creating a connection beyond the breach, without it being inevitably misrepresented? (p. 227)

Muhlmann asserts that violence cannot be witnessed, experienced, and recounted at the same time. A massacre is hidden when it is being committed; it is only in the discovery and retelling that the public comes to know about it. But the actual experience still remains invisible. The audience doesn't see it and experience it as it is happening. It is up to the journalist to reconstruct the violence and present it in the past tense, not the present tense. For Muhlman, "the journalism which takes violence as its subject pushes the breach between journalist and audience to a danger point; can the otherness constituted by violence really be represented, made visible to the public that 'wasn't there', when this otherness is actually characterized by an invisibility for those who 'are there' (p. 257).

This brings us to some of the key questions of this paper. How do the imaginary war journalists in the novels discussed see themselves? Is patriotism important to them? Are they prepared to describe war as it really is? How do they reconcile the differences between (military and political) propaganda and their own observations and experience? What do the imaginary war

journalists tell us about the limits of journalism when it comes to journalistic representations of war? What is the impact of gender on a war journalist's reports?

The War Journalists Who Turned to Fiction

Martha Gellhorn went to Prague in 1938 shortly after Nazi Germany had annexed Sudetenland. By the time she had arrived in Czechoslovakia, Gellhorn had already covered the Spanish civil war from the front lines for publications in the United States. She came away convinced that war was about to spread throughout Europe. What she saw in Prague - frightened refugees, ruthless Gestapo agents, and concentration camps – shook her even more. She wrote a few articles for magazines back in the United States but left Prague soon after she arrived. She was convinced her work was useless, that it would not save anyone: Hitler was determined to wage war and millions would die as a result (Gellhorn, 1986). Later that year she took up residence in Cuba and began writing a novel about the frustrations of an American journalist covering events in Nazi-controlled Prague and later trying to save the life of a German Jewish refugee. Entitled *A Stricken Field*, it was published in 1940.

Oakland Ross is a Canadian journalist who reported from Latin America for the *Globe and Mail* during the 1980s when there was a good deal of political upheaval throughout the region. Many left-leaning groups from Mexico to Argentina wanted to replicate the Cuban Revolution of 1959 through armed guerrilla conflicts. This alarmed established governments across the continent and they began to clamp down not only on armed subversives but anyone who might be in sympathy with them. The United States, which at the time was locked into a cold war with the Soviet Union, saw the sporadic insurgencies and the threat of left-wing revolutions as a threat to its political and economic control of Latin America and often supplied Latin American governments with, intelligence and arms, even if they were brutal dictatorships such as was the case in Nicaragua under Anastasio Somoza. During the 1980s in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua thousands were tortured and/or killed by the military, or its proxies, during campaigns ostensibly aimed at eradicating Communism. Some guerrilla organizations did indeed receive arms and funding from the Soviet Union or its allies. But the emphasis on the threat of Communism masked the huge inequities between the poor, mostly illiterate majority, and small, but powerful, oligarchies. (Skidmore & Smith, 1989)

Guerrilla Beach, a collection of short stories, was published in 1994 and was Ross' first foray in to imaginative literature. The stories all take place in Latin American countries and journalists are leading characters in all but one of the ten stories. There's Matt Burrell a stringer for the New York Times who lives in San Salvador and knows he is putting one of his anonymous sources at great risk. There's R. Dale Wickham a cautious reporter who becomes addicted to the excitement of armed combat. There's the American television crew determined to find "bang-bang" footage for the nightly news no matter who gets hurt. These imaginary journalists are faced with various ethical dilemmas, but in most cases they don't do the right thing. Ross portrays them as self-centred, ignorant and superficial. The journalists who do try to do the right thing are often thwarted by their editors at home, or the demands of the news business. The overall tone is one of deep disdain for foreign correspondents. In *Guerrilla Beach* only a handful of war journalists have the insight or courage to do the right thing.

Gil Courtemanche was a Quebec journalist specializing in international and third world politics. His journalism, both print and film, took him to various war-torn countries including Lebanon and Haiti. Courtemanche was first sent to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, by his newspaper in 1989 to research the problems caused by AIDS in Africa. He travelled to Rwanda four times, spending a total of a year in the country, and produced an award-winning TV documentary, *The Gospel of AIDS*, that focused on a group of Catholic priests and nuns who had taken it upon themselves to distribute condoms and encourage safe sex. Courtemanche was actually in France at the time of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 that left almost a million people dead at the hands of machete wielding hoodlums spurred on by the Hutu-backed government and military. The friction between the majority Hutus and the minority Tutsis was instigated during colonial times when the Belgians tended to favour the more Caucasian-looking Tutsis.

