

'Truth is not found in the history book but in the hands of the fictional author.'

Compare and contrast the relationship between these texts and truth to say how far you agree with this interpretation.

Truth, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is **'Conformity with fact; agreement with reality; accuracy, correctness, verity (of statement or thought).'**¹ Taken at face value, academic history fits this definition perfectly. History is **'A narration of incidents, esp. (in later use) professedly true ones; a narrative, a story'**,² whereas fiction is defined as the art of **'Feigning, counterfeiting; deceit, dissimulation, pretence.'**³ This appears to be the exact opposite of truth, according to both the definitions listed above, so the statement 'truth is found in the hands of the fictional author' is technically an oxymoron. Delve a little deeper, however, and one discovers that the lines between history and fiction are blurred. The truth of war is much more complex than these definitions allow. In many ways, fiction is much closer to the truth of war than academic history.

The popular version of war history – that which has come to be known and accepted as the 'truth' of the war – is untrue. Samuel Hynes explains that this 'Myth of the War' is **'not a falsification of reality, but an imaginative version of it, the story of the war that has evolved, and has come to be accepted as true.'**⁴ It is a common misconception that the war went something like this:

'a generation of innocent young men, their heads full of abstractions like Honour, Glory and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance.'⁵

This myth of the war is not entirely inaccurate, but merely creates an imagined picture of reality. Anyone, whether historian or fictional author, who makes the assumption that this mythology is accurate - simply because it is a belief held by the majority – has missed the truth of the First World War. Much of the modern perspective of the war is based around this myth, however, as suggested by Dan Todman in *The Great War (Myth and Memory)*. Todman acknowledges that for many Britons, **'the war had been a tragedy ... on an individual emotional level.'**⁶ This tragedy of war is the basis on which the myth of the war was formed and still stands today. Yet this is a narrow perspective of the First World War, one which does not allow for the other meanings which those who had survived constructed around it. **'The war could mean survival, victory (personal and national), disappointment, comradeship, unity, sorrow, shared purpose, betrayal, sacrifice, redefined status, and enjoyment; sometimes all at the same time.'** The reality this myth constructs is not falsified, because it contains a great deal of truth, since the war was indeed tragic. Yet the myth is still guilty

¹ OED

² OED

³ OED

⁴ Samuel Hynes Introduction *A War Imagined*

⁵ Samuel Hynes Introduction *A War Imagined*

⁶ Dan Todman *The Great War (Myth and Memory)*

of creating an imagined reality, one which ignores different perspectives and focuses only on the tragedy.

The war's literary memory usually corresponds to the myth of the war, and the myth is therefore closely associated with fiction. The myth can be found in cinema, television, newspapers and literature, but fiction is largely responsible for creating and perpetuating the myth. This is a strong argument against the idea that truth can only be found in fiction, since we know that the myth does not give a broad or accurate picture of the war. It has become the widely accepted version of war history, but it is more a corruption of history than a truthful version of it. In addition, the very definition of fiction suggests that it is, in its most basic form, entirely made up of falsehood. If fiction were the opposite of history, and the myth a corruption of it, then it would be the pretence of truth, a falsified version of reality. Yet the concept of the truth of war is much more complex than it appears – it cannot be taken at face value.

Writers of fiction cannot help extrapolating ideas from their own life experiences, so to a small extent their fictional writings are autobiographical: this further complicates the idea of truth. Fiction is a reproduction of elements of history and of the author's life, but seen through a distorted lens. Pat Barker, the author of *Regeneration*, in an interview with Donna Perry, explains how **"The starting point is inevitably always something in your own life ... just as the source of every single character you create has to be yourself."**⁷ It would appear at first that this factual basis is a proof of the truthfulness of fiction, yet the fictional author often twists these facts so utterly beyond recognition that they take on a new identity of their own, as an imagined reality: **"But quite often you are taking a fact in your own life and saying 'What if...' and from that point you are going away from your own life at right angles, although the bedrock of the book was your own experience."**⁸ Here we hold the key to understanding the myth of the war. Pat Barker admits that she uses her personal history as the truthful, factual basis for her novels, but distorts the truth when she moves away from it **'at right angles'**. The fictional author alters real-life events to produce an imagined version of reality which merely resembles truth. A writer has the power to make the reader live in a world of their choice: it is the fictional author who chooses to abuse this power, by placing them in a world that has never, and never will exist, apart from in their imagination. This is what fiction has done to war history. It has taken the truth and presented its own version of the war, the myth which is now almost universally accepted. Ernest Hemingway is accredited with saying: **"The writer's job is to tell the truth."**⁹ Indeed, if history is the ultimate truth and fiction a corrupt version of it, then the fictional author has broken this fundamental rule.

