The Military Author and Romantic War:
British Military Memoirs and the Emergence of the Soldier Hero, 1809-1835

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Statement of Candidate

I hereby acknowledge that all material included in this thesis is my own work.

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Abstract

This thesis is a literary history of military memoirs published in Britain during the Romantic period, with an analysis of some of the genre’s key texts. Writing on military topics was common in Britain throughout the eighteenth century, but the period 1809-1835 witnessed a radical alteration in traditional forms of war writing, introducing narratives that foregrounded soldiers’ personal feelings and observations of war. Despite recent interest in the connections between Romanticism and war, the military memoir as a distinct genre has been neglected in Romantic studies and historical analyses of the period. This thesis will provide the first overview and analysis of the development and reception of these memoirs, situating their emergence in relation to recent research on the appearance of a modern culture of war and, in particular, the broadly sentimental forms of war writing that had an important role in representing warfare through the Romantic period. This thesis explores the ways in which these memoirs highlighted the figure of the suffering soldier, thereby offering a response to the nation’s wars that was not, necessarily, aligned with official views of the British state at war. In the popular private soldiers’ memoirs that emerged in the immediate post-war period, editors and authors were at times adamant that they were introducing a body of strongly anti-war writing into British culture. By the mid 1820s, however, a shifting understanding of the historical significance of autobiographical forms of writing meant that the military memoir began to assume a less oppositional role in the construction of a national commemoration of the Napoleonic Wars. There was an outpouring of more patriotic, adventurous and Romantic memoirs through the late 1820s, a development that was met with surprise and considerable approbation in the reviews. Forming a distinct and successful genre, and in turn inspiring the genres of the military and nautical novels that flourished in the 1830s, the military memoir and the idea of the military author profoundly shaped nineteenth century British culture’s understanding of war as Romantic adventure. These texts established images of the nation’s middle-class soldier heroes that would be of enduring significance.
# Table of Contents

Statement of Candidate ........................................................................................................ 2  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... 3  
Abstract ................................................................................................................................ 5  
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. 6  
List of Illustrations ................................................................................................................ 7  
Introduction: Romantic Studies, Modern War and the Suffering Soldier .................. 8  
Part One: The Genre of the Military Memoir, 1780-1835 ............................................. 37  
   Chapter One: The Sentimental Military Memoir: Eighteenth-Century Contexts and Personal Narratives of the Peninsular War, 1780-1825 ......................................................... 38  
   Chapter Two: “A Lively School of Writing”: The Military Author and the Commemoration of War, 1825-1835 ................................................................. 73  
Part Two: The Soldier’s Tale and the Sacrifices of War .................................................. 110  
   Chapter Three: Marvellous Scenes and Horrid Sights: Robert Ker Porter’s Spectacle of War ......................................................................................................................... 111  
   Chapter Four: “An Atom of an Army”: The Sentimental Figure of the Suffering Soldier ..................................................................................................................... 147  
   Chapter Five: Picturesque War: Moyle Sherer, George Gleig and the Subaltern View of War ...................................................................................................................... 180  
   Chapter Six: Authoring the Soldier Hero: John Kincaid’s *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* ......................................................................................................................... 218  
Conclusion: “A Plain, Unvarnished Tale”: Military Authors and Romantic War .......... 252  
Appendix ............................................................................................................................... 260  
Bibliography ........................................................................................................................ 295
List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Scene from *The Storming of Seringapatam, in India*. Engraving. By John Vendramini, after Robert Ker Porter (1802). Copyright the British Library Board. All rights reserved. British Library Shelfmark P779. .........................................................116

Figure 2. *The Great Historical Picture of the Storming of Seringapatam, by the British Troops and their Allies, May 4th, 1799*. Descriptive Sketch. By John Lee, after Robert Ker Porter (1800). Copyright the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. ........................................................................................................119

Figure 3. [Lieutenant Farquhar]. Detail from *The Storming of Seringapatam, in India*. Engraving. By John Vendramini, after Robert Ker Porter (1802). Copyright the British Library Board. All rights reserved. British Library Shelfmark P779.....123

Charles Oman achieved fame as a historian in large part for his *History of the Peninsular War*, published between 1902 and 1930, which established itself as the definitive account of the Peninsular War (1808-14).\(^1\) In addition to this history, Oman also published *Wellington’s Army* (1912), a detailed account of the inner workings of Wellington’s Peninsula forces that listed the wide range of sources he had located through the course of his research. Of these sources, he claimed that the “[m]emoirs and autobiographies, of course, possess the greatest share of interest”, indicating that he “thought it worth while to give in an appendix the names and titles of the best of them”. Oman listed over 100 military memoirs written by soldiers who had served during the Peninsular War and which had been published between the start of the conflict in 1809 and the publication of his own book in 1912. (Around half of these were published during the wars or within twenty years of their conclusion). It was, Oman conceded, an astonishing list: no previous war had produced such an outpouring of writing from British soldiers. He concluded: “It is a very notable fact, which requires (but has never hitherto received) an explanation, that it is precisely with the coming in of the nineteenth century that British soldiers and officers alike began to write diaries and reminiscences on a large scale and in great numbers”.\(^2\)

This body of military memoirs has, however, been all but forgotten by scholars of the Romantic period and of war literature more generally. The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewed Oman’s book favourably in 1912, observing that “it is worth while to emphasise the fact that there is no war which throws so much light upon our peculiar difficulties as the Peninsular War”.\(^3\) Two years later the First World War began and by the time it ended in 1918 these Peninsular War memoirs seemed to report on a form of battle that appeared hopelessly archaic in the face of modern industrialised, trench warfare. Within a decade British culture was swamped

\(^3\) *Times Literary Supplement* (19 December 1912), 582.
with military memoirs and semi-fictionalised novels of the First World War, in what is commonly referred to as the war books “boom” of the late 1920s and early 30s. In her important study of Romantic period literature, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries, Marilyn Butler neglected these military memoirs, suggesting incorrectly that the literary response to the wars during the Romantic period “is in total contrast with the First World War, in which young officers both wrote and gave their lives”. The Peninsular War memoirs have remained of interest to military historians. Indeed, the continuing publication of manuscripts and collections of letters, probably in large part due to the “rise of recreational war-gaming” and its associated literature from the 1960s, indicates that this writing has maintained a degree of interest for the general reading public. An updated version of Oman’s list of memoirs, published in 2006 and covering British memoirs from all theatres of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815), includes over 300 titles, many of which were published since Oman compiled his list in 1912. An Appendix to this thesis lists nearly 500 titles published since the start of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (around half of which appeared between 1792 and 1854). A few critics had noticed during the war books boom of the late 1920s that the Peninsular War had been “one of the best ‘documented’ wars ever fought”. In the last few years contemporary literary critics have begun to recognise the existence of these military memoirs. Commentary on them, however, has only been offered in passing. There has been no effort to assess the nature and development of the memoirs, or any sustained response to Oman’s question of why such memoirs began to appear at the start of the nineteenth century.

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8 New Statesman 32 (26 January 1929), 502.
This thesis provides the first literary analysis of the Romantic period military memoir. It argues that the military memoir had a significant presence in Romantic culture, achieving widespread acclaim and commercial success, particularly between 1825 and 1835. The military author emerged from this body of writing to assume a recognised and prestigious position in British letters. He was celebrated as the exponent of a “homely and true” style of writing that had strong resonances with ideals of British identity and arguably influenced the development of Victorian literary culture. Private soldiers’ memoirs published through these years can also been seen to represent one of the earliest bodies of labouring-class literature, beginning a significant strand of anti-war writing that continued through the nineteenth century. This contemporary prominence suggests that these books, long forgotten to Romantic studies, are of considerable interest in understanding Romantic culture and need to be reassessed. Military memoirs, indeed, remain among the few books from the Romantic period that survive as popular works outside of the academy, through republication and an indirect influence in popular culture’s enduring fascination with stories of adventure set during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Along with highlighting their prominence in Romantic period literary culture, this thesis also argues that an analysis of the military memoir is important for a full understanding of the Romantic culture’s response to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. This thesis responds to Oman’s desire for an explanation for the appearance of personal forms of military memoirs at the start of the nineteenth century by providing a rationale not simply for their publication, but also for their subsequent reception. I argue that they appeared because the military memoir adapted elements of sentimentalism to traditional patterns of war writing associated with the rise of modern states. This change meant that forms of war stretching back to the seventeenth century were radically altered in the Romantic period, and this fact needs to be acknowledged if we are to have a thorough understanding of Romantic culture’s response to war. I argue that such writing produced a cultural

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9 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 5.29 (1819), 548.
10 For an overview of the development of private soldiers’ memoirs through the nineteenth century, see Carolyn Steedman, The Radical Soldier's Tale: John Pearman, 1819-1908 (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). In this thesis I use the term soldier to refer to both officers and rank-and-file soldiers. I use the term “private soldier”, or “common soldier”, to indicate that I am referring only to rank-and-file soldiers.
approach to reflecting on war that has been seen as lying at the heart of modern forms of commemoration of war and, arguably, modern war literature.

This introduction outlines the context for my subsequent analysis of the development and reception of the military memoir by assessing contemporary debate about the relationship of Romantic culture and war. Two basic interpretations have been offered for this relationship in recent years. On the one hand, Mary Favret has contended that the underlying truth of war, its basis in what Elaine Scarry describes as “the activity of reciprocal injuring”, was “mediated for the public through institutions and verbal conventions” that left the public with no access to accounts of war's violence and corporeal horrors.11 Favret’s approach has been subsequently developed by a number of commentators, particularly Philip Shaw and Diego Saglia.12 Alternatively, it has been argued that if we examine a wide selection of cultural production from the period, it seems clear that the war had been extensively written about and its meanings widely contested during the period. This approach has been broadly developed in the work of Gillian Russell, Simon Bainbridge, J. R. Watson, and Ian Haywood, amongst others.13 In this introduction, I seek to show that the debate that has thus emerged principally revolves around the question of whether the Romantic period’s cultural response to war was informed by sentimental writing or sought to hold sentiment at bay, simply directing it towards support of the state’s protective power. By highlighting the emergence of a modern culture of war and what I term sentimental military memoirs, I argue that we should see the period as being characterised as sentimental. Romantic culture appears to have been dramatically concerned with sentimental images of suffering, and such images were widely utilised in reflections on the nation’s wars.

However, this thesis also addresses what Favret describes as the enormous cultural ambiguity that surrounds images of soldiers’ suffering. Underlying this thesis is Scarry’s work on the body in pain, and Favret and Shaw’s reworking of Scarry’s arguments for the Romantic period. Though I take issue with their assertion that the period simply sought to control sentimental responses to war, particularly their suggestion that there were no images of soldiers’ suffering, I utilise their arguments through this thesis to outline the ways in which these memoirs can be seen to affect the cultural work of war. I seek to show how the memoirs responded to and enabled elements of a modern culture of war to function through the specific deployment and rhetorical construction of the soldier’s suffering. What results most notably, is the memorialising function of the military memoir, the ways in which it both anchors war in modern civil society and ensures that warfare is seen to have a legitimate and virtuous element. This thesis charts the complex ways in which the military memoir came to serve a memorialising function for a modern culture of war. Partly, this requires some consideration of the shifting ideas of the individual and the nation, and of the wider reception of autobiographical forms of writing in the post-war period. These developments were also related to the ways in which the soldier could be acceptable to modern civil society. Only where he was recognised as the military author was the soldier able to gain currency in Britain as a fellow citizen, his story functioning as a legitimate component in a national commemoration of war.

The Sentimental Response to Modern War

Summarising recent historical research, H. V. Bowen suggests that the wars between Britain and France were increasingly “all embracing” as the eighteenth century progressed. They occupied an ever larger portion of the British state’s budget and required increasing numbers of individuals to volunteer their services to the nation. This expansion of the scale of war culminated at the century’s end with the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, conflicts that are now commonly

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14 Favret, “Coming Home”, 546, n.15.
regarded as the first modern, or “total war”. The wars were marked by enormous efforts to mobilise the British population through propaganda and civic rituals. This led not only to a massive extension of Britain’s auxiliary armed forces, with around 400,000 enlistments at the start of the nineteenth century in newly formed volunteer and local militia units, but also encouraged a far greater participation of the population in the political life of the nation through “the singing of loyal songs, participation in patriotic pageants, or practical involvement in matters of local defence”. J. E. Cookson similarly observes that the mobilisation of the population approached “total war”, in which
civilian participation in national defence went far beyond the volunteers: rural workers were enrolled to assist the army and to ‘drive’ districts by removing or destroying anything of use to the enemy; women formed ‘committees of clothing’ to provide for the troops, or featured in patriotic ceremonies to underline the point that the whole of society was under threat; patriotic subscriptions, which were numerous, organized down to the parish level, and solicitous for the pennies of the poor, were made equally symbolic of ‘patriotic union’. Modern or total war is a useful, if controversial, concept. David Bell’s recent book *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, for example, has already attracted considerable debate. Military historians have long discussed the precise dating of a “military revolution” that saw warfare break with traditional medieval forms, leading to the emergence of modern, state organised armies. Jeremy Black stresses that it is unclear how exactly warfare during the period from 1775-1815 might best be located in relation to wider developments in

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the modernisation of warfare.\textsuperscript{25} Nonetheless, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were fought on a scale and with an intensity not seen earlier in the eighteenth century. As Frank O'Gorman observes, “[i]f the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were not total wars as the twentieth century has come to experience them, they penetrated more deeply and more comprehensively into the experiences of the nation than any previous war had done.”\textsuperscript{26} In his work on the British experience of war through the eighteenth century, Lawrence Stone similarly concludes that “[i]n terms of money, manpower, and duration, this was a war on a wholly unprecedented scale”.\textsuperscript{27}

It is also possible to understand this shift towards “total war” not simply in relation to an increased scale of warfare but also in terms of significant changes in the cultural understanding of warfare across Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, changes that created a distinct role for sentimental forms of writing.\textsuperscript{28} As Bell suggests, the aristocratic elites who governed Europe through the eighteenth century were little troubled by war as a practice because “warfare was an utterly normal, unexceptional state of affairs and was treated as such by nearly all concerned”.\textsuperscript{29} War in the eighteenth century was intimately connected with mercantilist international commerce, which was “an acutely competitive affair” where states existed in a thoroughly antagonistic international environment. Though conflicts through the period were fought as “limited warfare” because of the emphasis on sieges and the clear demarcation of combatants and non-combatants,\textsuperscript{30} warfare was a frequent occurrence. Paul Langford suggests that even periods of apparent peace between the European major powers during the eighteenth century are best understood as simply “the continuation of war by economic means”.\textsuperscript{31} He further points out that states perpetually jostled for power and “[t]rade with European


\textsuperscript{26} Frank O’Gorman, \textit{The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832} (London: Arnold, 1997), 267.

\textsuperscript{27} Lawrence Stone, “Introduction”, \textit{An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815}, ed. Lawrence Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 21.

\textsuperscript{28} David Bell, \textit{The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It} (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 82.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 30.

\textsuperscript{30} Margiotta, ed., \textit{Brassey’s Encyclopedia of Military History and Biography}, 101 and 1056.

powers was essentially a form of undeclared warfare, the object being to maximise the benefits to the home country while minimizing those to competitors”. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, warfare was coming to no longer be viewed simply as the “necessary evil of polite society”. It was increasingly framed within ideas broadly developed by enlightenment philosophers who envisioned an idealised modern civil society as a site of peaceful prosperity and commerce that was quite distinct from realms of war. Political economy emerging at the end of the century was reconfiguring mercantilist economics to imagine a mutually beneficial basis for international trade that saw peaceful commerce emerge as a viable and legitimate alternative to violent international relations. By the end of the eighteenth century, ordinary life was associated with the peaceful commerce of civil society, whilst war, conversely, “ceased to be seen as an ordinary part of the social order and began to appear as something entirely apart from the proper course of history”.

Warfare was loudly condemned by European intellectual culture at the end of the eighteenth century. As Bernd Hüppauf argues, however, this condemnation of violence created a paradoxical situation that also gave birth to ideas surrounding the “legitimate” use of violence “in the service of equality and liberation from oppression”. William Godwin voiced an assumption that was increasingly echoed by the end of the century when he insisted that war could only be condoned where it rescued a people from insurrectionary tyranny, highlighting the significance of “the people” and the defence of ordinary life as a defining element in legitimating war. The military officer Thomas Simes similarly commented in his work on military science, the *Portable Military Library* (1782):

*If he who first reduced to rules the art of destroying his fellow creatures, had no end in view but to gratify the passion of princes, he was a monster whom it would have been happy to have smothered at his birth: but if his intention was the defence of persecuted virtue, or the punishment of successful*

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32 Ibid., 174.
36 Bell, *The First Total War*, 11.
wickedness, to curb ambition, or to oppose the unjust claims of superior power, mankind ought to erect altars to his memory.\(^{39}\)

Simes’s text was itself only one of “a revolutionary growth in military publications” at the end of the eighteenth century.\(^{40}\) It formed part of what Armstrong Starkey terms the “military enlightenment”,\(^{41}\) which saw warfare placed onto an increasingly scientific basis. It also saw the development of a distinct professional identity for the British military, leading to its emergence as an institution in its own right by the early nineteenth century.\(^{42}\) However, in his insistence that a scientific military must not be used for “gratifying the passion of princes”, Simes’s remarks show how war was moving away from its associations with sovereign privilege and increasingly came to emerge as, at some level, expressing the will of the people. This shift saw the British middle classes gradually lose their traditional contempt for the military as the “tool of tyranny”, as the military was coming to be viewed as an institution that could serve the public good.\(^{43}\) Associated with these developments were widespread considerations of the soldier’s humanity and personal motivations that extended an earlier military culture’s focus on drill and bodily discipline to a new way of conceptualising soldiers. Manuel De Landa associates this shift with “motorized warfare” and the rise of the citizen-soldier.\(^{44}\) Warfare was thus condemned and isolated from ordinary life as a barbaric, dehumanizing enterprise, and yet it re-

\(^{39}\) Thomas Simes, *A Portable Military Library, in Four Volumes Octavo; Containing, a System of the Art of War; ... Ornamented with Frontispieces, and Many Other Engraved Plates* (London: Printed for the author; and sold by Bew; Becket; Debrett; Dodsley; Durham; [and 7 others in London], 1782), vii-viii.


\(^{42}\) Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 55-58. For a discussion of the army’s professionalism in relation to the military memoirs that appeared during the Peninsular War, see Chapter One.


\(^{44}\) Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 66-67. Harvie Ferguson has also written on the fundamental connection between shifting forms of modern selfhood and the role of the soldier, and though he suggests a slightly earlier emergence of these changes than De Landa, similarly views a shift between an earlier disciplinary military culture that simply required the soldier to obey and a military culture that emerges in the eighteenth century in which “morale became fundamental to the strategy of combat”. See Harvie Ferguson, “The Sublime and the Subliminal: Modern Identities and the Aesthetics of Combat”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 21.3 (2004): 1-33, 4-5.
emerged with intimate connections to the people as an extraordinary event, and a “constitutive element of modern societies”.

Sentimental forms of writing about war were widely deployed through the Romantic period in an effort to mediate this increasingly central, yet potentially ambivalent, relationship between the separate realms of the civilian and war. Notably, Simes, as much as Godwin, develops a vision of warfare in distinctly sentimental terms of “virtue in distress”. This implied that only through correct sentimental feelings could the military be expected to act rationally and humanely, so that the nation’s involvement in war might be anything other than a monstrous crime. As Ian Haywood has recently argued, an enormous amount of writing from the Romantic period, whatever its ideological viewpoint, utilised sentimental images of suffering and horror to address political themes. This meant that the “public sphere” was pervaded with images of what he terms “spectacular violence”, particularly as part of a “critique of cyclical State violence”. Sentimental writing was widely deployed because, as Haywood continues, “[t]he reader had to be made to feel the injustice of the crime and to be inspired to take action”. Images of suffering were considered of central importance in constructing the reader’s sympathies for those who were threatened with injustice and cruelty. However, if sentimental writing of the mid eighteenth century had largely addressed war in an abstract manner, by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars this writing had a more didactic and immediate presence because war was increasingly identified with the illegitimate crimes and tyranny of the French Revolution and the expansion of the Napoleonic Empire.

In her influential, though critiqued, study, “Coming Home”, Mary Favret has positioned sentimental war writing of the Romantic period as working to regulate an

45 Hüppauf, “Modernity and Violence”, 14. On the ways in which modernity could thus also valorise warfare as potentially beneficial or revivifying to commercial society, see Mark Rawlinson, British Writing of the Second World War (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 10; and Shaw, Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination, 5-6.
46 Haywood, Bloody Romanticism, 3.
47 Ibid., 11.
affective understanding of war. The deployment of "domestic sentiment", she argues, had an important role in the justification of Britain’s national conflict, the widespread use of sentimental images of vulnerable women and children helping to construct an image of the nation’s wars as serving to protect the private realm from French aggression.  

Importantly, however, she argues that such sentimental imagery deflected attention away from images of the soldier and any indications of his personal suffering, as it strove to maintain the illusion of a “domestic front” that was sheltered from war’s hardships. Violence was seen as an entirely foreign affair that the nation’s war effort effectively prevented from ever “coming home” to Britain. 

Sentimental writing thus reflected state centred representations of war, such as the widespread civic culture of “fast days, thanksgivings, victory celebrations and various military occasions”, which similarly encouraged a view of the power and integrity of the state in protecting its subjects, and in which, as Philip Shaw similarly argues, “it is not so much the effective significance of war that comes across as its glamorous façade”.

Indeed, Shaw, whose own work on Romanticism and war has been influenced by Favret, has more generally argued of state centered visions of war that prevailed through the eighteenth century:

For the members of Britain’s ruling elite, war is an evil but one that is necessary, perhaps even essential, to the integrity of the nation state. But if this integrity is to be maintained the artist must avoid arousing dissident ‘sentiment’. Crucially, there should be no indication that war has any effect on the domestic front .... Our capacity for excess sentiment is therefore reigned in by an overriding logic of sacrifice, one that maintains a distance, geopolitical, aesthetic and social, between the viewing subject and the sublime object of war.

The emotion of sacrifice served to discipline a more unruly sentimentality that might lead the individual and society to question the role of the state in defending the nation from war’s horrors. Shaw argues that sentiment was precisely the response to war that state centred views of war sought to control, offering idealised visions of the

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50 Favret, “Coming Home”, 543.  
51 Ibid., 547.  
state as the protector of the private realm and only ever directing sentimental responses to war towards reinforcing the state’s protective power. He argues these views dominated representations of warfare through the Romantic period, in which the “official culture” of the period, including the writing of major Romantic authors, was “preoccupied with the disturbing appeal of war”.

Favret and Shaw have been very influential in developing approaches to Romanticism and war. Favret’s arguments, for instance, underpin several of the contributions to Shaw’s edited volume *Romantic Wars*. Others have advanced a quite different interpretation of the relationship between Romanticism and war: one which argues for a more contested public sphere and has also come to highlight sentimental writing in a quite different manner. In her seminal study of Romantic period culture and war, *The Theatres of War*, Gillian Russell set out to link two areas traditionally neglected in studies of Romanticism, theatre and war, insisting that their interconnections were central to the culture of the period. She examines the ways that war was represented and visualized during the period and concludes that the theatre had a central role in displaying war. She argues that the British public was exposed to a vast, theatrical spectacle of war through this period in which the “whole enterprise of the theatre was dedicated to the commemoration of the war and the enhancement of patriotic values”. Russell’s work nonetheless points in a different direction to Favret’s by stressing the visibility of the war in public culture during the period, particularly in relation to how the war was to be understood and managed as it became increasingly totalised and detached from eighteenth-century aristocratic warfare. Spectacle is thus viewed quite differently, not as a shield or distraction from war’s miseries, but as a way of mediating and contesting its multiple meanings. Here, Russell draws upon Cookson’s work on British society and the wars, which downplays the prevalence of loyalist and patriotic responses to the war. His *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England, 1793-1815* demonstrates that a significant and lively anti-war culture developed throughout the course of the wars. Russell argues that celebrations of war in terms of a transparent, open theatre of war and the development of the volunteer movement to meet the threat of invasion were

57 Ibid., 26.
uncomfortably close to radical models of the nation state at war developed by the French.

Simon Bainbridge’s more recent study *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* directly challenges Favret’s arguments. He insists that the period’s poetry, far from operating as a paper shield, frequently operated like a “paper bullet”, bringing a painful understanding of war’s horrors home to a British audience.\(^{59}\) Bainbridge echoes Bennett’s earlier work when he argues that the Romantic period was an age of war poetry, and that not only did poetry determine how war would be understood, but that war was central in “shaping poetic theory and practices in the romantic period”.\(^{60}\) This was particularly because writing about war provided poets with a useful, and appropriately masculine, role to play. This is not to say that Bainbridge neglects women writers in his account and alongside readings of major male Romantic authors he examines the ways that Charlotte Smith, Felicia Hemans and Anna Laetitia Barbauld approached the subject of war. He suggests that war both reproduced rigid gendered distinctions and simultaneously called these into question, enabling the imagination of gendered identities beyond women’s supposed “natural role”.\(^{61}\) Crucially, for Bainbridge this poetry was part of a cultural contestation over the way the wars were to be understood. He recognizes, like Favret, the gap between the British reading public and its experience of war, but argues that the poetic imagination was considered by contemporaries to be vital in bridging this gap. Rather than striving to keep war distant, poets sought to use the imagination to make war visible to their audience, particularly in an effort to help foster the reader’s sympathy with those at war. This involved considerable controversy over how war should be imagined, as readers were variously persuaded to imagine both the horrors and glories of war. However, Bainbridge concludes that the period ultimately witnessed a shift in how war was imagined. Sir Walter Scott’s poetry was, in this respect, instrumental, because it shifted the dominant mode of representations of conflict away from a concentration on war’s horrors to a focus on the picturesque glories of combat.


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 34.
Whilst Favret argues that during the war the public sphere simply identified with the state and its efforts to keep the “excess sentiment” of war at bay, it is clear from more recent work that much war writing of the period was potentially more volatile than she implies. As Bainbridge shows, it actively sought to generate an affective response to war in its readers in a manner that had the potential to run counter to more state centered visions of war. If the British reading public was widely identified by the end of the eighteenth century with an urban “commercial society” that was felt to be fundamentally removed from the nation’s wars, many writers also felt that civil society had to understand and feel the affective significance of war. William Wordsworth famously claimed in the preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* that the public had come to view the “great national events of the day” with a “craving for extraordinary incident”, whilst Samuel Taylor Coleridge similarly insisted in “Fears in Solitude” that war had emerged as “the best amusement for our morning meal!” War not only appears as something out of the ordinary in these statements, an extraordinary incident, but there is equally an implication that the reading public fundamentally misunderstands the significance of warfare, and that it was the poet’s task to bring the reader into imaginative contact with war’s reality. Coleridge’s writing thus mediated the relationship between war and his readers by attaching “feeling and imagination” to the abstract euphemisms of war that were reported, largely via government despatches, in the newspapers. His readers had to feel war’s pains if they were to feel sympathy for those individuals exposed to war’s misery and to respond seriously to the threat war posed to the nation.

The period was thus pervaded with images of war’s violence and horrors that reflected sentimental forms of writing, providing, as Bainbridge observes, “an

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62 Favret’s more recent work has begun to explore this dimension of war’s affective impact upon civil society through the period, and in a reading of Austen’s *Persuasion* (1818) she draws attention to the ways in which the novel “demonstrates … that the affective structures demanded by war—its peculiar blend of self-alienation, selfless caring for others, alarm, endurance, even a felicity hard to distinguish from pain—migrate into everyday life, becoming so well understood, standing under everything one does, that one hardly knows how or when to account for them”. Mary Favret, “Everyday War”, *English Literary History* 72.3 (2005): 605-33, 629.


alternative means of reading and writing battle” to the more “official” reports of war and which, in broad terms, created images of suffering that could draw forth the reader’s sympathies for a correct response to war’s horrors. Even celebratory verse, like Scott’s glorifying war poetry, confronted the reader with the felt experience of war’s violence, though typically representing modern war through tropes and stories drawn from the traditions of chivalric romance. As Mark Rawlinson thus observes of the British cultural response to the wars, “[m]ilitary practice in Napoleonic Britain, conditional or otherwise, seems to rely on the capacity of large fractions of the population to simultaneously imagine the horrors of war and to direct those imaginings to the production of assent to military conduct”. Much writing of the period drew upon broadly sentimental motifs of suffering in order, as Favret and Shaw intimate, to direct personal sentiment into support for the state’s war. Yet this writing also responded to the existence of a direct relationship between the reading public and war’s hardships and horrors, and thus sought to produce an effect of personal responsibility in the reader rather than simply a sublime awe that glorified the British state and its protective powers.

**British Military Memoirs of the Romantic Period**

Bainbridge argues that poetry was central to this affective engagement with war, because it was seen to have a particularly powerful capacity to stimulate the reader’s imagination. But he also observes that an enormous amount of the period’s poetry sought to transform the reader into an imaginative eyewitness to conflict, suggesting that actual eyewitness accounts could function in a similar fashion. Notably, Coleridge included excerpts from one British soldier’s first-hand account of the Flanders Campaign in *The Watchman* (1796) in an effort to bring an affective understanding of war’s horrors to his civilian readers he imagines as sitting complacently at “home by their fireside”. The significance, therefore, of the eyewitness account of war in Romantic period culture suggests that military memoirs had an important role to play in the representation of warfare through the period.

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66 Ibid., 127-29.
Clive Emsley has even suggested that one of the reasons why a large portion of the period’s literature ignored the wars was because “[i]t is arguable that there was no need for novelists and poets to turn their attention to describing the wars since the task was undertaken by veterans”. These military memoirs, indeed, can be broadly termed sentimental military memoirs to indicate their distinction from earlier forms of military memoir. In presenting eyewitness accounts of war, these memoirs operated much like other sentimental war writing of the period, which sought to make the reader feel war’s pain. Janet Todd argues that the defining characteristic of sentimental literature was its capacity to invoke emotional reactions and educate its readers into correct ways of seeing and sharing common feelings with fellow sufferers. The sentimental military memoir principally sought to foster the nation’s sympathy with the suffering of its soldiers.

Literary critics have indicated their awareness of these military memoirs, though there has been almost no effort to examine this work in detail. Echoing Oman’s earlier claims about the spread of military memoirs, Diego Saglia, for example, views the “numerous travel narratives and soldiers’ diaries” that were written in response to the Peninsular War and the subsequent Waterloo campaign as forming “a distinct and substantial trend in the publishing landscape of the 1810s”. J. R. Watson makes similar claims, noting that military memoirs were a “lively part of the literary scene of the 1820s”. A. D. Harvey, in his earlier study, had also drawn attention to military memoirs, including excerpts from several in his anthology of war writing from the Romantic period. Despite noting the presence of these memoirs, no literary critic has endeavoured to undertake an analysis of this body of material beyond these passing comments. John Peck, in his study War, the Army and Victorian Literature, for instance, indicates that he largely ignores “the innumerable volumes of memoirs from soldiers, war reporters and civilians caught up in conflicts”. The only attention given to this work as a body of writing is that of the military historian of the First World War, Tim Travers, who has written briefly on these Romantic period memoirs in comparison to earlier eighteenth-century memoirs.

72 Saglia, Poetic Castles in Spain, 35; Watson, Romanticism and War, 198.
and later memoirs of the First World War. His work is useful and informs this current study, but he provides only a brief overview of the development of these memoirs, which he links with an overly expansive conceptualisation of the period’s “Romanticism”.

Partly, this lack of attention reflects Romantic studies more general disinterest in life writing until recent years. Kay Cook has observed that neither Jerome McGann nor Butler provide an analysis of Romantic period autobiography in their foundational historicist approaches to Romanticism. She also notes that research undertaken on Romantic period life writing has been focussed on canonical autobiographies like Rousseau’s *Confessions* or Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, an approach that neglects writing in the form of journals and the memoir. James Treadwell’s *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834*, the first general study of Romantic period autobiography, is important, however, in suggesting the significance of memoirs. Although he does not directly investigate the period’s military memoirs, Treadwell suggests that the bulk of autobiographical writing of the Romantic period was typically far more documentary in character than the subjective reflections and narratives of a whole life characterised by Wordsworth or Rousseau’s writing. One of the most important changes occurring through this period can be seen in the expansion of popular involvement in what has been termed “print culture”, indicating the complex socio-cultural elements surrounding the publication and dissemination of forms of print and the emergent idea through this period of Britain as a “reading nation”. In part, this meant that a considerably greater number of individuals turned their hand to publishing their writing, leading particularly to an increase in what Benjamin Colbert terms “personal witness narratives”, such as

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first-person travel writing, memoirs and a diverse array of eyewitness accounts and personal narratives.  

As William St. Clair suggests, however, whilst the period saw a rapid expansion of reading and print culture, this very growth led to considerable anxiety over the kinds of books that were appearing. Intensive reading practices (the reading of a select few, carefully controlled books) were giving way to extensive reading practices, as print culture increasingly slipped out of the control of religious and state authorities to develop within the market place. Treadwell emphasises that these anxieties were particularly acute in the case of autobiographical writing because it positioned the personal life of the author as a worthy object of public interest. “During the Romantic period”, Treadwell asserts, “autobiography is above all a debatable practice”. Treadwell claims that reading Romantic autobiography is primarily a process of examining the public justifications and legitimacy such writing accrued to itself within a wider field of anxiety, and debate about the nature and growth of autobiographical writing through the period. He even suggests that autobiographical writing of the period typically only demonstrates any kind of Romantic subjectivity when it fails to conform to its formally stated documentary purposes and collapses into self-reflective rhetoric. If we reflect on Oman’s question as to why British soldiers should have started writing memoirs at the beginning of the nineteenth century, we might conclude simply that the military memoirs are consistent with the development of “first-person” writing through this period more generally. Yet as Treadwell’s comments suggest, we equally have to come to terms with the anxieties surrounding this work, and the ways in which these military memoirs were able to establish their legitimacy in bringing personal stories of soldiers to the wider attention of the public. And, as Treadwell shows, much of the commentary surrounding autobiography took place through the reviews and paratextual elements of autobiographies and memoirs, which were usually accompanied by lengthy prefaces that defended the rationale for publication.  

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81 St Clair. The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period, 10-13.  
82 Treadwell. Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834, 8.  
83 Ibid., 176.  
84 Ibid., viii.
This thesis interrogates the contemporary commentary surrounding the military memoirs alongside studies of the military memoirs themselves, in order to understand how they emerged into British literary culture in the Romantic period. The period’s anxieties about autobiographical forms of writing were, arguably, potentially even more acutely felt in relation to autobiographical forms of military writing. War in the eighteenth century was regarded as the sole preserve of the sovereign and the state, and the government exercised a highly centralised control over the flow of information about the nation’s wars. The individual had little claim to appearing in public if they might be seen to be, even implicitly, representing the nation’s wars. Only with shifts in the understanding of warfare and the relationship between the civilian and military worlds did a more legitimate role emerge for personal narratives of war, particularly in response to Britain’s involvement in the Peninsular War. The sentimental culture of modern war is extremely important in understanding the emergence of these memoirs, therefore, because in many ways they represent one of the first bodies of war writing that drew upon civilian genres of writing. Though written by soldiers, they represent a distinctly civilian response to war.

As such, this writing could be deemed oppositional to proper patriotic reflection on the nation state at war and was often criticised. The most positive reception of this work was through reflections on its potential as anti-war writing that exposed the corporeal horrors of conflict. This thesis thus explores the ways in which the anxieties about this work were subsequently resolved. By the 1820s the military memoir began to assume a role in the construction of a national commemoration of the Napoleonic Wars, arguably because of a greater acceptance of autobiographical forms of writing by the late Romantic period culture as a whole and a recognition of their importance in the construction of sympathy with the nation’s history. There was an outpouring of more patriotic, adventurous and Romantic memoirs through the late 1820s, a development that was met with surprise and considerable approbation in the reviews. This thesis argues that these military memoirs confirm assertions that war’s suffering was highly visible in British culture of the Romantic period. It also, however, draws on Favret and Shaw’s work on the suffering soldier to interrogate the ways in which these memoirs both affirmed and

85 Joseph J. Matthews, Reporting the Wars (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 3.
potentially undermined support for war. I turn now to their arguments to offer a brief rationale for the theoretical underpinnings of the arguments presented in this thesis.

The Suffering of the Soldier

At the heart of Favret’s assertions about the representation of war through the Romantic period are the arguments put forward in Elaine Scarry’s *Body in Pain*. This work partly investigates the ways in which injuring relates to representations of warfare. Defining war as, essentially, a contest between two states, Scarry questions why this contest takes the form of violence and injuring rather than a more benign form of competition, and why, correspondingly, this injuring is so often disassociated from cultural representations of warfare. She proposes that there are two quite distinct functions for violence and injuring in war.86 The first function is to decide the outcome of the contest, the victor in a war winning through out-injuring and hence defeating an enemy’s armies. The fact, however, that this contest could, potentially, be replaced with any other form of non-violent contest leads Scarry to speculate that there is a second, and arguably more important function to injuring in war than simply deciding a winner. This second function is to memorialize war. Injury guarantees and secures the outcome of war’s contest by lending this outcome the incontestable reality of the soldier’s wounded body.87 Scarry’s argument is, therefore, that in times of war, the reality of the wounded soldier’s body is separated from its source (the private soldier) and is conferred instead onto an ideology as a means of substantiating that ideology when it is being challenged by an enemy power. In other words, war is a dispute that exposes as a fiction a nation’s self-beliefs, and only by conferring the reality of the wounded body can these self-beliefs regain the status of a reality.88 Rather than war being commonly regarded as a process of reciprocal injuring, it is typically referred to in relation to ideological issues like the defence of freedom or a state’s territorial integrity.89

Adapting Scarry’s arguments to her study of Romanticism and war, Favret insists that the soldier figures in public discourse of the Romantic period only as an

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87 Ibid., 121.
88 Ibid., 131.
89 Ibid., 64.
idealised vision of the nation’s citizen-soldier, and not as an individual, private, woundable body. She claims this is because the soldier’s service is always translated away from injuring and into images of national safety and coherence. This point is further developed in Shaw’s subsequent *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination*. This study takes Favret as a starting point for examining the ways in which the material reality of war, the wounding of soldiers’ bodies, was rhetorically displaced in the culture of the period, particularly in representations of the Waterloo campaign. Developing a study that draws Colley and Favret’s arguments into a Lacanian analysis of representations of the battle of Waterloo, Shaw asserts that the Napoleonic Wars were, as Linda Colley implies, instrumental in establishing the national unity of the Britain. He argues that the battle of Waterloo, having singularly established Britain as the victor of the wars, should stand as the ultimate mark of this national cohesion. Central to this process, the wounded bodies of soldiers operated as a sacrifice that substantiated these national claims to unity. Shaw’s book largely explores the ways in which this substantiation, however, could never be completely realised because these repressed bodies must always return, in a disguised form, to unsettle any claims to authority or unity. What is therefore missing from the literature of the period, Shaw argues, is any representation of the soldier’s bodily pain. There is almost no accounting for what he terms the “inner experience of wounding”, because wounding is tied up with patriotism and an “ideology of sacrifice”. Thus whilst wounds themselves might occasionally be shown and discussed, pain and suffering are written out of these discussions so that even where we can see suffering, “the impact of such sights was, for the most part, easily adapted to the task of national aggrandizement”. Favret similarly argues that war’s miseries were only represented through feminised, and much more ideologically stable, figures like the war-widow rather than through images of soldiers’ personal suffering.

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90 Favret, “Coming Home”, 542-44.
94 Ibid., 20.
Whilst agreeing with much of the critique of Favret, which has shown that suffering was far more visible in the period’s culture than she supposes, the framework proposed by her, based on Scarry and further elaborated by Shaw, contains a great deal that is of value to this thesis. This thesis thus emphasises that representations of soldiers’ wounding were commonly associated with a noble rhetoric of sacrifice and national aggrandizement, but it also recognises that to represent the soldier’s felt experience of suffering was an important element in constructing this idea of sacrifice. Images of suffering served as powerful indicators of the soldier’s virtues in relation to the defence of the nation, helping to forge the British public’s sympathetic identification with the nation’s armies and mediating the experiential divide between the realms of the civilian and the military. What seems most remarkable about representations of warfare in the Romantic period is less the absence of images of soldiers’ pain than the enormous expansion in the circulation of images of their death and suffering. Peter Harrington observes that the most common image to appear in British paintings of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was the death of Nelson. The earlier martyrdom and heroism of General Wolfe, was widely echoed in representations of the subsequent deaths of Admiral Nelson and General Moore, but the idea of stoical suffering was also coming to be associated with ordinary soldiers as well as martyred generals. Images of death, wounding and suffering helped to create associations of authenticity and sympathy that were vital in the emergent culture of modern war. As Robert Ker Porter observed of criticisms of Nelson’s supposed vainglory as a soldier:

I remember, and I blush for Englishmen while I write it, many in our island turning the chivalric distinctions of our immortal Nelson into ridicule. They have jested on his crosses and his stars, when, had they looked deeper, they would have seen wounds under every ornament, received in making his breast the shield of their safety.