After the massacres Courtemanche returned to Rwanda in order to find out what had happened to his Hutu and Tutsi friends. He found most of them in communal graves, or in jail accused of murder. Courtemanche then began work on a documentary which he envisioned as thirty stories about survivors. But he found the project hard to do and harder to sell. So he started to write a book in which the main character is a documentary film maker from Quebec who is in Rwanda at the behest of an international development agency to set up a television station. In one interview Courtemanche said he doesn't remember when his documentary turned into a novel (Waters, 2003)

Messy Moral Dilemmas

A reading of the fiction under discussion revealed three consistent political or socially engendered attitudes that influenced the work of the imaginary war journalists - patriotism, allegiance to truth, and gender. There are three other consistent influences – journalistic objectivity, editorial constraints, and the war correspondent's relationship with other correspondents. These factors can also affect the way a journalist represents war but they arise from the requirements of journalistic practice rather than from political or social circumstances.

Patriot or Observer?

According to Knightley (2003), modern war reporting - professional journalists reporting from the battlefield - began with the Crimean War (1854-1856). Before Crimea, British editors either reprinted news from foreign newspapers or relied on soldier correspondents to send regular letters from the field. The new practice of civilians reporting from the frontlines to other civilians didn't require the journalist to be any less loyal to his country and its troops than the soldier. One of the first widely read war correspondents, William Howard Russell, wrote for *The Times* (London) from the Crimean front where the British and their allies squared off with Russian forces trying to advance into territories controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Russell's reports provided a much more truthful version of the horrors of the battlefield than readers had been accustomed to. But Knightley also points out that "Russell made the mistake, common to many a war correspondent, of considering himself part of the military establishment. The one thing he never doubted or criticized was the institution of war itself" (p. 16).

This attitude wasn't peculiar to British correspondents basking in the glory days of the British Empire. During the Spanish-American War (1898) which resulted in the Spanish being routed from Cuba with the help of the Americans, newspaper correspondents also considered

themselves to be soldiers. Stephen Crane who reported for both the *New York World* and the *New York Journal*, the two newspapers who many believe started the war in order to boost circulation, carried a sidearm, served as an aide to the commanding officer and was cited in official military reports (Robertson, 1997).

The question of patriotism still presents a dilemma for many journalists. Morrison and Tumber (1988) found considerable ambivalence among journalists, both in the field and in London, about whether the journalist's proper role was as observer or patriot. Liebes (1992) looks at patriotism in U.S and Israeli war coverage, stressing the differences in news conventions when journalists are covering 'their own' war, or that of another country, including, for example, the tendency to personalize 'our' side but not 'their' side (cited in Hallin, 1998, p. 221). Hallin argues that war creates conditions that are far removed from normative journalistic practice. It is a model in which the journalist is expected not to stand back as an observer, but to participate actively in the reaffirmation of consensus norms. Hallin and Gitlin (1994) argue that local news coverage in the Gulf War performed a 'ritual' function of celebrating community consensus, a function frequently performed by local news, though usually in 'non-political' contexts (cited in Hallin, 1998, p. 221).

Martha Gellhorn's protagonist is not bound by such blind loyalty. Instead, the American journalist Mary Douglas decries Nazi Germany along with the world powers – England, France and the U.S - that have appeased Hitler and allowed him to take over Czechoslovakia. When she meets with the Commissioner for Refugees appointed by the British, she realizes his ineffectiveness is not due to opposition from the Nazis but a planned strategy on the part of the British, French and Americans: "So that was how they did it, those crooks who didn't want the news of this disaster to get out, those more than crooks who wanted this peace to seem successful. They work well, she thought" (p. 166). Mary Douglas lives by an ethic that surpasses blind loyalty or patriotism. It even trumps her journalistic ethic of objectivity. Rather than identify with any of the political powers involved in the annexation of Czechoslovakia she identifies with the *victims* of the annexation – the German refugees living in Prague and the Czechs who have been forced out of the new German territories. She sees these people as having the right to live free of terror and oppression and believes democratic governments around the world should help them. She doesn't see herself as an agent of any government or ideology but rather as a moral individual who must act when she sees others in danger.