It is not only war novelists who are guilty of misrepresenting history and corrupting the modern reader's perspective of WW1 by creating and reinforcing the myth. Many of the war poets are highly critical of figures of military authority, and their poems have greatly contributed towards the myth of the war, the imagined version of history which has come to be accepted as truth. The belief that those in positions of power were deliberately sending men to the Front to be slaughtered was held by Sassoon and many of his contemporaries and is reflected in his poems and *A Soldier's*

⁷ Westman p.20

⁸ Westman p.20

⁹ <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/ernest-m-hemingway>

Declaration, particularly in *The General*, which features in both *101 Poems against War and Regeneration*. This single perspective has formed the basis of what is now the widely-accepted war mythology, yet it is the kind of historical 'truth' which is in reality more fict than it is fact. There is evidence of the war poets' influence in modern war literature; in *Regeneration*, for example, Barker accepts the myth of the war and projects it onto her own writing: **'It'll go on til there isn't a cat or a dog left to enlist.'**¹⁰

An extract from *The Recruiting Sergeant* satirizes the whole situation: **'What a charming thing's a battle!'**¹¹ The poet uses sarcasm to criticise the role the authorities played in the deliberate concealment of the truth of war, resulting in the suffering and violent deaths of all the troops they recruited. Although Bickerstaffe does not refer to the First World War, but to an earlier battle, his criticism of war authorities is still relevant and applicable to the Great War.

Wilfred Owen is also critical of this false portrayal of the war, and expresses his disgust in *Dulce et Decorum Est*: **'My friend, you would not tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori.'**¹² In MCMXIV there is the very same suggestion that most people were being fed the lie, that to fight and die in the war was honourable. Larkin's poem was written in retrospect, so much of his knowledge of the war is gleaned from the very same history which he criticises. The **'moustached archaic faces, / Grinning as if it were all an August Bank Holiday lark'**¹³ are representative of the Generals and the Recruiting Sergeants who churn out 'The old Lie' to every young fellow they meet, to persuade him to join up. Yet they are unaware of what atrocities the first 'dirty war' will bring. When they discover the truth, the authorities whom Owen and Larkin refer to are eager to conceal it from the general public. The war poets were highly critical of figures of authority, because they used propaganda to persuade young men to enlist. Although much of this poetry is unjustified in its hyperbolic depictions of generals and recruiting sergeants, it is still accurate in its criticism of the deception being practised on the general public, using propaganda.

When tackling the issue of truth and fiction in relation to war, it seems sensible to address the issue of censorship during the First World War. The Defence of the Realm Act shows the extent to which the truth was censored. It was decreed that: **'No person shall by word of mouth or in writing spread reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm among any of His Majesty's forces or among the civilian population.'**¹⁴ One particular journalist, Northcliffe, said: **'I mean to tell the people the truth and I don't care what it costs.'**¹⁵

Despite the repercussions he could have faced in light of the new censorship act, Sassoon launched his public protest against the continuation of the war:

¹⁰ *Regeneration* p.32

¹¹ *Recruiting sergeant* page number

¹² *Dulce* p.6

¹³ MCMXIV p.120

¹⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jul/27/first-world-war-state-press-reporting>

¹⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jul/27/first-world-war-state-press-reporting>

“I have seen and endured the suffering of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.”¹⁶

The authorities attempted to silence Sassoon - he was deemed unfit for military service and sentenced to a short stay in Craiglockhart Hospital, where he was treated by Dr Rivers for war neurosis, which he may or may not have suffered from. As has already been discussed in this essay, Sassoon's beliefs about the misconduct of military authority were not well founded and were therefore - since they could not be supported by evidence - untrue in the factual, historical sense. Yet his belief was a strong conviction shared by many of his contemporaries and thus reflects the true thought processes of many who experienced the Great War first hand.