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97 In his tribute to General Moore’s death in the official dispatch of the Battle of Corunna (1809), for instance, Sir John Hope claimed: “Like Wolfe, his last Moments were gilded by the Prospect of Success, and cheared [sic] by the Acclamation of Victory”. *The London Gazette* (24 January 1809), 91.
Recent work on war writing of the First and Second World Wars, by Sarah Cole and Mark Rawlinson respectively, has also drawn attention to the importance of the prominence of wounded soldiers’ bodies in the service of what Scarry terms a “memorialization function”. Following Scarry’s logic that only injury confers reality on the contest of war, they show that it is through the widespread recognition of soldiers’ injuries that modern war can be effectively established as a significant event with enduring consequences. This “memorialization function” is arguably an especially crucial element for a modern culture of war, in which warfare was coming to be understood not as a recurrent feature of ongoing dynastic struggles, but as a way for a nation to consolidate its existence in terms of a lasting peace. The military memoir largely exemplifies the widespread prominence of images of the soldier’s suffering in the service of the nation at war.

Images of suffering could be problematic, however. Images of more junior ranking figures than Wolfe or Nelson potentially threatened established hierarchies of war. Nor did the British military-fiscal state, necessarily, utilise or endorse such images in its own self-representation. It tended to favour a traditional pageantry and military spectacle that represented the state’s grandeur and power. Images of the soldier’s suffering could also be ideologically unstable if the suffering soldier was read as a private, ordinary man. As Benjamin West asserted of his painting The Death of Lord Nelson at Trafalgar (1806), death had to be seen as “extraordinary” if it were to correctly move the viewer; as he claimed, no one would “be animated by a representation of Nelson dying like an ordinary man. His feelings must be roused & His mind inflamed by a scene great & extraordinary”. David Solkin similarly draws attention to the Earl of Chatham’s criticism of West’s earlier The Death of Wolfe (1770), that in depicting Wolfe the painting retained too much private dejection in its portrayal of the suffering Wolfe. Chatham argued that “Englishmen should forget all traces of private misfortune when they had so grandly conquered for the country”.

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If a modern culture of war demanded that the soldier’s suffering be visualised, this suffering was nonetheless meant to be correctly seen in relation to the glorious defence of the nation. The soldier had to be seen to stoically embrace his suffering, without exhibiting traces of private dejection. Scarry’s most fundamental claim is that war lacks the power of its own enforcement: the violence that constitutes war does not, ordinarily, signify or resolve anything. The effects of violence have to be, as Rawlinson observes, “translated into a wholly different vocabulary” if they are to have any political efficacy. A wide ranging “cultural work” is thus required before “violence in war comes to signify politically, morally and psychologically”. Only through this cultural work can the “brute facts of killing and being killed [be] represented and interpreted” in a way that can make war seem a necessary, meaningful and effective continuation of political reason. This thesis proposes that in images of the soldier’s stoical endurance and embrace of suffering we can see an important way in which the injured body was translated into politically rational actions concerning the defence of the nation. Such images perform much of the cultural work that translates and confers the reality of wounding into national defence, and which helps to consolidate ideas of soldiers as figures of national importance. As Lord Castlereagh claimed in 1809, during a Parliamentary debate over the construction of a Monument to General Moore following his death at the Battle of Corunna (1809), “it will be grateful to every man who can enter into the feeling of an intrepid soldier” that Moore’s “mind did not droop with the faintness of his body, but seemed to derive new and increased vigour from the scene, as if the approach of death was forgotten in the approach of victory”. Death becomes “indifferent”, because Moore was simply concerned, Castlereagh argues, “that his country would think well of him”. But as Castlereagh’s comments suppose, though Moore exhibits a sublime indifference to death as he contemplates national victory, stoical suffering also lets us enter into the feelings of the soldier. By imagining the soldier’s suffering, the viewer is asked to imaginatively become a soldier and is provoked into identification with a national community.

Rawlinson, British Writing of the Second World War, 26. For a discussion of the importance of “compliance” and “symbolic” factors in enabling the contest of war to be resolved, see Hugh Smith, On Clausewitz: A Study of Military and Political Ideas (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 92-97.

The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time. Published under the Superintendance of T. C. Hansard, vol. 12, 19th January - 7th March 1809 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1812), 139-42.
Whilst this thesis points to the widespread dissemination of images of soldiers’ suffering, therefore, it also largely agrees with Shaw’s assertion that a prevailing “ideology of sacrifice” was typically deployed alongside reflection on soldiers’ wounding. The stoical sufferer served the twin imperatives of identification and distancing the viewer from war’s horrors. The private, suffering man is ennobled by his stoicism, transformed into the abstract, collective and immortal vision of the soldier through his sublime act at the same time that the viewer is invited to identify with the soldier in the process of serving the nation. Indeed, as Julie Ellison demonstrates, the representation of stoical endurance of suffering was widely linked to the production of sentimental and sympathetic feeling in the viewer. She suggests that “[s]toicism and sensibility provoke each other”. Haywood similarly insists that the correct construction of sympathy required that suffering be displayed through various framing devices in order to create a degree of imaginative distance between the viewer and the sufferer. Scott’s use of picturesque aesthetics, as Bainbridge contends, enabled his writing to produce a poetry that reflected war’s violence and yet distanced the reader from the effects of horror, detailing glory rather than misery. Favret proposes that the soldier appears in Romantic period culture as though possessing two bodies, a private body that might be seen as “dying like an ordinary man” and a heroic body that shields the nation. It is this latter understanding of the body to which representations of the soldier’s suffering through the period habitually directed the audience, and with which the audience was meant to identify. Conversely, dissenting opinion often sought to recover the “brute fact” of the soldier’s unredeemed wounded body; for example, Byron questioning in Don Juan whether “a man’s name in a bulletin | May make up for a bullet in his body?”. Still, the soldier’s wounded body was meant to be read as a symbol of the body politic that the soldier both represents and protects.

However, for the soldier to report on his own, personal suffering was a process that lacked the authorial or artistic intercession necessary in order to

106 Haywood, Bloody Romanticism, 6.
107 Bainbridge, British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 131-32.
imaginatively distance the reader from war’s horrors or effectively represent stoical heroism. As the military memoir emerged into British literary culture it threatened to produce, in Shaw’s phrase, an “excess sentiment” in the reader. The memoir could conflate the idea of the heroic soldier with a private, wounded man in a manner that did not clearly align with state centered views of war and their more decorous and hierarchical representations of conflict and an ideology of sacrifice, leaving violence to potentially appear simply as a disturbing “brute fact”. Geoffrey Best voices a common assumption that autobiographical writing by soldiers did little to shift opinions about the glory of war, but in deploying broadly sentimental tropes of the suffering soldier, memoirs could be more ambivalent about war than has been supposed. The memoirs of private soldiers in particular offered an alternative and at times quite radicalized view of the appallingly harsh conditions of soldiering and the horrors of warfare that could conflict with the rhetoric of national glory. Military memoirs thus provided images of soldiers’ suffering that could be, as Favret observes, “culturally ambiguous” and it is this cultural ambiguity associated with the figure of the suffering soldier that this thesis investigates. Ultimately, forms of imaginative distancing were established around the representation of suffering, as the soldier assumed the status of the military author and the military memoir consolidated its generic boundaries. This only occurred in the later part of the 1820s and private soldiers’ memoirs, in many ways, remained outside of this process, forming a dissident strain of war writing that endured in nineteenth-century British culture. The main figure to emerge from these memoirs was the soldier hero, and images of war’s adventure that have had a lasting significance on cultural understanding of warfare. Through this work, the military memoir of the Romantic period thus came to have an important role in the British nation’s commemoration of the wars.

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first, consisting of two chapters, examines the ways in which the military memoirs formed into a genre in the

109 Geoffrey Best, War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870 (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 201-02.
110 Favret, “Coming Home”, 546.
Romantic period, producing a distinct way of visualizing war that largely resolved the contradictions inherent in the presentation of soldiers’ suffering and allowed these images to be readily apprehended as images of heroic sacrifice. In particular, this part investigates what was driving the emergence of these memoirs despite their potential threat to official views of war, and how this threat was managed through the cultural policing effected by the review periodicals and other social commentary. It outlines two distinct phases in the development of these memoirs, corresponding to the earlier publication of what this thesis terms sentimental military memoirs, and a subsequent development of military memoirs as commemorative adventure stories beginning around 1825. Chapter One details how the basic form of the military memoir adapted elements from the widespread sentimentalism of the period and alternative genres like tales of the suffering traveller and spiritual autobiography, and how these works were initially received into British culture. Chapter Two discusses the development and reception of personal forms of military memoirs in the post-war period, examining how they came to be accepted by the British reading public as a form of commemoration for the history of the nation’s wars. I argue that they transformed earlier stories of suffering into narratives of heroic sacrifice, and in the officer’s memoir, gave rise to the important figure of the military author in Romantic literary culture.

The second part of this thesis offers close readings of five of the most influential or representative texts that emerged through this period to offer a detailed analysis of these broad changes in the style of Romantic period military memoirs.112 Chapter Three examines the work of Robert Ker Porter, who was a leading figure in the development of a media spectacle of war at the start of the nineteenth century. Seeking to take his audience imaginatively to the site of war through renditions of first hand military experience, his work nonetheless exposes the horrors of war and the limitations of the soldier’s perspective during the war years. Chapter Four focuses on The Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First (1819) a military memoir composed by an anonymous soldier, known only as Thomas, which was a commercially successful and influential text, one of the first memoirs produced after

112 As the relevant editions of the five principle texts analysed in the second section of this thesis may not be readily accessible, I have created a Google Books Library from electronic editions available in the public domain. These books can be accessed online at Google Books: http://books.google.com/books?as_list=BSDS9UjQQo_rIo8tPi8tNe1ARoUq-Zeeby1eJc-TCSFXs5Ud5jF9n0 (accessed 29 June 2008).
the wars by a private soldier. This chapter argues that the Journal represented a fundamental shift in the composition of a private soldier’s autobiography, combining earlier traditions of the spiritual autobiography with sentimental elements of the period’s war writing. The resulting narrative focussed on war’s appalling hardships and helped to initiate a dissenting tradition of soldiers’ writing, though it also problematised the soldier’s relationship with authorship and personal identity.

Chapter Five investigates Sherer’s Recollections of the Peninsula (1823) and George Gleig’s The Subaltern (1825). Here it is concluded that by introducing elements of the picturesque travelogue to their accounts of the personal experience of war these works overcame many of the difficulties of writing on war that had preoccupied earlier writers, helping to create a commercially successful aestheticisation of war that could allow their work to celebrate war and accrue the cultural authority of the professional author. Chapter Six analyses the ways in which, following Sherer and Gleig’s work, the military memoir took shape as an adventure story, an approach to writing the personal narrative of war that was most fully reflected in John Kincaid’s Adventures in the Rifle Brigade (1830). This chapter shows how Kincaid emerges as a soldier hero, his story successfully commemorating his heroic service to the nation and representing the soldier’s cheerfully stoical endurance of war’s hardships. His book has since become one of the most famous of these Peninsular War military memoirs, whilst the image of soldiering he developed has had enduring importance for understanding war and soldiering in British culture.

These memoirs have been long forgotten to Romantic studies, but by documenting their development and reception I hope to recover their significance for the period and to show their continuity with later war writing. Yuval Noah Harari, indeed, observes that Paul Fussell’s seminal work on war literature, The Great War and Modern Memory was “based mainly on reading the canon of First World War military memoirs”. For Fussell it is precisely in the military memoirs of the First and Second World Wars that we can gain access, if not to the “real war”, at least to a vision of war that might lie outside the “ideological frameworks” through which we habitually envision warfare. This thesis demonstrates that the military memoirs of

114 Quoted in Paul Fussell, Wartime (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 290. For an overview of the impact and significance of Fussell’s work, see L. V. Smith, “Paul Fussell’s the
the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and the Peninsular War in particular, are equally important to our understanding of modern warfare as these later, twentieth-century memoirs. To some extent, they helped to establish the very ideological frameworks of stoical heroism that Fussell views later memoirs as reacting against. But the Romantic period military memoir could also trouble the nation’s reflections on war, and in private soldiers’ memoirs, in particular, we can see an important line of continuity with anti-war memoirs of the First and Second World Wars.

Part One

The Genre of the Military Memoir, 1780-1835
Accounts of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and the Peninsular War in particular, originated from virtually every rank and service within the British army, ranging from generals to private soldiers, from those serving in the infantry, cavalry, artillery, the staff, to the commissariat and medical departments of the army. All this work, in varying degrees, reflected on the author’s personal experiences of campaigning as a soldier. Reviewing this body of writing, Charles Oman suggests that “it is quite certain that there was more writing going on in the army during the ten years 1805-15 than in the whole eighteenth century”. More recent historians have largely confirmed Oman’s findings. Frederick Myatt, for example, asserting “books of reminiscence written by individuals who actually took part in the operations they describe” became increasingly common from the Napoleonic Wars, but that “before about 1800 they are comparatively rare”.

The question of exactly how or why these memoirs appeared at this point in history has not, however, received significant critical attention outside limited acknowledgements in the field of military history. Oman suggests that, in part, the appearance of these memoirs may have been due to the fact that the British army was consistently victorious during the Peninsular War, helping to make “officers and men justifiably proud of themselves, and more anxious than any previous generation had been to put on paper the tale of their own exploits”. He also posits the existence of more explicitly cultural factors in prompting the growth of these memoirs, pointing to a shifting conception of the war effort as private soldiers and officers came to view the war as vital to the defence of Britain, a crusade against the radical political forces unleashed by the French Revolution. Ian Fletcher concurs with Oman’s assertion that these soldiers’ memoirs were a product of pride in British victories, though he adds that the “great flood of memoirs, written by Wellington’s men” was

3 Oman, *Wellington’s Army, 1809-1814*, 4-5.
also “due to a combination of an increase in literacy amongst British soldiers coupled with the fact that after years of under-achievement they finally had something worth writing about”.

Tim Travers suggests that we also need to take account of the “Romanticism of the prevailing intellectual currents of the time”, as a specific rationale for the emergence of military memoirs that focused on the personal experience of the soldier, shifting an earlier eighteenth-century tradition of military memoirs written as impersonal “narrative campaign accounts”.

These claims have only been offered as relatively speculative assertions, but they nonetheless help to provide a useful starting point for an investigation of the development and nature of the military memoir as a genre by pointing towards broad cultural shifts through the Romantic period, and the evolving relationship between war and the period’s print culture. This chapter will argue that the emergence of these memoirs was most directly related to developments associated with sentimentalism from the mid to late eighteenth century, which influenced many genres of historical narrative and prompted a widespread interest in the personal and inward elements of history. Such developments, however, only took hold very slowly in the traditionally impersonal format of the military memoir. It was not until the start of the nineteenth century, and particularly through the pressures of modern or total war associated with the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, that there was a marked increase in more personal forms of military memoirs produced by British military officers. These memoirs can thus be seen as part of a broadly sentimental culture of modern war that emerged in Britain through these war years. The eyewitness account of war, and a pervasive desire to foster a sympathetic attachment to the nation’s armies or the victims of war, emerged as important cultural forms for representing conflict alongside traditional state-sponsored military despatches, spectacles and civic festivals.

The use of genre as an analytical tool has, admittedly, received considerable scrutiny in recent years, because the taxonomic fixing of texts into a genre can be

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seen as both an arbitrary and limiting practice. Though Yuval Noah Harari has offered a broad definition of military memoirs, he too observes that “the definition of military memoirs, as of any literary genre, is problematic”. One of the difficulties in attempting to categorize military memoirs generically is that these texts can diverge widely between detailing the life of an individual or reflecting, instead, simply on historical, public events. As a category, the genre has thus variously been applied to works ranging from eyewitness narratives of war, which in turn can be seen to focus in varying degrees on the actual experiences of the narrator, through to forms of writing that are virtually synonymous with an impersonal history or even biography. Rather than attempting a comprehensive examination of the boundaries of the military memoir as a genre, however, this chapter will instead follow Tilottama Rajan and Julia M. Wright’s work on Romantic period genre. They highlight the significance of historical change in marking out generic forms, and the “constant renegotiation between fixed canons and historical pressures”, as genres both encode and recreate cultural norms. This chapter will examine the continuity and changes occurring within the historically established traditions of the military memoir in the Romantic period. It will draw attention to the remarkable openness of the genre and its interactions with alternative generic conventions, not simply with a pervasive sentimentalism but also with the genres of the suffering traveller and the spiritual autobiography.

Focussing on the shifting boundaries of the military memoir can help to highlight the ways in which they engage with the figure of the suffering soldier, which in turn provides context for a more detailed analysis of select memoirs in subsequent chapters. As Rajan and Wright emphasize, genre can be seen not only as “forms that determine identity” but as providing “the possibility of subjectivity” for both individuals and groups. This chapter questions the cultural rationale for the emergence of a new identity of the suffering soldier into British military memoirs and the broad outlines of the reception and significance of this figuration of the

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6 For an overview of this critique of genre criticism, with particular reference to historical forms of narrative, see Ralph Cohen, “History and Genre”, New Literary History 17.2 (1986): 203-18, 203.
9 Ibid., 6.
soldier. Notably, although the marked increase in what can be termed sentimental forms of military memoir suggests that the reading public responded to such publications with a degree of enthusiasm, the very generic openness of these texts meant that they were not always met with approval in the reviews or by authorities on war such as the Duke of Wellington. These personal stories of soldiering, though typically exhibiting pride in British military prowess as Oman and Fletcher observe, could be politically problematic. They operate at times as a potentially disturbing counter-narrative to a hegemonic national history. This was particularly the case with private soldiers’ memoirs that emerged in the post-war period and which, as will be argued in subsequent chapters, even came to be associated with radical and anti-war sentiments. Only with a subsequent fixing of the generic boundaries of these personal military memoirs, particularly through the consolidation of the officer’s professional identity with the emerging professionalism of the Romantic author, were these cultural ambiguities largely resolved. As will be detailed in Chapter Two, the memoir was thus able to form a distinctively middle-class commemoration of Britain’s involvement in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Eighteenth-Century Traditions of the Military Memoir

Jeremy Black has emphasised the extent to which British culture throughout the eighteenth century was influenced by warfare, arguing that “the celebration of martial prowess and success was an important theme of the arts that is underrated today”.\textsuperscript{10} Linda Colley has described the ostentatious cult of heroism that circulated amongst the aristocracy through the late eighteenth century,\textsuperscript{11} whilst Black himself points to the widespread interest in martial themes in paintings, celebratory verse, theatre and martial music in British culture of the period.\textsuperscript{12} More detailed studies of the period’s literature and art have similarly emphasised the significance of war. Dustin Griffin, for instance, has shown how poets throughout the eighteenth century forged a public role for themselves by writing on patriotic themes and celebrating the


\textsuperscript{12} Black, \textit{A Subject for Taste}, 34.
nation’s wars,’ whilst Peter Harrington has reflected on the prevalence of “[r]egal or glorifying military art” that dominated artistic representations of war through the century. John Cardwell and Carol Watts have also recently investigated the British literary responses to the Seven Years’ War (1756-63). The celebration of the “martial prowess” of Britain is thus recognized as having a central role in eighteenth-century culture.

The military memoirs that were published in the eighteenth century participated in this broadly celebratory style of military writing, emerging as they did out of an aristocratic military culture and continuing a traditional format for writing narratives of war. Yuval Noah Harari argues that the military memoir emerged as a legitimate and popular genre across Europe at the start of the seventeenth century, in which a “glorious façade” of war was constructed “out of the marriage of the old medieval chivalric ideals with the rising ideals of statehood and nationalism”. The memoir, Harari argues, developed as a genre that mediated between the public and the private by documenting the personal lives of figures who held important public positions. But military memoirs as a genre typically exhibited little concern with the individual at all: they largely focused on describing the history of military campaigns, only ever recounting the individual’s role in warfare by situating personal achievement firmly within the context of the grandeur of the state and monarchy. As David Bell insists of traditional military memoirs, “[t]hese men almost never included reflections on their interior lives and had little concern for the flavor and color of particular events. They celebrated deeds that fit stereotyped

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15 M. John Cardwell, *Arts and Arms: Literature, Politics and Patriotism During the Seven Years’ War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); and Carol Watts, *The Cultural Work of Empire: The Seven Years’ War and the Imagining of the Shandean State* (Toronto Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
17 David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 42.
21 Bell, *The First Total War*, 44.
images of noble valor, making the writing flat and tedious to modern sensibilities". 

So too, the only individuals deemed worthy of attention in military memoirs were commanding generals and illustrious nobles. Accounts of the heroic deeds of junior ranking military officers only emerged sporadically through the late eighteenth century. 

When they did emerge, such as Philip Doddridge’s *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner* (1747), they were dominated by the conventions of the spiritual autobiography or confessional narrative. Such memoirs were principally written to provide information about the narrator’s religious life or moral development and thus, as Harari observes, often had “little to say about their authors’ military careers”.

Military memoirs through the eighteenth century were almost all composed as what Tim Travers describes as a “narrative campaign style of military history, which basically described campaigns in a chronological way”, documenting the movements and major engagements of the nation’s armies. The writers of such memoirs typically distinguished their writing from a formal history, Robert Beatson suggesting that his *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain* (1790), was termed a “military memoir” both because of his unpolished writing style and because the narrative might be more “particular and minute” than a formal history. Often, too, these memoirs indicate that the author was present at the scenes recounted, such as the anonymous *The Present State of the British Army in Flanders; with an Authentic Account of their Retreat from before Dunkirk. By a British Officer in that Army* (1793). Alternatively they describe the work as a “journal”, implying that the work is composed from an eyewitness source, such as John Knox’s *An Historical Journal of

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22 Ibid., 312.
the Campaigns in North America (1769). Nonetheless, these memoirs all follow a similar, impersonal pattern for narrating events. Travers observes that they show a “detached, uninvolved quality”, submerging the personality of the author or any interest in individual experiences “in the attention paid to strategy, tactics, the doings of generals, battles, times, places, names, numbers of casualties, marches and the outcome of campaigns”. Warfare was held to be a significant public event that reflected the aspirations and grandeur of Britain’s governing elite, and military memoirs, for the most part, did little to question this aristocratic hierarchy and the dense codes of political and social meaning that infused eighteenth-century warfare.

The later half of the eighteenth century, however, also saw the appearance of a set of ideas associated with sentimentalism, a profoundly important development that had a significant and ongoing influence on many genres of writing, including historical narratives and, to some degree, military memoirs. This interest in sentimentality arose out of wide-ranging developments through the mid eighteenth century in moral philosophy, natural science and literature that are now increasingly viewed as exerting an extensive influence over the Romantic period as a whole. Deeply entwined with the emergence of the middle classes and a commercial society, one of the central elements of sentimentality was an emphasis on the importance of individual human experience and personal feelings in establishing moral judgements. Writers such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, influenced

29 Travers, “The Relativity of War”, 156.
30 Ibid., 154.
33 Brisenden, Virtue in Distress, 22-26.
by earlier philosophers such as John Locke and David Hume, positioned shared
sympathy of feeling between individuals as the key to providing the ethical
structures of human relations in modern, commercial societies. This ethical
dimension was of increasing importance as anxieties about a market society grew,
generating a concern for ensuring transparency and authenticity in human relations.
Sentimental writing sought to cultivate such sympathy through its emphasis on
individual feelings and a cultivation of the reader’s moral sentiments. It also, more
widely, reflected a pervasive interest in the everyday and an understanding of the self
as possessing depth and individuality. These developments, in turn, saw many
writers of history reconceive “the reader’s engagement with historical narratives in
more inward and sentimental terms” and thus it is possible to see a concern with the
“the inner world of the sentiments” emerge across a range of historical genres
through the eighteenth century. By the 1790s, sentimentalism was subject to
c onsiderable criticism within Britain as leading to an effeminate self-indulgence in
one’s own emotions and fostering potentially subversive concepts of equality based
on one’s capacity for feeling rather than social rank. Nonetheless, sentimental ideas
continued to exert an influence upon the writing of history. By the end of the
eighteenth century a commentator such as William Godwin, although critical of an
excessive emphasis on sentimental feelings, was adamant that the best type of
history requires “knowledge of the individual”.

Notably, a far less celebratory tradition of writing about war emerged out of
eighteenth-century sentimental novels and poetry, wherein warfare was viewed not
so much in terms of “martial prowess”, but rather through the lens of individual,
personal suffering. Whilst images of war’s violence and suffering had long

36 Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 103 and xii.
37 Todd, *Sensibility*, 130.
38 Ibid., 139-40.
circulated in British culture, with the advent of sentimentality these images of suffering took on a particular importance in the cultivation of taste and personal virtue. This was most particularly the case amongst an emerging middle class that depended not on marks of social rank, but on a display of the inherent moral qualities and good judgement of the individual. Reading about suffering was an important means by which individuals could be educated to share common feelings and sympathy with their fellow humans. As Ian Haywood argues, “eighteenth-century literary and artistic culture” was profoundly influenced by “[t]he idea that sensational violent imagery could have a redemptive moral effect on the suitably refined reader or spectator”. Such literary reflections on war sought to evoke reactions of pathos and pity in the reader by confronting him or her with individuated images of war’s victims, such as destitute soldiers, war widows and grieving parents. Sentimental literature was not, however, necessarily accompanied by expressly anti-war political commentary. Nor was it fixed to any particular ideological perspective. Focussing on warfare in a generalised and abstract manner, such literature principally depicted scenes of war’s suffering in an effort to stimulate the reader’s emotions and cultivate sympathetic feelings.

Although sentimental elements can be seen exerting an influence “right across eighteenth-century letters”, military memoirs only gradually exhibited such interest in the individual or the inner experience of soldiers at war. The adoption of sentimental elements into historical narratives in large part reflected a concern with the development of commercial society rather than with the subject of warfare and the details of “military manoeuvre”. Ordinary individuals still had little claim to appearing in historical narratives of the nation’s wars. Nor were individual soldiers seen as having a role to play in battles and campaigns that were viewed as “the site


41 Harari, “Martial Illusions”, 54.
46 Phillips, Society and Sentiment, xii.
47 Ibid., 16.
for massed movements” in which the army’s collective discipline and the commander’s stratagems were the principal factors for achieving victory.\textsuperscript{48} Partly too, sentimentality was broadly associated with forms of middle-class behaviour, taste and morals that were in many ways antithetical to the requirements of the military-fiscal state and a military dominated by aristocratic ideals of honour.\textsuperscript{49} Sarah Knott has argued, for instance, that codes of sentimentality were not widely adopted in the British army of the late eighteenth century, despite having significance for officers in their American revolutionary counterpart.\textsuperscript{50}

It is possible, however, to see from at least the 1780s onwards personal elements occasionally included in British military memoirs and official reports of military campaigns. Works such as \textit{Memoirs of the Late War in Asia} (1788), as Sharon Alker observes, reflected on the soldier’s personal experience and the “horrors of battle” in a manner that was rare for earlier memoirs.\textsuperscript{51} Even a journal such as \textit{The Political Magazine, and Parliamentary, Naval, Military and Literary Journal}, which featured official government information about the nation’s wars alongside reports of parliamentary debates and other matters of public significance, occasionally included short, sentimental narratives of individual subaltern officers. In 1783, for instance, the journal included a piece entitled “The Narrative of the Surpizing Exertions and Sufferings of Lieut. James Moody”. Moody’s personal adventures in the war in America suggest a combination of poignant suffering and personal heroism, the narrator concluding of his exploits that there are “few subjects on which a painter of taste and sensibility could more happily employ his pencil”.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} Armstrong Starkey, \textit{War in the Age of Enlightenment, 1700-1789} (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), 76.
\textsuperscript{51} Sharon Alker, “The Soldierly Imagination: Narrating Fear in Defoe’s \textit{Memoirs of a Cavalier}”, \textit{Eighteenth Century Fiction} 19.1-2 (2006-07): 43-68, 68. Alker also proposes that Defoe’s fictional \textit{Memoirs of a Cavalier} (1720) operate as a critique of traditional military memoirs and their displacement of war’s suffering, suggesting, therefore, that Defoe’s work may have opened up a space for these later, more personal military memoirs. She does not, however, consider the wider impact of sentimental writing.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{The Political Magazine, and Parliamentary, Naval, Military and Literary Journal} 4.1 (1783), 57.
Paul Langford also observes that numbers of sentimental novels and stories about the American War of Independence emerged in Britain soon after the conflict ended. See Langford, \textit{A Polite and Commercial People}, 626.
In a work such as Samuel Ancell’s *Letters of the Siege of Gibraltar* (1784) it is possible to see a sustained sentimental approach to writing on military events emerging alongside traditional elements of the impersonal military campaign narrative. Phillips describes Ancell’s *Letters* as a “sentimentalist experiment in contemporary history”, combining “public matters … with circumstantial details designed to bring the reader closer to the front lines”. The very fact that Ancell composed his account as a series of private letters to his brother suggests his divergence from the narrative traditions of the military memoir, the epistolary form being widely associated in the late eighteenth century with the sentimental expression of private feelings. Certainly, the traditional elements of a campaign narrative remain to the fore, with Ancell insisting that his work is an account of events that are of public importance. He thus asserts:

> you will … not expect this Journal to be elaborately filled with trivial daily occurrences, but depend upon receiving a full account of every transaction of a public nature; such as the enemy’s motions, firings; vessels engaged, taken, escaped, failed, arrived; batteries erected, destroyed, &c.

Although he describes personal or daily kinds of information as trivial, Ancell repeatedly draws attention to the quotidian activities of the soldiers garrisoning Gibraltar, bringing the reader into close proximity with the fighting at the “front lines”. He observes, for instance, as the soldiers serve the cannons, “[w]hat with the heat of the day, the forges, furnaces, and piles of flaming shot, amidst clouds of smoak and sulphur, accompanied with heavy toil, you may judge we found ourselves very feeble and thirsty”. Ancell also offers sentimental pictures of the garrison’s hardships during the siege, observing at one point that “[o]ur bay appears a scene of horror” and that the wounded soldiers appeared as “horrid spectacles”. He reflects too, on his own emotional response to these scenes, observing “[y]ou would think sensibility would shed a tear; but yet when we are in equal distress ourselves, our

56 Ibid., 263.
57 Ibid., 264 and 267.
feelings for others rather subdue”. \(^{58}\) Despite such subdued feelings, Ancell repeatedly draws attention to graphic details of the dangers and wounds to which individuals were exposed and the slowly dwindling stock of provisions available to the garrison. He therefore offers his reader a novelistic account of war, selecting details and foregrounding his own role as an eyewitness and participant in the events described and drawing attention in particular to the soldiers’ individual experiences and suffering.

Sentimental or personal elements remained a peripheral or “trivial” element in late eighteenth-century military memoirs, and although we can see the occasional inclusion of an officer’s personal reflections, such memoirs remained far from being wholly “introspective or personal” and continued to be predominantly written as impersonal narratives, relating “daily accounts of battles” and the route of the army’s march. \(^{59}\) But there was obviously some interest in more sentimental memoirs of war. Although it did not represent a common approach to the military memoir, Ancell’s work was remarkably well received. Reprinted in 1793 in a fourth edition, 10 years after it was first published, Ancell himself wrote with surprise of the “successful and rapid sale” of his book and the continuing “great indulgence the ... Letters have experienced from a generous Public”. \(^{60}\) Ancell added a list of subscribers to the fourth edition of his *Letters*, and whilst it includes numerous military personnel, over two thirds of those listed are civilians. \(^{61}\) Arguably, therefore, a civilian reading public was, by the start of the 1790s, creating a market for forms of military writing that emphasised these personal, sentimental elements. It is only with the outbreak of the Peninsular War in 1809, however, that this writing was to make a significant impact.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 14-15.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., vii-xii.
Military Memoirs of the Peninsular War

The outbreak of war with revolutionary France in 1793 was a stimulus to the further publication of military memoirs in Britain, and numerous works appeared between the outbreak of the war and the start of the Peninsular War in 1808. For the most part these largely continued the traditions of the impersonal military memoir although they occasionally, and increasingly, included sentimental elements as the wars progressed. Typical of such works are the military memoirs The Present State of the British Army in Flanders; with an Authentic Account of their Retreat from before Dunkirk. By a British Officer in that Army (1793), and A Journal kept in the British Army, from the Landing of the Troops under the Command of Earl Moira, at Ostend, in June 1794, to their Return to England the following Year (1796).^62 Both of which, whilst implying the eyewitness status of the author, are almost wholly written as impersonal campaign narratives that simply related the movements of the army and described the major engagements. As the wars progressed, personal details can at times be seen emerging, though these were only included as peripheral to the main narrative. Captain Thomas Walsh, for instance, maintained a personal journal whilst he accompanied the British army on campaign to Egypt, as Aide-de-Camp to Major-General Sir Eyre Coote, and published this on returning to Britain as Journal of the Late Campaign in Egypt (1803). Walsh presents his journal to the public as thoroughly historical, accurate and complete record of the campaign, but also apologetically introduces elements of his experience as a mode of travel writing, asking his reader not to “censure him severely” when he will “occasionally step out of this track for a few moments, briefly to describe what he has seen, or to relate the feelings suggested to his mind on the spot as they arose”.^63 In a similar way, A Narrative of the Expedition to and the Storming of Buenos Ayres, by the British Army ... By an Officer Attached to the Expedition (1807), documents the military events of the expedition in a highly impersonal style, yet includes occasional

^62 Anonymous, The Present State of the British Army in Flanders; with an Authentic Account of their Retreat from before Dunkirk. By a British Officer in that Army, Etc.; and Anonymous, A Journal Kept in the British Army, from the Landing of the Troops under the Command of Earl Moira, at Ostend, in June 1794, to their Return to England the Following Year (Liverpool: 1796).

personal and sentimental elements. The author, for instance, relates the death of “Poor Major Trotter, of the 83d, than whom a more gallant man never existed, fell, covered with wounds, to the eternal regret of the whole army”. He also occasionally documents the hardships of the army as a whole during the campaign, noting for instance that “[o]n the march we were much annoyed by the prickly pear hedges which we had to pierce almost every moment”. His work thus constructs a sympathy for the soldiers’ suffering alongside his reportage of the campaign, and he concludes by directly addressing the reader’s sympathies for the soldiers, observing that “[t]he army are conscious of having done their duty to their country, and before the awful tribunal of their countrymen lay their cause”. Such work continued to provide highly impersonal public information about war, but in its occasional reflection on personal experience, suffering and “feelings” it suggested that sentimental responses had a role in disseminating information about war and encouraging support for Britain’s armies.

Whilst sentimental elements were included in military memoirs published throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, there was something remarkable about the flood of such writing from the Peninsular War. When Napoleonic France invaded Spain and Portugal in 1808, there was an enormous outpouring of popular enthusiasm within Britain for a military intervention to assist the Spanish and Portuguese resistance. A military force was rapidly despatched from Britain to Portugal and many commentators felt that the nation had at last become truly united in its enthusiasm for the war against France. Looking back on the start of the war from 1815, Robert Southey observed in the Quarterly Review that when the Spaniards and Portuguese rose simultaneously against their oppressors ... [t]he feelings of the British people were forcibly appealed to, and they were universally excited. The war, which had hitherto been carried on firmly

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64 Anonymous, A Narrative of the Expedition to and the Storming of Buenos Ayres, by the British Army, Commanded by Lieutenant General Whitelocke. By an Officer Attached to the Expedition (Bath: Printed by William Meyler, 1807), 30 and 13.
65 Ibid., 36.
indeed, but almost without object, or prospect however distant of its termination, assumed at once a new character.\textsuperscript{67}

Southey was far from the only commentator to hold such views, with Peter Spence observing that “[s]upport for the Spanish swept through London, from the highest to the lowest in society, as day by day, news arrived of the continuing success of the Spanish insurrection”.\textsuperscript{68} Admittedly, this enthusiasm was met with dismay shortly after the British landing in Portugal. Although the British army defeated the French forces at the battle of Vimeiro in August 1808, and all but liberated Portugal, the victory was followed up by the signing of the enormously controversial Convention of Cintra later that same month.\textsuperscript{69} The convention allowed the French army safe passage back to France in British naval vessels rather than ensuring that they were taken into Britain as prisoners of war. A public inquiry was set up to examine the event, with considerable controversy raging in Britain over these proceedings. Yet even here, the public’s response was as equally startling, the “popular outrage” being as widespread and unexpected as the initial rejoicing.\textsuperscript{70}

In part, the Peninsular War can be seen to have inspired a greater number of military memoirs simply because of this enormous public interest, but, so too, these events appear to have been widely associated with elements of a distinctly modern culture of war, in which questions of national liberty in terms of the “defense of virtue” took centre stage. A key element in the rhetoric surrounding Britain’s entry into the campaign was a heightened sense of the army as a national army and the war as a popular, or people’s war, even though the army that embarked for the Peninsula was a small, professional force, that appeared little changed from earlier conflicts.\textsuperscript{71} Russell observes that by the later war years there was an increasingly pronounced emphasis on the professional ethos of the military, as an earlier and more “theatrical” culture of aristocratic war collapsed in the face of a serious, modern culture of war


\textsuperscript{68} Spence, The Birth of Romantic Radicalism, 64.

\textsuperscript{69} For a summary of these events, see Charles Esdaile, The Peninsular War: A New History (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 96-103.

\textsuperscript{70} Spence, The Birth of Romantic Radicalism, 79.

that was widely considered to be a conflict for national survival.\textsuperscript{72} Beset by invasion scares through the early 1800s, and finding itself alone in its war with an ever-expanding and belligerent French Empire, the nation was turning to a professional military who were coming to be perceived, at least in part, as citizen-soldiers. J. E. Cookson goes further to suggest that reading these memoirs may have served, at some level, as a replacement amongst the middle classes for involvement in Britain’s volunteer movement.\textsuperscript{73} It may be noted that the proliferation of writing on the Peninsula campaigns from 1809 coincided with the fact, as Colley reports, that “the volunteer corps were savagely cut back after 1808”, in large part because such forces were seen as being too amateur to be useful in war.\textsuperscript{74} At some level a replacement for volunteering and other forms of popular service amongst Britain’s middle classes, these texts represented an attempt to both respond to and to directly foster sympathy with a national army that was now almost entirely remote from the British civilian reader.

Writing on the war in his \textit{Letters on the Spaniards} (1809-10), Samuel Taylor Coleridge pointed to this affective relationship between the army and those at home when he reflected that the public mind had “an amiable jealousy for the character, and a keen sympathy with the sufferings, of the gallant Officers and soldiers to whom the execution of the plan was committed”.\textsuperscript{75} Similarly, William Wordsworth insisted in \textit{The Convention of Cintra} (1809) that when the British army travelled to fight the French in the Iberian Peninsula, every soldier took with him “not only the virtues which might be expected from him as a soldier, but the antipathies and sympathies, the loves and hatreds of a citizen – of a human being – acting, in a manner hitherto unprecedented under the obligation of his human and social nature”.\textsuperscript{76} This unprecedented recognition of the “sympathy” between the soldier and the citizen, saw both Coleridge and Wordsworth justify speaking on war from the

\textsuperscript{74} Colley, \textit{Britons}, 312.
position of a “private individual”. Recognition of this sympathy similarly encouraged the emergence of an enormous outpouring of writing from military officers who had accompanied the army on the Peninsula campaign. Officers such as Adam Neale, James Ormsby, James Carrick, Robert Porter, William Bradford and H. Milburne, along with others who have remained anonymous, all published accounts in 1809 of their experiences campaigning with the army. More such accounts followed in the final years of the war, such as narratives by Peter Hawker, R. Mayne, Henry MacKinnon and Andrew Blayney and in the immediate post-war period by Samuel Broughton, James Hope, George Cumberland, William Graham and John Daniel. Through this work, the soldier entered into the public sphere to speak on public events through his status as an eyewitness and a private citizen. A far more sentimental vision of war thus emerges than had been the case with earlier military memoirs. Memoirs in the impersonal style certainly continued to be published, such as Sir John T. Jones’s *Account of the war in Spain and Portugal, and in the south of France, from 1808 to 1814* that appeared soon after the war in 1818, but such texts were increasingly marginalized by more personal accounts of military service.

The authors of these memoirs repeatedly stated that they were entering into print because of what they regarded as the enormous historical and public importance of the Peninsular War. They saw themselves describing “momentous scenes”, or events which would prove to be forever memorable in the “annals of England”. Viewing their work as the record of public events, they frequently either offer details from official despatches to inform and legitimate their accounts of battles, provide official information and documentation in their appendices, or recount the historical events that led up to and which thus contextualised their own personal narratives. Ormsby, for instance, argues that “I have availed myself of the official accounts” in his descriptions of the battles of Rolica and Vimiero. These authors frequently pause in their narratives to debate aspects of the campaign,

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77 Ibid., 369.
particularly questioning the controversy surrounding the Spanish commitment to the war effort. Their works are thus clearly positioned in conjunction with official documents, and as a response to the enormous public enthusiasm for information about the war. Broughton’s assertion that his work was published due to “the lively interest recently taken in every thing relating to the countries through which he passed,” or the claim of the editor of MacKinnon’s posthumous journal that it appeared due to the “interest excited by the great Contest in which the unhappy Countries are engaged” were typical of the rationales presented for the publication of these works.\(^{80}\)

One of the most striking elements of these memoirs, however, is the extent to which the narrators describe themselves as lacking any formal understanding of warfare. Far from proclaiming his authority to write on war, Daniel, for instance, described himself as a “Mr Newcome”, contemporary slang for an inexperienced or young soldier, whilst Broughton insisted that he “has studiously avoided giving any information, or expressing any opinion, upon military affairs”. Ormsby similarly declared that he was a “novice” at war.\(^{81}\) As discussed above, earlier military memoirs sought to reproduce an official view of war that delineated important aspects of military strategy and detailed the movements of the army as a whole. These Peninsular War memoirs, however, define their personal viewpoint in direct opposition to such a formal or official view of military events. Broughton conceded that his mind was “unaccustomed to view things in a military point of view”, whilst Ormsby self-consciously distinguished between his personal perspective of events and what he terms the “military view”.\(^{82}\) Bradford even offered an illustration of the town of Torres Vedras after having observed that it was now “of little importance”

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from a “military point of view”. That said, a “military view” is not entirely absent from these memoirs, but it assumes a far less central location in the narrative and, indeed, the memoirists almost all register an uneasiness about their ability to provide relevant information about military events. Highly conscious of a divide between the public and the private, they repeatedly draw attention to their writing as private reflections that were never intended for a public audience; it is only the enormous interest shown by the public in the war, they claim, which has prompted them to publish their accounts. Neither a military authority nor a professional identity as an author is assumed. They offer their writing as a form of public service rather than recognisably presenting it as a commercial venture. Ormsby thus pleads an apology “for the descriptions of places, and remarks on manners” because he believed that “though they might be gratifying to private friendship, may not be thought worthy of being submitted to the public”. Hope likewise published a collection of letters originally intended for his grandmother and Mackinnon’s posthumous Journal was prefaced by comment that the work was never intended to stray beyond the “Eyes of Relatives”, rather being “published for the Benefit of Three infant Boys, who are deprived of the valuable Assistance of a Father”. These narrators no longer simply assume a privileged authority for discussing military matters that can be seen in earlier military memoirs.