I am going to make a fool of myself," she said seriously. "And you will all have a swell laugh, and I won't be able to think it is funny at all. And it's none of my business as I'm the first to admit, but there's nobody here who can do anything about it and I've got to try. (p. 161)

Gil Courtemanche's protagonist/journalist in *A Sunday by the Pool in Kigali* takes things even further. Bernard Valcourt not only eschews patriotism to his own country (Canada), he denounces Canadian diplomats, aid workers, missionaries and businessmen working in Rwanda for their self-serving attitudes in the face of certain knowledge that the Hutu-backed government is planning widespread genocide against the Tutsi minority. When he meets with a novice Canadian consular official to discuss the death of a Canadian priest who Valcourt believes was murdered by the Rwandan government, he spares him no sympathy:

You don't want to know and even less write, that members of the President's entourage probably ordered his death. You don't want to know, you want to get out of this looking good. I understand and I feel for you. But you won't get away with it. The dead we hide away turn into ghosts and come back to haunt us. You're screwed. Another victim of this shitty country. If you tell the truth, your career's down the drain. If you back the version the minister wants so his chummy relations with Rwanda will carry on as before, I'll get after you. (p. 135)

Courtemanche's imaginary journalist is also contemptuous of the Canadian Commander of the U.N Forces in Rwanda. After Valcourt, a documentary film producer who used to work for the CBC, meets with him to plead for more forceful U.N intervention so as to prevent the looming genocide, he describes the outcome this way:

The general had done everything to justify his present passivity and future impotence. Had asked another of his own kind, a public servant, for permission he did not need and knew would be refused. Had written reports asking for more troops, knowing that no country wanted to send more troops to Rwanda, but knowing also, which was much more serious, that with the several thousand soldiers he already had he could neutralize the extremists of the presidential guard and their accomplices in a few hours. (p. 114)

Valcourt is also scathing in his criticism of white westerners who passively watch crises unfold in other parts of the world via television;

An article, an in-depth report might perhaps stir public opinion and influence his government which in turn would talk about it to another...But what a fool I am! he thought. It takes ten thousand dead Africans to furrow the brow of even one left-leaning White. Even ten thousand's not enough. And they aren't noble deaths either – they make humanity blush. (p.111)

Valcourt is extremely bitter and despairing about the apathy of his own government, the Canadian news media and Canadians in general towards the looming genocide that would leave hundreds of thousands Rwandans dead, mutilated, or traumatized. But his condemnation is not a blanket condemnation. He singles out, for example, a Canadian nurse working in Rwanda with people who have HIV/AIDS: "...more stubborn than a mule, and more generous than a field of poppies" (p. 47). When a Canadian religious –Brother Francois Cardinal – is mysteriously murdered in Rwanda, Valcourt refers to him as a hero: "Cardinal was working for the dignity of men, for sharing of the land's riches, for tolerance. In the eyes of the law governing this country, these were three offences deserving of the death penalty" (p. 133).

In the fiction of these two journalists, blind patriotism is not upheld as a virtue; their protagonists' ethics require that the actions of their own governments and countrymen must be as diligently scrutinized as those of the opposing forces.

Truth-telling

War and propaganda have long walked hand in hand. But with the development of total war - the mobilization of both industry and the citizenry on a massive scale in order to advance the interests of the nation state - propaganda became essential to war. The armies sent into the field were vast as a percentage of the population. They were fighting a technological conflict that required massive amounts of industrial production. This meant the home front was key to military success, and had to be treated as an integral part of the war effort (Hallin, 1998). Military planners began to concern themselves with the systematic management of public opinion and of the media, particularly correspondents in the field. This resulted in a combination of censorship and planned publicity that served the purposes of total war but fell short of telling the whole story. According to Hallin, during the Second World War: "...the press in the U.S and Britain developed a style of war reporting which combined strategic reporting heavily dependent on official sources, viewing the world from the centralized perspective of those who managed the global war apparatus, with a populist perspective which concentrated on and often glorified the 'GI' or the 'Tommy' and the ordinary family on the 'home front'" (p. 209). The fear, despair, and suffering that accompanies injury and death of both soldiers and civilians were usually downplayed in favour of accounts of bravery and heroism because it better served the aims of the nation state. Consequently, a war journalist's stance on truth-telling can determine whether he sees himself working to uphold the designs of the military establishment and their political masters, or working to inform the people whose lives will be impacted by their decisions.