The war short story has not become part of the war's literary memory, nor does it contribute towards the myth of the war. Very little critical material is available on the works of fiction found in *The Penguin Book of First World War Stories*. Einhaus is puzzled as to how **‘a genre as productive and popular during the First World War as the short story did not become part of the war's literary memory’**.¹⁷ One possible reason for the genre passing into semi-obsolentism is the idea that it expresses a kind of truth which does not conform to the myth of the war, but serves to undermine the supposed truthfulness of the popular version of history. Einhaus suggests that **‘Because most of us have been reared on these writings [war novels and poetry] in our perception of the war, it is hard to look beyond them and beyond the mythology of the war of which they form such an integral part.’**¹⁸ In *The Penguin Book of First World War Stories*, *Once a Hero* is a prime example of the way in which fiction can be presented as truth, if the lie is believable and it is presented by a figure of authority. Much like Kitchener, Timothy Martlow is celebrated as a hero of the war who died for his town and country: **‘a man with his name wrote up in letters of gold in a dry canteen’**¹⁹, when in reality he is a homeless man who has always been despised and is still very much alive: **‘a disreputable drunken loafer’**.²⁰ The short story is full of irony, since Martlow is remembered for being the exact opposite of the man he was, and still is: the canteen built in his honour is dry, but in reality alcohol was never far from his lips; history says he is a respectable war veteran, but truth says he is a tramp who taints his own reputation with his far-from-respectable outfit. Even Martlow sees the humour which these blatant lies afford. *Once a Hero* could be seen as a satire of the way in which the war is falsely remembered; the official version of the ‘truth’, which is written over canteens in gold lettering, and recorded in the history books.

Regeneration, a historical fiction, shows how the line between history and fiction - lies and truth - is unclear. The author says herself that: **‘Fact and fiction are so interwoven in this book that it may help the reader to know what is historical and what is not.’**²¹ Barker's need to clarify which elements are fact and which are fiction suggests that her novel is partially accurate and partially

¹⁶ *Regeneration* p.1

¹⁷ Einhaus Introduction

¹⁸ Einhaus Introduction

¹⁹ *Once a Hero* p.293

²⁰ *Once a Hero* p.293

²¹ Author's note p.335

fictionalised. Taking *Regeneration* **‘Historical fiction is a kind of “looking back,” but also an opportunity to reinvent, or to color the way the past is perceived. Similarly, nonfiction history books are, for better or worse, a kind of story-telling, colored (no matter how hard one tries to be impartial) by the teller.’**²² Does this mean that historical fiction is an opportunity to re-invent reality, change the facts and feed the reader a lie? No, it is an opportunity to alter the way the reader perceives the war, to change the myth for something which is closer to reality, if you will. Although the actual events are not completely factually accurate, fiction still manages to reflect the truth of the war’s reality; it allows the reader to interact with the war on a personal and emotional level and to engage with the thought processes of the past; an experience which academic history does not, and cannot, provide.

Barker herself may have been influenced by the myth of the war; her perspective wrongly coloured by the beliefs of her contemporaries. After all, her knowledge of the war was based upon her grandfather’s one-sided experience of the Front Line: **‘Barker’s grandfather “survived, but he had to lie on the battlefield and he got flies all around and maggots in the wound.”’**²³ His wound may have caused Barker to focus on the horror of the battlefield; his silence due to the horrific nature of his experiences could have encouraged her to believe that all the soldiers of the Great War had much the same experience. Indeed, if Barker had simply projected her grandfather’s war onto the characters in her novel, she would have been guilty of buying into the myth of the war. However, Barker’s novel does present other viewpoints and shows a real understanding of the fact that her grandfather’s experience was not everyone’s experience of the war.