In addition, rather than producing a distinctly soldier’s writing, the narratives often provide a record of the experience of the ordinary gentleman traveller. They detail their personal encounters with the scenery and local inhabitants and relate intimate details of their journeys that principally focus on the hardships and miseries attendant on campaigning at war and marching with the army. Carl Thompson argues that the genre of Voyages and Travels was enormously influential in this period, particularly through strands of writing associated with the suffering

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84 They could even be said to occupy a similar status as women writers of the period who similarly lacked a recognisably public role as authors.
85 Ormsby, An Account of the Operations of the British Army, iv.
86 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 5.29 (1819) 549; and MacKinnon, A Journal of the Campaign in Portugal and Spain, v-vii.
The shipwreck narrative and captivity narrative, Thompson asserts, constitute whole subgenres of writing that are “organized around the sufferings of travellers”. In many ways the military memoirs were similarly organized around such experiences of the traveller’s hardships. Discussing a night march with the army, for instance, Neale concluded, “[t]he night was misty and excessively dark, and it froze severely. Nothing could be more dreary and unpleasant. The deserted streets of Valencia sent back a thousand echoes to every challenge of our sentries. I never was more tempted to regret my destiny than at this moment”. Burroughs described his entire experience of campaigning as “months of toil”. Even Ormsby, who suggested that his experience “resembled rather a tour than a campaign”, reflected on the “confusion and misery” that attended marching with the army on campaign. A certain generic indeterminacy emerges from these military memoirs. They introduce stories of the suffering traveller into the traditions of the impersonal military memoir, and thus establish a view of war that draws on both civilian and military perspectives.

In these memoirs, therefore, the personal experience of war is largely viewed through “novice” or civilian eyes and war itself emerges as something foreign and discomforting for the individual. The brief Waterloo campaign (1815) also saw the publication of numerous eyewitness accounts, such as James Simpson’s *A Visit to Flanders, in July, 1815* (1815) and John Scott’s *Paris Revisited, in 1815, by way of Brussels* (1816), that are remarkably similar in style to the more personal campaign narratives emerging from the Peninsular War. The accounts of Waterloo typically blend information derived from official reports with personal reflections on

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88 Ibid., 15.
landscapes, travelling and scenes of war’s horrors, such as the sight of wounded soldiers after the battle of Waterloo. But rather than being produced by soldiers, these accounts were almost wholly written by civilians, “British travellers” who had “rushed to the battlefield” immediately after the campaign ended. An interest in travelling to war had been a feature of British culture in earlier years; the anonymous author of The Art of War (1707) claimed to be publishing his book because of the enormous public interest in the “bloody wars” that were then raging across Europe, offering advice for the gentleman travelling to war. This advice, however, relates to the most appropriate codes of conduct that a traveller needs to take account of in interactions with his military superiors and inferiors. War does not provide an inherently unfamiliar or miserable experience and the gentleman travelling to war, the author assumes, simply partakes in an extension of aristocratic sociability. In stark contrast, the narratives of Waterloo and the Peninsular War see the gentleman traveller encounter forms of suffering and an experience of travelling that are fundamentally removed from normal, civilian life. As Thompson suggests, images of the “suffering traveller” were widely deployed in Romantic period travel writing in order to acknowledge the traveller as someone who had rejected the “comforts of the modern world” (though he does not consider military narratives at all in his study).

In these narratives of the Peninsular War and Waterloo, war appears as something radically other to the comforts of the modern world and ordinary civilian society. At the same time, these texts offer a perspective that assumes a fundamental connection between the reader and the suffering traveller at war, providing a “novice” picture of war that aligns with the perspective of the middle-class gentleman at home. By presenting themselves as suffering travellers and offering a sentimental view of war, the soldier narrators of the Peninsular War memoirs were thus invoking a shared sympathy between the separate worlds of the soldier and the civilian.

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92 For a brief analysis of these accounts of Waterloo, see Philip Shaw, Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination (Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 67-78.
94 The Art of War. In Four Parts. Containing, I. The Duties of Officers of Horse. II. Of Officers of Foot. III. Of a Soldier in General. ... IV. The Rules and Practice of War by All Great Generals; ... Written in French by Four Able Officers of Long Service and Experience, and Translated into English by an English Officer. Illustrated with Several Copper Cuts. (London: Printed, and sold by J. Morphew, 1707), [n.p.].
95 Ibid., 120-30.
96 Thompson, The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination, 273.
Underlying the records of suffering in the Peninsular War military memoirs it is possible to detect an emphasis on the valour and humanity of the British army. Reflection on the soldier’s suffering serves to render him a sympathetic figure to the civilian reader. Commenting, for instance, that “the fatigues endured by the troops was [sic] incredible”, Milburne concluded his narrative by focusing on the heroic suffering and fortitude of soldiers in defending the nation: “the performance of the arduous and unprecedented severe service in which the army was engaged in Spain, must inspire the firmest conviction, that Great Britain yet possesses the power of arresting the career of Buonaparte”. Frequently too, these memoirs reflect on the suffering Spanish and Portuguese civilians, particularly on the cruelties inflicted by the French army. Burroughs, for instance, claimed that the French retreat from Portugal in 1811 was “marked with all that cruelty and savage ferocity inflicted upon the helpless peasants, that the most depraved imagination could exhibit”, echoing the “atrocity stories” that were “a hallmark of anti-Napoleonic propaganda”. Such reflections on war’s miseries helped to further establish the moral certitude of the British war effort.

But the alignment of military and civilian identities at work in these texts was not entirely stable. More so than the accounts of Waterloo written by civilian travellers, the military memoirs constantly threaten to produce an “excess sentiment” in the reader by collapsing an abstract view of the stoical soldier into a figure of the soldier as a suffering, individual traveller. Despite exhibiting a patriotic tenor and serving as a reflection on “the strength and spirit of a British army”, these memoirs could thus also reproduce war as an utterly horrific experience. Milburne describes how, during the retreat to Corunna, he encountered a woman accompanying the army who entered into labour on the march: “[a] most distressing object attracted my notice during this day’s march, which powerfully awakened my sensibility, and occasioned deep and sincere regret that I had not the means of effectually relieving”. Elsewhere, he lamented that “words are inadequate to depict

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97 Milburne, A Narrative of Circumstances Attending the Retreat of the British Army, 32 and 112-13.
98 Burroughs, A Narrative of the Retreat of the British Army from Burgos, xxix.
99 Haywood, Bloody Romanticism, 92-95.
100 Shaw views these later Waterloo accounts as largely keeping at bay the horrors of war through the aesthetic distancing of the picturesque. See Shaw, Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination, 73-78.
101 Ormsby, An Account of the Operations of the British Army, 188.
the scenes of distress which every moment presented themselves to notice. After witnessing the battle of Vimeira, Ormsby states, echoing Wordsworth, “the still small voice of humanity led me to the hospitals”, where the sight of the wounded “affected me deeply. They were principally young men, and delicate”. Such an inclusion of personal or sentimental reflection produced texts that might emphasise sympathy with soldiers, but which could also, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, simply appal the soldier and reader with an account of war’s utter brutality. This generic instability accounts for why these memoirs were, at times, met with a strong degree of resistance from the reviews and other commentators, as outlined below and in more detail in Chapter Two. Both writers and readers could perceive a profound tension and disharmony between the individual story of war and the official state centred historical narrative that military memoirs had traditionally conveyed.

The Private Soldiers’ Military Memoir

However much these military memoirs may have sought to cultivate sympathy between a civilian audience and the military, there were limitations to how much this sympathy might extend to the common soldier. The memoirs that emerged in the wake of the Peninsular War were largely directed towards that class of reader who identified with the gentleman military officer, and not his common counterpart. Whilst these works typically encourage a sympathetic response to the army as an aggregate whole, individual private soldiers were still mostly ignored and the memoirists display a repeated concern with the conduct of the common soldiers who could, at times, be seen to possess a “wanton barbarity”. As numerous historians have shown, common soldiers were still widely regarded in the culture of the period with fear and contempt, typically being viewed as petty criminals or licentious drunkards. Nonetheless, gradual changes took place in the period in how the soldier was apprehended in British society as the widespread volunteer movements and the overall demands of war meant that the soldier came to be viewed as an important contributor to the national defence. Coupled with the increasing interest of the reading public in accounts of the personal experience of war, such developments

102 Milburne, A Narrative of Circumstances Attending the Retreat of the British Army, 27 and 36.
104 Ibid., 92.
helped to make stories of soldiering far more appealing to a national print market. In
the immediate post-war period, a significant number of military memoirs written by
private soldiers began to appear in the British press.

During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, autobiographical
writing by rank-and-file soldiers maintained eighteenth-century traditions that
figured the soldier as a wayward and immoral rogue. Soldiering itself was widely
associated with a gross immorality and conditions of service in the army were
considered sufficiently harsh that only the poorest or most desperate men
contemplated becoming a soldier. To “go for a soldier” was widely considered a
mark of disgrace and an immoral abandonment of one’s family. Samuel Plummer
recorded in his memoirs, for instance, that having enlisted in the Twenty-second
Regiment of Foot, “I went to take leave of my unhappy parents, who were in much
distress on account of the step I had taken”. The soldier was associated with
criminality, idleness, drunkenness and swearing, and was thus in compelling need of
spiritual enlightenment. With private soldiers also lacking the necessary
qualifications or access to military information in order to compose campaign
narratives, any writing they produced largely conformed to the traditions of spiritual
autobiography and conversion narratives. Military officers also published conversion
narratives throughout the eighteenth century, but, as noted earlier, these works
constituted a very different tradition to campaign narratives and were only
incidentally concerned with the officer’s military life. Conversion narratives,
conversely, represent the dominant way in which private soldiers published accounts
of military service and war.

These attitudes towards the soldier are apparent, for instance, in an
autobiographical poem, written predominantly in the metre and stanza form of
popular ballads by the private soldier James Downing, and entitled A Narrative of
the Life of James Downing (a Blind Man) (1811). Prefacing the poem by pointing
towards an inherent connection between soldiers and sinning: “When blind in sin, I

stray’d from God, | And in the Army went abroad”

- Downing’s poem recounts his experiences as a soldier with the British army, drawing particular attention to the privations he suffered whilst on campaign in Egypt. Though the poem includes considerable reflection on his military service, along with a marked strain of anti-war rhetoric and reflection on war’s horrors as “cause for sympathy, | To ev’ry thoughtful mind”, it primarily details his spiritual re-awakening after he became blind, left the army, and returned home to eventually discover a renewed religiosity and release from his sinful ways.  

Writing his personal tale was, for Downing and his editor, principally viewed as relevant to the wider populace as an example of the reformation of the sinner, Downing concluding with the hope that his reader would be “Led to admire that matchless grace, | Which found out worthless me”.

In the possibly fictional *The Blind Soldier: An Authentic Narrative* (1818), published in the immediate post-war period, such concerns found a wider cultural resonance. Talking with the narrator, the eponymous soldier reflects on his life: 

“[m]y youth, sir, was spent in idleness and dissipation. I was too idle to work, and enlisted because I thought it the easiest kind of livelihood. Religion very seldom came into my thoughts”. The book reflects common assumptions about the soldier’s wayward behaviour, and in the soldier’s pitiful tale of suffering and eventual conversion, allows the narrator to present a particularly poignant example of how the dissolute sinner could achieve redemption. Such religiously-orientated writing about soldiers’ lives continued through the nineteenth century. Robert Butler’s *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant Butler* (1823) develops these religious themes in conjunction with an account of his military experiences, which produces a book his editor, John Brown, hoped might prove to be “useful for promoting the glory of God, as well as profitable and acceptable to his ‘dear readers’ – objects more precious, the Editor firmly believes, to his soul, ‘than thousands of gold and silver’”. The book was republished in 1850, having been, according to its editor,

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109 James Downing, *A Narrative of the Life of James Downing (a Blind Man) Late a Private in His Majesty’s 20th Regiment of Foot. Containing Historical, Naval, Military, Moral, Religious and Entertaining Reflections. Composed by Himself in Easy Verse, and Published at the Request of His Friends*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by J. Haddon, 1811), [n.p.].

Ibid., 40.

108 Ibid., 108.


"a general favourite wherever it was known; and was, and still is, I believe, in frequent request at the circulating libraries".  

Although these religious narratives were the most common way in which soldiers’ life writing appeared in the early years of the nineteenth century, there were other traditions of writing that at times had seen soldiers emerging as autobiographical authors, mostly through subgenres of the suffering traveller’s tale, which included captivity narratives, accounts of shipwrecks and other forms of extraordinary adventure. Examples of the latter include An Affecting Narrative of the Extraordinary Adventures and Sufferings of Six Deserters from the Artillery on the Garrison of St. Helena, in the Year 1799 (1802), or tales of cross-dressing female soldiers, such as The Life & Extraordinary Adventures of Susanna Cope, the British Female Soldier, etc. (1810). Relating the soldier’s “extraordinary adventures”, these works shared a similarity with the traditions of the soldiers’ spiritual autobiography in so far as they presented soldiers who were, like the religious convert, in some way exceptional, such as the cross-dressing “female soldier” Susanna Cope, and whose experiences, therefore, lay outside the ordinary experience. The immediate post-war period, however, saw the emergence of memoirs that were, instead, simply focussed on the ordinary experience, and in particular the suffering, of rank-and-file soldiers in Britain’s European wars. War itself was now coming to constitute an extraordinary event that the soldier might witness for the reader and a new kind of soldier’s tale was developing that allowed the reader to focus on an account of the experience of ordinary military life.

Whilst the more traditional, and mostly negative views, of soldiers still dominated British culture, a different set of attitudes towards the soldier can be seen as gradually emerging through the war years. Betty Bennett has shown that one of the most remarkable shifts in the poetry of the Romantic period was the emergence of a significant body of war poetry, which, whether pro- or anti-war, highlighted the efforts of the common soldier in the defence of the nation. As Bennett observes of these texts:

In their efforts to enhance the role of the common man as soldier and citizen, they glorified the image of the individual ... the epithets once reserved only for officers of the army and navy were applied to ordinary fighting men. They were ennobled not only in their military role, but given credit for excellent, albeit rough, intelligence and sensitivity as well.¹¹⁶

The memoirs written by officers at times demonstrated some interest in the character and behaviour of the common British soldiers, echoing this sense of the soldier as possessing feelings and sensitivity. In his account of the Peninsular War, Hope, for instance, made an appeal to sympathetic humanity when he reported how, after an engagement with the French, he had witnessed one soldier “occasionally bending over the lifeless trunk of one of his comrades, and now and then wiping away the salt tear as it trickled down his furrowed cheek”.¹¹⁷ This sympathetic attitude towards the common soldier was reflected in the paternalistic attitudes towards military discipline that were playing a role in army reforms. Sir John Moore pioneered new training methods for British soldiers in the early 1800s that helped, over time, to forge a new ethos of discipline within the army. Moore sought to educate the soldier’s mind as well as physically training and disciplining his body.¹¹⁸ The Duke of York was also widely regarded as having introduced changes through the early years of the nineteenth century, which brought a higher moral tone to the army. Before his intervention, at least one commentator argued, the “soldiery were a mass of gross and beastly vice”.¹¹⁹

The publication of the Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First in 1819,¹²⁰ discussed in detail in Chapter Four, was a particularly pivotal moment in the development of military memoirs through this period, helping to redefine such work as the narrative of a common soldier. Telling the story of one private soldier’s experiences, principally through the Peninsular War, the Journal became an enormously successful book, selling over 3000 copies. It was highly influential on

¹¹⁷ James Hope, Letters from Portugal, Spain and France During the Memorable Campaigns of 1811,1812, & 1813; and from Belgium and France in the Year 1815 (London: T and G. Underwood, 1819), 79.
¹¹⁹ London Magazine 7 (1827), 197.
the subsequent development of autobiographical stories of soldiering through the period. To some extent framing the soldier’s tale within the broad generic conventions of the story of the suffering traveller, it also developed a vision of the returned soldier that drew upon this sentimental interest in the common soldier’s hardships. A number of similar narratives by soldiers (and more by sailors) followed in the wake of the success of the *Journal*, including the *Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier* and *The Journal of Samuel Plummer, A Private in the 22d. Regiment of Foot*, both published in 1821, *A Journal of the Voyages and Travels, by the Late Thomas Rees* in 1822, *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant Butler* and *A Narrative of the Military Adventures of Samuel Wray* in 1823, and *Recollections of an Eventful Life Chiefly Passed in the Army and Journal from the year 1809 to 1816 by William Wheeler, a Soldier of the 51st or King’s Own Light Infantry* in 1824.121

According to the editors of *The Autobiography of the Working Class* around one third of all autobiographical works published by labouring-class individuals from the early years of the nineteenth century were military or naval autobiographies, many of which, like the *Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First*, led to “a re-valuation of the role of the common serviceman”.122

To a certain degree these texts still deferred to a religious framework, exhibiting traces of the spiritual autobiography, just as earlier private soldiers’ memoirs had also included a certain amount of explicit reflection on military events. What had changed, however, was that the soldier’s tale was now being produced simply as a reflection on the soldier’s experience of military service, with little concern for questions of the soldier’s personal moral character. J. S. Eskelith, the editor of Eli Gill’s *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Eli Gill* (1826), for instance, reflected on the rationale for publication of Gill’s memoirs by arguing

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that the history would not be of a moral character, as the life of the subject might be virtuous or criminal, but that it would be limited to a detail of his sufferings and dangers as a soldier. And as in the capacity of a soldier Eli visited the principal nations and cities in Europe, therefore his adventures cannot be devoid of interest and entertainment. Also I conceived it right to contribute my quota towards relieving an old infirm veteran from poverty and toil, after so much suffering, fatigue and want; and to give my neighbours an opportunity of displaying their liberality and kindness, to a man who endured hardships not for himself only, but for his friends and country.123

The editor acknowledges that what had traditionally constituted the rationale for publishing writing about a soldier’s life was its capacity to serve as a “moral” example to the reader. Here, however, the editor emphatically seeks to realign such a rationale by drawing attention to the value of reading about the experiences, suffering and travels of the soldier, detached from his personal “moral character”. Eskelith instead positions Gill as an object of sentimental pity, “an old infirm veteran”, although he also implies that the story could be read as an interesting and entertaining adventure in its own right, whilst emphasising a patriotic dimension in the fact that the story showed the soldier’s hardships in the service of his “friends and country”.

As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the idea of the private soldier as having this kind of validity in the service of the nation was controversial, and the upsurge in private soldiers’ memoirs after the Journal was later eclipsed by more patriotic and adventurous tales of war by junior ranking officers. Indeed, private soldiers’ memoirs, most notably the Journal, could be published precisely in order to offer the viewer insight into the soldier’s miseries and his unfair treatment at the hands of those in authority. Yet such work undoubtedly had some role to play in the overall development of affective ties between the army and the civilian population, asking a middle-class reading public to sympathise with the exploits and adventures of the nation’s soldiers. Corelli Barnett argues that it was not until the Cardwell reforms in the 1870s that changes in army management and a wider inclusion of the labouring classes in the life of the nation came together, meaning that “[t]he gulf of sympathy

123 Eli Gill, A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Eli Gill, a Private in His Majesty’s 52nd Regiment of Light Infantry, Containing an Account of His Journies in Denmark, Portugal, Spain, France &C. With a Description of Twenty Five Battles in Which He Was Engaged, and the Principal Cities Which He Visited, from the Bombardment of Copenhagen until the Battle of Waterloo. Extracted from His Own Journal, ed. [The editor’s preface signed: J. S.] (Barnard Castle: Thomas Clifton, 1826), v.
between army and nation was at last nearly closed". As soldiers were increasingly associated with reformed disciplinary practices and a presence in print culture, so they were increasingly coming to occupy a more important status within the nation. The military memoirs of the Napoleonic Wars thus have an important role in prefiguring the later developments that Barnett identifies. Reviewing one private soldier’s memoirs, The Young Rifleman’s Comrade (1826), the London Magazine conceded that “even those persons who look with the greatest distrust on the general education of the people, must be grateful for the pleasure it may afford, when common soldiers are the authors of such a book as this”.

The Reception of the Peninsular War Memoir, 1809-1825

Whilst the narratives of soldiering that appeared in Britain following the Peninsular War continued in many ways to reflect the campaign narratives that had traditionally appeared in the wake of British military campaigns, they also introduced personal elements into the military memoir, which were distinctly modern. In particular, the emergence of private soldiers’ accounts of their war experience radically altered the genre of military memoirs, giving a new visibility to the role and importance of the common soldier in war. Though these memoirs were typically written as a celebration of Britain and its military prestige, they could challenge or disrupt more formal historical accounts of the war. Such narratives, with their focus on military suffering and their potential to be construed as anti-war narratives, could be politically controversial. One anonymous author saw eyewitness accounts as a challenge to the more formal governmental reporting of the war effort, by refuting “many incorrect statements which have been offered to the Public, through the Journals of London”. In The Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire (1810), Captain Charles Pasley argued for the need for a comprehensive account of the war because the personal views that were appearing could distort the information the public received about it. He described accounts by

125 London Magazine N.S.4 (1826), 267.
126 Anonymous, Operations of the British Army in Spain: Involving Broad Hints to the Commissariat, and Board of Transports; With Anecdotes Illustrative of the Spanish Character. By an Officer of the Staff, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by J. Dennett, Leather Lane, Holborn; for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, Paternoster Row, 1809), 17.
British officers published in the wake of the early Peninsula campaigns as “jarring” and insisted that they produced “contradictory inferences”. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the Duke of Wellington, and even Coleridge, similarly complained about the potentially detrimental effect that the public circulation of personal accounts of the war could have on the nation’s war effort.

Sentimental military memoirs situated individual responses to war alongside impersonal narratives of public events, producing a mixture of public and private reflections that sat uncomfortably with many reviewers. They were widely viewed as representing an inferior kind of historical narrative and reviewers repeatedly expressed their concerns as to whether they had any real value or interest for the public. As the Quarterly Review stated, “[t]he accounts of eyewitnesses are always valuable: but ... must always be considered as subordinate to the labours of the professed historian”. A reviewer in the Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine posed the question as to how “any works which narrate events of such interest and importance as those of the late war should in general be so intolerably dull”, and concluded that it was largely because

[s]uch a writer is for ever heralding the exploits of his own little squad or battalion, recounting his achievements on out-piquet, and disgusting us, who care nothing about him, with some story of a rifleman sending a bullet through his thick legs, or a lancer breaking his sabre on his still thicker skull.

History, the reviewer believed, was aligned with events of a more general importance, and should be recorded within the larger framework of the traditional, impersonal historical narrative. The reviewer concluded “who, for instance, could for a moment tolerate a picture of Waterloo, in which the chief figure was Lieutenant McIntosh of the 79th, or Captain Augustus Polidore Brumme of the Royal Scotch Fusiliers?” By assuming the role of an eyewitness and by placing himself within the narrative, the officer had become an egotist, his personal narration displacing events of a public importance. Such work was, according to Blackwood’s, haunted with the “demon of dullness” and images of Colonel Jackson’s “right whisker and

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127 C.W. Pasley, The Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire: By C.W. Pasley, Captain in the Corps of Royal Engineers, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by A.J. Valpy, Took’s Court, Chancery Lane; For Edmund Lloyd, Harley Street, 1811), vi.
128 Quarterly Review 2.3 (1809), 204.
129 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 9.50 (1821), 180.
130 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 9.50 (1821), 180.
three of his grinders”. Where the perspective on war was focussed too closely on the individual, its meaning could be potentially distorted, confronting the reader with a discomforting and grotesque corporeality.

By atomising war to this degree and disabling a larger, controlling perspective, these works could resonate with the period’s anti-war sentiments. Reviewing Hope’s *Letters from Portugal, Spain and France*, the Eclectic Review asserted that the book’s value derived from the fact that it introduced the horrifying particularity of war:

There is something indescribably grand and impressive in the aspect of field manoeuvres, – in the simultaneous and systematic movements of immense bodies of men arrayed in all the splendour of warlike appointment and decoration. Even the deadly fight, with its disastrous and appalling circumstances and consequences, presents itself to the mind, invested with nearly all that is interesting and admirable in the intense exercise of skill, valour and exertion. It is no wonder, then, that with these bright features of the royal game – and these are all that ministers and martialisists voluntarily reveal – set before us, we are apt to forget that its real character is to be derived from the fearful but unnoticed details; from the fatigues and privations of the march, the languor of the halt, the miseries of the bivouac, the dreadful casualties of the battle, and the agonies of the hospital. For these we must look to a different class of chroniclers; to men who, without the excitements and the alleviations which elevated rank accumulates around itself, have mingled as privates or subalterns in the business of war, have felt its bad passions and its demoralizing influences, have revelled in its low malignities, been maddened by its ferocious instigations, and have writhed under its bodily tortures.\(^{132}\)

The Eclectic Review had adopted a pronounced anti-war position, conducting as John Hayden suggests, “an almost single-handed campaign against the glorification of war”. Thus its response to Hope’s account was not necessarily typical. Nonetheless, the Review’s comments show how the personal perspective of war provided by these military memoirs offered a potentially challenging view to that offered by “ministers and martialisists”, a view that rejected the idea of war simply as a “royal game”. For this reviewer, the traditional, impersonal views of war operated precisely to mask the “real”, and much less decorous, violence of war. Descriptions of the “bodies of men” in the aggregate that produced these “indescribably grand”

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\(^{131}\) *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 9.50 (1821), 180.

\(^{132}\) *Eclectic Review* N.S. 16 (1821), 422.

field manoeuvres, the reviewer argued, simply hide from sight the soldier’s own, tortured body. A more humble, bodily encounter with war’s sufferings could serve as an important corrective to visions of war as a theatrical display of power that cloaked war in impersonal, massive splendour.

The personal narratives of private soldiers or subaltern officers could, therefore, be considered “valuable”, but outside of such reflections on their potential to reveal war’s “real character” of suffering, these memoirs were typically viewed as an inferior version of military history. However much attitudes towards the soldier emphasized his status as a human and a citizen, he was still in many ways regarded as a “mere machine”, an inconsequential component of the army as a whole. It was, one reviewer reflected, “a mere vulgar error to suppose, that military men, from being present on the spot, are therefore better qualified to give an accurate account of the manoeuvres of an engagement”. The eyewitness accounts these memoirs provided could be engaging, but they could not surpass the general’s or historian’s official view of war. The Edinburgh Review saw the “Letters of Drs Neale and Ormsby” as only worthy of review “as books of Travel”, whilst the Quarterly Review similarly reflected the indeterminate genre of Hope’s Letters from Portugal, Spain, and France, by first listing them as a new publication under the heading “Voyages and Travels”, and then again under the heading “Military” in the very next issue. A review of Blayney’s Narrative of a Forced Journey through Spain and France hoped the book would include insights into the history of the wars, such as “remarks upon the internal state of France” or reflections on “the organization or spirit of the French army”, but lamented that we only learn of Blayney’s travels and that the book was mostly taken up with lengthy accounts of his dinners. Samuel Broughton’s work was likewise reviewed as a piece of travel writing because he had failed to “avail himself of several good opportunities of describing military movements at which he was present”. The reviewer thus asserts that “the praise of Mr. B. must be confined, in a great measure, to his delineation of local scenery and national manners”. Arguably, these men were presenting themselves as gentleman travellers as much as professional soldiers. Their memoirs provided less the view of

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134 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 9.50 (1821), 181.
135 Edinburgh Review 15.29 (1809), 201; Quarterly Review 21.42 (1819), 567; and Quarterly Review 21.43 (1819), 269.
136 Quarterly Review 14.27 (1815), 113.
137 Monthly Review 82 (1817), 164.
a citizen-soldier, than an uncomfortable amalgam of a private citizen’s views with a traditional and impersonal narrative of war that did not successfully constitute an interesting account. War was still, effectively, unrealisable to the private citizen and the personal narratives of those who had been to war were seen to be contributing little to wider public information about the nation’s military effort.

The memoirs of private soldiers’ were also at times examined in relation to historical narratives, but were considered as being of even more marginal historical significance than officers’ memoirs. The *London Magazine* concluded in its review of the *Recollections of an Eventful Life*: “a private soldier is not in a situation to give, from his own experience, a general account of a war. He sees nothing but detached incidents, and if he describes more he must rely upon newspapers and despatches – a task he had better leave to others”. The review acknowledged that the individual experiences of the private soldier could be read as an exciting story of “adventure and travel”, but it recognised that such stories tended to serve as a counter-narrative to official history, offering a correct reading of war’s miseries and the suffering of the individual soldier. The *London Magazine* thus concluded: “[i]f we had no other reason for recommending these little volumes, it would be sufficient that they will instruct unthinking people in the real nature of war and military glory”.

The magazine equally suggested, however, that the *Recollections of an Eventful Life* had received almost no attention from newspapers, reviewers or book clubs since it was published, indicating that a poor soldier’s tale held only modest interest, post-war, for the middle-class British reading public. Earlier, in 1816, the *Edinburgh Review* argued that the individual experiences of the soldier added little to our knowledge of a battle. Personal stories of war were, it concluded, tedious: “[w]e doze in listless languor, when the veteran fights his battles over again”. Serving as counter-narratives to war, and even exhibiting radical undertones, these books were not readily accepted into British literary culture in the immediate post-war period. The prodigious sales figures of the *Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First* suggest that these memoirs did possess more interest than the *London Magazine* supposed, a

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139 *London Magazine* 13 (1825), 365.
140 *London Magazine* 13 (1825), 375.
142 *Edinburgh Review* 27.53 (1816), 69.
point that will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four, but the significance of this interest was not reflected in the reviews. Through the later half of the 1820s, however, there was an increase in the commercial success and acceptance by the review periodicals of these personal military memoirs. Such work came to be established as an important means for commemorating the nation’s wars. The next chapter will thus consider exactly how British culture embraced what was previously viewed as a “tedious” and “jarring” form of narrative.
Chapter Two

“A Lively School of Writing”: The Military Author and the Commemoration of War, 1825-1835

In the early 1820s the enormous public interest in the topicality of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was beginning to wane. The wars continued, however, to be viewed as a significant event in British history, and at least one commentator identified, in 1823, a need for a “literary monument worthy of the holy cause, the stupendous exertions, and the splendid glories which it designed to commemorate.”1 During the 1820s a considerable body of soldiers’ writing emerged that broadly answered this appeal for a literary monument to commemorate the wars. Reviewers increasingly remarked, typically with some surprise, that they were witnessing an outpouring of personal accounts of war. Narratives of the Peninsular War remained central to this body of work, to the extent that by 1830 reviewers suggested that the British reading public must be in possession of everything there could be to know about the “personal history of the Wellington armies”.2 The military author had assumed a prominent position in British literature, with the soldier’s personal narrative forming a recognisable and commercially successful genre of writing identified at the time as the “military memoir”.3 These memoirs, it was widely believed, constituted a distinct and important new “class” of literature, a class that “every Englishman reads with pleasure”.4 In this chapter I provide an account of the development of this literature and the contemporary critical reception to it. This will give context for the later analysis of key individual texts in the second part of this thesis.

Historical Memory and the Memoir

For a wide section of “British intellectuals”, the end of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was seen as marking the emergence of peaceful civil society, or “modern liberalism”, out of a past associated with warfare and

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1 Quarterly Review 29.57 (1823), 54.
2 Monthly Review N.S.13.56 (1830), 534.
3 New Monthly Magazine 18 (1826), 97.
4 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres no.548 (1827), 468.
“historical conflict”. As Jerome Christensen states, the wars thus represented the “triumph of British liberty over Napoleonic tyranny and the advent of perpetual, commercial prosperity”. The sense of victory, progress, and political liberty that such thinking implied was not unquestioned after the war: William Hazlitt, for instance, regarded Waterloo as marking the defeat of liberty, whilst Shaw has examined the postwar “pervasive sense of unease”, as attention was focussed on uncertainties facing the nation’s future development. The wars had, however, formed a key element in the emerging historical consciousness of the British nation, Linda Colley viewing the wars as marking a culminating point in the formation of a distinctly British national identity. Indeed, for Anthony Smith the development of a historical memory of a nation’s wars is central to the formation of modern national identity. Smith observes that a “process of cementing a sense of national identity among the European participants”, through historical commemoration was a fundamental outcome of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Mobilizing the population for war, particularly in response to threats of invasion, had been vital for the British government during the conflict with France, such that “patriotic festivals” and various forms of “military spectacle” were common across Britain. Yet through the post-war period Britain’s governing elite

grew apprehensive of the political consequences of any such celebration of popular nationalism: Britain may have emerged victorious from the wars and attained a dominant and prestigious place in international European politics, but the internal political situation was far from stable. The end of the war led to an economic downturn and a resurgent radicalism, meaning, as Frank O’Gorman states, that “the return to peace in 1815 inaugurated a period of almost constant uncertainty, economic hardship, radical mobilization and popular unrest which lasted down to 1821”. Arguably, the widespread involvement of the population in the war effort had led to a much greater political participation. Post-war radicalism often associated recognition of military service with a demand for an extension of the franchise. Political tensions across the country were exacerbated by the fact that between 1815 and 1817, nearly a third of a million soldiers and sailors were discharged and returned to Britain. Many of these men were unable to find work and their presence helped to fuel the already widespread unemployment and social unrest. The government initially embarked upon commemorative efforts, such as issuing the Waterloo medal in 1815 to all soldiers who had participated in the battle and parliament debated whether to commemorate those who had served in the Peninsular War. By 1818, however, these plans were abandoned and no subsequent commemorative initiatives were contemplated; the Waterloo Bridge, opened in 1817, was the only contemporary national monument to the wars. As Colley observes, “as late as 1850 no outdoor state monument had been completed either to the duke of Wellington and the battle of Waterloo or to Nelson and Trafalgar”.

The muted commemorative efforts of the state reflected the British government’s desire to assert historical continuity, political stability and loyalty to

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the monarchy after the war. However, if we view the wars as marking the emergence and consolidation of civil society and a middle-class identity, then it is not surprising that the most concerted efforts to commemorate the war began to emerge from within the middle classes. Alison Yarrington has, for example, shown that a number of towns and cities across Britain, operating through "spontaneous local action" rather than any form of centralized governmental control, undertook schemes to commemorate the most notable heroes of the war, such as Nelson and Wellington. More pervasive commemorative practices can also be seen in such post-war activities as the establishment of annual dinners, or the naming of pubs and streets after British generals and battles. The wars were thus remembered as a "total" experience for the population in a way that was outside state control or influence.

This widespread sense of "the people's" involvement in the wars also produced changes that helped to establish a role for the more personal forms of military memoir in such commemorative efforts. As George Lukács famously argued, the involvement of European populations in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the mass mobilisation of nations for war, saw the emergence in the post-war period of a modern historical consciousness. The involvement of ordinary people in the wars had, therefore, encouraged a widespread belief that the individual was both a participant in a national history, and that his or her individual life was profoundly shaped by that history. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki argues in relation to these developments, "[t]he nation is thus seen as having a historical momentum which is intimately entwined with the private lives of the multitudinous human individuals of whom society is composed". Combined with the emergence of sentimental literature in the late eighteenth century, with its interest in the inner

19 Cookson, The British Armed Nation, 1793-1815, 251.
20 Yarrington, The Commemoration of the Hero, 1800-1864, 102-03.
experience of ordinary people, a new kind of historical sensibility was taking shape. History was no longer viewed simply as the exploits of great men, but was defined as something in which ordinary individuals could participate. Peter Mandler, for instance, insists that we can see modern forms of history and the growing nationalism of Britain develop together out of the experience of the Napoleonic Wars, as the people became the heroes of their own national history.\(^{25}\)

For Lukács, these changes were exemplified by the publication of Sir Walter Scott’s historical novels in the post-war period, beginning with *Waverley* in 1814. He argues that such a development represented a shift in history from “the retelling of great historical events, … [to] … the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events”.\(^{26}\) More recent commentary has, admittedly, downplayed the extent to which Scott’s novels represented a radical departure from earlier historical fiction.\(^{27}\) Mark Phillips has demonstrated at length that much of the shift towards the emphasis on a more sentimental, inward and social viewpoint of history, developed from the mid eighteenth century rather than as a response to the Scott phenomenon.\(^{28}\) Anne Stevens has argued that the period saw the publication of collections of letters, autobiographies and private memoirs that all ensured that personal and private details were increasingly utilised as significant insights into history.\(^{29}\) Greg Kucich similarly documents the significance of autobiographical forms of writing within shifting forms of historical consciousness, arguing that “[h]istory and memory intersect in various, complicated ways throughout the nineteenth century, especially

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\(^{26}\) Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 44.


in the rise of autobiographical discourses”. What can be taken from Lukács arguments, then, is that stories of the individual were coming to have a much greater relevance as forms of reflection on the nation’s history.

When Thomas Macaulay wrote his essay “History” in 1828, he reflected that “the writers of history seem to have an aristocratical contempt for the writers of memoirs” because ordinary details and accounts of individual experience were widely deemed “too trivial for the majesty of history”. Just such contempt characterised many of the early responses to the military memoirs that appeared during and immediately after the war. The personal elements of a military memoir were typically considered to be of limited relevance to a full and legitimate historical narrative of the nation’s wars. Approval of these narratives typically only originated from reviewers who valued the individual or eyewitness narrative of war precisely because it was set outside and against the official, impersonal history of war. The military memoir was typically only valued in so far as it exposed war’s corporeal miseries through representation of the soldier’s suffering. But writing in the wake of Sir Walter Scott’s historical novels, Macaulay asserted that the best writer of history produced something that reflected the attention to detail and imaginative interest of the memoirist. In order to establish an affectionate connection with history, the emphases of the memoirist were essential.

The individual story was thus coming to be a significant part of historical reflection. This enabled the military memoirs to play a role similar to Scott’s novels, by providing a sympathetic and imaginative association with a national history. The Quarterly Review argued that Scott’s historical novels were so interesting because they offered the “first-person narrative” of a battle. Observing that a narrative of a battle is normally written from “the common or historical” perspective, which adopts a distant viewpoint formed from multiple sources, the reviewer suggested that although the historical perspective affords information, such a narrative “can suggest no new image to the imagination”. It is the first-person narrative that can provide

32 Ibid., 273.
such an element, its value lying in “authenticity and power of creating sympathy”.

The military memoir and its individual narrative of war provided just such a sympathetic connection between the reader and the events described. Though the memoir was still distinguishable from more formal histories, the post-war period saw it operating as a much more effective, and affective, component of the historical narrative. Indeed, Morris-Suzuki proposes that we view historical commemoration as distinct from what she terms an “interpretive” historical narrative: the former represents an effort to forge an empathetic identification with a historico-national community. As the individual narrative increasingly came to be accepted as a legitimate element of a national history rather than a merely peripheral, personal account, so the sentimental military memoir was able to function as an effective commemoration of that history, no longer operating as a counter-narrative to war but taking a distinct place within the nation’s history.

The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review identified just such an importance for the military memoir in relation to the historical narrative in a review of The Young Rifleman’s Comrade (1826):

[h]istory has this in common with geography – the high and prominent and obtrusive features of her subject alone occupy her attention. It is to the traveller and to the memorialist that we are indebted for that information, which, if it be of a less dignified, is at least of a far more serviceable character to the individual than the records of its lofty compeer. The results of human machinery are laid before us by history; the engines themselves she regards with indifference, often with contempt; and her followers are but too apt to become her imitators in this respect, until the evils they overlooked or sneered at affect themselves.

Indepently, therefore, of the information to be derived from productions of the class to which that before us belongs, there is another, and we conceive an equally important benefit, which their publication confers upon mankind – that of keeping alive a spirit of humanity of an exceedingly perishable nature.

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33 Quarterly Review 26.51 (1822), 134. In a review entitled ‘Tales of Military and Naval Life’, The Edinburgh Review explicitly linked tales of military adventure with Scott’s historical novels, noting that they filled the same role as Scott’s fiction, but did so in relation to the nation’s more recent history. Edinburgh Review 52.103 (1830), 123. Richard Maxwell similarly detects a correlation between the historical novel and the fictionalised military memoir (discussed in my Conclusion) that developed through the later 1820s, Richard Maxwell, “The Historical Novel”, The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period, eds. Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65-87, 81.