Vivid accounts of bravery and heroism usually preclude any mention of fear on the part of those fighting in a war and the journalists writing stories about them. Although pervasive on the battle field, fear is usually absent in journalistic accounts. But in the novels fear is everywhere like a thick fog. In a short story by Oakland Ross entitled *Dangerland* three war journalists traveling by car get caught in a confrontation between the Salvadoran Army and rebels. When they first come across the army patrol, the narrator of the story, a North American war journalist, knows the patrol is looking for rebels and will kill them and anyone who gets in the way:

It wasn't a formal roadblock, but I had to stop. Something was up, I could feel it in my chest. It wasn't that I was afraid – not yet, or not exactly – but something was definitely up. I could feel that quickening of the blood, that throbbing in the chest, that airy almost porous feeling you got in the outer circles of *Dangerland*, as if some key element of your molecular structure had just dropped out of the picture, leaving a thousand little holes. They made you float. This wasn't fear. Fear was different. This was just the beginning of fear. (p. 143)

Later in the story, the trio encounters a band of rebels and the American war journalist/narrator notices that they are scared too. This makes him even more afraid of what might happen.

The fear that pervades these fictionalized accounts of war is of course fuelled by the certain knowledge of what happens to people - both soldiers and civilians - during war. In another short story by Oakland Ross, a university professor who is sympathetic to the guerrillas and a regular anonymous source for visiting journalists comes across two bodies in a garbage dump – a man and a pregnant woman. They have been dismembered and mutilated by death

squads. The professor has seen this before and knows that a similar fate awaits him if the authorities catch on to him.

He tried to make himself imagine. Make himself feel. But it was no use. You saw these things over and over and soon you stopped feeling, as though there had been a cauterizing of your nerves, as though proud flesh had formed. Calluses. Walls. All you could think was, *God, oh God, don't let me end up like this. Not this way.* (p. 78)

In another story - *Fighting at Gotera* – Ross depicts the sickening helplessness felt by journalists as they witness the cold blooded execution of defenceless men, women and children whom the army believes have helped the guerrillas.

In *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* Gil Courtemanche creates vivid, memorable and sympathetic Rwandan characters. Then he describes in vivid detail what happens to them, how they are savagely murdered by machete wielding bands of Hutu thugs spurred on by the government. One such character is Emérita, an ebullient taxi-driver who is killed along with her family when a grenade is thrown into their house. Courtemanche spares no detail when he describes the scene:

On the walls and floor, mementos, evocations of what once had been arms, a face, breasts. In this small space the grenade slipped through the window had pulverized the body into a thousand little pieces of flesh. Valcourt began to vomit. He wanted to cry but in his despair could only hiccup in the epileptic rhythm of the emptying of his stomach. (p. 165)

Gil Courtemanche's descriptions of people being slaughtered by mobs with machetes are almost unbearable to read, yet necessary if one is to understand what really happened. It would be simplistic to conclude that the imaginary journalists are tortured by fear because they are fundamentally anti-war. Many of Oakland Ross's characters are sympathetic to the guerrillas because they believe armed insurrection is the only way to stop the violence inflicted on them by the government. Bernard Valcourt in *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* demands that the international community mount an armed intervention to stop the genocide. Martha Gellhorn's protagonist wants England, France, and the U.S to mount an offensive against Germany. However, all the imaginary journalists believe that every facet of war, even the darkest most unpleasant truths, must be depicted by war journalists

Patriarchy and War

Since war is overwhelmingly represented in the news media by men, gender has to be taken into consideration when discussing factors that influence the behaviour and work of a war journalist. Susan Jeffords (1989) argues that throughout history wars have been the most obvious manifestation and the most severe consequence of patriarchal power relations. How war journalists view and present war, how they interact with the victims of war, many of whom are women and children, very much depends on whether they see themselves as benefiting from patriarchal power relations, or as victims of them. Whatever their perspective, it will impact how they report on violent conflicts.

In *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* Jeffords proposes that "...war should be seen as an eruption of systems already at work in patriarchal structures, a focalization of tensions already in operation" (p. 182). Jeffords adopts Gerda Lerner's definition of patriarchy: "...the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power" (p. xii). Jeffords also agrees with Lerner's premise that patriarchal dominance of women facilitated the subservience of certain classes, and races.