Barker’s approach to war has been highly criticised by historian Tracey Loughran, who claims that the uninitiated reader would be unaware of the alterations to historical fact, and would merely accept Barker’s false representation of the past as truth. However, such accusations imply that Barker has only presented the myth of the war, when *Regeneration* actually provides a very broad spectrum of war experiences. It also does not account for the kind of truth which only fiction can provide: that of the human condition. A considerable portion of the narrative is based around Barker’s invented character of Prior, whom history does not remember but fiction presents as an undisputable truth. Barker also deliberately changed the colloquial language of the soldiers to language her readers would appreciate: she **“avoided the kind of language they spoke because at least on our side of the trenches there was a sort of farcical humour which would not be appreciated today”, “a black humour”, “a kind of black laughter, laughter on the other side of despair”**²⁴ Although this makes it a less accurate factual account, the obscure colloquialisms of WW1 soldiers might have clouded the reader’s understanding of Barker’s re-telling of history, and thus would have hindered the novel’s effectiveness in combating the myth of the war and replacing it with an understanding of the war akin to real experience.

As a child, Barker began to doubt the reliability and truthfulness of history. Westman explains: **‘The only books at home were her grandfather’s pre-World War I encyclopedias, whose out-dated information soon taught her to be skeptical of material labelled as ‘truth’.**²⁵ Since Barker

²² <http://bloom-site.com/2013/09/30/deep-creek-on-history-fiction-and-truth/>

²³ P.18

²⁴ P16

²⁵ Westman

questions the 'truth', meaning the accuracy of academic history, she may well expect her readership to do the same, yet Loughran's doubts cause her to suggest that: **'To walk with the dead unfettered by footnotes seems a terrible kind of freedom'**.²⁶ In Barker's defence, Marie-Noëlle Provost-Vallet believes that: **'Many more (or less) contemporary writers could be accused of trespassing on historians' grounds. It is far more interesting, in my opinion, to see how she does it and the perspective that she manages to instil in her narrative.'**²⁷ A narrow perspective of the war which focuses on one individual or on a group of people with similar beliefs, thoughts and experiences, though entirely factual, cannot be regarded as a complete and comprehensive version of the truth. History is often guilty of offering this narrow, one-sided perspective and can therefore not be considered to be the whole truth. A completely accurate portrayal of the reality of the First World War must reflect the experiences, thoughts and beliefs of all who endured it. Since this wide perspective is nigh on impossible to achieve, one must settle for the mode of narration which comes closest to representing the war experience, and that mode is fiction. Novelist Erik Christian Haugaard on historical fiction, and writing about the distant past: **'You and your reader have less at stake, and thus you might get nearer to the truth, possibly even to reality. For it is amazing how often sensitive, intelligent people can excuse or even condone the most despicable acts if perpetrated in the name of the politics they believe in or by the nation they belong to.'**²⁸ This suggests that not only is fiction able to present many different perspectives of war in a way that history cannot, but it also penetrates to the central truths, those relating to the human condition.

Barker chooses to approach the war from a different angle, one which is left out of the history books. In doing so she creates a broader and more accurate picture of the war. Take Burns, for instance: **'[Rivers] was dealing with David Burns, who'd got his head stuck in the belly of a dead German soldier, and somehow had to be helped to live with the memory.'**²⁹ The real Rivers, in his paper On the Repression of War Experience, published in the Lancet: **'Before he lost consciousness the patient had clearly realized his situation and knew that the substance which filled his mouth and produced the most horrible sensations of taste and smell was derived from the decomposed entrails of an enemy.'**³⁰ Barker's character was clearly based upon this young officer who faced the horrifying reality of death in a way that was all too real. Rivers had developed a theory that his patients developed war neurosis because they had repressed their memories of the war. He soon realised that his usual method of encouraging the patient to remember would not improve Burns' condition. According to Rob Ruggenberg: **'The authorities first believed that shell shock was an excuse for cowardice... They felt that harsh discipline and harsh therapy would cure and prevent more cases.'**³¹ This belief is contrary to the views of both the authentic and fictional Rivers. He claims that most sufferers of war neurosis have at some point faced a choice between duty and fear. In that situation, the coward would have fled immediately: **'A coward needs his legs'**³², but his patients remain and develop the 'hysterical symptom.'