35 Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review no.391 (11 November 1826), 712; my emphasis.
The military memoir could thus be seen to forge a sympathetic identification with the nation’s soldiers. But the importance of the memoir in a national history equally implied that the memoirist had to be a figure worthy enough to be recognised as a symbol of the “spirit of humanity”. Questions surrounding the “decorum” of a memoir remained crucial, and for personal tales of soldiering to function effectively as a document of public events they had to resonate with wider gentlemanly and masculinist notions of literary propriety. Accruing the status of an author was, therefore, critical in forging the soldier’s respectable, professional identity, thereby enabling the military memoir to unite the identities of citizen and soldier.

**Military History and the Author**

By the early 1820s literary commentators were noting the appearance in Britain of histories of the Napoleonic Wars by French generals and voicing their concern that Britain’s soldiers were doing nothing in a similarly way to preserve the memory of the wars. *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* noted that “the eagerness with which these works are translated and read in our language, is convincing and mortifying evidence of the utter incapacity of our military authors, since we are obliged to be indebted for the only tolerable records of our victories to the pens of our enemies”. The *Monthly Review* drew attention to the “truly painful” way in which British officers declined to compose accounts of the war, concluding “[t]hey are content with wresting the laurel crown from their Gallic competitors, and leave them the bays; so that after-ages will remain doubtful on many points, concerning which thousands of living witnesses are competent to decide.” Robert Southey’s *History of the Peninsular War* (1822) raised some hope of a suitably commemorative British history of the war, but many reviewers felt dissatisfied by his descriptions of military events. The *Monthly Review*, for instance, argued that his narrative was marred because he introduced too many romantic legends of Spain and Portugal and thus failed to provide sufficient attention to historical events: “Had it less of the fanciful in the stories of saints and mysteries”, the reviewer opined, “we should have assigned it to a much more favourable character than we now can”. The

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37 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 9.50 (1821), 181.
38 *Monthly Review* 90 (1819), 84.
reviewer in turn expressed regret that Southey was forced to write the history due to the “supineness of our military men; who have resigned to another the pen which they ought to have wielded during so long an interval of repose”. The Eclectic Review similarly commented that Southey’s history “has somewhat disappointed us... [i]n one of the most important features of his undertaking, the distinct description of military movements and manoeuvres, he has, in our apprehension, entirely failed”. Apparently, a writer such as Southey was “better qualified to write” than a military officer, but, lacking an intimacy with warfare, he remained “wholly ignorant of the events” that he described.

On the other hand, military authors were regarded as lacking proficiency as men of letters. Adam Neale’s Letters from Portugal and Spain (1809) was attacked by the Edinburgh Review for containing “some of the worst poetry, and the very worst drawings, we ever yet saw published”. The Quarterly Review likewise commented in a review of Andrew Blayney’s Narrative of a Forced Journey through Spain and France, as a Prisoner of War (1814) that Blayney himself, although a “goodnatured man, one who has a very honest John-Bull spirit”, lacked the necessary “literary qualifications” to emerge as an author.

Officers too were highly conscious of their own literary failings, frequently suggesting that their work needed to be excused as the literary composition of a mere soldier. Robert Ker Porter, for instance, stated that his Letters from Portugal and Spain (1809) was “narrated by a man who pretends to no better style than that learnt in camps”. Samuel Daniel Broughton similarly apologised in his Letters from Portugal, Spain, & France (1815), stating that he had “very slender claims only to literary merit”, and a reviewer in the Monthly Review condemned his work for its poor quality as a “literary composition”. Reviewing the poems of a heavy dragoon, Lieutenant Edward Quillinan’s Dunluce Castle (1814), Blackwood’s insisted that “[i]f there is

40 Eclectic Review N.S.20 (1823), 2.
41 Monthly Review 103 (1824), 48.
42 Edinburgh Review 15.29 (1809), 201.
43 Quarterly Review 14.27 (1815), 120 and 112.
45 Samuel Daniel Broughton, Letters from Portugal, Spain, & France During the Campaigns of 1812, 1813, & 1814, Addressed to a Friend in England: Describing the Leading Features of the Provinces Passed through, and the State of Society, Manners, Habits &C. Of the People (London: Longman & Co., 1815), iii; and Monthly Review 82 (1817), 160.
any principle in political economy set completely at rest, it is that of the advantages arising from the division of labour, of which such a proceeding would be a total violation. It is the duty of some men to fight battles, and the pleasures of others to sing them".46 Soldiers, it was firmly believed had little capacity as authors and the magazine elsewhere asserted: "[t]here exists but little connexion between Mars and the Muses; and it may reasonably be concluded, that Shakespeare would no more have proved a Wellington in the field, than Wellington could become a Shakespeare in the closet."47

Such comments belie the fact that there was, in fact, a long tradition of writing on military subjects by British officers. J. A. Houlding observing that Britain possessed a flourishing “Military Literary World” by the mid eighteenth century.48 As M. John Cardwell suggests, there existed an extensive market in mid eighteenth-century Britain for the “copious contemporary literature” of military manuals and histories. Such literature, moreover, had widely infused literary writing of the period, from poetry through to novels. Cardwell demonstrates that a novel such as Richardson’s Clarissa (1747-48), for instance, included numerous references to military terms and procedures, clearly presupposing that the reader has some familiarity with military textbooks.49 However, contemporaries appear to have been uncertain about the extent of this military literature, and by the end of the century military writing appears to have had a very low public profile. It was not uncommon for a reviewer to reflect in the 1780s that “only of late were military books published”, and even as late as 1809 the editor of Essays on the Theory and Practice of the Art of War (1809) stated that his book had been published due to the “proverbial scarcity of books on Military Subjects in the English Language”.50

46 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 4.23 (1819), 577.
47 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, 6.33 (1819), 292.
50 Quoted in Thomas Simes, A Portable Military Library, in Four Volumes Octavo: Containing, a System of the Art of War: ... Ornamented with Frontispieces, and Many Other Engraved Plates (London: Printed for the author; and sold by Bew, Becket, Debrett, Dodsley, Durham; [and 7 others in London], 1782), 199; and Essays on the Theory and Practice of the Art of War: Including the Duties of Officers on Actual Service and the Principles of Modern Tactics, Chiefly Translated from the Best French and German Writers, by the Editor of the Military Mentor, vol. 1 (London: Printed for Richard Phillips, Bridge-Street, Blackfriars, 1809), iii.
Hostility toward military authors in the early nineteenth century was, arguably, related to the circulation of military literature in what was increasingly recognised as a commercial and identifiably civilian “republic of letters”. The growing disassociation of civilian and military worlds through the later part of the eighteenth century helped to lend military writing an increasingly scientific and technical air that made it unfamiliar and dull to civilian tastes (in a way that, as Cardwell shows, it had not been earlier in the century). Indeed, modern civilian literature itself had, in many ways, developed from the 1770s as a product of the Enlightenment reaction against the barbarism of war, which meant that military literature had a questionable place in the domain of “civilised letters”.

The *Monthly Review*, for instance, suggested that warfare was the result of an ignorance that the spread of literature was bound to remedy. More generally, the values of a middle-class reading public were supposed to be antithetical to a predominantly aristocratic culture of war. The author of the *Strictures on Military Discipline* (1774) argued that although military officers were beginning to be more highly esteemed in Britain there was still little acceptance of the officer as an author:

> very few military books of merit have been published by British officers, probably from the same cause, the little regard paid to military men in England in time of peace, which discourages gentlemen of education, or learning, reading and experience, to employ their time in writing on a science which they have seen so much despised and neglected in their native country.

Military officers were not all aristocrats and, indeed, originated from a range of backgrounds. Armstrong Starkey notes, for instance, that “the majority of regimental officers” were “drawn from cadet branches of the aristocracy, professional families, and from among yeomen farmers ... [and] ... a wide spectrum of the well-enough educated and well-enough born”. But aristocratic ideals and forms of social behaviour prevailed among the officer class, and however much attitudes towards

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53 Quoted in Keen, ed., *Revolutions in Romantic Literature*, 5.


military officers were changing by the early nineteenth century, they were still widely associated with forms of aristocratic vice. They were, in particular, frequently presented as “luxurious or foolish” in late eighteenth-century literature and carried a reputation for being vain, idle and, above all, unlearned. Military officers were certainly considered gentleman, but they were also widely felt to lack the refinement, education and virtues that were essential requirements of the increasingly professional identity of the author. Vicesimus Knox, for instance, asserted in 1795 that whilst no profession could claim to be “so polite, in modern times, as the military”, such men lacked proper education and that “he will discover his defect, his want of education, whenever he is obliged to have recourse to his pen to communicate his knowledge”. The military profession had thus given rise to “many instances of illiterate fine gentlemen”. Penelope Corfield has also drawn attention to attacks aimed at the figure of the military officer in this period, arguing that “by contrast with the learned professions, the officers in the armed forces made bluffer targets for satire”. She notes too that “[a]bove all, however, it was agreed that the military man was a monotonous bore, endlessly talking about army life and past battles”. Such attitudes towards military officers are particularly significant given that gentlemanly “prestige” through the latter years of the eighteenth century was increasingly relating to an individual’s breadth and taste in reading.

Therefore, only where authorial talent and good taste were recognizable could a soldier’s writing be defended as wholly instructive and interesting to a wider public readership. Jane Austen claimed to have fallen in love with a soldier after reading Captain Charles Pasley’s Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire (1810), not simply for his display of patriotism, but equally for his


59 Penelope J. Corfield, Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850 (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 63.

60 Keen, ed., Revolutions in Romantic Literature, 18.
manly writing style and its associations of taste and virtue.\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine} similarly praised Captain Cooper’s \textit{Military Cabinet} (1809), written as a dictionary of military terms, as a “miscellany which will afford amusement and instruction to almost all classes of readers” by drawing attention to Cooper as “no doubt, a man of taste, observation, reading, and good sense”.\textsuperscript{62} This recognition of authorial taste and talent also informed one of the earliest reviews of a personal military memoir to see the narrative as having a national significance. \textit{Blackwood’s}, writing through the pseudonymous reviewer “Odoherty”, identified the “genius of the author” in James Hope’s \textit{Letters from Portugal, Spain and France during The Memorable Campaigns of 1811, 1812, & 1813} (1819), and praised his text as an important means for recording the “memorable occurrences” of the Peninsular War.\textsuperscript{63}

Odoherty argues that it is through Hope’s descriptive powers as an author that he is able to produce scenes filled with “interest and beauty”, scenes which are “brought home to our hearts and our imaginations”. He thus favourably compares Hope’s writing with that of the professional writer, by referring to the accounts of military history by both Southey and Scott, noting “[w]e have read, for instance, Mr Southey’s account of the battles in the Peninsula, and Mr Scott’s description of Waterloo, which have attracted, we believe, no small portion of the public admiration”. Such works, Odoherty argues, failed to engage the reader’s interest because they gave no attention to the more personal details of the campaigns: these writers dealt in “grand and sweeping descriptions” and could not provide “the fidelity of outline, and the minute touch” of a soldier. Even though “[t]hey have no objection to bestow a page on the wound of a general” they “altogether despise to mention the hardships of a subaltern”. Odoherty thus observes that “[l]ittle instruction, therefore, can be derived from the military works of a civilian, and we turn from them with an unsatisfied appetite to devour the more homely and true narration of the heroic sufferers themselves.” Reflecting the wider interest in memoir and more personal kinds of historical reflection that emerged in the wake of Scott’s historical novels, Odoherty in particular privileges Hope’s “homely and true”

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine} 34 (1809), 322.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine} 5.29 (1819), 548.
reflections on the personal suffering of the subaltern officer as being “sufficient to move every sympathetic bosom with compassion for the sufferer”. Hope’s work, in other words, serves to commemorate the war because his book can develop, through his authorial “genius”, an imaginative sympathy with the individual, suffering soldier. Hope thus emerges as a man with a “sensitive heart and tender imagination”, in whom Odoherty can detect “delicate and refined feelings”.

Odoherty’s claims about the value of the military author were still relatively uncommon in 1819, however. Blackwood’s even published a quite different review of the book alongside Odoherty’s, because the editors of the journal were at odds as to whether Hope’s narrative was deserving of attention at all. In the alternative review, the presumably pseudonymous Mr Tickler insisted that the book was so bad that it would reflect poorly on the reputation of the periodical if it were to publish Odoherty’s “absurd and exaggerated praises without contrast or counterbalance of censure”. Tickler argues “This, in a few words, Mr Editor, is one of the most silly and contemptible pieces of book-manufacture that ever fell in my way”, a contention that was largely due, he insists, to Hope’s incessant tone of complaint about the “little inconveniences of a martial life” and an “audaciously high opinion of himself” in relating his own story as a corrective or counter-narrative to the Duke of Wellington’s official accounts. He concludes, in some contrast to Odoherty, that Hope “possesses not any one talent which fits a man for being an author. He has not any power of observation to take note of what occurs in his presence ... [and] has evidently no knowledge either of the English or of any other language.” Any memorialising of the war had to be left to someone who possessed an author’s “professional skill”, and Tickler laments: “Enough of this red-coated author! I wonder what possess men in red coats to write so many books now-a-days. I am sure they have not, among them all, written a single good one”.

“The Romance of History” and the Subaltern Officer’s Memoirs

Although the personal details of soldiering were increasingly recognised as a significant element in an imaginatively interesting account of the wars, this interest could only be conveyed where a memoirist displayed a “genius” or “professional

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64 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 5.29 (1819), 548-49.
65 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 5.29 (1819), 552-53.
skill” as an author. The personal narrative could only build the reader’s imaginative sympathy with the soldier as a “heroic sufferer” in the nation’s wars if it demonstrated the author’s “refined feelings”. For the most part, as Tickler’s comments indicate, the military memoir was simply not viewed in this manner. The personal elements remained tedious and even embarrassing to a correct reading of a national history. It was only with the emergence of two books in the mid 1820s that a more approving view of the military memoir gained wider currency and the soldier’s personal story acquired relevance in the historical memory of the wars. These books were Moyle Sherer’s *Recollections of the Peninsula*, published in 1823, and George Gleig’s *The Subaltern*, a work that had been serialised in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1825 and published by Blackwood later that same year. Both works ran to numerous editions within a few years and were widely applauded in the review periodicals, as will be discussed below. They were also enormously influential on the development of the genre of military memoirs through the late 1820s and 30s.

What Sherer and Gleig brought to the production of their memoirs was an unmistakeable authorial “genius” that enabled their writing to be widely accepted in the reviews. Indeed, both men developed careers as professional writers, largely on the basis of the success of their memoirs, and they thus possessed precisely the “professional skill” that was otherwise felt to be lacking from the productions of the earlier incarnations of the military author. A full analysis of their writing and the ways in which they shifted the soldier’s tale away from the associations with the suffering traveller to focus on the aesthetic and pastoral pleasures of war, will be undertaken in Chapter Five. But if we turn briefly to the reception of both memoirs it is notable that where earlier reviews of military memoirs were typically written in a satirical vein and denigrated the soldier’s efforts to aspire to authorship, reviews of Sherer and Gleig unanimously celebrated the poetic quality of their writing. In the preface to his *Recollections*, Sherer deprecated his own writing as “beneath the notice of a scholar and the critic”, but it was argued by at least one reviewer that “[f]ew writers, indeed, who are not poets by profession, have the art of painting in words, with so much vividness and distinctness, the various objects which surround their view”. His work was seen to exhibit “the charm that attaches to the narrative

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of a young soldier, unaffectedly recalling the vicissitudes of a life which he loved". The *Quarterly Review* made similar claims about Gleig's descriptive powers in *The Subaltern*, reflecting on his authorial status as though he were responding to Wordsworth's dictum for composing poetry, picturing him reflecting imaginatively and in tranquillity upon the scenes he describes:

> the *quondam* subaltern, it may be easily imagined, looks back in a calm and contemplative mood to the scenes of violent excitement in which a part of his life was passed; his mind retraces them as it might the visions of some strange dream; it seems as if he even wrote minutely, in order to convince himself that he was not writing a fiction.

The *Monthly Review* similarly commended Gleig for his "vigorous and highly graphic pen" and his "modest and unpretending genius".

Widely ascribed marks of poetic genius, these works were also recognised as operating much like Scott's historical novels, creating imaginatively interesting associations with the history of the nation's wars. Just as the *Quarterly Review* observed the ability of Scott's first-person narrative of a battle to convey "authenticity and the power of creating sympathy", so Gleig and Sherer's writing was felt to have established an imaginative identification with the soldier and his experience of war. The *Monthly Review* remarked that *The Subaltern* provided an "animated" and "natural" picture of war, that allowed the reader to stand "side by side" with the subaltern himself. Sherer was similarly felt to have presented scenes of the Peninsular War as though it were "in a camera obscurca", allowing the reader to be transported imaginatively to the scene of conflict. Reviewers noted, in addition, that Gleig and Sherer's ability to provide distinct descriptions of war was accompanied by their personal reflections on the felt experience of soldiering. Accounts of their "personal identity and feelings" were offered to the reader, and their poetic writing style combined a soldier's enthusiasm with the refined sentiments of a gentlemanly author. As the *Quarterly Review* noted of Gleig's writing: "[h]e compels himself to record not only what he did but what he felt; and the delight which the kindest and noblest dispositions can take in employments

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68 *Quarterly Review* 30.59 (1823), 66.
69 *Quarterly Review* 34.68 (1826), 408.
73 *Quarterly Review* 30.59 (1823), 62.
productive of so much suffering and desolation is remembered in a spirit of sufficient sobriety”. Exhibiting the “the kindest and noblest disposition” as an author, Gleig’s writing brought the reader into contact with the “suffering and desolation of war” in a manner that was entirely pleasing to refined civilian sensibilities. Indeed *The Subaltern* thus combined the “mirth and lightheartedness of the young campaigner” with “a strain of serious enough reflection”. The *Quarterly* noted that the success of the book was likely because the “writer was only for a short time a soldier”. Rather than overpowering a reader with an “excess sentiment” of war’s horrors or boring him or her with its trivial details, Gleig’s writing ensured that the soldier’s personal story could be perceived as a display of noble qualities that united the citizen and the soldier. The *London Magazine* concurred that the author of *The Subaltern*, though a soldier, was “evidently a correct and elegant scholar, a man of sound sense and good feeling, combining the spirit of adventure and inquiry with unusual powers and accuracy of description” and was “well known to have been a gentleman by birth, by habit, and by education.” This pleasing mixture of refined civilian sensibilities and a soldier’s enthusiasm were equally associated with Sherer’s work, which similarly displayed “[h]is generous sentiments so well becom[ing] the English soldier and gentleman”.

Such writing was viewed as more interesting than the accounts of war provided by the historian because it enabled a sympathetic engagement with the soldier and his experience of war, offering a far more immediate and romantically pleasurable engagement with historical events than the traditional campaign narrative military memoir or work of history. When Sherer’s *Recollections* were reviewed alongside the more traditional memoirs of his fellow soldier Captain Batty, which were written as an impersonal campaign narrative, Batty was seen as being too scientific in his approach to writing for his work to be fully interesting to the “general reader”. The only real interest of the book was seen to derive from its accounts of the “intervals between his duties in the field”. As the *Quarterly Review* observed, he had

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74 Quarterly Review 34.68 (1826), 407-08.
75 London Magazine (1826), 501.
76 Quarterly Review 30.59 (1823), 62.
77 Quarterly Review 30.59 (1823), 62.
78 Quarterly Review 30.59 (1823), 63.
studded his volume with judicious and entertaining notices on the inhabitants, and on the sublime and picturesque features of the mountain regions in which he was quartered; and he has thus relieved much of the tedium attendant on the perusal of the mere military details of which his book is otherwise composed.

Compared to Batty’s “entertaining” remarks as the traveller, the military detail, related to the scientific world of the soldier, was tedious. It reflected the “dry, confused and uninteresting” reportage of an official despatch. Sherer’s work was in contrast seen to be coloured by a romantic love of his profession in which his “feelings” display “the naïveté of a frank and enthusiastic spirit” of the novice at war, making it “impossible not to feel amused and pleased with the writer”. Sherer’s work was “interrupted by no technical details, and burthened with none of those tactical dissertations which can interest only the professional student”. Gleig’s military writing was similarly considered interesting for the “individual feeling” with which he coloured his observations, lifting his work from being “a mere professional detail of military transactions”. His memoir thus helped remove the “cloak of generality which historians usually spread over battles ... we understand clearly from him the share which he and his companions sustained in the dangers and triumphs of the field”. One commentator looked back on the significance of The Subaltern, exclaiming: “[h]istory it is true hands down to posterity and consecrates the names of the chiefs of those armies, but we may search in vain for the poetry, the romance of history; the episodes in the great chronicles of war.” This romance of history was to be found in “the pages of The Subaltern where talent blended with simplicity fascinates the attracted reader at every sentence”.

David Higgins, echoing similar remarks by Jon Klancher, has recently emphasised the centrality of the review magazines in the emergence of middle-class identity during the Romantic period, particularly after 1815. The resoundingly positive reception in the reviews of Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs, suggests the

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79 *Quarterly Review* 30.59 (1823), 68.
80 *Quarterly Review* 30.59 (1823), 62.
81 *Edinburgh Review* 45.90 (1827), 369.
82 *Monthly Review N.S.1* (1826), 54.
importance of their two books in the formation of a distinctly middle-class memory of the nation’s recent wars. As noted, Sherer and Gleig were highly successful in mediating the tensions that existed between civilian and military worlds by drawing on the general reader’s sympathetic identification with the romantic adventures of the soldier. By entitling his memoirs *The Subaltern*, rather than naming them after a particular campaign as earlier military officers had done, Gleig defined from the outset how the central focus of his narrative fell on the personal experiences and romantic adventures of the soldier at war. His memoirs no longer operated as a counter-narrative to an official history of the wars, but helped to supplement this history with tales of personal military service that reflected middle-class aspirations and virtues and which located the soldier as the ideal symbol of a national experience of war. These memoirs, arguably, functioned much like Scott’s historical novels in their ability to forge an imaginative engagement and identification with the nation’s recent history. It is notable that James Fenimore Cooper, himself inspired by Scott’s historical fiction, dedicated his novel *The Pilot* (1823) to William Bradford Shubrick, his “old messmate” in the US navy, and claimed in the preface that it was written in order to commemorate the deeds of his fellow mariners during the Revolutionary War. Cooper thus acknowledged that his story drew on elements of romance and history, claiming “poetical authority” for the stories he related. Aligning romance with history, the military memoir similarly came to serve as a commemorative tale of military adventure.

**The Military Adventure of the Soldier’s Tale: Military Memoirs after Sherer and Gleig**

From its first appearance, the *Monthly Review* hoped that Sherer’s “adventures will yet excite new ‘Recollections’”. Though Sherer himself did not revisit his military experiences in the Peninsula, an enormous number of military “recollections” were published by soldiers and sailors in the wake of Sherer and Gleig’s military memoirs. The *Journal of the Soldier of the Seventy First* had been a clear stimulus to the publication of other private soldiers’ memoirs in the early

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1820s. The translator of the *Young Rifleman’s Comrade* observed in 1826 that most of the military memoirs written in Britain since the end of the wars derived from private British soldiers. But these earlier works by private soldiers were largely ignored in the wake of the memoirs of Sherer and Gleig, who were increasingly viewed as the progenitors of a distinctly new genre. The *London Literary Gazette*, for instance, concluded that *The Subaltern* was “unquestionably, the most popular military narrative of the present day”. Such sentiments were reflected in private correspondence with its publisher William Blackwood, to whom Alaric Watts, for instance, observed that *The Subaltern* was “the most admirable book of the kind that has ever been published”.

Between 1825 and 1830 nearly forty such accounts of military or naval life appeared in the British press, with roughly half of the accounts penned by soldiers or sailors from the ranks and the bulk of the remainder by junior military and naval officers. A further twenty accounts were published between 1830 and 1835, nearly all of which were written by junior ranking officers (see Appendix). Following Sherer and Gleig, the Peninsular War was of particular interest for these memoirists, with perhaps two thirds of the memoirs appearing at this time including at least some account of the soldier’s experiences whilst serving in this conflict. The Peninsular War itself was widely considered the pivotal moment in the Napoleonic struggle: as the *British Review and London Critical Journal* insisted in 1825:

> The Peninsular war ... possesses an interest to which an Englishman must be peculiarly alive. It forms an era in the military history of Great Britain. It taught her senator and ministers the magnitude of her resources and the true way of employing them. Instead of continuing to send insulated and inadequate expeditions to points of attack ... England learned from this momentous struggle to bring forward the invincible spirit, and generous devotedness, of her own armies.

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89 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres no.645 (1829), 353.
91 British Review, and London Critical Journal 23 (1825), 266.
John Green, for instance, published his memoirs *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life* (1827) in the assumption that “anything connected with the Peninsular War would be of interest to all Britons”. These military memoirs still constituted a relatively small portion of the total books being published in Britain through the 1820s, which Lee Erickson estimates as being in the region of around 1,500 per year through the decade, with many of these titles possibly having fairly modest print runs. Nonetheless, by the mid 1820s reviewers were establishing these memoirs as a distinct and enjoyable genre of writing with a prominence that belies their actual numbers. The *Monthly Review* held them to be an “agreeable and attractive class of personal narrative”, while the *Quarterly Review* believed that there was “perhaps no species of composition which the reading public is disposed to treat with greater lenity, certainly none better calculated to interest and amuse, than a Military Memoir”. The *London Magazine* claimed that they constituted “one of the most amusing parts of literature”, and the *New Monthly Magazine* was conscious of their being an increasing “stock of Military Memoirs” in British literature. The memoirs were felt to be so prominent that the *Literary Chronicle* even exclaimed:

We have had so many of this description, that Waterloo, and every acre of the Peninsula, are almost as well known by the gouty old gentleman, who never stirred out of his arm-chair, as by the stoutest chevalier who figured in those memorable scenes. This little volume is by a medical man attached to his Majesty’s German legion, and is, in the nature of its contents, neither better nor worse than the hundred other publications of the same description that have come before the public.

Not all of the commentary was positive, some reviewers expressing a certain wariness about such publications as they began to lose their original novelty. The *Literary Chronicle* commented in 1827 that “[s]o much has been written and

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92 John Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life: or, a Series of Occurrences from 1806 to 1815 ... Containing, with Some Other Matters, a Concise Account of the War in the Peninsula, Etc.* (Louth: 1827), iv.
94 *Monthly Review* N.S.1 (1826), 278.
95 *Quarterly Review* 34.68 (1826), 406-07.
97 *New Monthly Magazine* 18.3 (1826), 97.
published relative to the late Peninsular War, that we almost dreaded the thought of encountering another volume”. By 1833, the editor of William Surtees’s *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (1833) similarly conceded that the reader might find “Narratives of the Peninsular War” to be “hackneyed”. Generally, though, the reviews remained favourably disposed to the memoirs and as the *London Literary Gazette* remarked upon the appearance of Leith Hay’s *A Narrative of the Peninsular War* in 1831, it was “[a] lively narrative, founded on personal observation, [and] even after the numerous and laborious volumes which have been published on the events of this remarkable struggle, ought to find favour with the British reader”.

The *London Magazine* broadly reflected the wider opinion of the review periodicals through the late 1820s: “We are extremely glad to see the Half-pay on active literary service. Few people have more to tell than they who have seen seventeen years of service abroad and at home; and few, that which is better worth hearing. Military authors, we are glad to observe, are accumulating.”

None of these subsequent military memoirs were seen to exhibit the obvious authorial genius that was found in Sherer and Gleig’s writing. Yet these two men had helped to establish a particular soldiers’ style that was widely recognised and praised in the memoirs that followed their work. Just as Sherer’s work was recognised as being composed “[w]ith none of the set phrase of authorship, and with much of that carelessness of manner which is common to a military life, the author of the volume before us gives some very animated pictures from his acquaintance with the Peninsula”, so a “plain soldier-like manner” was widely coming to be recognised as a definitive quality of a soldier’s writing, and, indeed, of literary style more generally. Rather than marking the soldier’s incapacity as an author, lack of polish and simplicity were increasingly viewed as indicative of homely and true sentiments, in which the soldier’s “plain, unvarnished tale” told of an inherently adventurous life. This style was, remarkably, located in both private soldiers’ and officers’

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104 *London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres* no.442 (1825), 437.
105 George Blennie, *Narrative of a Private Soldier in One of His Majesty’s Regiments of Foot, Written by Himself. Detailing Many Circumstances Relative to the Irish Rebellion in 1798, the Expedition to
narratives, though, as will be argued later, officers and soldiers were seen to stand in quite different relationships to the category of authorship. Blackwood’s noted that if a military memoir is written with a simplicity that could produce a “vivid and affecting picture ... [w]e read it with all the avidity with which we peruse a romance, and with a deeper interest, arising from a knowledge of its truth, than ever a romance excited”. By the mid 1820s, such a view of the romantic nature of the soldier’s simple writing was common in response to the military memoirs. The Monthly Review, for instance, observed that: “Such works, if composed only with simplicity, truth, and common intelligence, have an irresistible charm, for they blend all the excitement of romance with the important realities of history”. Blackwood’s similarly reflected on a collection of tales by naval sailors, the Naval Sketch-Book (1826), by observing that a true narration of life at war was more engaging than the “fine poetry” of Romance: “Dang your Spenserian stanza – your octosyllabics – your long and shorts; your heroics and blank-verse, feeble as blank-cartridge – but give us Jack himself ... spinning a long yarn”. By 1835 Blackwood’s was insisting that tales of “the ‘moving accidents of flood and field’ have an attraction for every one” because “[w]ar is heroic poetry put into action”.

In the later part of the 1820s, therefore, the personal story of soldiering was increasingly fashioned as a pleasing story of romantic, military adventure. The Quarterly Review felt that the soldier always met with “wild adventures” at war, whilst the New Monthly Magazine declared that “[t]he adventures of a soldier are, to our apprehension, singularly captivating”. The “excess sentiment” that could be created by reflections on the soldier’s personal suffering were also increasingly marginalised by an emphasis on war as a site for personal adventure. In his Reminiscences of a Campaign in the Pyrenees and South of France in 1814 (1826), John Malcolm reflected on the appalling consequences of war: “Of the crowds ... hastening to swell the ranks of war,” he asked, “how many were destined never to return, – and how many to return under such altered circumstances, – so maimed or

Holland in 1799, and the Expedition Too Egypt in 1801; and Giving a Particular Account of His Religious History and Experience. With a Preface by the Rev. Ralph Wardlaw (Glasgow: A. & J. M. Duncan, etc., 1819), iv.

106 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 9.50 (1821), 181.
107 Monthly Review N.S.1 (1826), 278.
108 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 19 (1826), 361.
109 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 37.2.36 (1835), 957.
broken down, as to make it difficult for the mother to recognise her own child in the wreck before her!"\textsuperscript{110} Visiting the trenches employed in the siege of St Sebastian, he encountered a "scene of horror": the trenches were choked with "dead bodies", the appalling sight of which, he claimed, "will haunt me as long as I live".\textsuperscript{111} Such "scenes of horror" were common in the sentimental military memoirs published during the war years and in the private soldiers' memoirs that were published in the 1820s. But such horror was increasingly contextualised in officers' memoirs of the later 1820s by an emphasis on war as a site of adventurous pleasure. Malcolm, for instance, opened his account by insisting upon "the unrestrained freedom which is supposed to belong to a military life – in its promise of honour and glory – of love and war; and strange adventures in foreign lands" and where travelling to the Peninsular War, "the romance of my nature was called forth".\textsuperscript{112}

**Authorship and the Professional Identity of the Soldier**

One of the major publishers of the military memoirs of the later 1820s was Henry Colburn, who was responsible for nearly a quarter of the memoirs that appeared between 1825 and 1830. Colburn is best known for his publication of what have been termed "silver fork novels", a form of fashionable literature that was highly popular between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the start of the 1840s. This writing detailed the intrigues and manners of contemporary London high society, often with barely concealed references to real people.\textsuperscript{113} The popularity of these novels saw Colburn himself emerge as one of the most successful publishers in Britain during the 1820s, one reviewer suggesting that he "is now the only publisher, and to whom we are indebted for almost every book of a popular kind that makes its appearance".\textsuperscript{114} That Colburn should have also taken to publishing military memoirs is suggestive of just how successful the genre of military memoirs had become. Arguably, the memoirs themselves were, by the end of the 1820s, being presented to the public in a similar market as the silver fork novels. The novels offered advice and

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 252.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 235-36.
\textsuperscript{114} *London Magazine* 5 (1826), 518.
insights into London high-society, and were essentially marketed as guide books for aspiring social climbers or simply as a view inside high-society for an expanding middle-class readership. To some extent, the military memoirs operated in a similar way. They were directed at a middle-class audience who were unlikely to ever see war for themselves, but who were clearly responding to the appeal of the vicarious experience of war offered by such texts, thereby gaining access to a more inclusive sense of nation which these offered.

Colburn was also one of the key figures, alongside Alaric Watts, responsible for publishing the professional military journals and gazettes that appeared in Britain from the late 1820s. In 1829 he took over proprietorship of the Naval and Military Magazine, which had been established in 1827, renaming it the United Services Journal, and subsequently established the Naval and Military Gazette in 1833 (Watts establishing the United Services Gazette in the same year).

The emergence of these military publications reflected the growth of an increasingly pronounced professional identity amongst the officer corps through the early nineteenth century, providing a more comprehensive and regulated repository for a professional military literature. Colburn’s United Services Journal was also established, its editor claimed, on the assumption that “British officers are ... constantly in relation with society at large” and that the Journal would help to disseminate information to the “universal Reader – The Public.” A central role for the Journal was to disseminate personal stories of military adventure of the kind that were appearing in the military memoirs; in advertisements for the Journal Colburn announced that it had been expressly intended as “a book wherein the Military and Naval events of the age, including Narratives by Officers now living, and Biographical Memoirs of those who are deceased, may be permanently embodied.”

115 Adburgham, Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840, 1-2.
117 Ibid., 20. The Journal’s editor was Major T. H. Shadwell Clerke, himself a veteran of the Peninsular War.
119 Quoted in John Blakiston, Twelve Years’ Military Adventure in Three Quarters of the Globe; or, Memoirs of an Officer Who Served in the Armies of His Majesty and of the East India Company between the Years 1802 and 1814, in Which Are Contained the Campaigns of the Duke of Wellington in India, and His Last in Spain and the South of France, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), vol. 1, 382.
the *Journal* as a natural outgrowth of the development of the military memoirs, observing:

Naval and military authors have of late years increased and multiplied in a style that must make Malthusian critics shake in their slippers; but we, being of the old breed, are at no loss to discover that the usual compensatory process has been equally at work, and hail, with sincere satisfaction, the appearance of a monthly journal expressly devoted to the rising literature of the United Service."^{120}

Colburn’s advertisement for the *Journal* insisted upon the shared interest of soldiers and the public in the “deeply interesting” personal narratives by officers, claiming that “to Professional Gentlemen, the record of these Events, and these personal Histories, cannot but be of the greatest value; while to the Public at large they will afford subjects of the most exciting interest”.^{121} The *Journal’s* editor had claimed in the first issue that “we shall err in our anticipations, if the *United Services Journal* do not prove a repository of details attractive to the general taste”,^{122} and by 1832 the *Quarterly Review* insisted that the *United Services Journal* had become, quite remarkably, one of the most popular periodicals read in Britain: “many of the most popular histories, novels, tales, and descriptive essays of all sorts” originated from soldiers and sailors, “gentleman who took their only degrees under such tutors as Nelson and Wellington”.^{123}

The *United Services Journal* was itself a supporter of reforms that sought to cultivate a greater professionalism and meritocratic ethic in the army.^{124} The military memoirs were, in a similar way, broadly associated with the increasing professionalism of the officer corps, in which military authorship was playing a crucial role. As one commentator wrote in 1835, “[t]here are few persons, we apprehend, who will not feel that the literary distinctions obtained by English soldiers of late years add considerably to the enlightened character of the [military] profession”.^{125} Where the soldier had earlier been regarded as lacking in good taste, refinement and literary talent, a renewed commentary on the military author indicated that, in the light of Sherer and Gleig’s work, officers were entitled to lay

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120 *Quarterly Review* 45 (1831), 166-67.
121 Quoted in Blakiston, *Twelve Years’ Military Adventure*, 382.
123 *Quarterly Review* 47 (1832), 134-35.
125 *Monthly Magazine* N.S.1 (1835), 324.
claim to a legitimate role within the literary public sphere. The Edinburgh Review went so far as to insist, referring to Henry Fielding’s Tom Jones (1749), that images of officers as “Ensign Northerton ... were scarcely caricatures”, but argued that there had been, by 1829, a “revolution” in the “intellectual character of the British army”. It was:

now an army of Gentlemen; and it is no small praise, that, under all the temptations which arise from idleness, or want of occupation – from a peculiar kind of social intercourse, which often excludes females – from an unsettled or wandering life – from ancient usages or example – and from a sort of license long granted by opinion, its officers are now as free from the ordinary vices of society, or of the day, as any class in England.

The military officer was thus recognised as holding a place alongside other professional figures, “the physician, the lawyer, the divine, the merchant”. As the soldier developed his status as an author, so he was increasingly recognised as having developed virtues, professionalism and an intellectual character commensurate with the status claims of the rising middle classes. Through these stories the middle classes were also able to recognise themselves as having played an important role in the nation’s recent history.

However, such developments as the Edinburgh Review observed were only related to the officer class, although the Review acknowledged some improvement in the “moral character” of the private soldier. A number of memoirs by private soldiers had emerged in the wake of the Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First that developed the public’s greater sympathies with the nation’s private soldiers. This idea was given impetus when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe edited two military memoirs by German private soldiers who had served in the British army, Adventures of a Young Rifleman, in the French and English Armies, during the War in Spain and Portugal, from 1806 to 1816 and The Young Rifleman’s Comrade: A Narrative of his Military Adventures, Captivity and Shipwreck, both published in English translations in Britain by Henry Colburn in 1826. In his prefatory statements, Goethe insists that autobiographical material provides an important way to acquaint the reader with historical events:

126 Edinburgh Review 49.98 (1829), 389-92.
127 Edinburgh Review 49.98 (1829), 389.
In whatever degree we strive to become acquainted with things past, and occupy ourselves with history in general, yet we find at last that we gain most information from the personal narratives of individuals, and the relation of particular occurrences. On this account, therefore, Memoirs, Auto-Biographies, Original Letters, and Documents of this nature, are particularly sought after.

Goethe concluded, therefore, "[t]here is not a more pleasing method of recalling the past, than by the contemplation of individual realities", and nowhere was this more the case than where we might read of the "individual realities" of the soldier at war. Goethe thus reflected of the soldier's tale:

The description of this every-varying career, is also rendered particularly interesting on this account: that the commonest soldier, seeking his home wherever he goes, is, by means of his billets, as if led by the hand of Asmodeus, introduced into every house, and into the deepest recesses of domestic privacy. Of relations of this nature there is no scarcity in the volume before us.128

Removed from earlier connections with irreligion or immorality, the soldier's itinerant life was exemplified by Goethe as a demonstration of fortitude and stoicism, and through the soldier's suffering "the moral government of the world is presented in its clearest manifestation by assistance afforded to the good and brave sufferer".129 The individual, domestic situation, and suffering, of the private soldier was thus represented as an object of considerable interest.

Whether these memoirs were indeed genuinely written by rank and file soldiers remained a central concern for reviewers. As the Monthly Magazine observed, "[t]he value of memoirs depends, of course, entirely upon their genuineness" and that though memoirs of eminent persons could be guaranteed, "in the case of one of no kind of distinction among his fellows, we are without any security".130 The translator of The Young Rifleman's Comrade confessed his concerns in his preface "that, at times, the elevation of sentiment and refinement of taste displayed by the Rifleman seem somewhat beyond the sphere of his alleged rank".131 The Monthly Review also puzzled that Goethe had stooped from the

129 The Young Rifleman's Comrade, x.
130 Monthly Magazine N.S.3 (1827), 84.
131 The Young Rifleman's Comrade, xvii.
“dignity of this station, both in literature and society, by condescending to bestow his care upon the memoirs of a private soldier”. Asserting that “it is not difficult to trace through its pages a gleam now and then of his meditative and poetic mind”, the reviewer doubted the veracity of all the events related:

Nothing could be easier for a soldier than to pick out a few by-scenes in this drama, and say, “oh, I was present at that action,” “here I was wounded,” “here was I made prisoner”. We suspect the present work to be made up in this manner, and thus woven into a tale, because there are very few of the incidents that are related in it, which bear the stamp of personal recollection.

The London Magazine raised similar objections and asserted that in Goethe’s involvement with these military memoirs they could detect the “deadening hand of the regular trader in literature”. Such concerns were, however, extended to many of the military memoirs by private soldiers. Reflecting on the reception of his book, the private soldier Joseph Donaldson, for instance, observed that “[m]any, indeed, alleged ‘that they were the production of some book-maker,’ and others ‘that some person of literary ability must have assisted the soldier’”. If claims to authorship had helped to establish the military officer as a gentleman, confirming his virtues, talents and taste in a manner that resonated with middle-class ideals, the private soldier was condemned wherever the reviewer detected traces of authorship. As will be argued later, the memoirs of private soldiers were starting to develop in quite different ways to those of officers, particularly in terms of how they depicted the suffering of the soldier at war.