The discussion of patriarchy and its effect on women, certain classes and races is quite relevant to the narrative fiction under discussion since two of the authors and imaginary war journalists are men and one is a woman. Given Jeffords proposal that war should be seen as an "eruption" of tensions already present in society, it is not surprising that since its inception, war journalism has largely been the province of men. Women war correspondents have been on the front lines since the early days of war journalism but they were a small minority that faced strong opposition from military authorities and their male peers (Roth, 1997). The army attempted to block access for correspondent Anna Benjamin to the fighting in Cuba during the Spanish American War (1898). When she eventually reached the front lines she was one of only two women correspondents (Roth, 1997, p. 39). The situation had improved somewhat by the Second World War: of approximately 3,000 correspondents that covered the war, 1,646 were from the United States, and at least 100 of those were women (Roth, 1997, p. 364). Still, women found it more difficult to acquire the privileges granted to male correspondents. Renowned American photographer Margaret Bourke-White often had to overcome discrimination by military brass in order to accompany troops into battle. The British were even more determined to keep women in their place. When newspaper correspondent Iris Carpenter applied for accreditation with the British Expeditionary Force in 1942 she was rebuffed. At one point General Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery flatly vowed: "we will not tolerate" women (Roth, 1997, p. 67).

Martha Gellhorn's novel was published in 1940 when women's contributions to society were routinely seen as much less important than men's. But Gellhorn puts women at the centre of the story as active, important players. Her journalist, Mary Douglas relates to Rita, a Jewish refugee from Germany whom she is trying to help, as a peer even though Douglas has more status in the eyes of the authorities because she is a foreign journalist. This relationship is not based on romantic love, but on friendship and respect. Mary Douglas wants to help Rita get out of Czechoslovakia simply because she doesn't want to see her suffer. Douglas has nothing to gain; there would be no future relationship, other than friendship, in fact, it's possible that Douglas would never see Rita again. Douglas' motivation seems more altruistic and pure in the Kantian sense. It's also interesting to note that she established this peer relationship with a woman who is of a different nationality and religion. It would seem that through the novel Gellhorn was challenging patriarchy and the relationships it imposes, even during war. And in doing so she creates an imaginary world in which egalitarian relationships would be the norm rather than the exception.

A Sunday by the Pool in Kigali was published over 60 years later, but the journalist/protagonist - Bernard Valcourt – seems like a throwback to a former time. He has a very erotic but paternalistic relationship with a Rwandan woman named Gentille. He is a bored Canadian documentary film producer, and widower, in his 50s. Gentille is a young Hutu

woman he meets when she serves him breakfast in the Hotel des Milles-Collines. Gentile has “completed her social services studies” and is more refined and intelligent than the prostitutes that Valcourt frequents. He falls in love with her and eventually marries her. As the planned genocide unfolds Valcourt’s passionate love for Gentile becomes a metaphor for his love of Rwanda and the people of Rwanda. Valcourt has discovered something to live for, someone who makes him feel alive and purposeful again. Even though they have a very sexual relationship, he treats her with a great deal of respect, particularly when compared to the way many foreigners and Rwandan men treat Rwandan women. In fact, Valcourt idealizes her to the point that she seems more a figment of his imagination than a real woman. And even he acknowledges that if they were to leave Rwanda for a life in Canada he would become much less appealing to her, and she would become ordinary in his eyes. Gentile is portrayed as young and exotic, as bringing new vigour to a jaded, tired, middle-aged man. Valcourt dominates the relationship because he has status, and money that Gentile desperately needs to survive. Even though this novel was published in 2004 Gil Courtemanche’s protagonist seems to yearn for a return to a time when patriarchal power relationships were the norm and rarely questioned.

The Reality of Fiction

By the end of the story these imaginary war journalists have completely repudiated disengagement and refusal to take action in the face of grave danger or suffering. They recognize that journalism has its limits when confronted with the horror of a war zone and decide to take action to help the victims of war. Martha Gellhorn’s imaginary journalist uses her professional status and know-how to arrange a meeting between a French general sympathetic to the Czechs and the British commissioner for refugees in hopes they will convince England and France to take action on behalf of the thousands of doomed refugees in Prague.