²⁶ Loughran

²⁷ http://www.awpreview.univ-paris-diderot.fr/IMG/pdf/1.1_3_vallet_craiglockhart28fev2013.pdf

²⁸ <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall98/brown.html> Joanne Brown

²⁹ Regeneration

³⁰ See English folder

³¹ See Shell Shock article in English Folder

³² Regeneration p152

Mary Postgate and *Them Others* focus on the effects of the physical costs of war: both Mrs Ward and Miss Postgate effectively lose a beloved son, and the stories describe the ways in which they are impacted by their grief. When her Ernie stops returning her letters, Mrs Ward refuses to grieve publically for her son, although the other members of the family quickly come to terms with his apparent 'death'. **"She was convinced that the boy was alive, but she suffered terribly. She seemed to lose all interest in the passing world and lived entirely within herself"**³³ Her private, inward grief causes her to become more reflective and to dwell on the fact that German mothers have also lost sons. It causes her to think of the Germans as human beings, rather than simply as the 'enemy'. **'Stresses the tragedy of personal loss and the universality of grief and anxiety across national boundaries'**³⁴ History rarely addresses this issue, and when it does it is in a dry and unfeeling manner.

In comparison, Mary Postgate does not appear grief-stricken when Wynn dies. **"Have you cried yet?" "I can't. It only makes me angry with the Germans."**³⁵ Her detachment resembles that of Prior; it protects them from raw emotion. Prior is determined to remain in this state of detachment: **'You will never make me feel'**³⁶ and Miss Postgate has a similar aim. Her treatment of the wounded pilot suggests that she was either psychologically damaged by her refusal to grieve for her adopted son, or she sought revenge for his death. Angus Wilson states that her **'evil arises from an unfulfilled nature'**³⁷. One can infer that Wilson is referring to Postgate's lack of a fully-formed identity. Firstly, she is not married, nor does she have any children of her own. This is important because she believes this to be a woman's purpose in life: **'Now a woman's business was to make a happy home for – for a husband and children'**³⁸ and therefore feels that she is unable to fulfil the role of 'woman'. Miss Postgate is also a sort of maid, and has always been expected to serve other people, which has robbed her of any identity which she might otherwise have had. Wynn describes her as looking **'more or less like a human being'**³⁹, which suggests that others regard her almost as an inferior life form, a sort of sub-human. This inability to identify completely as a woman or even as a human being accounts for her merciless refusal to heed the dying man's cries, regardless of whether he is an enemy or an ally.

Wilson also said of Mary Postgate, that it was **'unacceptably brutal'**.⁴⁰ Similar criticism was dealt to the war poet for his statements in *Suicide in the Trenches*, which have a harsh directness. He in no way attempts to soften the blows he deals to the reader, but instead he **'lay[s] bare the ugly truth of the war.'**⁴¹ This ugly truth which critic Sagher speaks of is the indignity of the soldier's death and the lack of remembrance on the part of his comrades and those at home. Sagher suggests that the truth is put across in the poem's **'directness of language, its concreteness, and lack of high-flown or vehement rhetoric.'**⁴² An example of this blunt use of language: **'He put a bullet through**

³³ P206

³⁴ Ann-Marie Einhaus, *The Short Story and First World War*

³⁵ p185

³⁶ *Regeneration* p.108

³⁷ Wilson

³⁸ Mary Postgate

³⁹ Mary Postgate

⁴⁰ Wilson

⁴¹ Sagher

⁴² Sagher

his brain. / No one spoke of him again.⁴³ This highlights the fact that the majority of WW1 poets, particularly Sassoon, merely stated the facts. They made no attempt to conceal the truth and horror of the war; they did not deceive their readers. Sassoon creates a sense of futility which is an accurate representation of the war; the soldier's sacrifice was a complete waste of a young life, and many of those who fought on the Western Front realised that their lives would be wasted in much the same way. This relates to Barker's portrayal of Sassoon in *Regeneration*, since the character also makes no attempt to hide 'the ugly truth'. He speaks of a young soldier, too young to enlist and now dead, but **'nobody gives a damn'**.⁴⁴ They read the casualty lists in the clubhouse and in the breakfast room, but appallingly, **'It doesn't even put them off their sausages'**.⁴⁵ History may not perpetuate the myth of the war, but it does encourage a sense of emotional detachment from it. The dry, emotionless facts are much further from the truth than the narrow perspective often found in fiction, because fiction at least addresses the tragedy of war. In history, little mention is made of any potential meaning of war: **'survival, victory (personal and national), disappointment, comradeship, unity, sorrow, shared purpose, betrayal, sacrifice, redefined status, and enjoyment'** are all absent. It is only in fiction that the meaning, and truth, of war can begin to be recovered.