Suffering, Sacrifice and the Citizen-Soldier

By the early 1830s reviewers were almost wholly unanimous that something remarkable had appeared with the emergence of the military memoir. As the Monthly Review reflected in 1835:

There is no feature perhaps more remarkable in our literary history of late years than the number of military authors, who have suddenly poured in upon us, and sustained themselves so able in the assault as to usurp the sundry shelves of our library, and divide many a laurel in the republic of letters with

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132 Monthly Review N.S.3 (1826), 434.
133 London Magazine N.S.4 (1826), 267.
their elder brethren, who, pursuing literature as a profession, have lived their lives unadventurously clustered in retirement, and sedulous in study.\textsuperscript{135}

The \textit{Quarterly Review} was, admittedly, in the same years suggesting that the most remarkable development in the period’s literature was the emergence of biography and autobiography; both statements have a degree of hyperbole.\textsuperscript{136} But the \textit{Monthly Review} was not alone in such views about the rise of military authors. The \textit{Quarterly Review}, as noted above, had made similar claims itself several years earlier, whilst in 1831 the \textit{Gentleman’s Magazine} reflected that through the \textit{Subaltern}, Gleig “has founded a lively school of writing by divesting literature of gown and wig, and dressing it \textit{en militaire}”.\textsuperscript{137} Indeed, a number of commentators through the late 1820s had come to insist that military memoirs represented the most engaging form of autobiographical writing. John Shipp’s \textit{Memoirs of the Extraordinary Military Career of John Shipp} (1829) were widely praised, one reviewer commenting that “[t]here have been few memoirs, even in this age of autobiography, so curious and amusing as these”.\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Blackwood’s} reviewed John Blakiston’s \textit{Twelve Years’ Military Adventures in Three Quarters of the Globe} (1829) by declaring:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Cedat toga armis}, is our motto in all matters of autobiography and adventure; for the odds are, that the life of one soldier, however unpretending and ungifted, will contain more both of amusement and instruction, than the memoirs of a dozen barristers, a score of M.P.s, or a whole centenary of squires, doctors, stockbrokers, parsons, or writers to the signet, with a bishop or two, and half the members of the Glasgow coffee-room tossed into the bargain.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

The review similarly argued that although the semi-fictionalised military memoir \textit{Cyril Thornton} (1827) was a work of “fictitious biography”, Thornton was nonetheless “an autobiographer, and we cannot too much admire his skill in the use of the first person”, having produced a work far better, the reviewer felt, than the autobiographies of Rousseau or De Quincey, or indeed a “million” others, because “[w]ith all, it is ever – \textit{Ego et Rex meus}”.\textsuperscript{140} The military memoir was, in other words, coming to be more immune to the anxieties surrounding autobiographical writing than any other form of autobiography.

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\item[135] \textit{Monthly Magazine} N.S.1 (1835), 323.
\item[136] Treadwell, \textit{Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834}, 4.
\item[137] \textit{Gentleman’s Magazine} 101 (1831), 68.
\item[138] \textit{Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register} 27 (1829), 181.
\item[139] \textit{Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine} 25,150 (1829), 362.
\item[140] \textit{Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine} 22,128 (1827), 83.
\end{footnotes}
In 1820 Edward Quillinan had responded to Blackwood’s scathing reviews of his authorial skills as a soldier by insisting that “if my productions be devoid of merit, my profession has nothing whatever to do with the deficiency”, thereby arguing that there was no connection between the soldier and a type of writing as was implied by the term “military author”. But by the 1830s there was an increasingly widespread designation of soldier memoirists and other soldier writers as military authors, arguably helping to effect something analogous to what Michel Foucault has described as the “author function”. For Foucault, the author function relates to the ways in which ascriptions of certain works to individuals identified as authors both grants a degree of significance to the work and to some extent limits the potential meanings that might be taken from it. Such a function emerged, therefore, in relation to the anxieties surrounding the expansion of writing into a literary market place and the lack of control over writing which this expansion implied. Foucault argues that “[t]he author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning”. Though he principally utilises the term in reference to the emergence of literary or fictive discourses, it is possible to see the consolidation of the military author as similarly controlling the possible meanings and responses available to the military memoir, establishing clear boundaries around the “mode of being” or status of these texts.

The term “military author” was coming to delineate the kinds of military writing that might be deemed valuable and interesting to the public, thus helping to control the cultural ambiguity that surrounded tales of the soldier’s personal experience, and suffering, in the nation’s wars. Memoirs such as Buckham’s, along with many of the private soldiers’ memoirs that reflected on the soldier’s suffering, could thus be described as not the authentic “production of a military man” if they failed to conform to the patterns being set down and established by an increasingly regulated idea of the military author. Generic boundaries were thus forming

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144 Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 119.
145 Ibid., 107.
146 Naval and Military Magazine 1 (1827) 471.
around the military memoir so that later writers increasingly presented their own stories of soldiering in terms of Romantic adventure, whilst narratives that, alternatively, related accounts of war’s suffering and hardships were increasingly marginalised. Indeed, as will be argued in Chapter Six, the kind of soldier’s identity that thus emerged from stories of military adventure was increasingly an institutional identity, as the soldier emerged as a figure who embraced a love of fighting and his regimental comrades and affiliations.

One of the main elements within this construction of the military author, therefore, was the containment of the possibilities for “excess sentiment” that images of soldiers’ suffering might bring to the reader. As detailed in Chapter One, the suffering soldier was a potentially problematic figure in Romantic literary culture. The editors of private soldiers’ memoirs, like Goethe, often emphasised the soldier’s status as a victim of war’s horrors in order to encourage the reader’s sympathies with an expanded sense of humanity. By the late 1820s, the military memoir increasingly positioned the soldier in relation to ideas of national service rather than a more universal conception of humanity, thus redirecting the soldier’s suffering into a nationalistic “ideology of sacrifice”. Indeed, where the advertisement for Gleig’s earliest editions of *A Narrative of the Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans* (1821), a historical and impersonal campaign narrative published prior to his more personal *The Subaltern*, simply stressed the accuracy of the narrative, by the fourth edition of 1836, the book carried an advertisement to the effect that the work was written “to redeem from an oblivion which they hardly merit, the actions and sufferings of a few brave men”, highlighting the importance of the military memoir as what the Quarterly Review had termed a “literary monument” of the wars.¹⁴⁷ Jane Porter adapted “admirable” sentiments from Sherer’s *Recollections* for her novel *Duke Christian* (1824), when the character of Mansfeldt describes the “good soldier” as being “sought after as a benefactor; and when he falls or dies, not one family alone, but a country’s tears, embalm his monument”. In a footnote Porter describes Sherer in similar terms to how Austen had earlier considered Pasley, observing of the *Recollections* “[w]hoever the British officer may be, who is the writer of that little book, it is the work of an accomplished soldier and

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¹⁴⁷ George Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans in the Years 1814-1815*, 4th ed. (London: John Murray, 1836), [n.p.].
a perfect gentleman. Via military authors such as Sherer, the soldier had come to be re-imagined in relation to gentlemanly sentiments and national significance, his personal story of familial grief located within a history of the nation and the commemoration of his heroic service.

A commemorative element to the military was thus increasingly identified in responses to the military memoirs during the later 1820s, drawing representations of suffering into an “ideology of sacrifice” and the commemoration of the nation’s historical wars. As the *London Literary Gazette* commented in a review of *Journal of an Officer in the King’s German Legion* (1827):

To those who have had fathers, brothers, friends, engaged in the late fearful warfare which has desolated Europe, all that related to it must be most interesting; and those who actually were engaged in the struggle must look with mingled pride and pleasure on any records of the events in which themselves bore part.

A collection of soldiers’ narratives was explicitly published in an 1828 edition of *Constable’s Miscellany*, precisely to provide *Memorials of the Late War*. The connection between soldiers’ families and a national remembrance of the Peninsular War was again evoked as a key element in the interest provided by the soldier’s memoir:

Fifteen years have elapsed since it terminated, yet many brave and gentle hearts are still linked to Spain by emotions too proud and too holy even for time to destroy. There are few persons in the land who have not one or more relatives sleeping in a soldier’s grave, among the Spanish Sierras; and there is certainly not one who had not, at some period or other, during the contest, a kinsman serving in the British ranks. Under these impressions, the following Memorials are now given to the public.

The military memoir was thus regarded as a fitting memorial for the “lofty historical associations” that were felt to be connected with the war, a war that was cast with a “solemn romance, which attaches to no other struggle in which Britain has ever been engaged”. The *Edinburgh Review* similarly focussed on a belief that the nation owed an eternal debt to those who had fought in the wars. Military memoirs

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149 *London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres no.548* (1827), 467.
150 *Memorials of the Late Wars, Constable’s Miscellany*, vol. 27 (Edinburgh: Printed for Constable & Co., 1828), xii.
151 Ibid., xi.
possessed a “peculiar interest”, the Review claimed, because “[w]e cannot but love to owe instruction and entertainment to the nearest kindred of the Keppels, the Russells, and the Cokes, – to whom we are debtors in obligations of a high order, never to be forgotten or repaid”. The review concluded by observing:

It is a circumstance most honourable to the British army, and of the highest importance to the country, that it occupies now a strong position in the republic of letters. Many works of standard value, have latterly proceeded from our fellow citizens in the profession of arms. Their improved education now enables them to partake in those pursuits, to which the prevailing taste of the times directs the attention of all classes.\(^\text{152}\)

The soldier was thus coming to be viewed as a “fellow citizen”, a “father, brother, or friend” of the nation at large. This was, obviously, not a state-sponsored commemoration of the wars, but rather, reflected a form of commemoration explicitly linked to the “republic of letters”. Indeed, the nation was felt to be united with its soldiers in a shared experience of war’s suffering and in a taste and enthusiasm for tales of military service.

Private soldiers’ memoirs, however, were frequently criticised for their lack of appropriate deference to military hierarchies and their poor display of patriotism. In his caustic reflections in the \textit{Quarterly Review} on the growth of autobiographical writing, John Lockhart notably included private soldiers’ memoirs as examples of the ways autobiography had led to “the author’s inflated notion of his or her own public significance”.\(^\text{153}\) Grouping these private soldiers’ memoirs alongside those of “pickpockets” and “mob-orators”, and thus identifying their disruption of proper hierarchies with efforts to foster a sympathy with social deviants and radicals, Lockhart concluded by offering up his hopes that “the virtue and patriotism of this age may be commemorated as effectually, though not quite so voluminously, as its imbecility, quackery, and vice”.\(^\text{154}\) The newly established military periodicals were even harsher in their criticisms. \textit{Naval and Military Magazine} complained, for instance, about the improper display of “military spirit” demonstrated by the author of \textit{Vicissitudes in the Life of a Scottish Soldier} (1827), condemning such passages from his book as: “we had no will of our own; and, in short, that we were slaves, that must kill or be killed, or starve or perish with cold, or walk to the end of the world if

\(^{152}\text{Edinburgh Review 47.94 (1828), 368.}\)
\(^{153}\text{Treadwell, Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834, 77.}\)
\(^{154}\text{Quarterly Review 35 (1827), 149 and 164.}\)
commanded”. The Magazine asserted that the book was “trash” and urged its readers to read instead *The Humble Address of John Lowe, late Serjeant of H.M.’s 2d Battalion 95th (now part of the Rifle Brigade), to Field Marshal his Grace the Duke of Wellington* (1827). Lowe, the reviewer notes, had been wounded in numerous campaigns but had not received a full pension from the Chelsea Hospital, and was thus “advised to memorialize the Duke of Wellington” to redress his grievance. The reviewer goes on to note that

his Grace (who visited him at his bedside, whilst in the hospital at Elvas, where he lay wounded), has done everything in his power, with a view to obtain a favourable consideration of his case, on the part of the Lords Commissioners of Chelsea Hospital.156

It is the humble, plaintive soldier Lowe, favoured by the Duke of Wellington, whom the Magazine feels exemplifies the “brave soldier”, and whose sufferings are properly directed towards a correct understanding of the soldier’s role. The *United Service Journal* voiced similar opinions whilst reviewing John Malcolm’s collection of poems, *Scenes of War, and other Poems* (1828), observing of his poem “The Deserter”, which eulogised the death of a deserter from the British army:

> It appears to us rather a perversion of humane feeling to invest convicted criminals with posthumous merits, and awaken sympathy for the penalties of treason and dishonour. To hallow the death of the patriot soldier, arouse interest for his manly fate, and paint the domestic desolation and bereavement which enhance the sacrifice of his life to the hearts of those for whom he has laid it down, is a more legitimate office for the recording pen of a comrade. 157

A “legitimate office for the recording pen” of the military author was being identified, in which the soldier’s suffering was meant to be represented with a proper respect for hierarchies and ideals of national service. The military author, we might say, had emerged as an ideological figure who could transform the soldier’s personal experience of suffering into a nationalistic reflection on stoical sacrifice. The disturbing potential that earlier private soldiers’ memoirs had thus brought to a narrative of war, their reflections on war’s unredeemed hardships and the appalling conditions of soldiering, was increasingly controlled as the reviews deflected attention away from personal suffering by situating it in relation to heroic sacrifice.

155 *Naval and Military Magazine* 2 (1827), 492-93.
156 *Naval and Military Magazine* 2 (1827), 492-93.
By the end of the 1820s, then, the personal military memoir had been recruited to the cause of upholding a view of the army’s “immortal service” to the nation.

By displacing the private soldier’s tale of suffering with tales modelled on the officer’s heroic national service, the military memoir thus emerged as a central element in the remembrance of the wars and the construction of a particular kind of patriotism. It was seen to provide exactly the commemoration of “virtue and patriotism” that Lockhart hoped would come to dominate the production of autobiographical writing. The *Metropolitan Magazine* claimed of Caddell’s *Narrative of the Campaigns of the Twenty-Eighth Regiment* (1835): “This work will be read by youth with the most overpowering interest, and, we doubt not, scatter very widely the good seed of military patriotism”.\(^{158}\) Surtees’s *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (1833) was similarly recommended by a reviewer in the *London Literary Gazette* as being “a standard one for admission into regimental libraries, where the example of Surtees cannot fail to be duly appreciated, and perhaps stimulate others to go and do likewise”, whilst the *Monthly Review* insisted in 1831 that *The Subaltern* “now maintains an honourable place in every well regulated library in the empire”.\(^{159}\) The *United Services Journal* reflected that no class of people in society suffers a higher mortality rate than the soldier, but observed:

> To his latest breath, however, the soldier clings to the passionate memory of his comrades, his battle-fields, and his reckless and uncalculating patriotism. How many thousands, ay, tens of thousands of heroic men have sunk into the grave unpitied and unknown, under circumstances similar to those we are about to quote. – Yet such are the servants whom their country would fain dismiss from her bosom and her bounty, to “shake her superflux” to the parasitic and pampered.\(^{160}\)

The soldier might have “sunk into his grave unpitied and unknown”, but increasingly the military memoir was seen to draw attention to his reckless patriotism in service to the nation, and to offer itself as an example of the soldier’s heroic sacrifice.

Notably, the military memoir is today recognised as the central element in the commemoration of modern war. As Ashplant, Roper and Dawson argue:

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\(^{158}\) *Metropolitan Magazine* (1835), 40-41.

\(^{159}\) *London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres* no.833 (1833), 5; *Monthly Review* N.S. 3 (1831), 391.

\(^{160}\) *United Services Journal and Naval and Military Magazine* pt.1 (1829), 484.
the specific form of memory-production that is favoured in modern war commemoration is the personal testimony. It constitutes the dominant genre of ‘modern memory’ of war. Its intensely individuated meanings differentiate it from the monument, remembrance day or other ‘official’ and collective markers of memory.\textsuperscript{161}

It seems significant, therefore, that this association of modern war and “personal testimony” first emerged with what is now widely recognised as the first modern war. Through these military memoirs, a middle-class civil society was able to apprehend the nation’s wars in a manner that had relevance and interest for the common reader. Where originally, however, such individual stories of soldiering had a potential to represent the soldier’s suffering as a horrifying experience, by the 1830s, this story of soldiering was widely contained within the generic categories of adventure and heroism, and the soldier was successfully writing of himself as a stoical soldier hero. The full popularity of these memoirs did not last beyond the 1830s, in many ways being displaced by military and nautical novels and Napier’s celebrated \textit{History of the Peninsular War} (1828-40), but these memoirs had helped to create a civilian market for this later military writing. I will now examine, in detail, the key texts that helped to develop this body of work, looking in particular at how they came to construct these enduring cultural images of the soldier.

\textsuperscript{161} Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration”, 48.
Part Two

The Soldier’s Tale and the Sacrifices of War
Robert Ker Porter’s work can be seen to have both reflected and shaped an emerging modern culture of war by representing the authentic experience, and suffering, of the nation’s soldiers. The scale of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, with its enormous demand for resources, military personnel and political support, meant that the British government was forced to call upon ever larger sectors of the population to assist in the defence of the nation.¹ Soldier memoirists like Porter, along with numerous writers and artists of the period, strove to breach the experiential gap that existed between the public and scenes of foreign war in an effort to bring the public into contact, at least imaginatively, with war.² Jerome Christensen has remarked that we can think of war as becoming modern at precisely the moment that it was transformed into an “all-engrossing spectacle” that sought to elicit widespread national support for war through the “strategic representation” of distant conflict.³

During an earlier, eighteenth-century culture of war there had been little perception of a need to breach this gap between the public and the nation’s wars, largely because war was viewed as an ordinary aspect of elite cultural life and was not, therefore, understood as distinct or exceptional. Eighteenth-century Britain operated with what Gillian Russell has termed a theatrical culture of war,⁴ wherein the primary means for representing war, such as military parades, civic festivals and celebratory poems or portraits of great generals, focussed less on realistic or authentic representation of scenes of conflict and more on utilising military spectacles in order to underscore patriotic unity and existing hierarchies. As Matthew Craske suggests, art and theatre through the period 1730-70 “represented, rather than reproduced the spectacle of war”, as audiences exhibited “an appetite for iconic and

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¹ David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 5-9.
theatrical representations of war”, with little concern for realistic or authentic representations.\(^5\) In the later eighteenth century, and during the Napoleonic Wars in particular, a new culture of war emerged in which warfare was increasingly viewed as more serious and all-pervasive part of a total national experience. Writers and artists strove to provide their audience with a more direct experience of conflict, seeking to enable individuals to imagine themselves as being personally involved in the conflict. Sentimental representations of personal suffering thus emerged as a significant element in representing war, because they helped to develop sympathy between a national audience and those at war.

Manuel De Landa suggests that we can understand this new culture of war in terms of a beginning of a shift from the clockwork armies and “robot-like soldiers” of the eighteenth century, towards the development of what he terms “motorized” armies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\(^6\) The metaphor of clockwork describes the ways in which eighteenth-century armies fought within an orderly hierarchy that was centred on the authority of its commanding general and, ultimately, the sovereign, and in which the soldier is an “ideally identical element in a complex fighting machine the overall coordination and control of which depend wholly on a clearly formulated plan of action”.\(^7\) The increased scale and changing style of warfare at the end of the eighteenth century, however, meant that authority and initiative had to be diffused, at least to some extent, throughout the army’s soldiers. De Landa uses the concept of motorized to refer to these changes, not simply in relation to the idea of a mechanical motor, but to suggest primarily a shift in the source of “motivation” for a soldier.\(^8\) There was thus a development from the clockwork model, which imposed regimes of drill and obedience upon the soldier, towards a model that sought to also encourage soldiers to motivate themselves through ideals of military heroism, duty and glory, thus introducing a “human” element into warfare through the individuation of the soldier and a concern for his

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interior experience of war.\textsuperscript{9} Originating initially with the French armies of the revolutionary period and spreading across Europe through the course of the Napoleonic Wars, this change in the style of warfare took time to unfold in Britain, De Landa suggesting that it was not decisive until later in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{10} But shifts in the management of the army and its relation to the civilian population were gradually beginning in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. J. E. Cookson points out that although we do not know the extent to which the bulk of the soldiery were motivated by a desire to serve their country, the army’s junior ranking officers were increasingly displaying a professionalism as soldiers and an attachment to country and ideals of “public service”.\textsuperscript{11} E. S. Turner similarly observes, “[s]ince the standing army was formed no war had seen such a widening of the officer class”, with officers increasingly being drawn from the urban middle classes and offering their services as part of what was commonly viewed as a crusade against Napoleon’s tyranny.\textsuperscript{12} More widely, the British cultural imaginary also found itself recoiling from the idea of clockwork warfare and its impersonal and theatrically inauthentic approach to conflict, and increasingly imagined warfare instead in terms of authentic personal heroism, sacrifice and service to the nation.\textsuperscript{13} Military effectiveness was seen to rely on soldiers who possessed, as John Levi Martin suggests, “subjective motivations” to fight, just as the citizen was being called upon to volunteer his or her services for the nation.\textsuperscript{14}

Porter’s work emphasises the mass experience of war and the pivotal role of Britain’s generals in deciding victory, but it additionally reflects these broad changes in the culture of war by helping to establish the individuated citizen-soldier and his subjective experience as central elements in the way the British public imagined its wars. His work is remarkable for its dramatic representation of the suffering of the British army and, in particular, of individual subaltern officers, as he created images that fostered his audience’s sympathetic identification with the military, serving to

\textsuperscript{9} De Landa, \textit{War in the Age of Intelligent Machines}, 127, 67.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{11} J. E. Cookson, “Service without Politics? Army, Militia and Volunteers in Britain During the American and French Revolutionary Wars”, \textit{War in History} 10 (2003): 381-97, 392 and 396.
\textsuperscript{12} E. S. Turner, \textit{Gallant Gentlemen: A Portrait of the British Officer, 1600-1956} (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), 133.
\textsuperscript{13} For a discussion of these issues in relation to Sir Walter Scott’s poetry, see Bainbridge, \textit{British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars}, 120-33.
celebrate and inculcate ideals of personal sacrifice for the nation. But although his work thus participated in the nation’s efforts to create an all-engrossing spectacle of war, there is, nonetheless, a transgressive aspect to his alignment of the citizen and the soldier. Any such privileging of the personal views or subjective experience of junior ranking officers could conflict with the state’s attempts to control information about the war. The Duke of Wellington, for instance, railed against what he believed were “stories which all have read” in the “gazettes and newspapers” that emphasised his officers’ individual efforts and heroism rather than celebrating the army as a corporate whole. This transgressive element particularly comes to the fore where Porter shifts from representing scenes of war as the military artist to the far more problematic role of the military author, in which he interposes his own subjective experience of war into public discourse. His depictions of personal sacrifice revealed a horrifying truth about war that could be unsettling, potentially eliciting affective responses far removed from the pressing needs of a militaristic state. His work could foster sympathy not simply with a national ideal of the soldier, but with the soldier as a private man exposed to the full horror of war’s hardships and misery. William St. Clair has recently observed that “almost nothing which questioned or undermined the institutions of the nation state at war was published in the mainstream literature of the romantic period”. Yet Porter’s Letters and his personal response to war, like many of the military memoirs that appeared through the war years, suggest that the reading public was, at least in part, exposed to stories that might trouble the way the nation state sought to represent its wars.

**The Storming of Seringapatam and the Officer’s Sacrifice**

Robert Ker Porter’s current reputation as a writer and artist has been largely eclipsed by that of his two sisters Jane, and to a lesser extent, Anna Maria, who both became commercially successful novelists in the Romantic period; Jane particularly achieving fame with her two novels *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803) and *The Scottish

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Chiefs (1810). Though the family had descended from more distinguished forbears, their immediate origins were relatively humble. Their father was a surgeon in the Sixth Inniskilling Dragoons who died in 1779 two years after Porter’s birth. Like his sisters, however, Porter went on to achieve a considerable degree of contemporary fame, becoming one of the leading military artists in Britain in the early 1800s. He was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools in 1791 and worked initially on religious subjects, developing his talents as a scene painter for the theatre. He composed several paintings depicting historical battle scenes during the 1790s, but his reputation as a military artist rested primarily on the basis of his painting The Storming of Seringapatam (1800), which depicted the victory of the British forces over those of Tipu Sultan at the storming of Seringapatam on 4 May 1799, during the fourth Anglo/Mysore war in India (see Figure 1). Tipu Sultan, who was killed during the fighting at Seringapatam, was allied with the French and represented a significant threat to British interests in India. There were celebrations across Britain when news of Seringapatam was received, and the action was represented in a number of popular entertainments at the time. Catching the mood of this public enthusiasm for the victory, Porter’s Seringapatam became an enormously successful painting. Executed in just six weeks, it was exhibited at the Lyceum only a few months after news of the event had reached Britain and it rapidly attracted “record-breaking crowds”. Its success saw Porter included in a volume Public Characters for 1801, and he followed Seringapatam with a number of similar battle paintings in the following years, including The Battle of Alexandria (1802) and The Battle of Lodi (1803).
Porter composed *Seringapatam* as a panoramic painting, utilizing techniques for creating panoramas that had been developed by Robert Barker in the 1790s, and which Barker himself had used for creating several panoramas of naval battle scenes.\(^{24}\) The panorama sought to produce works that were far more mimaetically realistic than traditional paintings. To achieve this effect, panoramic paintings were executed on massive canvases that were curved through a full 360-degrees to form a "cylindrical canvas" that encircled the viewer.\(^{25}\) By thus removing any framing devices, a far more "successful illusion of reality" could be produced than traditional artistic forms, and it was intended that the audience would be able to view the painting that enclosed them as though they were actually present at the scene depicted.\(^{26}\) Porter's *Seringapatam* was distinctive in that the canvas was only

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 105-08.
extended through a semi-circle, and the audience occupied a stage area to its front. It was, nonetheless, undertaken on an equally massive scale and the canvas was over 120 feet long. Depicting several scenes from the events of the storming and portraying hundreds of figures, Seringapatam was considered at the time to have been painted “on a scale of magnitude hitherto unattempted in this Country”. Porter also took considerable pains to ensure that he depicted the storming as accurately as possible, and the guide to the painting proudly announced that it was “designed from the most authentic and correct information”. He obtained numerous eyewitness accounts of the action from officers to assist in his composition of the painting, paid careful attention to reproducing exact details of the soldiers’ uniforms and the “Scenery of the Place”, and included portraits of a number of officers who had been present. So impressive was the resulting work that the president of the Royal Academy, Benjamin West, described it as a “Wonder of the World!”

Augmenting more traditional forums such as the art galleries or the spectacular depictions of war in the theatre and through occasional civic festivities, the military panorama was arguably a pivotal element in the representation of a modern culture of war. On the one hand the large scale and realism of the panorama meant that it could successfully depict war as vast and foreign, something that the theatre and even traditional artistic representations struggled to achieve. As Russell shows, theatrical representations of the war were constantly subject to criticism because their representations led to distortions of space and scale, making the scenes

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27 Harrington, British Artists and War, 62. Possibly to reflect this distinction between his paintings and the panorama proper, Porter preferred the term “coup d’oeil” to describe his work, a term that had traditionally been used by travellers to describe a striking view of a landscape. The terms was also used in military parlance, where it referred to the ability to judge, at a glance, the tactical opportunities offered by any given landscape.


depicted frequently appear ridiculous rather than awe inspiring. On the other hand, Porter's work simultaneously populated this foreign arena of war with recognisable individuals, helping to bring the viewer into an intimate relationship with war. His panorama replaced the theatre’s actors with images of real soldiers, soldiers who could be identified with the very same national public viewing the painting, thereby making war appear national as he configured the nation in an inclusive manner. Russell has argued that in the realism and vast scale of the military panorama, it is possible to see a “detheatricalization” of war. The panorama represented a movement away from representations of traditional elite warfare, as the public was invited to contemplate accurate and authoritative scenes of warfare that were central to the process of enabling the imaginative participation of the viewer in the nation’s conflicts. Indeed, rather than operating in terms of polite or elite artistic taste, the panorama located itself within a commercial art market and its attendance was open to anyone who could afford the price of admission. We can see the enormously popular spectacle of war in Porter’s panorama, therefore, as facilitating, at least amongst the urban crowds who attended the exhibition, a far more democratic reception of and participation in war; one in which all viewers could share a “vicarious participation” in the national conflict.

William Galperin cautions that Porter’s work can be seen to resist some of the panorama’s impulse to create a truly democratised experience for the viewer, in large part because of the “explanatory descriptions” that accompanied the painting (see Figure 2). Galperin suggests that unlike other panoramas, Porter’s work did not offer the populace a “homogenised” view of itself that would enable the audience to see itself reflected, as a democratic totality, in the panoramic representation. He insists, on the contrary, that the accompanying material, which named a number of the soldiers depicted, underscored a deferential distinction between the military

33 Russell, The Theatres of War, 74.
34 Ibid., 77.
37 Ibid., 51. The fact that Porter’s work was exhibited at the Lyceum, rather than the more commercially open space of the Rotunda, similarly suggests that the painting was not simply a popular entertainment, but rather existed at the boundaries of artistic taste and the commercial market. See Simon During, “‘the Temple Lives’: The Lyceum and Romantic Show Business”, Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840, eds. James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 204-24.
Figure 2. The Great Historical Picture of the Storming of Seringapatam, by the British Troops and their Allies, May 4th, 1799. Descriptive Sketch. By John Lee, after Robert Ker Porter (1800). Copyright the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
scenes represented and the wider population viewing these scenes. Philip Shaw has extended Galperin’s argument in his commentary on Henry Aston Barker’s later panorama, the *Battle of Waterloo* (1816), observing that the accompanying key to the work identified Wellington as “the primary figure in the scene”, thus encouraging the viewer to defer to the perspective established by Wellington as commander of the British forces. Although the panorama was composed from a “proliferation of picturesque details” that offered the viewer a potentially democratic view of the battle, the effect of the accompanying material, Shaw argues, is that “we are trained to view all other images from the point of view of the state … our identification with the guiding lens of the Duke determines not only our subjective coherence but also our ideological response to the scenes around it.”  

Notably, the accompanying key to Porter’s *Seringapatam* also draws our attention to the centrality of the commanding general, and it observes of the painting: “The centre object is General Baird, surrounded by his Staff”.  

A reviewer concurred that Baird dominated the painting, stating that “[t]he most striking group meets the eye in the centre of the picture. It consists of General Baird, attended by his *aid-de-camps*”. Directing our attention to his centrality helps to ensure that the viewer regards the action as directed and arranged by Baird, himself the representative of the British sovereign and state.

Although there is not a total democratising impulse to Porter’s painting, neither can it be seen as simply deferring identification between the soldier and the wider population. What needs to be taken into account is the unprecedented nature of the representation of subaltern officers offered by *Seringapatam*. The emotional centre of Porter’s painting does not revolve around the commanding general, but is constituted, rather, by a series of images of dying or wounded subaltern officers. Some precedent for this was provided by Benjamin West’s celebrated *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770), but David Solkin has observed that the group of more junior ranking officers surrounding the dying Wolfe are depicted as a sympathetic community of mourners. In their contemplation of the general’s death they represent

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39 *The Great Historical Picture of the Storming of Seringapatam*.
Macquarie University Library, Digital Initiatives.
the very way in which the audience itself is meant to respond to the painting. The painting represents “elite warfare” in which the audience is asked to contemplate national service but is held at bay from contemplating their own participation in the life of the nation. It reminds the viewer that the ordinary individual has “no more right to command the attention of historical artists than to lead Britain’s armies or engage in the exercise of political power”. Porter’s individuation of officers operates differently, and needs to be read as emphasising the vital necessity for personal sacrifice in the evolving military situation of Britain’s war.

Baird’s central presence in the painting is thus largely occluded by the scenes of heroic and wounded junior ranking officers, and even more remarkably heroic non-commissioned officers, that surround him. Though the key to Seringapatam points towards Baird’s centrality and reminds us that he directs the activities, “calling his men to follow Serjeant Graham of the Forlorn Hope”, it is Sergeant Graham to whom our attention is immediately drawn. We are told that the Sergeant, “having snatched the Colours from the Ensign, planted them on the breach, and as he gave the 3d huzza of Victory, an Indian with a Pistol shot him through the Heart”. Depicted with the British flag and standing alone on top of the breach, Graham appears as a prominent figure in the painting, whilst the narrative surrounding his actions, relating his death and exemplary heroics, presents him as a highly sympathetic individual. Though he has neither the social status nor political authority of Baird, the remarkable attention offered to Graham’s exemplary physical courage encourages the viewer to see him as a significant individual in his own right.

The painting as a whole is composed as a series of minor actions or tableaux that focus on individual subaltern officers (although the Indian and private British soldiers remain anonymous and largely background figures). One reviewer observed:

Captain Cormicke, a brave officer is seen falling headlong down the steep, being killed near the upper part of the rampart. Halfway up the breach is a sally of Tippoo’s guards, who are repulsed by the 74th regiment. Lieutenant Prendergast appears mortally wounded by a musket shot; and Lieutenant Shaw lies among the slain in the thickest groups of the battle. In the foreground, to the left of the battalion, lies [Lieutenant Farquhar]. He rests

upon a cannon, is supported by an artillery-man, who points towards the Indian from whom he received his death wound.\textsuperscript{43}

Porter’s painting is constructed so that subaltern officers are linked to the commander through his central and governing presence, but they are no longer represented merely as a community of observers. Rather, they are represented as active agents and sympathetic figures in their own right; Lieutenant Farquhar, for instance, is posed similarly to West’s dying Wolfe, resting upon a cannon and clutching “his death wound” as he looks heavenwards (see Figure 3). Indeed, the very fact that Porter depicts the storming of Seringapatam, rather than detailing the siege in its entirety, shows the extent to which his painting is articulating a new conception of warfare that was emerging in the Romantic period. Established rules of warfare through the eighteenth century located the siege as the epitome of scientific or rational warfare that essentially precluded the storming of fortifications. Once artillery had made a “practicable” breach in the walls of a fortress, the demise of the latter was deemed inevitable and the laws of rational and humane warfare dictated that the fort’s governor must surrender in order to avoid the bloodshed that would occur if the breach were stormed.\textsuperscript{44} Porter’s valorisation of the storming presciently predicted the later fighting in Europe and the breakdown of such humane restraints on warfare through the Napoleonic period. The storming represents war as an event beyond regulated, clockwork warfare, demanding the soldier’s personal valour, courage and effort in a manner that lay beyond the immediate control of the commanding general and rationalised systems of war. Individually naming these men is not, then, about establishing a distance between these soldiers and the wider population, so much as it underscores the way personal sacrifice had become crucial to military effectiveness and was being increasingly demanded of the wider populace.

Thus, whilst a hierarchical response is engendered by the painting’s textual key, which insists that we see the action through the dominating presence of the

\textsuperscript{43} Anonymous, “Mr. Robert Ker Porter”, 140-41.

commanding general, reinforcing, as Shaw suggests, that “it is the politicians and
generals who underwrite the order of history”, Porter’s panoramic work
simultaneously demonstrates that the subaltern officer, a recognizably individuated
citizen-soldier, equally has a role to play in underwriting that history. At least one
reviewer concluded of the work that “it will prove a gratifying promise to the
perspective of military prowess, that the names and persons of the most
distinguished of Valour’s sons, will live to after ages in the glowing colours of the
canvas, as well as in the annals of their country”. As Porter wrote elsewhere of his
soldierly feelings whilst contemplating West’s *The Death of Nelson* (1806):

> To die like a Wolfe or a Nelson, is a destiny so great, that cold must be the
heart which is not awakened to enthusiasm and patriotic zeal when it recollects

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46 Anonymous, “Mr. Robert Ker Porter”, 140-41.
their life and death to remembrance. Who would not partake their bed with joy? Defending your country, opposing your breast as a shield between England and her enemies, let the balls come: if they strike, it is for thousands your life is given. Victory! Safety to your country, the preservation of relations, friends, countrymen, all are in that word!  

For Porter, the heart of any of his countrymen must be awakened to enthusiasm and zeal by images of heroic sacrifice. His painting sought to invoke just such a patriotic response in its viewers. Notably, one commentator on Seringapatam, Thomas Dibdin, wrote that although as a young man he shuddered and retreated at the sight of the “carnage” in Porter’s work, he nonetheless “carried it home, and did nothing but think of it, talk of it, and dream of it”. For Dibdin the painting created a “longing to be leaping from crag to crag with Sir David Baird, hallowing his men on to victory”. Porter’s work could enable war to “come home” by rendering the horrors of war through the lens of personal sacrifice for the nation, enabling the citizen to join imaginatively with General Baird and the British state to engage in what Dibdin described as war’s “hot and bloody fight”.  

Certainly, Porter was not inviting any body to participate – the private soldier still remains anonymous and relegated to the background. Yet, his work seeks to refashion a certain middle-class subjectivity around this militarised identity. Offering an individuated soldier’s subjectivity to the middle-class civilian viewer, Porter’s painting could interpellate the citizen into a nationalist framework as just such a citizen-soldier, helping to make the home a site for bloody dreams of military glory.

War Correspondence and the Soldier’s Wounded Body

The artist Joseph Farington also visited Seringapatam. He recorded his visit in his diary but commented little on the painting itself, showing more interest in the events leading up to and surrounding the actual storming of Seringapatam. At one point he recalled: “Lyson called read a letter from Major Lambton dated Seringapatam. Duke of York says best acct. of taking that fort that has been reed”.  

Farington’s comment implies that the junior ranking officer had a significant role in


disseminating information about the nation’s wars, just as officers’ eyewitness accounts were one of the core elements in the production of Porter’s *Seringapatam*. But such accounts needed to be located correctly in relation to state sanctioned views of war. Farthing defers to the Duke of York’s authority in order to legitimate the significance of Major Lambton’s letter, just as Porter grants General Baird a central position in his painting in order to unite the personal sacrifice of subaltern officers with the state’s military effort. This very act of deferral nonetheless raises a spectre of a sociable soldier speaking on war as a “private individual”, implying the possibility of other perspectives of war than those sanctioned by the army and the state.

Indeed, in his role as commander of the British forces during the Peninsular War, the Duke of Wellington repeatedly complained about the extent to which his junior officers discussed military matters in their personal correspondence. The public’s eagerness to read personal accounts of the war meant that many of these private letters from officers, were, in turn, published in the newspapers. Wellington lamented the damage that could be done to the war effort by the spread of these alternative views of war. Observing that “as soon as an accident happens, every man who can write, and who can read, sits down to write his account of what he does not know”, Wellington expressed a desire that his officers “mind their own business instead of writing news and keeping coffee-houses”.\(^{50}\) Despite the popular appeal of these letters as a source of information about the war, the Duke felt that “[t]he croaking which already prevails in the Army … is disgraceful to us as a nation and does infinite mischief to the cause”.\(^{51}\) He eventually found it necessary to expressly forbid his officers to write letters intended for publication in the newspapers.\(^{52}\)

Porter, notably, published a collection of letters that recounted his personal experiences of the war as just such an eyewitness to the conflict. Invited by General Sir John Moore to join the army as a military artist, he travelled with the British army in Portugal and Spain from 1808 to 1809, as a colonel with Moore’s staff.\(^{53}\)

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50 Quoted in Turner, *Gallant Gentlemen*, 151.
52 Quoted in Turner, *Gallant Gentlemen*, 151.
Returning to Britain, he published an account of his experiences campaigning with the army, as *Letters from Portugal and Spain* (1809), producing a book that, like *Seringapatam*, sought to extol the heroic bravery of the British army. Porter had already attracted enormous praise for the heroic efforts he had exerted in producing the massive *Seringapatam* in only six weeks. The *Narrative Sketches*, which were eventually published to accompany the *Seringapatam* exhibition due to the “flattering and popular acceptation of the great work”, observed that the “popularity” which surrounded the painting was “universally attached to the enterprise of the Soldier, and the labours of the Artist”. Porter’s painting had shown that military prowess could exist as firmly in the “annals of the country” as on his canvas, suggesting that the artist, as much as the soldier, had a role to play in helping to secure the defence and glory of the nation. Porter had twinned the roles of the citizen and the soldier in producing his art, and equally sought to twin these roles in accompanying Moore to Spain. His *Letters* also largely operate by seeking to forge a sympathetic identification between the citizen and the soldier. But although he travelled with the army as a military artist, Porter did not produce any further military paintings, and his *Letters* suggest a more ambiguous response to war than his earlier portrayal.

To argue that Porter’s *Letters* seek to construct the reader’s sympathies for the soldier at war is, however, to offer a somewhat different analysis of “war correspondence” than an influential account offered by Mary Favret. Favret has, in particular, insisted that war correspondence of the Romantic period helped to maintain war’s rhetorical distance from Britain by, in part, establishing a radical separation of soldiers and civilians that was not mediated through shared sympathies. She observes that whilst war correspondence between soldiers and their families at home inherently suggests bonds of domestic and national affection, it also implies an epistemological gap between soldiers who experience war and the domestic realm of those to whom they write. It is a gap, Favret believes, that helped to construct through the war years a necessary image of Britain as safely shielded from foreign

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war by its army and navy. The soldier’s identity and experience of war, she therefore believes, were entirely remote and inaccessible to the civilian:

Since sending British troops to fight and die overseas was a strategy to keep England free from the violence of war, fighting men had to be radically differentiated from the English people whom they protected. War letters could participate in these protective manoeuvres, using the language of ineffable sublimity to shield domestic readers from being invaded by the particular anguish of military engagements.57

She also views “war correspondence” as working across these distinct realms, helping at some level to make war into a knowable, felt experience for the domestic reader, but she insists that this crossing only produces a form of hysteria in the domestic realm, not a sympathetic or moral identification with the soldier and his personal experience of violence and pain. As I argue in this thesis, however, representations of warfare through the period regularly sought to foster sympathy between these separate realms of the citizen and the soldier in order to enable the citizen to identify with, and to even willingly become, the soldier. Correspondingly, such identifications enabled the soldier to view himself as a citizen-soldier, fighting in defence of the nation. It was, indeed, largely due to the recognition of the radical distinction between the civilian and military realms that there was widely felt to be need to establish a sympathetic identification between soldiers and civilians. Though Porter’s Letters operate much like other “war correspondence” in marking out separate realms of home and war, and he clearly aligns his writing with a state-centred view, he also repeatedly asks his reader to sympathise with the valour of the British army and to recognise its suffering and sacrifice. Highlighting the personal suffering of those at war was a vital means for establishing a civilian audience’s sympathy for and identification with the nation’s soldiers.