In a short story – *Synonyms for War-torn* – by Oakland Ross another journalist wrestles with disengagement and objectivity. He writes a story about a young girl who has been disappeared by death squads in a poor neighbourhood of San Salvador then moves on to cover other news. But the girl’s mother appears at his hotel almost every day to ask him if he knows anything more about her daughter. He realizes the story he has written which got bumped off the front page at the last minute, has not helped this woman or any of the other people looking for disappeared relatives. That’s when he decides to get engaged: “Maybe he could go around to some government offices, ask some questions, get a lot of blank stares and curt denials, even a threat or two . But at least he’d have done something. He’d have something to tell this woman, some activity to report” (p. 277).

Gil Courtemanche’s imaginary journalist gives up all hope of using objective journalism to convince the rest of the world of the need to intervene in the coming genocide and sets about trying to save as many people as he can by taking them to a large hotel in Kigali where westerners are waiting to be evacuated.

In *From Fact to Fiction* Shelley Fishkin writes that journalists who turn to narrative fiction, or art, have come to understand both the power of the press, and its limitations. As journalists they could expose the gap between rhetoric and reality, between illusion and fact. But as artists they could rearrange familiar events and facts into larger contexts thereby casting them

in a new light. By doing this, she writes, they not only challenge a reader's comfortable habits but often move her to weigh society's laws against the laws of her own conscience. Fishkin was referring to all journalists who turn to fiction, not only war journalists. But her conclusion certainly applies to the narrative fiction under discussion. In all the works imaginary war journalists challenge the expectations of society as well as the myths and conventions of their profession. Each one wrestles with his or her conscience. Mary Douglas in *A Stricken Field* asks herself: what's more important, her role as journalist or her role as a citizen? In *The Image of War Correspondents in Anglo-American Fiction*, Howard Good concludes that the war correspondent of contemporary fiction "doubts the sanity and morality of his role even as he rushes off to the latest flashpoint" (p. 21). Whereas earlier correspondents were not inclined to question the institution of war, and were often portrayed as heroes for venturing onto the battlefield, war journalists in contemporary fiction are crushed by the "weight of their memories and moral responsibilities" (p. 21). To remain human, the war journalist must shed his professional calm and stop treating war as just another tragedy, and take sides. According to Good, these war journalists are seeking redemption by trying to make others understand the nightmare of war. This certainly applies to Bernard Valcourt in *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*. Not only does he risk his life to save some Rwandans from death by machete, but he travels to a refugee camp to gather eye witness reports "so that a true history could be written of the genocide" (p. 231).

These novels support Fishkin's argument that introspection - the detailed mental self-examination of feelings, thoughts and motives - on the part of protagonists is one of the main advantages of fiction compared to journalism. In all the novels studied the reader comes to know the inner life of the protagonists; their doubts and fears, their regrets and laments; their hopes in the face of failure. And it is certainly this kind of introspection combined with action that creates the conflicted, guilt-ridden correspondents that Good discusses. These imaginary war journalists are complex characters who defy the stereotypical image presented by the mass media.

In a study of 19th and 20th novels written by exiles, Paul Dolan writes that the authors tackle the problems of their lives in their works. They wrestle with treason versus loyalty and must decide if they are loyal subjects of a country, or of humanity. As a collection, the novels raise questions familiar to 20th Century readers, Dolan argues, questions about "maintaining a conviction of morality, and a certainty of citizenship" (p. 13). In a study of eight 20th Century novels Keren (2003) analyzes the main characters as building blocks of a prescriptive model of civil society:

All eight characters bring up facets of a model citizen who is conscious of his or her limitations, is aware of the need for social communication, seeks authenticity, refuses total political domination, uses reason, takes responsibility over acts committed by the state, views history as the product of human action rather than the intervention of the messianic, and maintains a degree of common decency in mass society. (p. 138)

As the characters in those novels can be seen to represent building blocks for civil society, certain facets of the characters in the fiction of war journalists serve as a template for a prescriptive model of a war journalist that extends beyond concerns of journalistic practice to their responsibilities as members of society. Analysis of these works of fiction clearly shows that

the imaginary war journalists do not see themselves as having the right to set themselves apart from the rest of society in the name of journalistic autonomy. Quite the opposite, these war journalists see themselves as citizens who also happen to be journalists. Being a journalist does not exempt them from responsibilities to other members of society. In fact, the knowledge they acquire through journalistic practice compels them to seek solutions to the consequences of war and violent conflict that lie outside the purview of journalism.

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