The fictional Sassoon's tale bears a striking resemblance to a short story in the aforementioned collection. Told by the schoolmaster presents the emotional side of the cost of war, as opposed to the cold, emotionless fact – namely, the casualty list - which is a mainstay of academic history. As the title suggests, it is written in first person, from the perspective of the former schoolmaster of two young sweethearts. The boy is keen to join up for the war (having believed the lies of the authorities; lies which the poets warned against, but too late) despite being too young to enlist, like the boy Sassoon speaks of in *Regeneration*. He marries the young girl, and deserts his regiment when he discovers that she is with child. Eventually he is discovered and executed for his 'cowardice'. If the story were fact – and it is highly likely that tragedies of this nature did actually occur during the First World War – then history would record the boy as a coward, who fled his post and died for his crimes. Nothing would be known of his premature enlistment, the things he endured, the widow and orphan he left behind.

There is a brutality in that which cannot be ignored, which history conceals and fiction attempts to make known. Only through our emotional understanding of the loss of one dearly loved can we begin to comprehend the innumerable lives lost during the Great War. History leaves no room for such a depth of emotion, nor does it give a proper indication as to what it was like to be alive at such a time; to live on, while so many were being slaughtered. **"You don't think you might find being safe while other people die rather difficult?"**⁴⁶ History merely records the facts, thus producing a record of the past which is dry and unfaithful to the time which it describes, since it lacks any evidence of the emotion which helps makes us human. Fiction, on the other hand, comes closer to the truth of war in its faithful representation of these emotions.

In *Nobody*, Walpole addresses the psychological and spiritual side of the war, which history fails to recognise. If Tom was not merely a fictional character but had been based upon a real life war veteran, then he would have been recorded in history as having returned, very much alive, from

⁴³ Suicide in the Trenches, page number

⁴⁴ *Regeneration*

⁴⁵ *Regeneration*

⁴⁶ *Regeneration* Rivers to Sassoon

the war. Yet we can see, through the clearer eyeglass of fiction, that there is more to the character than that. Claribel frequently refers to Tom as a 'ghost' and alludes to his 'death'. This metaphor is almost allegorical, but for the ending, when he rediscovers himself and effectively comes back from the dead. Fiction regards him as a temporary casualty of war; dead not in body, but in mind and in spirit. History often discounts these two vital parts of a human being, yet in fiction we find ourselves always addressing issues to do with intellectuality and spirituality. Walpole **'wrote what he observed and was real and true to life.'**⁴⁷ It is possible that he was psychologically traumatised himself, having witnessed first-hand the horrors of war. There is an obvious comparison here between Walpole's short story and Barker's subject matter in *Regeneration*. Barker focusses on the psychological damage of the war rather than war itself. History books give casualty lists, on which psychologically damaged soldiers were not included.

In conclusion, history and fiction may be widely different in their definitions, but they are not so very different in their nature. Loughran, an historian, admits that: **'Imaginative reconstruction is a tool of the historian as well as the novelist'**.⁴⁸ History takes the facts and fills in the gaps with a made up story, whilst professing to be true; whereas fiction alters the truth, but admits that it is falsehood. Therefore a greater kind of truth can be found in the hands of the fictional author than history can convey. Both history and fiction uncover certain truths about the war, but the types of truth which they reveal are very different. Michael Hinken says of history: **'These accounts are hemmed in by facts, unable to examine the bigger truths, those of the human condition.'**⁴⁹ History merely records the facts and fails to recognise the importance of the emotional, moral, psychological and spiritual angles which are so vital in reporting the truth; details which are usually faithfully represented in fiction. Fiction, on the other hand, provides a more vivid imagined reality than that which history offers and contains something of a universal truth of humanity.. It embraces what it means to be human, and penetrates to the heart of the most serious subjects, such as love, loss, pain, hatred, pride, madness and war. Fiction goes against its very definition by illuminating truths of the human condition, which history so often ignores.

5,171 words

1,241 quotations

3,930 words minus quotations

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