But Porter’s resulting Letters nonetheless also show that however much the soldier’s views might correspond with those of the state, the foregrounding of an individuated citizen-soldier is an act that inherently retains within itself the potential to reorient views of war, enabling war to be profoundly misread as personal or domestic. In his The Face of Battle, John Keegan points out that by the time of the Napoleonic Wars, “[i]t was the receipt of wounds, not the infliction of death, which

57 Ibid., 175.
demonstrated an officer's courage". As De Landa observes, wounds operated for the officer as a physical marker of their self-motivated obedience to the demands of the army, and thus served as a key element in defining the officer's experience of war. This shift towards a more passive or stoical idea of courage had taken place since the introduction of clockwork warfare, but such issues come to the fore in motorized warfare. The officer's exemplary courage, and not simply his maintenance of rigorous discipline, came to be a key ingredient in military management, helping to foster an ideology of self-sacrifice amongst soldier and civilian alike. But it is precisely in this foregrounding of personal wounds and heroic sacrifice that the mass, corporate activity of warfare can most clearly come to seem solitary and corporeal. A sentimental approach to war could lead the reader to identify with the soldier as a private man, as simply a suffering individual, rather than with the soldier as an idealised and sacrificial representative of the nation. Foregrounding personal suffering could, therefore, produce the very kinds of sentimental responses to war that state-centred views of war habitually sought to hold at bay.

Coleridge, like Wellington, feared that the spread of personal information from military officers could be disruptive to the state's war effort, creating a misreading of war's sacrifices. His *Letters on the Spaniards* (1809-10) was written in an effort to persuade his readers that pursuing war with France in the Iberian Peninsula was of vital necessity to the defence of the British nation. Personal accounts of the war, were, Coleridge argued, potentially disruptive to these war aims, because they could subvert the official flow of information and produce alternative reactions to the war:

The impression made by each Officer on his relatives and connections spreads in ever-widening circles; and from the nature of our imagination, a few particular facts attested by an eye-witness of our own acquaintance, will produce a livelier conviction for, or against, a whole cause, than the clearest general reasonings, though confirmed by a hundred weightier facts that have been communicated through the common channels of public information.

For Coleridge, the dissemination of personal, eyewitness views of war could unsettle the public "imagination" and circumvent more official and rational reflection.

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58 Quoted in De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 249.
59 Favret, "War Correspondence", 175-76.
Though he acknowledges a place for eyewitness accounts from soldiers, informing his reader that he himself had acquired “additional intelligence from the oral or written testimony of independent witnesses both in the military and diplomatic capacities”, this personal, “independent” information, he implies, is only legitimated to circulate publicly when it is carefully mediated and controlled by the professional writer. The soldier’s status as an eyewitness to war could inflate the importance of his personal sentiments and convictions, granting him an undue and excessive authority that clouded a correct, rational assessment of public events. In particular, Coleridge insists that accounts of war’s personal suffering and misery, what he refers to as war’s “visible and bodily evils”, must be reimagined in terms of a striving after national “unanimity” and honour. Diego Saglia argues that Coleridge’s Letters deliberately seek to displace any such “acts and effects of war, such as the mutilated bodies, the suffering, [and] destruction”, by drawing his discussion of war into the abstraction of a “moral world” that would reconcile personal suffering to the wider aims of the nation at war. As Coleridge claims, the “horrors of battle … the miseries of a whole war … would even present a sight of comfort and of elevation, if this field of carnage were the sign and result of a national resolve, of a general will, so to die.”

However, personal responses to war and the foregrounding of the subaltern’s sacrifice threatened to re-imagine or misread such “horrors” and “miseries” as something other than an elevating sign of a “national resolve”. Thomas Dibdin had observed just such a misreading of war’s miseries when he visited Seringapatam – though he left the painting longing to be fighting alongside General Baird, he reported, too, that he had observed women in the audience who fainted at the sight of the “wounded and dying” in the painting, and who had to be “carried out swooning” from the gallery. Personal stories of war might achieve the very same effect. When, in Mansfield Park (1814), Austen imagines the midshipman William Price relating a personal tale of war, it is precisely a tale of “bodily hardships” and “suffering” that

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61 Ibid., 48.
62 Ibid., 84 and 91.
he tells. Hearing his story, Henry Crawford responded much like Dibdin, longing "to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much". Lady Bertram, however, recoiled in horror at the tale, asking how "any body can ever go to sea". Foregrounding the efforts and experience of the subaltern officer meant introducing an affective dimension into representations of war as personal wounds and suffering came to serve as key markers of military achievement and heroism. Where such representations were read in a personal or feminine manner, unmediated through an "ideology of sacrifice", they could produce a wholly different response: not simply an appalled feminine hysteria, but equally a sentimental moralizing that sought to dislocate the connection between suffering and a rhetoric of national heroics. It is precisely this sentimental dimension that will be reproduced through Porter’s *Letters*. Writing his account as an anonymous individual, Porter’s work was dangerously unmediated by any acknowledged authority on war as he moved from his role as an official military artist and into the more ambiguous figure of the military author. The potential for an excessively sentimental reading of the soldier’s sacrifice comes to the fore as Porter recoils in horror from his personal encounter with war’s brutality.

The “Melancholy Journey” of *Letters from Portugal and Spain*

*Letters from Portugal and Spain* is composed as a series of twenty-four letters, written by Porter to an anonymous friend, purportedly whilst he was on campaign with the British army from 1808 to 1809. The first letter is dated Lisbon, 30 September, 1808, and the final after his arrival back in England at Plymouth, in January 1809. The French had invaded and occupied Spain and Portugal in early 1808, and Porter’s letters relate to the British army’s intervention into the subsequent Spanish uprising against the invasion through the later part of 1808. Describing initially his arrival in Portugal, at Lisbon, soon after the British army had ensured the liberation of the country from the French (the French leaving the country under the notorious Convention of Cintra), his letters predominantly follow the events of the campaign through the later part of 1808 and into 1809, as the British field army, under the command of General Moore, advanced into Spain in an effort to support the Spanish forces resisting the French. The resulting campaign was widely

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considered a military disaster. The British army soon found itself outnumbered by the French and unable to successfully operate with its Spanish allies, and it was thus forced to retreat back out of the country. The army was evacuated by the British navy from the Spanish coastal town of Corunna in January 1809, but only after suffering a harrowing march to Corunna under appalling winter conditions. Large numbers of soldiers and camp followers died on the march, which ended with a close fought engagement with the French outside Corunna, a battle in which Moore was killed. The British public responded with dismay and even outrage at the turn of events, and considerable controversy erupted over the Government's handling of the campaign and Moore's competence as a general.

Like nearly all of the military memoirs that appeared during the war years and in the wake of the Peninsula campaigns, Porter's Letters are framed as what could be termed a campaign narrative or historical account of the campaign in which he was involved. Porter asserts in his preface that he set out to provide an accurate account of the "march and actions" of the British army. He thus positions his own narrative alongside official reports on the campaign, repeatedly insisting on the link between his work and the army's despatches. These despatches were composed by the army's commanding general and provided the government with a factual "narrative of events" that concentrated on troop movements and general details about the army's engagements through the campaign. Despatches were in turn published in the London Gazette for a wider public audience, and Porter notes that the sketches he provides in his own book are intended as a supplement to this information. He thus asserts that his sketch of the battlefield of Vimiera will help his friend to appreciate "the Gazette which contains the letter of Sir Arthur Wellesley: you will read it with double satisfaction when looking on the enclosed memorandum".
and he later provides a “plan” of the battle of Corunna for his friend which he believes will be primarily useful because it may “redouble” his friend’s interest “when following the events of the action through the narratives lately published in the Gazette” (308). In a similar way to how his *Seringapatam* situates representations of the soldier’s subjective experience in relation to the central, commanding figure of General Baird, Porter orients his writing in terms of official military accounts, presenting his work as part of the factual and authoritative Coleridgean “common channels of public information”.

Porter also celebrates the army’s noble and heroic service to the nation, repeatedly drawing attention to their hardships and yet reminding his reader of the heroic glory behind this suffering. He emphasises the enormous sacrifice of the army, asserting that despite the failures of the campaign, the army nonetheless fought bravely and with honour:

> having been thus constrained to seek repose for our toils in our native land, I hope the causes of our hasty retreat will be sought where they are alone to be found; and not be laid to the account of any want of judgement in our later commander, of any want of courage in our troops (304-05).

He portrays the army that returned to Britain as “a victor in arms, and yet a shattered army; returning to England with unsullied honour, yet with bleeding wounds” (305), highlighting wounds and toil alongside the army’s glory and honour. To some extent, indeed, he defines honourable combat as precisely that which can overcome or transcend the soldier’s misery. Witnessing an engagement a few days prior to the army’s arrival at Corunna, and subsequent evacuation, he reflects:

> During this affair nothing could exceed my admiration of the conduct of our men, but the transcendent courage, coolness, and steadiness of our officers. All seemed like a race started from the dead. The moment they heard the shout of battle, their ardour burst forth as if they had never known despondence, never felt fatigues (276-77).

The soldier’s suffering is repeatedly highlighted by Porter, but he equally endeavours to translate this suffering into an affirmation of military ardour, and, in particular, the officer’s “transcendent courage”.

As with *Seringapatam*, Porter also draws attention to the individual heroics of brave wounded and killed officers. He writes about the death in battle of Stanhope and Napier (297) and he reports on the wounding of Brigade-Major Roberts, “a
brave veteran, whose right hand was carried away by a shot, but not until he had gallantly buried the point which it held repeatedly in the hearts of those whose bayonets threatened him on all sides” (278). Recounting the death of Sir John Moore at the battle of Corunna, he even insists the death was “felt by us all”, thus linking the army and its commanding general, and, indeed, the reader, into a community of shared feeling, united by the “felt” pain of heroic sacrifice (298). He even portrays himself in his Preface as just such a heroically wounded officer, claiming that “as a soldier he felt, as a soldier he writes; and to a soldier who bled in the fields of Spain he hopes his readers will grant their indulgence” (iv). Just as Seringapatam was almost wholly based on reproducing factual, eyewitness accounts of soldiers and their personal suffering, so his Letters insists that it is through a depiction of the soldier’s experience of suffering that he can provide the authoritative truth of war.

But Porter’s embrace of this identity of the suffering soldier, forcibly locating himself into the narrative as a figure who “felt” and “bled”, produces a degree of instability in his text that troubles its reception as a narrative of “public information”. Writing of his own experience of suffering conflicts with an easy assumption of the heroic image of the soldier’s sacrifice because the soldier does not emerge as a stable speaking position from which Porter can compose his military memoirs. As the soldier, he is not rhetorically distanced from the private man who is feeling and bleeding and his account leaves the experience of soldiering as much a private affair as a narrative of national sacrifice. Introducing his subjective experience so emphatically into an account of these military events, Porter’s Letters thus repeatedly collapse his attempt to relate public information about war into a very different kind of account that focuses instead on his personal experiences of travelling with the army. What is striking about his Letters is, indeed, the extent to which Porter fails to achieve his stated aims of relating an account of the movements of the British army. Whilst Porter suggests that his own account may serve to “redouble” or supplement the commanding general’s official views, he equally registers the fact that he is unable to compose his own experiences according to what he regards, in relation to his sketching, as the “military rule” (21). On arriving in Portugal, he announces that he is confronted with a scene of confusion and uncertainty and is unable to tell his reader anything about the military situation. He feels that he is less able to understand the situation around him than those at home in Britain, who at least have
access to information about the war through the newspapers; “on the spot” he states, “we find a bewildering labyrinth” (3). For Porter, to be present at scenes of war means to be in an environment in which circulate a “thousand fabrications ... in the shape of information” (19) and he advises his friend simply that “all is doubt and wonder” (3). Throughout his narrative, he and his fellow soldiers are consistently unable to obtain reliable information about military events, and writing later in the campaign he can only advise his friend, “I am sorry to say that information respecting the military movements ... is very difficult to obtain” (146).

Viewing war as a private individual, Porter comes to provide a very different kind of narrative to the official despatch, detailing a far more personal and sentimental view of war in which the bleeding soldier is conflated with the suffering traveller and man. As the Critical Review, or Annals of Literature observed, Porter emerges as a “man of feeling” from his Letters, in which his sentimentality, with its intimate concern for human suffering, comes to trouble his celebration of military glory. James Treadwell has observed that the autobiographical element in personal narratives of the Romantic period almost invariably emerges through such a failure of a text’s stated purpose. Insisting that nearly all autobiographical writing of the period principally set out to document events or relate stories that were of public importance, Treadwell observes that these narratives only come to seem personal, or autobiographical in a more modern sense, when the personal intrudes itself upon the narrative’s stated, public, purpose. As he argues, “[r]ead[ing] the practice of Romantic autobiography ... is a matter of exploring the space which self-writing creates for itself within the text, and registering its presence in excess of the text’s sense of purpose”. It is here, in the failures of the period’s formal “autobiographical conventions”, that we find “subjectivity” injected into the personal narrative. Precisely such a failure characterises Porter’s Letters, as he comes to find himself overwhelmed by his personal, affective response to war; a “subjectivity” is introduced into his text that consistently disrupts his efforts to relate an impersonal campaign narrative.

71 Critical Review, or Annals of Literature 17 (1809), 423.
73 Ibid., 177.
As Porter begins to describe his experiences travelling through Portugal and Spain, he takes upon himself the task of describing what he views as “civil”, rather than “martial news” (48). His attention is primarily directed towards the landscapes, people and places around him. He specifically offers to be his friend’s “second eyes” in the country (24), thus situating himself in the narrative as a double for his anonymous, private friend rather than the commanding general. As the personal intrudes, so his narrative generically collapses into travel writing rather than a recognisable narrative of the campaign. The narrative that results is an account of his travels through Portugal and Spain, and he largely downplays any mention of military activities, only ever dealing with military matters perfunctorily. After writing to his friend with an account of the marches of the various commands in the army, for instance, he begins his next letter by stating “[m]y last was on military matters: being in those respects just as we were, I shall change to a more promising subject, and describe the beauties, ancient and modern, of Salamanca” (148). Porter even intersperses his Letters with a number of engravings of his ink and watercolour sketches of landscapes, and though these sketches illustrate the route of the army’s march they are composed with little attention to military details or soldiers. His Vale of Tancos in – Portugal, for instance, depicts a scene of natural splendour and only includes soldiers as a peripheral foreground detail (see Figure 4). Descriptions of his travels and of the scenery, towns and cities he encounters constitute the more “promising”, and far more prominent, subject through his Letters.

Writing as the gentleman traveller, the “man of feeling”, Porter will, in turn, frame his account of the military details of campaigning in terms of feelings and suffering, in which he will come to claim “[n]o pursuit of man produces such various feelings in the human breast as the events of a campaign. Scenes of exultation and regret chequer the path; but the latter, I am sorry to say, are generally most frequent” (210). He comes, instead, to relate an account of the miseries and horrors that accompany an army at war. From the start of his account Porter writes of his inconveniences on the march, describing, for instance, his experience of waiting for

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74 For a discussion of the sketch book Porter used during the campaign, see Harvey, A Muse of Fire, 15-16.
75 The bulk of Porter’s account reads much like Southey’s Letters Written During a Journey in Spain and a Short Residence in Portugal which was republished in a 3rd edition in Britain in 1808. Southey was likewise travelling at a time of war, but simply provides an account of the scenes he encounters and the discomforts of travel, rather than focusing on any military events.
accommodation in the “large, ruinous and miserable” (79) city of Abrantes and spending “two full hours on horseback, standing under torrents of rain” (81). He repeatedly draws attention to the miseries of sleeping in “wretched” accommodation (39), or to his lack of adequately warm or clean clothing. As soon as he and his fellow officers arrived home in Britain, he reports, they had a “warm bath” so that they could be “cleansed from all the pollutions of the disgusting part of Spain” and thus returned “to cleanliness, comfort, and to England” (309-10). He observes that though the “pretty” scenery meant that “your mind would be amused by the surrounding landscape”, the conditions of travelling nonetheless ensured “your body is tormented” (69). These miseries, however, intensify through his narrative as he recounts the army’s retreat to Corunna to be evacuated out of Spain, extending his experience beyond discomfort and into an appalled encounter with war’s horrors. “Retreat”, Porter exclaims, “is never an agreeable movement at the best; and when at the worst, as it is with us, no fancy can imagine its misery, no pen describe its horrors” (253). His description of the retreat is filled, however, with images of misery and horror: horses dying on the roads, wrecked houses, famished peasants,
terrified women struggling to keep up with the army, and everywhere the naked bodies of soldiers who had died on the road and been stripped of their uniforms. The British had become, he notes, “an army of starving wretches” (239), and he is forced to observe that “[f]amine, pestilence, and death are said to be three furies ever attendant on war! We have found the remark a just one!” (274).

The nationalist war effort at the start of the nineteenth century emphasised “restraint, self-control and stoical, wry acceptance”, so that overt displays of emotion and sentimentality appeared increasingly effete and self-indulgent. As Fulford has observed of the period, the language of sentimentality “risked seeming womanish and weak in an age in which manhood was increasingly defined in terms of a willingness to go to war”. The eminently pro-war editors of the Antijacobin Review and Magazine, notably, found themselves recoiling from Porter’s sentimental account of his personal travel experiences because it suggested something “womanish”, concluding:

if he is determined to make the public in future sharers in his adventures, we trust, for the sake of common decency, that he will commit that part of them to the wind and waves, and not to paper. Neither could we help blushing for the honour of a “British soldier,” at hearing this man-milliner jargon of affected delicacy so often repeated by an adventurous son of Mars.

Porter’s account fails to coincide with a properly rigorous stoical or manly response to war. An embarrassingly personal and feminine sentimentality, with its “affected delicacy” and horrified recoil from suffering as an effeminate “man-milliner”, subverts any expectations that his story could elevate the “national resolve” for war through a correct display of military honour and prowess. Porter himself confesses that he had hoped to write encouraging letters of British military victories, but, instead, in responding to war simply from the position of the gentleman traveller, he finds himself recounting the horrors he witnessed; “far different” he advises his friend, “were the letters I expected to write to you from this land of vaunted enthusiasm” (258).

77 Timothy Fulford, Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 10.
78 Antijacobin Review and Magazine 33 (1809), 271.
Rather than offering a celebratory vista of war, like Seringapatam, Porter narrates instead a “melancholy journey” filled with “raking spectacles of misery and death” (261) in which he and his reader seem injured, or raked, merely by contemplating scenes of war’s horror. He thus comes to view war as what Carl Thompson describes as a “suffering traveller”,

passing through scenes of desolation in which the military has become an intrusive force within the natural surroundings. The soldiers are viewed as a “discordant” accompaniment to Romantic scenes through which he travels (251), whilst with “all deference to orders” lost, the soldiers destroy the landscape, setting fire to the villages and houses as they pass and “committing every excess” (254). He registers the destructive impact of the soldiers’ presence and war itself comes to seem brutal, no longer a means for national celebration or glory but a force of horrifying destruction. As the miseries attendant on war come to the fore in his account of the army’s retreat to the town of Corunna, he concludes to his friend:

I shall never forget the horrors of these dreadful days. The field of battle is a festival of honour; a sublime pageant. But this is war! Here are her red dragons yoked to her fiery car! Here are her sufferings, her woes, her wide destructions. Every yard we passed over was marked with some heart-rending proof of our miseries. (264)

The official despatch of these events, by Lieutenant-General John Hope, who took over command following Moore’s death, noted simply that the retreat was “harassing” for the army and the events were deemed significant in so far as they “diminished the Numbers, exhausted the Strength, and impaired the Equipment of the Army”.

Porter recasts this official, public version of war, reframing these official military considerations of strength, numbers and equipment by placing his emphasis on the felt experience of suffering, woe and destruction, constructing war as sentimentally “heart rending”.

Porter does not entirely abandon his emphasis on the heroism and glorious sacrifice of the British army’s suffering, and he continues throughout his narrative to seek to educate his reader into a correct reading of war’s horrors as a national sacrifice. He advises his reader after the battle of Corunna, for instance:

80 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres (24 January 1809), 90.
Official communications having been yesterday dispatched to ministers at home, in a light-sailing vessel that must arrive many a day before our heavy laden transports; you may be mourning the result of our action, the details of which, though steeped in blood, would make the proud consciousness of an Englishman check his lamentations, to break forth in glorying admiration of the slain. (294)

He acknowledges that news of war may be mournfully “steeped in blood”, but he insists that a proper response is to admire the slain, to glorify them as Englishmen. Repeatedly he links accounts of the soldiers’ bleeding with recognition of their “dauntless courage” (295) and “deathless laurels” (297), relocating the potential for sentimental pity into admiration and glory. He argues that the “military philosophy” is precisely the ability to endure suffering stoically. Arguing that such a philosophy is as central to the soldier’s identity as being armed with “swords or firelocks”, he seeks to efface his status as a personal, suffering traveller by claiming that sufferings which “though of consequence with the mere traveller to the soldier are of secondary moment” (76). His military philosophy asks us to recognise military glory in a stoical endurance of suffering that could, as Martin Jay argues, “transfigure horror into something culturally elevating”.81

Nonetheless, through his reflections on war as a private individual, Porter ultimately comes to problematise the “ideology of sacrifice” that dominates such thinking on war. He concludes his narrative by describing how he and his fellow soldiers returned home to Britain ravaged by illness and wounds. Observing that the local inhabitants kindly received “the sick officers into their houses” (313-14), he laments that even with such attention, “the numbers we have buried are incalculable. Our officers are dropping off hourly”. Summing up the campaign and the victorious battle of Corunna, Porter concedes:

Even victory, that victory which cost us our commander, while it restored to us our rifled honour, and gave us the power of returning home as became free-born Britons, could not re-awaken the dead, could not revive the expiring soldiers whom Spanish deceit, by exposing them to want and unmentionable miseries, had even murdered. (312)

If we again follow Jay’s argument, echoing similar claims by Scarry, that the fraud of war is “the very belief in the resurrection of the dead, their symbolic recuperation

through communal efforts to justify their alleged ‘sacrifice’ and ignore their unrecuperable pain”, we can see that, despite his rhetoric of victory and honour, Porter concludes his work by refusing any such recuperation.\textsuperscript{82} He seems incapable of escaping a “woe-begone tone” (228), viewing war simply as a “melancholy” experience (281). Porter concludes, “[w]e few convalescents are overwhelmed with questions relative to our sufferings and our losses. I regret that my answers are even more dismal than the expectations of the interrogators” (316). He thus subverts his own “military philosophy”. The soldier is meant to arrest suffering through exulted glory and stoicism, but here, surrounded by his dying friends and comrades at home in England, his story becomes even more dismal than anyone might expect. The awe with which the viewer of a panorama might witness war’s horrors, where wounding and violence become a “marvellous” sight of “shuddering awe”,\textsuperscript{83} has been rendered instead through what Porter describes as “horrid scenes” of illness, hunger and death (261). War becomes a spectacle, he tells his friend, which would, if he were to relate in its entirety, “unman your heart, and send my reader weeping from the tale” (266). The individual reader is assumed to retreat into a private and mournful contemplation at the sight of war’s horrors rather than to participate in a collective, national celebration of wonder and awe. Porter himself concludes his \textit{Letters} by simply announcing to his correspondent, “[t]he moment I land at Portsmouth you shall see your friend”. Rather than his narrative situating the soldier forever into the “annals of the country”, through his “immortal glory” (317), the narrative ends with Porter simply disappearing from “this disastrous campaign”, back into an anonymous world of personal and private attachments (318-19).

William Armstrong insists that Porter’s writing reproduces his paintings’ “romantic” notions of warfare, but in his personal response to war’s horrors, Porter presents war in a far more ambiguous manner than his \textit{Seringapatam}.\textsuperscript{84} However much Porter sought to write about British military heroics in his \textit{Letters}, we see him recoil from war after personally travelling with the army on campaign, encountering not the spectacle of heroic death but the disturbing horrors of what Christensen describes as the “intimate, blind, and chronically tactical” world of the soldier on

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  \item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 24.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Quoted in Allick, \textit{The Shows of London}, 135.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Armstrong, “The Many-Sided World of Sir Robert Ker Porter”, 39.
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Indeed, Porter’s antagonism towards the “treachery” of Britain’s Spanish allies (170), in which he repeatedly claims that it was “the folly of the Spanish juntas [which] involved us in the disasters of the campaign” (304), echoes the anti-war arguments that appeared in the British newspapers following the early Peninsular campaigns, which similarly “dwelt on Spanish weakness and disunity”. Porter certainly refrains from making explicit anti-war pronouncements, and he clings to his ideals of British military valour throughout his Letters. Nonetheless, his concluding emphasis on the campaign as a failure, in which he has witnessed “streams of blood flowing in vain” (318), signals a recognition of war as being equally constituted by suffering and waste as it was a proving ground for manly sacrifice.

Suffering, Sacrifice and Sympathy

Porter’s work was responding to new ways of thinking about warfare that emphasized the subjective experience and efforts of the nation’s soldiers, particularly junior ranking officers. His work reflected a growing understanding of war as being fought in defence of the nation by soldiers who were, themselves, increasingly understood as fellow citizens, and in which the fostering of sympathy between the citizen and the soldier was considered an important element in the management of the nation’s wars. Much of his work thus provided images of the suffering officer as a way to engage his audience’s sympathies and identification with the nation’s wider military efforts. His work also, admittedly, habitually recognises the central role of the commanding general in accounts of war and the necessity of linking images of personal sacrifice to the nation. Notably too, he appeared to withdraw from a close attention to individual soldiers in the composition of his later, and enormously successful A Narrative of the Campaign in Russia During the Year 1812 (1814), which ran to seven printings and provided an impersonal historical overview of Napoleon’s disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812. Nonetheless, despite moving away from a subjective view of war, the book focuses on the enormous miseries and horrors associated with the campaign and expounds the valour of the Russian army,

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85 Christensen, Romanticism at the End of History, 4.
87 Armstrong, “The Many-Sided World of Sir Robert Ker Porter”, 44.
suggesting that questions of suffering and a sympathetic reading of the soldier remained central to Porter’s conception of war and the military experience. Porter’s work demonstrates that images and accounts of soldiers’ personal suffering did circulate through the Romantic period, in contrast to recent assertions that there was an absence of such imagery.\textsuperscript{88}

These assertions of the absence of images of suffering are most notably summarised in Favret’s argument that the period’s “publicity” erected a “paper shield – a shield of newspapers reports, pamphlets, songs and poems” that sought to protect the public from exposure to the miseries of war and images of soldiers’ violence and suffering.\textsuperscript{89} As this chapter has shown, however, public discourse about the war was not simply emptied of representations of soldiers’ personal suffering and injury. Both Porter’s \textit{Seringapatam} and his \textit{Letters} were based on their reproduction of factual, eyewitness accounts of the soldiers’ personal experience of the horrors of military conflict and the felt experience of pain and suffering. And even though Porter, similarly to Favret, viewed the soldier as an “immortal” figure who defends family and countrymen, insisting that the “real hero” will fight for “justice alone; to defend, not to oppress”, his work does not simply identify the suffering soldier with the private or the feminine.\textsuperscript{90} It was, rather, precisely in foregrounding the individual soldier’s experience, and highlighting his wounded, suffering body, that Porter sought to foster a public identification with ideals of a masculine, militarised sacrifice for the nation. Porter’s “military philosophy” does not operate through masking or shielding his reader from war’s horrors, but, rather, works by insisting upon an identification with, and stoical acceptance of, the soldier’s pain.

But representing soldiers’ suffering, Porter’s work also introduced the possibility for misreading state-centred views of war. Porter certainly attempted throughout his work to represent the soldier in terms of immortal glory, and to hold at bay any private or feminine reading of his suffering. The careful arrangement of \textit{Seringapatam} seeks to elide any such misreading of the soldiers’ suffering, clearly positioning officers’ wounded bodies in relation to the nation’s military effort and

\textsuperscript{90} Porter, \textit{Travelling Sketches in Russia and Sweden}, 136.
recreating war as the “sublime pageant” of the field of battle and the stormed breach. His *Letters*, however, written as a personal eyewitness account of the conflict, offer a far less disciplined view of war than *Seringapatam*. As a military author Porter enters public discourse as a more politically problematic figure than the military artist. Rather than the artist’s careful selection and refinement of views of war, his *Letters* could, at least in part, present the personal experience of war unmediated by the rhetoric of national glory and an “ideology of sacrifice”. Favret claims that “[w]hen the soldier is recognized as a wounded or dying body, he must be translated into a private body, identified with the feminine, and distanced from our vision of the public man”. In Porter’s *Letters*, we might say, the two “bodies” of the soldier that Favret identifies are rhetorically conflated in a highly problematic manner.

His *Letters* could thus provide a transgressive reading of the national war effort, as Porter conflates the public image of the soldier with a sentimental “man of feeling” and introduces an array of personal and sentimental reflections into his work that unsettled boundaries between public and private, masculine and feminine, immortal glory and personal hardship, that nationalistic representations of war sought to maintain. When another subaltern officer, Robert Blakeney, recounted his experiences of the Peninsular War (though his manuscript was only published at the end of the nineteenth century), he described his own performance of soldierly stoicism after being wounded in battle in the Pyrenees, commenting to his surgeon that “it was quite a pleasure to get wounded”. Unimpressed by his bravura, the surgeon, Blakeney reports, simply “feared I was somewhat deranged from the great loss of blood and agonising pain which I suffered”. Presenting war as a personal experience, Porter’s *Letters* similarly recasts the manly “pleasure” of wounding and sacrifice as a kind of derangement or “mock heroism”. Far from his work helping to maintain what Favret views as a necessary separation between the personal and the public dimensions of the soldier, his *Letters* force his reader to “blush” as Porter’s experience of pain and suffering conflates the stoical and immortal “son of mars” with a delicate, feminine “man-milliner”. Through Porter’s *Letters*, the reader,

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91 Favret, “Coming Home”, 542-43.
as much as the soldier, comes to be transgressively “unmanned” as they are confronted with war as a personal experience of suffering, misery and waste.

Indeed, nearly all the military memoirs that appeared through the war years, like Porter’s *Letters*, introduced a personal dimension into their account of war that could unsettle the ideology of heroic sacrifice that helped to underpin the nation state’s war effort. George Baldwin claimed that his *Narrative of the Ever Memorable British Campaign in the Spring of 1801* (1801), a piece of writing attached to his longer work on the politics of Egypt, was produced due to the “eagerness of the Publick to know (and the tribute of justice due to the brave Army of Egypt, to let the publick know) what British valour can accomplish”. But his account of the British landing in Egypt, in which he writes of the British army’s storming of French positions at Aboukir, records a deep degree of ambivalence about his personal response, as an eyewitness, to these scenes of “valour”:

If every circumstance could be drawn of this great day; if I could bring into the scene the various efforts of a generous people: the seamen; the spirit of our young officers, some of them only boys in age; the game they made of the danger; their enterprise in going up to the cannon’s mouth; their effectual, their essential, their distinguished co-operation, I could move you, perhaps, as I myself am moved, to weep, but whether I shall say for joy, or distress, or admiration, or pity, or what? or gratitude to such men; or to Heaven for giving them victory? or what? I cannot say: I feel it, and am overwhelmed. I cannot describe it; for not half the eventful tale is here.

Baldwin insists that “without personal feeling, no public virtue can inhere”, but it is this very personal feeling that can “tinge the spirits with grief” and which shrinks in horror from the sight of war’s carnage, distracting him from proper reflection on “[t]he amor patrie; the devotion for our country”. Introducing personal feeling was an important element in the period’s emerging media spectacle of war and Baldwin saw his writing as “the effusions of an arduous and patriotic turn of mind”, yet to be confronted so directly with war’s “visible and bodily evils”, to see as an eyewitness

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94 Ibid., 172-74.
to the corporeal horrors of conflict, could overwhelm or derange any easy reflection on heroic military sacrifice and “amor patrie”.

Invoking “personal feeling” or sympathy was therefore not without risk, though increasingly necessary to the maintenance of the national war effort. As one commentator observed in 1805, in a review of military memoirs in the *Edinburgh Review*, what was interesting and useful in reading of war was “our sympathy with the combatants, and the mingled emotions of pity, horror, and admiration” that we feel. Whether it engendered a response of horror or admiration, this “sympathy with the combatants” emerged in the early years of the nineteenth century as an important element in cultural representations of war. Perhaps most significantly then, we can see the spectacle of war that unfolds in Porter’s work as being centrally organised around an affective response to the individuated, humanised, citizen-soldier, however problematic this could be to proper reflection on war and patriotism. As a reviewer of his *Letters* commented “the Readers of his Letters will feel considerable gratification in reflecting they were written by a bleeding member of that brave army which suffered dreadful calamities to ensure their safety.” Though his *Letters* offer a melancholy view of war, refusing to sublate the soldier’s death into immortalised national glory, he still constructs a sympathetic identification with the soldier for his readers. Dibdin’s phantasmic identification with the heroics of General Baird’s men saw him imaginatively bringing the soldier “home”, but so too, at the conclusion of Porter’s *Letters*, we can see the suffering, convalescent soldier brought into the British home as a sympathetic individual. Porter’s narrative, like the other military memoirs appearing at this time, can be principally understood as helping to forge this sympathetic, though fraught, identification between the citizen and the soldier.

It was not, however, until the 1820s that personal stories of soldiering started to enjoy a commercial success and a consistently positive critical reception in the reviews. The immediate post-war period saw personal military memoirs continue in a similar vein to Porter’s *Letters*. They provided an uneasy response to war that, however much it developed a patriotic appeal and sympathy for Britain’s soldiers,
was seldom free of sentimental moralizing and a subjective reflection on war’s horrors. There was clearly some demand for soldiers’ personal stories of service, but the personal element in such work remained a largely apologetic and at times problematic element in the history of the nations’ wars that saw reviewers frequently dismiss such publications as trivial, dull or jarring. The post-war period also witnessed, however, the emergence of tales of soldiering from private soldiers that began to find considerably more favour with the reading public as something quite different to the tradition of campaign narratives. These books helped extend the sympathy that Porter fosters between readers and officers, to include the reader’s sympathies with the suffering of the private soldier, but they also highlighted war as an even more horrifying and brutal experience than Porter’s Letters. It is to these works from private soldiers that I now turn, and in particular, the enormously successful The Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First (1819).
Chapter Four

"An Atom of an Army": The Sentimental Figure of the Suffering Soldier

The Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First occupies a more canonical position in the historical literature of the Peninsular War than Porter's Letters. Published in 1819, it was one of the first, and most popular, private soldier's memoirs to be written in Britain after the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. It has since gone on to become one of the most well known and highly regarded of the Peninsular War memoirs identified by Sir Charles Oman in his Wellington's Army, 1809-1814. Oman insists that the Journal "stands out" for "its literary merit", and that the author, "[h]aving a ready pen and a keen observant eye ... produced a little book of extraordinary interest", one that was written with a "vivid literary style". Christopher Hibbert republished the Journal in an abridged version in 1975 (which was again reprinted in 1996), in large part because of these literary qualities:

Readers of books about Wellington's army have long been familiar with the anonymous soldier of the 71st Highlanders whose vivid record of his experiences has enlivened so many narratives of the Peninsular War. Yet the journal from which military historians have so often quoted has been out of print for so many years and, in its entirety, has been known only to the specialist. It deserves a far wider readership than it has previously enjoyed.

Rory Muir has recently reaffirmed Hibbert's assessment, suggesting that the Journal is a "simple book of great appeal". The book could, therefore, be viewed as a classic of Peninsular War literature, one indeed that has been praised precisely because of its "simple" and "vivid" literary style.

Despite the Journal's continuing appeal, little is known about its author beyond what is recorded in the book itself. Referring to himself through the narrative simply as Tom or Thomas, his Journal is composed as an episodic account of his experiences as a private soldier in the Seventy-first Regiment of the British army. Thomas细节 the events of his life as a soldier, describing his traumatic departure

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3 Rory Muir, Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon (London: Yale, 1998), 303.
from his parents' home in Edinburgh in 1806 to join his regiment. He recounts events of his travels and his experience of battles, marches and camps on campaign in South America, at the siege of Flushing, in the Peninsular War and at the battle of Waterloo, until his return home nine years later. The book was brought to print through the intercession of its editor, John Howell, who claims to have known Thomas as a childhood “playfellow” in Edinburgh. Howell was a bookbinder by trade and had encountered Thomas in a state of poverty after his discharge from the army in 1815. Unable to assist Thomas financially, he encouraged him to write of his experiences, partly in the hope that it “might have been the means of alleviating” his “indigence”. Following publication of the book, however, Howell lost any contact with Thomas, and eventually supposed that he had emigrated to South America. Ten years later, Howell reported that he had still heard nothing of his whereabouts.

Given the relative obscurity of both men, and their inexperience in the publishing trade (this being the first publication in which either of them appear to have been involved), the Journal went on to achieve a remarkable degree of commercial success. Howell tells us in his preface to the third edition that, by 1822, the first two editions had already sold nearly 3000 copies. It is possible that Howell’s remarks are an attempt to puff the book by exaggerating its success, but even if the figure is only approximate, it suggests something of the degree of popularity of the Journal. William St. Clair has tabulated sales volumes for a number of books during the Romantic period, and whilst sales of Thomas’s book in the early 1820s were clearly dwarfed by those of Byron or Scott, they nonetheless represent a success comparable to many other major works of the period, such as John Clare’s

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early poetry or Jane Porter’s novels. At the very least, the Journal appears to have outsold many other biographies or accounts of voyages and travels that were published at the start of the 1820s (though books of travel often appeared in expensive, multivolume editions), and even achieved comparable sales to the first edition of Southey’s Life of Nelson (1813). The success of the Journal also saw Howell go on to edit several more military (and nautical) memoirs, including The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner (1822), and The Life of Alexander Alexander (1830). By 1830 he was being described as “the common patron and biographer in Edinburgh, of shipwrecked sailors and broken-down soldiers”.

Though the book was not extensively reviewed, those reviews that did appear support Howell’s claims for its success and lasting appeal. The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review commented on the book’s “success” and noted the “interest” which it “must excite”, whilst the Monthly Review remarked on the “success which attended the Journal of a Soldier of the 71st Foot” and reflected on the “ready spirit of imitation” that the book had inspired. The anonymous editor of Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier in the 42nd Highlands (1821) claimed to have been directly inspired by Thomas’s “interesting” Journal. Howell himself advised in the preface to the book’s third edition that “[i]ts success has given birth to a variety of imitations”, and he notes that he had been inundated with similar manuscripts from soldiers after the publication of the Journal.

Such attention was far from temporary; by the mid 1820s reviewers still referred to the book by noting the “success which attended several works of this class”, whilst nearly ten years after its publication, the editor of Vicissitudes in the Life of a Scottish Soldier (1827) attributed publication of his book in large part to the success of the Journal, observing that it had “excited no small portion of public attention and applause”. The Journal was even republished in an issue of Constable’s Miscellany in 1828, the

10 Ibid., 555-60.
11 Monthly Magazine 10 (1830), 227.
12 Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review 2 (1819), 19.
13 Monthly Review 96 (1821), 335.
14 Anonymous, Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier Who Served in the 42nd Highlanders for Twelve Years (London: 1821), viii.
16 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres no.495 (1826), 436.
editor commenting that the work was still “fully entitled to the precedence now given it.” Though a number of pieces by higher ranking military figures appeared in the same edition, including the Duke of Wellington’s famous Waterloo despatch, a reviewer suggested that “[t]he longest and most interesting of these is unquestionably the soldier’s journal, which is a plain but vivid, and apparently faithful picture of what many thousands constantly endure in times of war”. John Lockhart even referred approvingly to the style of the *Journal* in his account of Scottish life and manners, *Peter’s Letters to His Kinfolk* (1819), noting that “I have seen a little book of memoirs, lately written and very well written by a soldier of the 71st Regiment”.

What had prompted this interest in the *Journal* and enabled it to have such lasting influence and appeal? It was certainly not the first memoir ever published by a private British soldier, several of which appeared during the eighteenth century. None of these earlier works, however, achieved a comparable popularity or influence and at best only received “momentary” interest from the reading public. David Vincent has argued that enthusiasm for private soldiers’ memoirs emerged in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars because of the nation’s widespread interest in what had been, Vincent claims, the “first people’s war”. He suggests, in particular, that the memoirs provided patriotic tales of national service that helped to allay widespread fears of the revived popular labouring-class radicalism of the post-war years: “an apprehensive middle class”, therefore, “gave a welcome to the narratives of soldiers and sailors who had risked their lives to defend the nation against the revolution”. It seems likely that the popularity of the *Journal* itself was, at least in part, due to the way it was related to such important national events.

