

Two world wars a journey of borden's fiction

War



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Introduction

The topic of World War I literature and World War II literature is one that is extensively covered and researched by contemporary critics and scholars. However, the focus tends to be on literature of either one or the other war and not typically on any links between the two. The research that exists is largely centred on either gender or class in the literature, not about how a particular gender writes about a specific class. Therefore, a dissertation on Mary Borden's focus on aristocracy in the two world wars will help fill a gap in research on war literature.

1. 1 Research Objective

Mary Borden lived through and wrote extensively on both wars and this dissertation will establish and illustrate the evolution of Borden's war consciousness and philosophies surrounding warfare and its impact on society. Borden's narrative focus began as intensely personal and situated in the aristocratic world, which was familiar to her, but evolved between wars and had opened up and shifted in a more political direction by the end of World War II. In order to prove this and explore how the wars affected Borden's writing, the dissertation will strive to answer the following questions:

To what extent did Borden's novels reflect the events of the two war eras

How did Mary Borden value the aristocracy and why

In what way was her opinion of the aristocracy influenced by the wars and her contemporary era as a whole

What kinds of themes are adopted in the novels depending on whether they

are pre-, during or post-war period and how much do they differ

To what extent do Borden's themes reflect the transitions in society and the changing roles of men and women that resulted from the two wars

1. 2. Proposed Structure

The proposed dissertation will be structured in five chapters set out around the following topics:

Introduction – Sets out the biography of Mary Borden in broad strokes, introduces the research questions and aim set out above and explains the choice to focus on Borden's novels and memoirs because they more directly show the influence of the war on Borden's consciousness and is less restricted by the mandatory commentary on form that poetry elicits.

Borden and World War I – Borden's memoir will be the foundation that a discussion around her opinions of the aristocracy and its influence on the coming and effects of the war is built.

Borden and World War II – Debates the new ideas introduced by Borden that were not present in her writing on the great war and uses her other memoir to again research how her life at this stage influenced the thinking in her writing.

The impact of war on Borden's literary consciousness – Establishes the reason Mary Borden should be read as a war novelist because of her evolving consciousness in her novels regarding the causes and effects of war on society.

Conclusion – Mary Borden was very much a novelist shaped by the two world wars and her own heritage strongly influenced her thinking around the impact the war had on herself and society at large.

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By structuring the dissertation in this manner - with the writing from each war in separate chapters the clarity of the argument will benefit in that it is easier to draw upon separate sources and build comprehensive profiles of how Borden wrote about the two wars. Once such profiles have been established, the fourth chapter can use these as the foundation of empirical evidence upon which to base a coherent exploration of the evolution of Borden's war consciousness in her writing. This chapter will provide the opportunity for the author's analytical skillset to be proven.

Literature Review

2. 1 Primary literature

The two chapters on the world wars will use two of Borden's memoirs as the foundation for arguing how Borden's life influenced her work. The Forbidden Zone will be analysed for the chapter on World War I and Journey Down A Blind Alley will be used for World War II.

Further, the chapter on WWI will centre upon three novels that present some of Borden's central themes and a chronological scope of the war: The Romantic Woman is a story of aristocracy before the war, Sarah Defiant centres upon a love affair during the war and finally Jehova's Day portrays England in the post-war period. Reference will also be made to Jericho Sands and A Woman With White Eyes.

As Borden's writing on war shifted in a more political direction around WWII, the analysis will not abide by a particular chronology in this chapter. The main texts are: You the Jury - setting the stage for the war and depicting it - The Hungry Leopard as a work containing Borden's broader political and <https://assignbuster.com/two-world-wars-a-journey-of-bordens-fiction/>

sociological points thoughts on the war era from 1937 to 54 and Margin of Error - a work concerned with colonialism and its role in the war. Other referenced works will include Catspaw and Passport for a Girl.

2. 2 Secondary sources

These will include a mixture of historical sources and literary criticism. Carol Acton's theories set forth in *Diverting the Gaze: The Unseen Text in Women's War Writing* will be used for some literary theory concerning women writing about war and the discussions on Borden's life and memoirs will be substantially aided by Jane Conway's - Borden's biographer - work.

Literary critics will include M. Higonnet, S. Ouditt,, F. Mort and T. Tate as they have all done substantial work concerning female writers of the war and their relationship to identity. Historical background will be works by B. A. Waites, M. L. Bush and B. W. Tuchman along with other sources yet to be identified.

Methodology

The approach will be independent analysis of the primary sources, using secondary sources primarily to argue against and some to support and provide background. Further sources will be identified by using Jane Conway's the bibliographies of Conway and other sources already identified as well as web searches on databases such as JStor and Project Muse.

Preliminary Bibliography

4. 1 Primary literature

Borden, M., 1929. *The Forbidden Zone*

Borden, M., 1946. Journey Down A Blind Alley

Borden, M., 1916. The Romantic Woman

Borden, M., 1931. Sarah Defiant

Borden, M., 1929. Jehova's Day

Borden, M., 1925. Jericho Sands

Borden, M., 1930. A Woman With White Eyes

Borden, M., 1952. You the Jury

Borden, M. 1956. The Hungry Leopard

Borden, M., 1954. Margin of Error

Borden, M., 1950. Catspaw

Borden, M., 1939. Passport for a Girl

4. 2. Secondary sources

Gubar, S., Gilbert, S. M. " The Madwoman in the Attic." New Haven: Yale University.

Heilbrun, C. G., Higonnet, M. R., 1983 The Representation of women in fiction. Vol. 7. Johns Hopkins University Press.

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Mort, F., 2006. " Scandalous Events: Metropolitan Culture and Moral Change in Post-Second World War London." *Representations* 93. 1 (2006): 106-137.

Ouditt, S., 1994. *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War*. London: Routledge.

Raitt, S., Tate, T., eds, 1997. *Women's fiction and the Great War*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Tate, T., 1998. *Modernism, History and the First World War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.