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18 *Memorials of the Late Wars. Constable’s Miscellany*, vol. 27 (Edinburgh: Printed for Constable & Co., 1828), xiii.
19 *London Weekly Review* 2.64 (16 August 1828), 516.
20 *Analectic Magazine* 14 (1819), 394-95.
Yet we cannot attribute the unprecedented success or influence of the *Journal* solely to a patriotic dimension. Notably, in his editorial commentary in the preface of the *Journal*’s third edition, Howell insisted that the story was of interest precisely because it might overturn patriotic feelings, “counteracting” in particular:

> the pernicious influence of the generally received maxim, that there is something peculiarly honourable in the profession of arms – that it is more glorious to be employed as an instrument of terror and destruction than in promoting the arts that gladden the life of man.\(^{25}\)

Rather than situating the story in terms of national heroics and victory, Howell used his preface to condemn the glorification of warfare, offering the *Journal* as a corrective reading of war’s destructive and terrifying nature. Notably too, Howell received numerous manuscripts from soldiers in the years immediately following the publication of the *Journal*, but by 1822 had chosen only to publish selections from the letters of A. F. Meüller who had served as a corporal in the First Regiment of British Foot Guards and whose letters recount his experiences during the army’s “disastrous” storming of Bergen-op-Zoom in 1814.\(^{26}\) The same year Howell also published *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner*, which similarly detailed Nicol’s suffering in the service of the Royal navy and provided descriptions of the horrors of a naval engagement. Choosing to focus on British military disasters and accounts of military suffering, an anti-militaristic bias appears to have been paramount in Howell’s rationale for publishing soldiers’ (and sailors’) tales.

As noted in Chapter Two, many of the private soldiers’ memoirs that appeared after the *Journal* were criticised for their anti-militaristic bias and their failure to display a proper spirit of patriotism or deference to military hierarchies. The *London Literary Gazette*, for instance, criticised the anonymous *Vicissitudes in the Life of a Scottish Soldier* for its “ridiculous opinions” in passing judgements on “the commanders of the war”, whilst the *London Magazine* detected a “tone of complaint against those in command” in Joseph Donaldson’s *Recollections of an Eventful Life* (1825).\(^{27}\) These soldiers’ voices carried echoes of the revived radicalism of the late war years in which “military-related issues”, such as the

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\(^{26}\) Ibid., iv. These letters were published as an addendum to the third edition of the *Journal*.

treatment of soldiers, had been a focal point for dissenting opinion. The *Journal* itself, served as the basis for Leigh Hunt’s “The Dogs”, a satirical attack on the Duke of Wellington which featured in the first volume of Hunt’s radical publication *The Liberal* in 1822. Attacking the Duke’s aristocratic contempt of the ordinary soldiers and the nation’s wider failure to properly recognise their service, Hunt quotes extensively from the *Journal* through his poem (though often in paraphrased form) to illustrate the soldier’s hardships and his poor treatment at the hands of superiors. He appropriates Thomas’s narrative, therefore, in terms of his own radical sentiments.

Despite his earlier enthusiasm for the *Journal*, by the mid 1820s John Lockhart was attacking the memoirs of private soldiers as dull and unpatriotic. Lockhart lamented the rapid spread of life writing through the 1820s, and the way it had enabled individuals to gain an inflated notion of their own public significance, insisting satirically that his was an age in which “England expects every driveller to do his Memorabilia”, and that “[c]abin-boys and drummers are busy with their commentaries *de bello Gallico*”.^29^

Despite their failure to emphasise patriotism, these tales of soldiering, as Hunt and Lockhart’s comments demonstrate, had brought the soldier’s personal story and questions of his service into public discourse about the nation’s wars in an unprecedented manner. As will be argued below, autobiographical accounts by soldiers prior to the *Journal* were largely dominated by the conventions of the spiritual autobiography. Even though the true conversion narrative was becoming increasingly rare by the start of the nineteenth century,^31^ the soldier’s personal moral history and spiritual progress was still the primary rationale offered for publication of most soldiers’ autobiographical writing. The soldier’s status as an eyewitness to and participant in the nation’s conflicts was of secondary importance, and these books were intended to circulate amongst a readership that was imagined as a spiritual, rather than a national, community. The *Journal*, itself, was in large part written as just such a confessional narrative. Yet there is also a marked generic

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^30^ *Quarterly Review* 35 (1827), 149.

indeterminacy to the *Journal* that helped lend the narrative to a very different kind of framing by its editor. The primary rationale he offered for publication of the *Journal* ignored its confessional aspect and drew, instead, upon sentimental traditions of writing about war that would see Thomas troped as the suffering and sympathetic figure of the returned soldier.

Nineteenth-century soldiers’ narratives have, admittedly, typically been viewed as forms of life-writing that are distinct from, even opposed to, the traditions of spiritual autobiography. For instance, Vincent claims of Robert Butler’s *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant Butler* (1823) that “the spiritual analysis is tacked on at the end of a straightforward account of his military career”, thereby suggesting that the book operates in terms of two quite distinct narrative forms.\(^{32}\) Regina Gagnier similarly groups private soldiers’ narratives, such as the memoirs from the Napoleonic Wars, into what she terms a “commemorative” genre of life-writing, characterised by stories that provide “unstructured, thematically arbitrary, disconnected anecdotes” quite distinct from the more formally structured patterns of spiritual autobiography.\(^{33}\) This chapter will argue, however, that it was only with the *Journal* that soldiers’ stories began to be commonly written and understood as a distinct type of narrative form, one that could be contrasted to the patterns of spiritual autobiography and read, simply, as a “straightforward account of his military career”. Rather than highlighting the soldier’s personal story in terms of vice and shame, as was common in the traditions of the spiritual autobiography, the *Journal* created a sympathetic picture of the soldier’s hardships. It allowed a recognition of a shared humanity to emerge between the soldier and the reader, that could, potentially, refocus the soldier’s tale in terms of his service and sacrifice for the nation. As the *Westminster Review* reflected, these stories, beginning with the *Journal*, introduced into literary accounts of war “a new view of military details” that focussed on the soldier’s miseries and hardships. Yet, as Porter had done with his *Letters*, the *Journal* documents the appalling suffering and hardship of soldiering in a way that remained politically problematic, exposing the class dimensions that saw his service largely ignored. This work challenged the value of “a delusive relish

\(^{32}\) Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, 17.

\(^{33}\) Gagnier, *Subjectivities*, 156.
for scenes of glory", recreating the soldier's experience as one of powerlessness and misery in a manner that sat uneasily alongside questions of his national service.\(^{34}\)

**The Common Soldier and the Spiritual Autobiography**

The early years of the nineteenth century saw autobiographical writing develop markedly as a genre, enabling a vastly greater range and number of individuals to enter into print. Critics have also observed, however, that such developments were accompanied by acute concerns over autobiography's veracity, legitimacy and decorum, leading, as Laura Marcus states, to "lengthy disquisitions on the questionable wisdom, propriety or usefulness of autobiography".\(^{35}\) Such concerns could be particularly acute in relation to the autobiographical writing that emerged from private soldiers. Although the military life had traditionally possessed a certain exoticism and glamour, and the widespread volunteer movements in the early 1800s saw soldiering increasingly associated with patriotism, the rank-and-file of the regular army were typically viewed as the most desperately poor, lazy or criminal members of society.\(^{36}\) To "go for a soldier" was widely regarded a mark of shame and an abandonment of one's family, and as Michael Glover has observed of soldiering through the period, "only 'the very worst members of society' could be persuaded to volunteer".\(^{37}\)

Private soldiers, in other words, traditionally lacked the necessary "decorum" or recognised social status to enter into print. The publication of autobiographical writing from a soldier was an act that therefore demanded a particularly clear defence of the text's propriety, usefulness and authenticity.\(^{38}\) Autobiographical accounts from soldiers that appeared in the period were thus typically written as spiritual autobiographies, in which the soldier's life was identified with a dissolute and wayward immorality and sinfulness. His narrative was introduced to the public as a model for how an individual could achieve spiritual or moral redemption from

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34 Westminster Review 7 (1827), 485.
sin. Even where private soldiers’ memoirs can be seen to offer versions of historical accounts of military campaigns (in the tradition of the campaign narrative), a spiritual dimension tends to predominate. Roger Lamb’s *Memoir of His Own Life* (1811), for instance, provides extensive details about the military operations involved in the recent “Trans-Atlantic hostilities” of the American War of Independence (1775-83), partly because he had personal knowledge of a number of the “prominent Actors and Officers” involved in the war. Yet, his memoirs were primarily published because of their spiritual dimension, their value lying in how they demonstrated “what the Almighty had done for him” as an “example” to others not “without its moral and spiritual utility”.

Published in 1819, the same year as the *Journal*, Robert Blennie’s *Narrative of a Private Soldier in One of His Majesty’s Regiments of Foot* was written as just such a spiritual autobiography. Blennie’s (anonymous) editor was certainly aware of the interest that might lie in the military observations of the soldier, claiming that “[t]he remarks of a private in the ranks, when he is a man of any shrewdness and observation, on the incidents that come within his notice, in the campaigns in which he is engaged, have in them a particular interest”. However, the editor goes on to emphasise that the spiritual dimension of the work was the main rationale behind its publication: “The religious experience of the writer, I consider as especially instructive”. Blennie himself reiterates the significance of the spiritual matter in his account, stating at the start of his narrative:

> In drawing up this account of myself, my motive is, to record the loving-kindness of the Lord, to me a sinner; and if you deem it proper to be brought before the public in any shape, the only object I would have in view, is the good of fellow sinners.

Though his account is in large part composed as a series of observations of events that came “within his notice” whilst a soldier on campaign, he continually brings the

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39 Roger Lamb, *Memoir of His Own Life: By R Lamb, Formerly a Serjeant in the Royal Welch Fuzileers and Author of “a Journal of Occurrences During the Late American War”* (Dublin: J Jones, 1811), iv.
40 Ibid., 6.
41 George Blennie, *Narrative of a Private Soldier in One of His Majesty’s Regiments of Foot. Written by Himself. Detailing Many Circumstances Relative to the Irish Rebellion in 1798, the Expedition to Holland in 1799, and the Expedition Too Egypt in 1801; and Giving a Particular Account of His Religious History and Experience. With a Preface by the Rev. Ralph Wardlaw* (Glasgow: A. & J. M. Duncan, etc., 1819), vi.
42 Ibid., 1.
focus of his narrative back to questions of his sinful conduct and neglect of religion. He concludes the book by recounting his eventual redemption from sin when he returns to England and is “born-again” under the care of his pastor. The army itself is presented to the reader primarily as a contaminating influence upon Blennie’s morals. He details how the “temptations” and the influence of the irreligious life led by the bulk of the soldiery led him astray from his Christian duties. Blennie concludes his narrative by informing us of his deliverance both from sin and the army, asserting a wish that “genuine piety may not only prevail but even shine most conspicuously in the army and navy, and that the last may become first”.

Even personal memoirs by military officers through the early nineteenth century, though not necessarily linked to the tradition of the spiritual autobiography itself, were typically dominated by assumptions about the licentious and dissolute life led by soldiers. Military officers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries certainly possessed a more elevated social status than private soldiers, often originating from the ranks of the gentry and even aristocracy. The memoirs or biographies of famous generals and admirals typically stressed the public duties performed by these men as a heroic service to the nation. The biographies of General Wolfe that emerged soon after his death at the battle of Quebec in the 1760s, for instance, depicted him as “the personification of British virtue”. Yet the private life of the military officer, particularly those officers of more junior rank, was commonly associated with an itinerancy, adventure and fashionable sociability that could be morally suspect. The “gay rambling life of a soldier” took young men away from their family and established place in society and could, therefore, lead individuals into a path of idleness, vice and moral ruin. As Stana Nenadic observes:

Excitement, extravagance, an excessive preoccupation with clothing and outward image and an immoderate engagement in expensive sociability, gave the military profession its ‘fashionable’ image. But on the other side of the coin, members of the profession could also be easily characterised as reckless, foolish and morally suspect.

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43 Ibid., 163.
44 Ibid., 186.
46 Thomas Ashe, Memoirs and Confessions of Captain Ashe (London: Henry Colburn, 1815), 43.
Shortly before the *Journal* appeared, Captain Thomas Ashe had published just such an account of his wayward life in his *Memoirs and Confessions of Captain Ashe* (1815). Though set within a secular framework, Ashe’s memoirs operate in a similar way to Blennie’s as a confessional account of his unruly passions and wayward life. He insists, for example, that “[i]t became fashionable to think that I was a sort of wild beast which could neither be dragooned nor caressed into tameness”.*^48 His memoirs detail his various amorous affairs and intrigues, and show his ultimate progress towards redemption from immoral depravity through the operation of his “reason and virtue”.*^49

The *Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First* also operates within a broadly confessional mode, but, as will be shown, there is a good deal of complexity to its generic status and it was ultimately offered to the public through a quite different rationale than the confessional. Thomas’s confession relates to what he views as his betrayal of his parents through his decision to become an actor. The anti-theatricalism of the early nineteenth century, particularly in Scotland, viewed the profession of acting, like soldiering itself, as an itinerant life of immorality and idleness.*^50 Though Thomas was born of a “poor” family, he informs us that his parents were “respectable” and “had bestowed upon me an education superior to my rank in life”. It is this respectability and education that his parents believe will be squandered if Thomas embarks upon a theatrical career.*^51 Ironically, his “genteel appearance and address” is precisely what leads him to the theatre (4), whilst the magnitude of his crime is shown by the fact that his parent’s poverty was, Thomas believes, the result of depriving themselves and their other children for the sake of Thomas’s education, in order that he might “appear genteel, and attend the best schools” (2). Though his parents beg him to rethink his decision, claiming that their

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*^49 Ibid., 7. Admittedly, the sentimental tradition of campaign narrative, such as Porter’s *Letters*, was beginning to supplant the confessional tradition by the start of the nineteenth century, introducing the personal experiences of the soldier to the public outside of this tradition of the confessional autobiography. But memoirs that stressed their concern with the whole life of a junior ranking officer, rather than his experiences of a particular campaign, often retained this libertine confessional form of autobiographical writing.


*^51 Thomas, *Journal of a Soldier of the Seventy-First, or Glasgow Regiment, Highland Light Infantry, from 1806 to 1815*, ed. John Howell, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: W. & C. Tait, 1819), 1. All subsequent references to this edition will be given in parentheses in the text.
hopes for him have been “crushed in the dust” (6), Thomas confesses that he was unmoved and simply “hurried to ruin” in pursuing his desire to be an actor (4). At his first performance, however, he is overcome with remorse and, telling the reader that he could not perform as his “voice had fled”, he is forced to abandon the stage and escape from the theatre (8). Thomas, in turn, views the resulting “bitter agony and shame” (9) as punishment for his sin of being a “disobedient and undutiful son” (13).

Rather than returning home to ask for his parent’s forgiveness, he concludes that “[a]s an atonement for my past misconduct, I resolved to undergo all the dangers and fatigues of a private soldier, for seven years” (12). The book as a whole traces out the events of his military career over the course of these years (in total he served nine years), and soldiering is presented by Thomas as a punishment for his sins because it constitutes a physical suffering to which his upbringing had left him entirely unaccustomed. As he states on first joining his regiment:

How different was my situation from what it had been! Forced from bed at five o’clock each morning, to get all things ready for drill, then drilled for three hours with the most unfeeling rigour, and often beat by the sergeant for the faults of others. I, who had never been crossed at home – I, who never knew fatigue, was now fainting under it. (14)

Accounts of his physical suffering dominate the narrative and although Thomas documents his participation in a number of separate campaigns, he primarily dwells on the British army’s notorious retreat to Corunna during the winter of 1808-09. The harrowing events of the march see him pushed to the limits of “human nature” through his sufferings (76). In a similar way to Porter’s account of these same events in his Letters, Thomas describes in detail his experience of physical suffering and war’s miseries, concluding: “Drenched with rain, famished with cold and hunger, ignorant when our misery was to cease. This was the most dreadful period of my life” (73). Indeed, his entire story is dominated by such accounts of suffering with the army, Thomas himself describing his book as a “melancholy narrative” (78).

Though the Journal can be seen to operate broadly within the moral framework of the confessional narrative, it possesses a marked degree of generic instability and draws, to some extent, on both the genres of the spiritual

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52 Soldiers had traditionally enlisted into the British army for life, but due to the enormous demand for soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars the government introduced legislation in 1806 that allowed soldiers the option of choosing to enlist, instead, for a period of only seven years. See J. E. Cookson, The British Armed Nation, 1793-1815 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 122-23.
autobiography and the libertine confessional. Thus, although Thomas employs a Christian framework, repeatedly drawing Biblical analogies with his own situation and telling us that he has placed his soul in God’s hands (47, 210), his narrative focuses on his relationship with his family far more than on the development of his Christian faith. His concerns with family, career and reputation, the result of a childhood education that prepared him for life in the “learned professions” as a clergyman or writer (1-2), suggest the preoccupations of a gentleman far more than the traditional religious concerns of other private soldiers. The book also echoes the traditions of eighteenth-century theatrical autobiography, in which acting is positioned in terms of a social liminality, leading the protagonist either to “[u]niversal applause, crowded houses, and wealth” or else, as it did for Thomas, to social “ruin” (5). The Journal is a book very much concerned with questions of respectability and social position, and, in its emphasis on social mobility and personal adventure, could be seen to reflect the libertine confessional narratives written by officers as much as the spiritual autobiographies of other private soldiers.

The book is also distinct from earlier private soldiers’ spiritual autobiographies in the way that Thomas represents his suffering. Whilst private soldiers’ tales of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were all, like the Journal, typically centred around the theme of the soldier’s suffering, this suffering is presented in such stories through a moral framework in which the experience helps the soldier to achieve Christian salvation. Blennie, for instance, provides an account of the terrible and prolonged pain he endured as he slowly recovered in hospital from wounds he had received in battle. He concludes of his experience:

I thought God had now afflicted me in order to make me hate sin, and love righteousness; and that were I again restored to health and free from pain, nothing in this world, would be able to make me leave my duty: and I flattered myself that what I had now suffered had destroyed the love of sin in my heart.\textsuperscript{54}

Though the episode does not see his final redemption from sin, it is through his physical sufferings that Blennie can most clearly come to perceive a need for attending to his Christian duties. Writing a few years before Blennie, the soldier


\textsuperscript{54} Blennie, Narrative of a Private Soldier, 142.
James Downing similarly recounts in his memoirs, *A Narrative of the Life of James Downing (a Blind Man) Late a Private in His Majesty’s 20th Regiment of Foot* (1811), that he was led to Christian redemption through being “struck blind” whilst on campaign with the army in Egypt. Claiming that he had earlier been “blind in sin”, he now observes that “I ne’er had sight ’till I was blind”. As Gagnier points out, one of the central conceits in the tradition of the spiritual autobiography was that “hardship in this life was necessary for redemption in the next”, and it is precisely through this idea of salvation that the soldier can justify his suffering at war.

Despite foregrounding suffering through a moral framework as a form of atonement for his sins, Thomas ultimately fails to achieve any personal redemption. Indeed, on returning to his mother at the end of his narrative he states that he was so ashamed that “I was suffering as keenly, at this moment, as when I went away” (230). So too, in very deliberately withholding his name from the book, telling us that “[f]rom motives of delicacy, which the narrative will explain, I choose to conceal my name, the knowledge of which can be of little importance to the reader” (1). Thomas appears to exhibit a continuing sense of shame over his deeds. He comes to recognise himself through the shameful image of the Prodigal Son, telling us at one point that whilst serving in the Peninsula he was ordered to feed the Duke of Wellington’s hunting dogs with soldiers’ biscuits, and that “[w]hen thus engaged, the prodigal son never once was out of my mind; and I sighed as I fed the dogs, over my humble situation and ruined hopes” (164). For Felicity Nussbaum, the motif of the Prodigal Son is a central “spiritual and familial myth” operating in autobiographical writing across the eighteenth century. She defines the myth as charting a fortunate fall into sin, one in which the son’s fall “leads to metamorphoses from one assumed ‘character’ to another ... [f]or the Prodigal Son, it is the separation from family and the fall into sin that enables him to achieve independence, as well as return to the father’s fold”. Captain Ashe experienced just

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56 Gagnier, *Subjectivities*, 152.

57 As will be discussed in detail below, even Thomas may not have been his real name.

such a fortunate fall – he redeems his name through his narrative, forging an independent identity as he restores his character and social status and reinscribes himself within his familial origins. The *Journal*, conversely, fails to establish Thomas as the Prodigal Son who can return home with an independent identity. The narrative is instead dominated by a pervasive sense of shame and failure that stands in stark contrast to the celebration of personal redemption that characterises the spiritual or confessional narrative.

Thomas, notably, deploys a sentimental “language of the heart” to describe his attachments to family and to imagine his initial betrayal of his parents, informing us that his moral failing was to have not “softened” (3) his heart towards his parents’ remonstrations against acting. He elsewhere describes the remorse he felt at leaving his parents as “a sensation of horror” that “pierced my heart” (7), whilst he tells us that when contemplating what would become of his parents after he joins the army, “[t]he blood forsook my heart” (11). Deploying metaphors of his heart to thus signal his inner virtues, what the *Journal* also documents, however, is the transformation of his “heart” wrought by the experience of soldiering, as warfare robs him of his most dear attachments and personal identity. Thus, reflecting on his experiences after his first battle, he reports how appalled he was at the sight of the men who had been killed:

As the battalion to which I belonged returned from the pursuit, we passed, in our way to the camp, over the field of the dead. It was too much for my feelings; I was obliged to turn aside my head from the horrid sight. The birds of prey seemed to contend with those who were burying the slain for possession of the bodies. Horrid sight! Men who in the morning, exulting, trod forth in strength; whose minds, only fettered by their bodies, seemed to feel restraint, now lay shockingly mangled and a prey to animals: and I had been an assistant in this work of death! I almost wished I had been a victim. (27-28)

His story opens with the horrors of war being “too much for my feelings”, and he recoils from the “horrid sight” by which the soldier, and the soldiers’ “minds”, are reduced to “mangled” bodies. But he notes, too, how he was overcome with “insensibility” when the battle first began, so that he was able to bear “all with invincible patience” (27). As the narrative progresses, he documents a process

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59 On the use of such a sentimental language in autobiographical writing of the period, see Treadwell, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834*, 170.
whereby he increasingly comes to feel this insensibility in the face of soldierly danger and hardship, becoming an “old soldier” who is inured to such horrors and increasingly identified with his own physical suffering (29; 218). He recounts his inability to feel for the victims of war as a process of brutalisation; he suggests at one point that the British commanders deliberately sought to brutalise the men, detailing how on the retreat to Corunna the officers paraded a line of stragglers past the other soldiers as a warning to not fall behind on the march. Thomas reflects: “There was something in the appearance of these poor, emaciated, lacerated wretches, that sickened me to look upon ... [s]urely this was one way to brutalise the men, and render them familiar to scenes of cruelty” (75). By the end of his narrative, he reports that after his many years of soldiering his mind had come to a point where he could look upon war’s horrors without concern or feeling for his fellow sufferers. He observes how during the combat at Fuentes de Honore “I was [sic] become ... inured to danger and fatigue” (134), relating a story of how during the day’s fighting, often was I obliged to stand with a foot upon each side of a wounded man, who wrung my soul with prayers I could not answer, and pierced my heart with his cries to be lifted out of the way of the cavalry. While my heart bled for them, I have shaken them rudely off (135).

After the battle of Waterloo, he similarly reports his indifference to the death of his fellow soldiers, observing that “I looked over the field of Waterloo as a matter of course – a matter of small concern” (226). If his first battle was too much for his feelings, he eventually reports his indifference to war’s horrors, reflecting that the sight of his fellow soldiers in formation and the “steady determined scowl” on each of their faces “assured my heart and gave me determination” (59). The Journal therefore narrates the transformation of his heart into a hardened, soldier’s heart, with Thomas emerging as a figure who is indifferent to the horrors and hardships of war.

Indeed, the story ultimately sees Thomas embracing suffering in a way that appears to subvert the very possibility that it might serve any redemptive purpose. As the Prodigal Son, he identifies himself with his familial origins, and is clear that leaving home to become a soldier was “leaving behind all that was dear to me” (10), whilst he considers his “greatest sufferings” as a soldier to be the fact that “I could not associate with the common soldiers; their habits made me shudder”, and “I was a solitary individual among hundreds” (15). By the conclusion of his narrative,
however, he reports on his growing attachment to and identification with his fellow soldiers precisely because his experience of suffering helps him to forge a communal soldier’s identity, in which “mutual hardships made us all brothers” (186). Thomas appears to ascribe to what he terms the “warrior’s doctrine” of stoical acceptance of suffering (much as Porter ascribed in his Letters to a stoical “military philosophy”). He learns to do “his duty” as this soldier, accepting suffering, horror and fear with an assumed indifference (29). For Blennie, it was precisely his suffering that sets his heart towards “doing my duty” to God. However much Blennie also ascribes to his soldier’s duty of stoical courage, stating that when in battle, for instance, “great as my fear of death was, I never thought of attempting to avoid it, by flinching from my duty as a soldier”, his story nonetheless locates a higher or more primary duty in his duty to God. Yet soldiering appears as the very thing that detaches Thomas from his filial duties as he comes to accept his suffering with a melancholy, yet stoical indifference, apparently subverting the very fact that he had entered into such suffering as an atonement for sinning against his parents. Suffering was meant to atone for his sins and reincorporate him into his family as the Prodigal Son. It instead made him into the soldier brother, forever estranged from his family, heart and home, unable to ever redeem his “name”. We can view the book as a “failed” confessional, ultimately resulting in, as Russell states, a story of “permanent alienation and itinerancy”. Rather than returning home to embrace a new found position with his family, Thomas feels himself to be estranged from his former identity as a son, simply a burden on his family and concluding at the end of his narrative “I wish I was a soldier again” (232). There is no place for him, nor any triumphant closure to his story, once he returns home.

In addition, given that the text is governed by this underlying confessional element, it is remarkable that in his prefatory remarks to the first edition of the Journal Howell simply states:

60 Carolyn Steedman insists that “[i]t is important to note that in published accounts of nineteenth-century soldiering written by working men, it is rare for the communality of war to be presented”, but as should be clear from this discussion of the Journal, this is only partly true for early nineteenth century soldiers’ narratives, particularly as these memoirs move away from the traditions of the spiritual autobiography. Though, obviously, any soldier sufficiently educated to compose his memoirs may have felt alienated from the mostly illiterate bulk of soldiers, memoirists often reflect warmly on the friendships they formed in the army. See Carolyn Steedman, The Radical Soldier’s Tale: John Pearman, 1819-1908 (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 40.
61 Blennie, Narrative of a Private Soldier, 119.
62 Russell, The Theatres of War, 182.
The Publishers have taken pains to ascertain the accuracy of the statements in the following Journal, and the result has confirmed them in the belief, that the Writer of it has related nothing but what passed under his own observation.

His education sufficiently accounts for his expressing himself better than could have been expected from a private soldier. No alteration has been made upon his language, farther than the correction of a few of the more obvious verbal inaccuracies. (iii)

In his compulsion to allay any concerns his readers might have had over the veracity of the Journal and the reliability of Thomas as a witness, Howell’s comments reflect wider cultural anxieties over the legitimacy of a private soldier’s claim to being an author. But significantly, despite being compelled to address such issues, the brief preface makes no recourse to any spiritual or confessional element as a rationale for the appearance of the Journal. The narrative it presents is important, Howell insists, solely because of its documentary qualities, its simple and factual account of what was viewed by a private soldier on campaign.

**Thomas and the Mythology of the “Poor Soldier”**

Arguably, the generic instabilities of the Journal helped lend the work to an alternative kind of framing by its editor, as the book was positioned in relation to a more sympathetic idea of soldiering. In particular, the failure of redemption that the book documents is mirrored by the way that the book itself came into print, with Thomas out of work and having to be financially supported by his family (231-32). It was thus Thomas’s financial situation, his poverty, that was the most direct reason behind the book’s publication, Howell informing the reader that the book had been brought to print in order to alleviate Thomas’s “indigence”. The book was not, therefore, produced for a spiritual community as a way to help guide the morality of the writer and reader. For instance, writing to his editor, Blennie set out his own understanding of the rationale behind the publication of his book:

> In drawing up this account of myself, my motive is, to record the loving-kindness of the Lord, to me a sinner; and if you deem it proper to be brought

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63 For a brief overview of the reception of the private soldier as an author at the start of the 1820s, see Neil Ramsey, “Making My Self a Soldier: The Role of Soldiering in the Autobiographical Work of John Clare”, *Romanticism* 13.2 (2007): 177-88, 182-86.
before the public in any shape, the only object I would have in view, is the good of fellow sinners."

The very act of writing his book is viewed by Blennie as a form of religious devotion, and its publication is intended principally for a community of “fellow sinners”. In contrast, the *Journal* was from the outset written for a commercial literary market and was published principally in order to make money for its author, publisher and editor. Indeed, writing in the preface to the third edition, Howell draws attention to the book’s extraordinary sales as the principal marker of its merit. Locating the book within the literary market place, Howell thus implicitly identifies a wider, national interest for Thomas’s narrative. His suffering remains central to the story and Howell’s rationale for publication, but rather than locating this in relation to his personal character and redemption, Howell insists that through his account of suffering we can see “a correct view of the interior of military service, the detail of exhausting toils and privations to which the soldier is exposed”. The book can thus, Howell hopes, dissuade young men from joining the army by showing a “correct view” of soldiering, overturning assumptions that it is a life of “gaiety and ease” and showing how soldiers become “mere tools in the hands of others”.  

Howell’s framing of the soldier’s suffering through his prefatorial comments could be seen to draw on a quite different tradition of writing about soldiers than the confessional memoir, one that had more directly developed out of the period’s sentimental literature and which reflects Thomas’s own sentimental “language of the heart”. Tales of soldiering had circulated in popular songs and ballads since at least the seventeenth century, and though the bulk of this material celebrated battles and the exploits of great generals, a “dissident, subversive vein” also emerged that reflected on the hardships of the private soldier and the miseries of war.  

The eighteenth century saw such views of soldiering entering into the arts, print culture and the realms of polite, particularly sentimental, poetry. As Joany Hichberger has claimed, echoing similar remarks by Marilyn Butler, “[a] considerable mythology had existed in eighteenth-century literature and painting on the subject of the ‘poor soldier’, i.e. the veteran, the most memorable being Goldsmith’s ‘broken soldier’

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64 Blennie, *Narrative of a Private Soldier*, 1.
from *The Deserted Village* (1770). Bennet, and more recently Bainbridge, have shown how this mythology of the “poor soldier” became even more prominent through the Romantic era in poetry and ballads, with the period’s poetry repeatedly drawing attention to the details of soldiers’ hardships in its efforts to “make the reader feel war’s pain and suffering”. Roy Palmer similarly observes that through the war years “popular minstrelsy” was profoundly influenced by an outpouring of “soldier-songs”. The sentimentality that also found its way into officers’ campaign narratives, such as Porter’s *Letters*, had emerged as a significant force in cultural representations of warfare, introducing representations of soldiers that focussed on their status as pitiful, suffering individuals.

Howell broadly seeks to position the *Journal* in terms of this mythology of the poor soldier by insisting that Thomas’s suffering reflects “the character and circumstances of the common soldier”. The reader is thus encouraged to view this suffering as an illustration of the mass experience of the soldier in Britain’s wars. As Howell comments, he wanted the *Journal* to help show:

> the mass of misery which war has inflicted upon the hundreds of thousands of unnoticed soldiers, equally susceptible of every feeling of pain, and more exposed to hardships and privations, than the commanders – who alone reap the laurels, and the few solid emoluments, of the field of battle.

Drawing attention to the feelings of the “thousands of unnoticed soldiers”, a “mass of misery”, Howell thus grants the ordinary soldier an equality of status and humanity with the army’s commander through virtue of their commonly shared experience of suffering and pain. This is war understood in terms of sentimentality and suffering, war presented as a matter of personal feelings and the experience of misery and hardships. Even though Thomas may insist that he feels a certain indifference or even stoical acceptance of his suffering, Howell nonetheless positions Thomas as an object of charitable pity for his readers, asking them to recognise his “feeling of pain” as a soldier.

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69 Quoted in Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 278.

Notably, the confessional mode of soldiers’ writing had posited the army as a locus of immorality and vice so that, as Blennie’s book demonstrates, a soldier had to signal his departure and redemption from the ordinary mass of soldiers if he was to acquire the necessary “decorum” to write about his life. It was only by being exceptional, as a redeemed soldier, that the soldier was legitimated to present a life story to the public. The Journal is imagined in distinct opposition to this confessional mode of writing about the soldier. It is precisely because Thomas is a common soldier that he is imagined to draw the reader’s sympathies. Thomas represents himself in similar terms, observing:

How different was Tom, marching to school with his satchel on his back, from Tom, with his musket and kit; a private soldier, an atom of an army, unheeded by all; his comforts sacrificed to ambition, his untimely death talked of with indifference, and only counted in the gross with hundreds without a sigh. (111-12)

Rather than direct attention to his suffering in relation to personal redemption, the Journal emphasizes Thomas’s status as a constituent part of the mass of soldiering, “an atom of an army”. It draws upon the reader’s sympathies by reflecting on the unacknowledged, or we might say, unredeemed nature of this suffering.

The Journal, and the subsequent books of soldiering that it inspired can in many ways be seen to be participating in these other genres familiar from the period’s poetry and drama, extending the figure of the returned soldier into the soldier’s memoir. Yet, as Stephen Brodsky points out, although the soldier may have acquired a voice, it was not clear that he simply spoke with his own voice, or with any sense of authorial autonomy in the same way that Romantic culture was defining authorship more generally.\(^7\) The sentimental mythology of writing about poor soldiers primarily allowed poets and novelists to speak through imaginary soldiers in order to describe and comment on war. With the authorship of the Journal left anonymous, we might even say that at a certain level Howell speaks through Thomas in order to make his own commentary on war, just as Hunt quotes from the Journal in his satirical attack on the Duke of Wellington. At a certain level therefore, the Journal can be viewed much like Porter’s Letters as a literary invention of the civilian “man of feeling”, as much a product of its editor Howell and a wider middle-

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class literary culture as an authentic story of Thomas’s experience. We might ask then, if Thomas presents himself as the pitiful or abject soldier, what kind of voice results from his narrative?

**Authorship and the “Inward Man”**

Howell’s editorial role may have extended further than simply facilitating the publication of Thomas’s manuscript. At the very least, in the years following its initial publication Howell increasingly emphasised the significance of his own role in the production of the book. In his subsequent *The Life of Alexander Alexander* he conflates his editorial and authorial roles by announcing himself on the title page as having also been the “Author” of the earlier *Journal of a Soldier*. In the preface, Howell further recounts how he became a “biographer” in producing “[m]y first effort, ‘The Journal of a Soldier’”, and he elaborates on his association with Mrs Ann Scott, Sir Walter Scott’s mother, telling us that it was one of the proudest moments of his life when he received money for Thomas from the benevolent Mrs Scott. Locating himself, therefore, within a specific literary culture as a biographer and associate of the famed Scott, Howell constructs his editorial role as the most significant element in the production of the book. Thomas is displaced from any autonomous authorial status as Howell recounts his charity to the man, and the book becomes “[m]y first effort”, which “was forced upon me by pity for the unfortunate individual, whom I found starving, naked, and bare, after having spent the prime of his life in the service of his country”. Thomas is simply identified with his body and social role as a poor soldier. Howell concludes by displacing his presence altogether when he informs us: “As for the poor lad himself, he left the country during the period I was engaged in drawing up his narrative, and I have never heard of him since”.

We might even speculate, as did contemporary reviewers, that the *Journal* was only fraudulently presented as the work of “Thomas” the soldier. The *New Monthly Magazine*, for instance, referred to this possibility when it noted that the “two or three little works” of military memoir that had appeared since the end of the

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war were only “ostensibly the productions of private soldiers”\textsuperscript{73}. Such literary forgery was a prevalent concern through the 1820s, largely sparked by the very public anonymity of the author of the Waverley novels.\textsuperscript{74} Suspicions of forgery could be exacerbated in the case of private soldiers’ writing as soldiers were widely viewed as illiterate and incapable of authoring a book on their own. As noted in Chapter Two, reviews of the private soldiers’ memoirs that were published after the Journal commonly indicated concerns that these books may have been forged, a concern that was given added impetus when two such works appeared that had been edited by Goethe. Purportedly written by private German soldiers who had served in the British army, and appearing in English translations in 1826, the reviews repeatedly insinuated that Goethe was the true author. The Monthly Review, for instance, claimed that they could detect his “meditative and poetic mind” at work in these texts.\textsuperscript{75} Though its modern editor insists otherwise, it is possible that the Journal is a literary forgery, and we cannot know the extent to which Howell “corrected” the work.\textsuperscript{76} With Thomas disappeared and unable to be contacted by the time the book was published, it is curious too that Howell declines to say what he did with the proceeds from the sale of the book, which was selling in 1820 at a relatively expensive five shillings a copy (the price further suggesting the book was not simply a popular or ephemeral work).\textsuperscript{77} Such authorial uncertainties are reflected in subsequent ascriptions of the book to, variously: “Thomas Pococke”, “T. S.”, or simply the anonymous “Soldier of the Seventy-First”.\textsuperscript{78} It is even possible that the name Thomas is a misnomer – an article in the Journal of the Royal Highland Fusiliers suggesting that the true author was a “James Todd”.\textsuperscript{79} The most recent assertion, put forward by Hibbert in the preface to his reprint of the work, is that “new evidence has come to light which suggests that the author of the journal was a certain Thomas Howell”.\textsuperscript{80} It seems surprisingly coincidental that Thomas’s last name should be “Howell”, and Hibbert unfortunately declines to provide any details

\textsuperscript{73} New Monthly Magazine 18 (1826), 27; my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{74} Margaret Russett, Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity, 1760-1845 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 172.
\textsuperscript{75} For the pricing of the Journal, see Monthly Review N.S.3 (1826), 434.
\textsuperscript{76} Thomas, A Soldier of the Seventy-First, iii.
\textsuperscript{77} Monthly Review 91 (1820), 220.
\textsuperscript{78} Jan Read, War in the Peninsula (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 196; Oman, Wellington’s Army, 1809-1814, 30; Muir, Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon, 303.
\textsuperscript{80} Thomas, A Soldier of the Seventy-First, v.
about the nature of this evidence. Nonetheless, it is perhaps fitting that we think of
the author in such terms as it draws attention to the way in which Howell both
couraged Thomas to write and ultimately displaced his authorial status from the
*Journal*.

In describing his own position as author, Thomas adamantly states that he
will limit himself to documenting events he had witnessed, telling us on the first
page of the book, “I pledge myself to write nothing but what came under my own
observation, and what I was personally engaged in” (1). He thus echoes Howell’s
insistence that “the Writer of it has related nothing but what passed under his own
observation”. Such a reduction of authorship to a purely descriptive role is in some
contrast to earlier soldiers’ confessional narratives, which are, arguably, built up
around the shaping presence of an individualised authorial voice. As Linda Peterson
has observed, spiritual (or we might add confessional) autobiographies do not simply
narrate events, but operate through an “interpretive method” as they seek to account
for the particular ways in which an individual life achieved redemption.\(^1\) The author
must still, of course, present a story that is both scrupulously true and has a wider
applicability to the reader. The path to redemption must be one that the reader can
emulate and the author, therefore, must present their life as being, at a certain level,
exemplary. It is because they emerge as the type of the reformed sinner that their
story can have a wider applicability in directing a reader’s spiritual wellbeing.
Blennie’s editor had, for instance, insisted of Blennie, “it is not
himself I commend, but the grace that has made him what he is, and to which he owns himself an entire
and humble debtor”.\(^2\) Yet, despite such editorial assertions, we can see a distinct
authorial presence emerge in the commentary that surrounds the act of writing itself
in these soldiers’ confessional narratives. In Blennie’s claim, for instance, that “as
much only of these particulars shall be narrated, as is necessary to account for, and
illustrate, the history of my mind”, we can see him interposing himself as an
authorial presence in his narrative, alerting us to the fact that he has shaped the
material he presents to the reader in order to account satisfactorily for his spiritual
redemption.\(^3\) Captain Ashe, like Blennie, similarly draws attention to the way he

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\(^1\) Linda H. Peterson, *Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation* (New Haven and
\(^3\) Ibid., 2.
composes an account of his moral progress, providing a “portrait” in which he “shall draw a faithful picture of transactions that have either tended to debase my moral and intellectual character or that have added lustre to my humble name”. However factual the account may be, what results, Ashe insists, is a composition that could rival the “finished productions of the most laborious artist”.^84

It is through this process of interpreting their life and actively constructing and narrating a life story that we might say the “interiority” and individuality of these authors could emerge. For Sidonie Smith, autobiography does not operate by expressing a prior existing selfhood: “there is no essential, original, coherent autobiographical self” she claims “before the moment of self-narrating. Nor is the autobiographical self expressive in the sense that it is the manifestation of an interiority”. Rather, deploying Judith Butler’s concept of performativity, Smith insists that the autobiographical narrative is itself a cultural practice that functions to establish the idea of an originary self, so that “narrative performativity constitutes interiority. That is, the interiority or self that is said to be prior to the autobiographical expression or reflection is an effect of autobiographical storytelling”.^85 By asserting themselves as authors involved in this process of recounting a personal history, insisting in particular on the authorial “portrayal” or “illustration” of their “mind” and “character”, we see writers such as Blennie and Ashe emerge as authors who imaginatively represent just such a prior or “deep-self” behind their integumentary social roles as soldiers.^86

However, with the Journal emerging as a failed confessional, there is a move away from this authorial dimension of the confessional or spiritual autobiography towards a documentary account of the common or usual experience of soldiering that forecloses any attention to Thomas’s selfhood or personal “interiority”. The emphasis on the mind and the artistry of the writer seen in these confessional narratives is thus downplayed in the way Thomas and Howell present the Journal to its readers, with Thomas portrayed not in terms of his moral or spiritual identity but in his observational role as a soldier and an “atom of an army”. Pictured by Howell

84 Ashe, Memoirs and Confessions of Captain Ashe, 1-3.
as a starving and naked body, Thomas's authorial presence is delineated as the very embodiment of soldiering and its corporeal suffering. Thomas's own sentimental "language of the heart" fails to reproduce a coherent sense of identity so much as it aligns with the very sentimental discourse that positions him as the pitiful poor soldier. He is left with what Smith terms an "embodied subjectivity" in which he can only be identified with his corporeality and representativeness as the soldier.\textsuperscript{87} Rather than expressing an interiority of "mind" and "artistry", such a construction merely expresses his abjection and his conflicting duties and attachments as the soldier and the son. His narrative itself can thus be viewed as an embodiment of his corporate, common soldier's identity. After the battle of Waterloo, for instance, Thomas observes that he needed to converse with his fellow soldiers in order to comprehend his own experience:

\begin{quote}
I rose up and looked around, and began to recollect. The events of the 18\textsuperscript{th} came before me, one by one; still they were confused, the whole appearing as an unpleasant dream. My comrades began to awake and talk of it; then the events were embodied as realities. (224-25)
\end{quote}

Only by seeing himself in relation to the shared collective experience of soldiering can Thomas understand his personal story or make sense of it as a "reality". In distinction to Blennie and Ashe's narratives our attention is not drawn to a representation of an inner subjectivity or personality, but is directed, instead, towards a view of the "interiority of military service" and the common experience of the soldier. Thomas appears as a representative of the collective identity and shared experiences of the soldier, largely operating as an embodied pair of eyes through which his reader can vicariously see, and experience, war.

Thus, whilst Hunt quotes extensively from the \textit{Journal} through "The Dogs", in order, he claims, to let the "inward man" of Thomas speak through his poem to illustrate the appalling hardships of the soldier, it is, paradoxically, precisely any such "inward man" that is occluded in this construction of Thomas.\textsuperscript{88} Soldiers, Howell insists, perform their service as "mere tools in the hands of others", but so too, at a certain level Thomas emerges as a tool in the service of literary culture of the 1820s. Howell, and Hunt, indeed, at a certain level threaten to reify Thomas's identity simply as "the soldier" in a way that potentially reframes his personal

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{88} Leigh Hunt, "The Dogs: To the Abusers of the Liberal", \textit{The Liberal} 1 (1822), 250.
experience of suffering through an ennobling rhetoric of national sacrifice. As Howell observes in the third edition of the *Journal*, reflecting similar remarks by Hunt, Thomas had suffered “in what is called the service of his country”. As Thomas’s reader’s to recognise his suffering as a service to the nation they could be seen to undermine their pacifist stance by refocusing the “stark reality” of Thomas’s injuries and suffering in terms of a “mythical truth” of national safety and integrity.

However, Howell’s editorial comments, similarly to Hunt’s reflections on the *Journal*, largely refrain from such ennobling rhetoric. Howell primarily points to the nation’s failure to ever recognize the poor, labouring-class soldier’s suffering, ironically observing that his suffering is only “what is called” a service to his country. Thomas’s corporeal miseries as a soldier thus have the potential to disrupt and expose a nationalistic “ideology of sacrifice”. Excluded from participation in the life of the nation by virtue of his class, Thomas is not entitled to represent himself as a heroic, immortal citizen-soldier in a way that was increasingly acceptable, as Porter’s *Letters* demonstrate, for select military officers, or for the army in the abstract. What results from the *Journal* was, therefore, consistent with Hunt’s own writing on war, in which, Shaw argues, he can be seen to expose the way “that the corporeal alteration demanded by conflict is exacted on the bodies of private individuals, not on the abstract or immortal body of the state”. Thomas emerges as precisely the “private individual” on whom war’s “corporeal alteration”, its bodily suffering and injury, is inflicted, his unredeemed and unacknowledged suffering exposing this gap between the soldier’s injury and the “immortal body of the state”. Porter’s *Letters* highlighted the difficulty of representing the officer’s sacrifice for the nation without simultaneously exposing his pain and suffering as a “private individual”. The *Journal* highlights the private soldier’s personal pain in a similar way, but it also exposes the inherent difficulty for British culture of the period in fully countenancing his suffering as a valid sacrifice for the nation. To do so meant

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91 Ibid.
recognising that common, labouring-class soldiers like Thomas may have had a legitimate claim on the nation in asserting their role in the wars.

But however problematic this figure of the suffering soldier may have been, it was nonetheless simply as the reified and anonymous figure of “the soldier” that Thomas emerged into British literary culture. When the *New Monthly Magazine*, for instance, drew attention to the *Journal* by noting its influence on the “two or three little works, ostensibly the productions of private soldiers, which have become deservedly popular”, it defined its popularity in relation to the way it developed traditional patterns of military memoirs, observing:

The military memoirs which we possess, consist for the most part of little more than professional details of the operations witnessed by the author, to the exclusion of his personal history, which is always the most engaging part of such publications.92

Remarkably, therefore, although the *Journal* was viewed as quite distinct from the campaign narrative tradition of military memoirs and their attention to the “professional details of [military] operations”, the review nonetheless elevates the status of the private soldier’s memoir alongside other “professional” records of war and acknowledges the reader’s interest in the “personal history” of the private soldier. *Constable’s Miscellany* similarly insisted, that although the *Journal* could not be viewed as “general history”, it was of interest because it provided “a genuine index of the feelings of a personal observer” of military events.93 But as the *Miscellany* also acknowledged, the “personal observer” in the *Journal*, “narrates only the fortunes of one who was but a unit of the thousands with whom he was banded”. His “interesting” personal history is simply identified with an anonymous and homogenized private soldier’s identity.94 A striking class dimension still operates where Thomas’s book is simply described as “the soldier’s journal”, clearly distinguishing his anonymous authorial presence as “the soldier” from the named military officers whose narratives feature in the same issue, such as Adam Neale or the Duke of Wellington. So too, whilst Howell, as editor of the *Journal*, clearly exhibits a concerned benevolence towards Thomas, and soldiers in general, helping to bring his work to print in an effort to alleviate his poverty and in the hope that the

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92 *New Monthly Magazine* 18 (1826), 27
93 *Memorials of the Late Wars*, xii-xiii.
94 Ibid., xiii.
book may dissuade other young men from joining the army, he similarly leaves little room for Thomas to write about his own life outside of the boundaries imposed on his writing by this identity as “the soldier”. With the justification for his narrative simply reduced to his status as an anonymous soldier, Thomas’s “autobiographical storytelling” ultimately produces a far less coherent sense of self than we see in the confessional mode. He emerges through his narrative in terms of a sentimental “language of the heart” that can never fully establish itself into a stable interiority, or “deep self”, but which leaves him an abject figure of pity. The Journal was simply recognised as a commodity that enabled its reader to objectify Thomas in an effort to view the “personal history” of the soldier. There was no way of acknowledging Thomas as a “private individual” or “inward man” outside of his embodied military role. Thomas’s failed confessional is quite simply a story about his loss of identity, a story of how Thomas is not only precluded from ever being able to redeem himself as a Prodigal Son (or even to attain authorial recognition or recompense), but of how he is transformed into the heartless “old soldier” through his experience of war’s suffering.

The Dissident Tradition of the Private Soldier’s Tale

Following the publication of the Journal, numerous soldiers came to write their own military memoirs by adopting the authorial stance of the common soldier. After having read the “Journal of the Soldier of the 71st”, the editor of the Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier (1821) saw the potential in publishing an anonymous, representative story of soldiering, wondering of his own soldier-friend, “[w]hy might not ***** write the personal Narrative of his Life, as ‘a poor, but honest Soldier?” By the time the soldier John Green published his memoirs, Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life, in 1827, such an approach to the soldier’s tale had become habitual. Green insists that he has not “attempted to put forth any thing in the shape of elegant composition”, but that, “I have simply endeavoured to give a plain unvarnished tale”, one that could show “what generally happens to a common soldier in serving during a series of campaigns”. These books shifted the emphasis of the

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95 Anonymous, Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier, viii.
96 John Green, The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life: or, a Series of Occurrences from 1806 to 1815 ... Containing, with Some Other Matters, a Concise Account of the War in the Peninsula, Etc. (Louth: 1827), iv.
soldier’s personal narrative away from the spiritual autobiography’s concern with moral character and a personal, spiritual progress. Instead, they focus on a representation of the “interior of military service” and the mass, common experience of soldiering in the nation’s wars. Drawing on traditions of sentimental writing about war, these stories offered, at least apparently, an authentic voice for the period’s prevalent cultural image of the returned, poor soldier. Depicting the soldier as a figure of pity, they even asked the reader to recognise, at least at some level, a shared humanity with the soldier, something that could potentially enable these stories to be read in terms of the soldier’s service and sacrifice for the nation.

These memoirs were not uncomplicated tales of patriotism, however. As Hunt’s referencing of the *Journal* in “The Dogs” suggests, emphasising the national service of the private soldier was an act that could be associated with radical opinion through the 1820s. Notably, these stories almost all lament the failure of the soldier to achieve adequate recognition for his sufferings, thus highlighting a disturbing disjunction between war’s corporeal horrors and a nationalistic “ideology of sacrifice”. William Brown, for instance, reflected on his miseries as a soldier in his *Autobiography, or Narrative of a Soldier* (1829):

While thus ruminating on the disasters my folly had launched me into, and as I turned me on my icy bed, I cursed the imprudence that had made me the tool and dupe of ambitious and designing men, whose cabals and intrigues lay waste the world; for whose aggrandisement rivers of human blood has flown, and who are as callous to the sufferings of humanity, as if their victims were inanimate, void of all sensation and feeling, and altogether of a different species from their rulers.⁷⁷

Picturing war’s corporeal suffering as being simply in vain, Brown imagines the soldier as a dupe to his ruler’s ambitions, indeed, a figure of suffering “humanity” in contrast to the ruler’s aggrandising inhumanity. The act of writing a memoir itself was often felt to compensate for this lack of recognition of their services. As Howell claimed of his subsequent *Life and Adventures of John Nicol* for instance, “[a]s the only means of being of permanent use to him, and, perhaps, of obtaining the pension he is by service entitled to, I thought of taking down a Narrative of his Life, from his

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own mouth”. Outright radical views or wider political commentary were largely absent from these works, but Clive Emsley suggests that in these assertions of national service private soldiers’ memoirs can be viewed as an example “of the developing consciousness among the lower classes of early nineteenth-century Britain”. Carolyn Steedman similarly reads nineteenth-century soldiers’ memoirs as “narratives of class”, that not only provide stories of the corporeal horrors of soldiering, its “terrible and sickening privations”, but which also recognise the soldier’s class bound status and appalling “powerlessness”. Many of these works exhibit a degree of hostility to soldiering and the military hierarchies of the army, often lamenting the very fact of becoming a soldier at all. The author of the Personal Narrative had concluded his book by pondering on his discharge:

Whilst on the salt sea, sailing to Ireland, I was pensive enough, remembering all I had gone through; the want, cold, fatigue, and danger, in which I had my share with the regiment, since I joined it, especially since we came into Spain, first and last. But what weighed upon my spirits was the time I had lost, and now to be discharged with hardly as much money as would carry me home.

A dissonant tradition of labouring-class soldiers’ writing was established through these narratives that, as Carolyn Steedman observes, carried on throughout the nineteenth century. They provided a quite different strand of writing than the dominant “pleasure culture” of war that formed through the century around stories of military adventure and heroism.

Although these memoirs were not celebrated as stories of national heroism, they do suggest at least some demand amongst their readership to imaginatively see and experience war. A shared sense of humanity was emerging between the reader and the soldier, but rather than stimulating a charitable pity, the military memoir

102 Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier, 263-64.
served to foster the reading public’s interest in the “personal history” of the soldier as a vicarious personal experience of war and its perilous adventures. The *New Monthly Magazine*, insisted that the personal history of the soldier was “singularly captivating” because:

> the wild and exciting scenes through which he passes, the variety of fortune which he encounters, and the perils with which he is constantly surrounded, give to the narrative no inconsiderable portion of that high interest which attaches to the life itself.\(^{105}\)

The soldier certainly continued to be viewed as a somewhat dissolute figure, but the morally instructive aspects of a soldier’s memoirs were becoming less important than its documentary qualities and ability to provide a representative illustration of the soldier’s experiences and feelings during a war. The *Monthly Review*, for instance, addressed *The Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier* by reflecting on how the story detailed the soldier’s “irregularities and excesses”, noting that the author had presented the reader with an overly “candid” account of his improprieties that “does not always place him in the most advantageous light as a soldier, or bring before the reader the most stimulant and useful examples of aspiring effort and successful perseverance”. Nonetheless, what was central was that the book enabled its readers to “make a campaign as private soldiers ... sharing their hardships”.\(^{106}\) Indeed, there is a striking elision of class in such comments, implying the reader might want to go to war imaginatively as a private soldier, to experience the “life itself”, even though any such imagining of the soldier reduced his individuality to an abstract cipher.

It was, however, only with the appearance of the military memoirs of two subaltern officers in the mid 1820s, Moyle Sherer and George Gleig, that the soldier’s personal history began to be commonly accepted as a tasteful story that might effectively commemorate the nation’s wars. These texts largely replaced the theme of hardship and suffering seen in earlier memoirs, whether of private soldiers or subaltern officers, with reflections on the virtuous pleasures of war, ultimately refocusing a story of suffering and class in terms of a story of heroic masculinity and the soldier’s professional expertise. Following the success of Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs, the *Westminster Review*, looking back on the publication of the *Journal*

\(^{105}\) *New Monthly Magazine* 18 (1826), 27

\(^{106}\) *Monthly Review* 96 (1821), 335.
and other soldiers’ memoirs, observed the contrast between these officers and private soldiers’ tales:

it is perfectly natural, we say, that an officer should take pride and pleasure in the recital of his adventures on service, and equally natural that they should kindle enthusiasm and lively sympathy in the minds of those who peruse them. Far different effects, however, may be anticipated from the diffusion of narratives penned by humble “rank-and-file” men, whose advantages are best summed up by prefixing a negative to each of those belonging to the officer.\footnote{Westminster Review 7 (1827), 484-85}

The private soldiers’ memoirs may have represented a dissident and disturbing strain of writing about war, but they were, nonetheless, helping to develop an audience for stories about the “personal history” of the soldier. The 1820s thus saw a growing interest in such stories, but this primarily emerged as an interest in junior officers’ more adventurous memoirs, in which an account of military enthusiasm, rather than suffering, was coming to be seen as a more natural and interesting way for the soldier to relate his experiences of war.
In his first letter home to his parents from the war in the Peninsula, George Hennell, a gentleman-volunteer with the Ninety-fourth Regiment, described his experiences at the storming of Badajoz in January 1812. The storming of the fortress was a celebrated victory for the British army, but it came at an enormous cost in lives, and Hennell’s letter reflects both the heroism and appalling carnage of the event.\(^1\) He describes how at one point, with the momentum of the assault faltering, he took hold of the regimental flag and, climbing an assault ladder, called on the soldiers to follow him into the French-held fortress. His action represents an important moment in the engagement, helping to rally the British troops to renew their assault on the French defences. He subsequently received an officer’s commission in recognition of his conspicuous bravery. But whilst conveying his military enthusiasm, Hennell also dwells on the horrors of the siege. He informs his parents of his shock, for instance, of seeing a cannon-ball pass through a file of soldiers:

> twelve men sank together with a groan that would have shook to the soul the nerves of the oldest soldier that ever carried a musket. I believe ten of them never rose again, the nearest was with\[in\] a foot of me, the farthest not four yards off. It swept like a besom all within its range. The next four steps I took were over this heap. You read of the horrors of war, you little know what it means.\(^2\)

Hennell insists that he “must tell the facts” of war’s brutality and horrors,\(^3\) striving to help his reader “know what it means” by contextualizing war’s heroism in its appalling miseries. In his next letter home, however, he comments with surprise: “I find that my description of Badajoz gave a great deal of pleasure to many and it gave me great pleasure to find that many approved the style of writing”. Having learnt that his first letter had been widely circulated by his parents amongst family and friends, he concludes: “I shall now make a point of writing constantly when I have the opportunity and send when I have a sheet full”, because, as he states, their praise of


\(^3\) Ibid.
his writing was “sterling worth”.\textsuperscript{4} Though Hennell was aware that one might not obtain any sense of “what it means” to read of war’s appalling horrors, he had nonetheless discovered a “style of writing” in which the “facts” of war could be made to bring both pleasure and profit.

In \textit{Recollections of the Peninsula} (1823) and \textit{The Subaltern} (1825), Moyle Sherer and George Gleig also developed a “style of writing” that enjoyed considerable commercial success and helped establish them both as prominent and influential authors. Both books sold far more copies and attracted more enthusiastic praise in the review periodicals than earlier military memoirs, and they were republished in a number of subsequent editions through the 1820s. Sherer’s book eventually reached a fifth edition in 1827, whilst Gleig’s achieved a third in 1828.\textsuperscript{5} Not only were these books commercially successful, but they also enabled the personal story of war to be acceptable and interesting in a way that earlier military memoirs seldom achieved. They shifted the campaign narrative tradition of military memoirs into something that was, like private soldiers’ memoirs, centrally concerned with the personal experiences of the soldier at war. Rather than detailing personal experiences through a pronounced sentimental moralizing, however, something that dominated earlier military memoirs that strove to “tell the facts” of war and its horrors, Sherer and, even more emphatically, Gleig, asked their readers to share their military enthusiasm. Adapting conventions of the picturesque travelogue to their writing, they sought to cultivate their reader’s appreciation of the aesthetic appeal of war.

This chapter will argue that the surprising success of their memoirs lay in the way that both authors brought a degree of distinction to their writing, their picturesque approach enabling them to display an authorial taste and genius that merged the identities of the gentleman of taste with that of the professional soldier. Their memoirs, indeed, helped to lend the figure of the military author a degree of respectability and interest that saw their story coming to be far more acceptable and appealing to the tastes of their largely middle-class readership. Though their work is

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{5} \textit{The Subaltern} was subsequently re-published numerous times through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whilst both books have been republished in recent years: Moyle Sherer, \textit{Recollections of the Peninsula}, ed. Philip J. Haythornthwaite (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1996); and George Gleig, \textit{The Subaltern: A Chronicle of the Peninsular War}, ed. Ian Robertson (London: Leo Cooper, 2001).
still at times haunted by melancholy, particularly focused on the loss of their close friends through war’s violence, their picturesque approach nonetheless allowed their writing to develop an aesthetic distancing from war’s horrors that saw them writing about war as a site of freedom, community and personal virtue. Their accounts of war were thus amongst the first to resonate with what Nancy Rosenblum has defined as a “Romantic militarism” that extolled the manifold virtues of war.⁶

Picturesque War: Moyle Sherer’s Recollections of the Peninsula

Born in Southampton in 1789, Moyle Sherer first entered the army as an ensign in the Thirty-fourth Regiment of Foot in 1807, at the age of eighteen, and served with his regiment in Spain and Portugal during the Peninsular War. His Recollections of the Peninsula is an episodic account of his experiences during four years service with his regiment, from his arrival in Lisbon in 1809 to his capture by the French at an engagement near the pass of Maya in Spain in 1813. Released in 1815 from internment as a prisoner of war in France, he continued to serve with the army for nearly twenty years, eventually reaching the rank of captain in the Ninety-sixth Regiment in 1831 and retiring in 1836.⁷ Sherer was, however, as much a professional author as a soldier and became notable as a travel writer in the 1820s. Prior to his Recollections, he had given an account of his travels through India in Sketches of India (1821) and he went on to write further books of travel through the 1820s including Scenes and Impressions in Egypt and Italy (1824) and Notes and Reflections during a Ramble in Germany (1826).⁸ Running through several editions each, these books were well received by the periodical press and at least one reviewer, in the Edinburgh Review, considered them exemplary pieces of travel writing.⁹

⁸ Moyle Sherer, Sketches of India: Written by an Officer for Fire-Side Travellers at-Home (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1821); Moyle Sherer, Scenes and Impressions in Egypt and in Italy. By the Author of Sketches of India, and Recollections of the Peninsula., 2nd ed. (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825); and Moyle Sherer, Notes and Reflections During a Ramble in Germany (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826).
⁹ Edinburgh Review 41.81 (1824), 32-33.
simply an instructive or scientific genre, and was typically constructed around the subjective reflections of the traveller.\textsuperscript{10} James Buzard has observed that the period saw the rise, in particular, of “the picturesque” as a “new vocabulary for travel experience” that emphasized the tasteful pleasures of travelling and profoundly affected “the way travelling got done and written about”.\textsuperscript{11} It was in this picturesque mode that Sherer developed his writing and composed his \textit{Recollections}.

Sir Uvedale Price, William Gilpin and Richard Payne Knight all contributed to the development of theories of picturesque aesthetics in the late eighteenth century, but of these three, Gilpin was the most instrumental in establishing the picturesque as a component of touristic travel.\textsuperscript{12} In his collection \textit{Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape} (1794) Gilpin envisioned a “new object of pursuit for the tourist”, wherein travel was to be undertaken expressly in an effort to discover and view picturesque scenery.\textsuperscript{13} Such scenery consisted, essentially, of landscapes that “please from some quality, capable of being illustrated by painting”.\textsuperscript{14} Gilpin particularly privileged the aesthetic or painterly appeal of roughness and irregularity in landscapes. As the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars had severely restricted the ability of most Britons to travel to the continent,\textsuperscript{15} the picturesque primarily served as an influence on travel undertaken within Britain. This roughness thus came to be associated with “the native English landscape itself”, its uncultivated woodlands, rocky hills and “winding country lanes”, along with the rugged and more remote terrain of Scotland and Wales.\textsuperscript{16} The picturesque was, however, widely detailed by British travel writers, such as Sherer, in their tours of India and other “distant lands”, as the

\textsuperscript{14} William Gilpin, \textit{Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: To Which is Added a Poem on Landscape Painting} (Westmead: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1972), 3.
\textsuperscript{15} Buzard, “The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)”, 42-43.
picturesque exerted itself as a pervasive influence on representations of other cultures and places. So too, despite its overarching appeal to naturalness, a correct training of the eye of the picturesque viewer was nonetheless essential to allow an appreciation of rough scenery, and the viewer had to be properly educated to understand the correct harmony and composition of scenes witnessed. Gilpin was thus helping to introduce a highly aestheticised and cultivated form of touristic travelling, wherein the principal object for the traveller was to obtain pleasure from viewing picturesque scenery. The picturesque was thus coming to shape the experience of travelling in relation to entertainment and aesthetic pleasure.

More widely, as Gary Harrison and Jill Heydt-Stevenson have observed, the picturesque extended a “complex and extensive influence” on matters of taste and aesthetic appreciation through the Romantic period. In particular, the picturesque fostered an understanding of the land as an aesthetic commodity that could be marketed through tours, guidebooks and travelogues, for consumption by what has been viewed as a largely middle-class audience. There was a markedly didactic element to much picturesque writing as it sought to develop the reader’s appreciation and taste for landscapes, whilst this appreciation for the picturesque itself rapidly emerged as a key marker of one’s personal distinction and good taste. Through their picturesque appreciation of land, the middle classes were, it has been argued, obtaining a vicarious participation in the nation. Although they did not possess the land through legal ownership, they could imaginatively possess it through cultivation of their tasteful appreciation of scenery, helping in turn to refashion taste as a vital component in one’s full participation in the life of the nation and linking it to wider moral qualities. Questions of taste were, indeed, of central importance in a reformation that occurred during the Romantic period of moral qualities around middle-class virtues, emphasizing self-cultivation and merit rather than aristocratic ideals of birth and rank. Though this process meant, at some level, adapting the

17 Leask. Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840, 158.
manners and style of the gentry, it was also helping to establish a far greater middle-
class cultural authority through the first half of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{22}

In adapting the picturesque to his military memoirs, Sherer similarly sought
to cultivate his readers’ aesthetic appreciation of, and to some extent their vicarious
participation in, scenes of war. He thus not only established the shared taste and
virtues of the military author and middle-class readers, but helped these readers to
understand and enjoy a war that had been relatively remote and commonly
associated with Britain’s aristocratic commanders, such as the Duke of Wellington.
Bainbridge has drawn attention to the ways in which Sir Walter Scott had earlier
introduced elements of the picturesque to his poetry during the war years, as he
strove to make representations of war poetically interesting and to help forge the
“military spirit” of the nation.\textsuperscript{23} Although Bainbridge suggests that Scott’s
picturesque view of war had a significant influence on cultural representations of war
through the nineteenth century, he is not able to investigate fully how this
picturesque came to be deployed in relation to modern war. Crucially, Scott himself
was only able to fashion a picturesque approach to war by writing of wars in the
chivalric past rather than modern war and he shifted away from this picturesque
approach to war in his post-war novels.\textsuperscript{24} Scott believed that authentic knowledge
was vital for the creation of picturesque writing, therefore implying that only a
soldier was capable of composing a picturesque account of contemporary or modern
war.\textsuperscript{25} Sherer, arguably, was the first author to take up this challenge, fashioning an
authentic account of modern war that resonated with these imaginatively interesting
and picturesque details. He does not appear to have been seeking to inspire, as had
Scott, the nation’s “military spirit”, so much as he was writing, like Thomas, for a
commercial market. Indeed, his use of the picturesque in his military memoirs can be
understood as an effort to establish the appeal of his military writing to the same
market of readers who had earlier enjoyed his \textit{Sketches of India}. Carl Thompson
observes that the picturesque was a genre of travel writing readily adopted by female

\begin{footnotes}
\item[22] Marjorie Garson, \textit{Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity, and Social Power in the Nineteenth-
\item[23] Simon Bainbridge, \textit{British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars} (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2003), 124.
\item[24] Ibid., 126-27 and 144. See also Andrew D. Krull, “Spectacles of Disaffection: Politics, Ethics, and
\item[25] Bainbridge, \textit{British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars}, 126.
\end{footnotes}
authors because it was “culturally impossible” for them to compose stories of the suffering traveller; they simply had no opportunity in this period to fully confront and experience “harrowing ordeals” when they travelled. Sherer was, arguably, shifting the earlier genre of the sentimental military memoir, with its associations of the suffering traveller and his ordeals, into the more feminized genre of the picturesque travelogue, thereby moving the soldier’s story away from perilous travel and into something far more safe and accessible to a middle-class, and at least partly female, audience. The effect of his writing was to recreate war as a realm of aesthetic pleasure and to establish his own taste and moral virtues as a military author.

Sherer’s *Recollections* demonstrate, to a marked degree, an adherence to the ideals and views of the picturesque traveller as set out by Gilpin, as he transposes the picturesque to his account of travelling with the army through Portugal and Spain. Indeed, it was as a work of “topography” that his *Recollections* was originally advertised in *The Quarterly Review*; The Review observed that though his book provided “sketches of the warfare in which the British Peninsular army was engaged”, it was not a “regular memoir of the operations of the conflicting armies” but was principally of interest as a work of travel writing. It displayed “the manners and customs of the people” and “the beautiful and magnificent scenery through which the military operations were conducted”. Sherer notably claimed that he was not trying to provide a “professional sketch of the campaigns”, but rather that he sought to “present to the reader as faithfully as I can the varieties and pleasures of a life on active service”. His work certainly details his professional military expertise and his patriotic enthusiasm for “bright examples of British heroism” (157). Yet, although he describes his *Recollections* as being about the “life of a soldier abroad” (1), he regards himself as more of a “traveller, and a man of feeling” than what he terms a “scientific soldier” (92). He concerns himself with the contemplation of aesthetic beauty, rather than with detailing the grand features and military lessons of a campaign. Sherer’s narrative is thus primarily constructed around his touristic observations and reflections on the picturesque qualities of the landscapes,

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27 *Quarterly Review* 29.57 (1823), 282.
28 *Quarterly Review* 30.59 (1823), 62 and 66.
29 Moyle Sherer, *Recollections of the Peninsula*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman & Co., 1824), 92. All subsequent references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.
architecture and people of Portugal and Spain as he undertakes the “daily march” with the army (1). Relating the army’s march from Medellin to Santa Cruz, for instance, he recounts:

On the 14th we marched to Escurial, on the 15th to Santa Cruz. The situation of this last village is very beautiful, and the neighbourhood highly picturesque. Above it rises a proud majestic mountain whose broad sides, towards the base, are clothed with the olive and the vine in rich profusion, while the higher region has a crown of heath, and rock-stone, most beautifully variegated with colourings, such as the art of the painter would in vain attempt to imitate. (195-96)

He describes his time on campaign as being largely “an excursion for pleasure” (84), in which he undertakes frequent detours from the main route of the army for the express purpose of viewing picturesque landscapes or architectural ruins. He concludes of his experiences campaigning: “The march, to a man of any mind or feeling, always presents enjoyment, especially when it lies among mountains, those grand features of scenery, which are, throughout romantic Spain, thrown every where by the bold hand of nature in the richest and wildest profusion” (223).

These touristic reflections were not uncommon in earlier military memoirs, such as Porter’s Letters. Unlike Porter, however, Sherer declines to situate his travel observations as a peripheral element of his narrative. Rejecting the campaign narrative tradition, situating his writing outside the “professional sketch of the campaign” and its historical narrative of events, he instead views his entire experience of being a soldier at war through this picturesque framework. He thus consistently draws scenes of war and assorted military activities into the aesthetic pleasure of his picturesque reveries. He recounts, for instance, how “[t]he order of our march, on the morning of the eighth, was very beautiful. We moved in four parallel columns, at well regulated intervals … [f]rom the nature of the country we passed over, all the columns had a fine distinct view of each other” (148). For Sherer, columns of soldiers impose themselves onto the country as aesthetic objects and evoke as much beauty as their natural surrounds. Elsewhere, as Sherer departs Lisbon with the army, he observes the British soldiers upon the Tagus River:

It must have been a beautiful sight, for those on the quays and along the banks, to mark our fair array. The polished arms, the glittering cap plates, and the crimson dress of the British soldiers, crowded in open barks must have produced a very fine effect. And we, too, gazed on a scene far different indeed, but most peaceful, most lovely. The northern bank of the river from
Lisbon to Villa Franca (about six leagues) presents a continued succession of rural beauties: convents, chapels, and quintas, gardens and vineyards, wood and verdure, cattle and groups of villagers, all blended in bright and gay confusion, arrest the eye and address the heart. (33)

The soldiers and the landscape represent scenes that Sherer feels are “far different” to one another, but he nonetheless describes both in terms of their “fine effect” and the “beautiful sight” that they produce. The natural surrounds remain “most peaceful, most lovely” despite the presence of soldiers. Although his scene is composed of picturesque detail and “confusion”, he does not describe nature as a picturesque wilderness so much as a cultivated world of gardens, habitations and villagers, suggesting that a social world can accommodate war. So too, whilst Sherer’s descriptions of “grand” martial scenes can verge on the sublime (109), such as his reflections on the vast and “magnificent” spectacle of the French army’s campfires, he does not reflect on war in terms of awe and terror. As Guglielmo Scaramellini argues, the picturesque offers an appreciation of “grandiose” scenes from “more ‘human’ perspectives” than the sublime, replacing sublime awe with “sensual curiosity” and “grace”. It is this more “human” and hospitable perspective that Sherer develops in his appreciation of martial scenes. The “grand and sublime views” he encounters are described not as sublimely disturbing experiences, but simply as being imaginatively “delightful” (194).

Gilpin had also insisted that a picturesque beauty adhered to landscapes and ruins that were rich in ancient historical associations, particularly castles and battlefields. In his travels through the Highlands of Scotland, for instance, he delighted in writing about the historical border feuds associated with the particular localities he had visited. Sherer similarly develops this picturesque reverence for antiquity, observing that he is never “[i]nsensible to a tale of heroism”, and that “such a tale is ever hallowed by the remoteness of the age in which the action it relates has been performed”. But he asks his reader to see precisely this historical reverence and hallowedness in his descriptions of modern soldiers and war, going on to inform his reader: “I condemn those, who rave about Greeks and Romans; and because division and regiment do not sound quite so classical as legion and cohort,

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would persuade us, that musketeers are not as brave as hastate; or British captains worthy to be classed with Roman centurions” (241). Much of the “charm of travelling” (27) is, for Sherer, found in forming his own historical associations around modern scenes of war. Thus he argues that the exploits of the “gallant” Colonel Cadogan of the Seventy-first, show a “trait of patriotism [which] would have figured well in Greek or Roman story” (240) and elsewhere ponders “who could stand on the solitary field of Waterloo, without imagining to himself his gallant countrymen, and their fierce opponents; or who could pass the Rubicon, without seeing the cohorts of Caesar, and their daring leader” (27). Integrating references to British heroism with classical history, Sherer suggests that a dignified and historically important significance adheres to the nation’s recent wars, comparable with the “daring” exploits of classical heroes.

Gilpin observed that though soldiers themselves could be picturesque, it was only where these soldiers were presented “not in modern regimentals”; they must, instead, be presented as ancient soldiers, “as Virgil paints them - longis adnixi hastis, et scuta tenentes”. But Sherer insists that modern British soldiers and military achievements carry as much historical significance and picturesque appeal as those of classical history. He thus asserts the tasteful appeal of the nation’s wars by infusing his recollections of British war with these rich and pleasing historical associations. Through this process of inscribing his encounter with scenes of war in familiar, picturesque terms, he was helping his ordinary British reader to more easily imagine and associate themselves with the experience of being a soldier on campaign, to appreciate its “varieties and pleasures”. Where picturesque “tourist guides and travellers’ accounts” sought to educate the tastes of their largely middle class audience, fostering an appreciation for landscapes and offering an imagined, “vicarious” access and ownership of the land, Sherer sought to cultivate his reader’s tasteful appreciation of scenes of war. His work was enabling his audience to, at least in part, see themselves reflected in the nation’s wars. Edmund Burke had insisted

32 William Gilpin, Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (London: Printed for R. Balmire, 1792), 46.
that to “make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely”. In a similar way, Sherer exhibits his patriotism by not merely celebrating British martial valour, but by equally seeking to develop his reader’s “love” of war and a sympathetic engagement with the soldier through positioning war in harmonious relationship with “romantic loveliness” (40). For Sherer, being at war thus meant that “you walked and rode through a beautiful country”, whilst you had “a fine martial scene constantly before your eyes” (100).

Reframing the Sentimental Military Memoir

As noted above, earlier military memoirists also often wrote much of their accounts from the perspective of a gentleman traveller. These books, however, had been principally offered to their readers as scientific descriptions of military campaigns. Reflections on travelling or encounters with picturesque beauty remained intermittent and peripheral to the main focus of such narratives. In his Campaign of the Left Wing of the Allied Army, in the Western Pyrenees and Sought of France in the Years 1813-1814 (1823), Robert Batty, for example, observes officers taking tours of the scenery or making sketches of the “picturesque” landscape, yet he is emphatic that this occurred only when these officers were “not engaged on military duty”. Picturesque description is seldom applied to scenes of warfare itself and as Porter’s Letters demonstrate, however much the soldier ascribed to a stoical “military philosophy”, the “daily march” with the army was seldom experienced by the “man of feeling” as a form of enjoyment. This focus on suffering was equally true of private soldiers’ memoirs, and though these soldiers lacked the class status to write as gentlemen travellers, they were typically positioned by their editors as sentimental figures of suffering and pity. The soldier’s personal encounter with the fatigues of campaigning, and the sights of the assorted “acts and effects of war”, therefore, tended to inspire sentimental reflections on war’s suffering and horror. When Peter Hawker, in his Journal of a Regimental Officer during the Recent

35 Robert Batty, Campaign of the Left Wing of the Allied Army, in the Western Pyrenees and Sought of France in the Years 1813-1814 (London: Murray, 1823), 32.
Campaign in Portugal and Spain (1810), describes his fellow officers’ touristic visit to the Talavera battlefield several days after the battle, he notes that “on their return from exploring the field of battle, [they] described the sight of dismembered limbs, embowelled and otherwise mangled bodies, as too horrible for contemplation; and even expressed their regret at having witnessed the scene”. In his memoirs (though possibly fictional), which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine in 1822, Julius Thunder similarly concluded, upon viewing the aftermath of the battle of Toulouse:

> when the ardour and excitement which the conflict gives birth to have passed away, ... the only feeling of the heart is a sense of the most lively compassion for the sufferings which we have ourselves been instrumental in producing. I was heartily rejoiced to make my escape from this scene of death, and my spirits gradually recovered their tone under the influence of the most beautiful scenery in Europe.  

As Thunder’s account suggests, a professional military “ardour and excitement” for war is only temporary in these earlier texts, linked to a proper “sentimental” mode which fostered a pity for war’s victims and an impassioned recoil from its horrors. Responses to war were seen as quite distinct from reflections on picturesque beauty, which offers an “escape” from scenes of war that are “too horrible for contemplation”. Thunder’s gentlemanly feelings and spirits are thus directed away from war and restored to a proper “tone” through contemplation of picturesque scenery.

By placing emphasis on the picturesque pleasures of war, Sherer helped to introduce a distinct and new way of reflecting on the soldier’s personal experience of a military campaign. Rather than attempt to describe the historical events of a campaign and presenting his narrative as a correct reflection of the commanding general’s authoritative view of war, Sherer writes as an independent picturesque observer. He thus legitimates and develops his own view of war around an aesthetic, rather than strategic, appreciation of events. Free to select scenes of interest for his readers, by virtue of their aesthetic appeal, he enables what might otherwise seem to be irrelevant or peripheral aspects of a military campaign to feature as the most important elements in his account. Thus, for instance, whilst he introduces his

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discussion of the battle of Albuera with a brief overview of the deployment and movements of the competing armies, he principally reflects on his personal observations and feelings of the battle, such as the “grand sight” of the French grenadiers, the “smoky shroud of battle” and the “heavy, chilling, and comfortless rain” (158-60). His expert “eye of taste” legitimates his subordinate vision of war and allows him to replace the commander’s authoritative view with his description of aesthetic scenes and his felt experiences (284). Indeed, he brings the authority of the picturesque itself to his writing, allowing its emphasis on the unmediated and natural quality of picturesque observations to permeate and authorize his writing. As John Barrell has argued of the picturesque gaze, “it instantiates a conception of ‘accuracy’ with which it registers the visual appearances of objects supposed to be humble and informal. It is expressive of neutrality”. Sherer similarly makes recourse to such neutrality, noting that his style is simply that of a soldier, because, “[w]e only observe and draw hasty conclusions” (v), and he typically describes his writing as a form of drawing or painting, reflecting on the limitations of language to describe what he views (197). It is a viewpoint that, additionally, distances Sherer from claims to a partisan or overly personal perspective in relation to war. Through Sherer’s adoption of the picturesque, therefore a far greater authority is granted to the individual gaze of the soldier at war; he manifests the picturesque as a tasteful, natural and interesting viewpoint from which the soldier is able to apprehend and describe his personal experience of war.

Sherer also draws attention to the “horrors” of conflict (45), but by applying his picturesque descriptions far more widely, so that his picturesque gaze dominates the narrative and encompasses scenes of war alongside his descriptions of landscapes, he displaces any moralizing or sentimental contemplation of horror into an aesthetic response. War’s “horrid features” still cannot be disguised, Sherer tells us, but they can be softened in ways that “reconcile our minds to scenes of blood and carnage” (111). Reflecting on the devastation of the Portuguese countryside by the retreating French, for instance, he comments:

Not a town or a village had I passed, on my route from Lisbon, but affecting traces of the invasion of this smiling country were, every where, to be seen.

Cottages all roofless and untenanted, the unpruned vine, growing in rank luxuriance over their ruined walls, neglected gardens, the shells of fine houses, half destroyed by fire, convents and churches, too solid to be demolished, standing open and neglected, with the ornamental wood or stone work, which once adorned them, broken down and defaced; all proclaimed silently, but forcibly, that I was travelling through a country which had been the theatre of war, and exposed to the ravages of contending armies. (184-85)

The descriptions he provides hauntingly echo Gilpin’s insistence that ornate or beautiful architecture is more aesthetically appealing if it is defaced and broken, emerging as a picturesque ruin. Sherer certainly regards scenes of destruction as affecting, but they are like the “picturesque ruins” of antiquity, upon which he equally feels it is impossible to look and remain “unmoved” (65-66), or the gardens around the palace at Aranjuez that are “rather improved to the eye of taste, by having been of late neglected” (284). Barrell notes that the picturesque “is concerned only with visible appearances, to the exclusion of the moral and the sentimental. The picturesque eye is a Polaroid lens, which eliminates all sentimental and moral reflection”. Sherer similarly defers sentimental contemplation of these scenes in favour of providing pleasant descriptions that are largely emptied of any political reflections, or what Copley and Garside describe as “socially consequential interpretations”. Although these descriptions of war’s desolation are quite different to his earlier scenes of war coexisting with an inhabited world of peace and loveliness, Sherer nonetheless renders the scene devoid of people and domestic associations in an effort to limit “the moral and the sentimental” overtones of war. He presents war’s destruction, instead, as simply being aesthetically pleasing. Elsewhere, he even depicts dead soldiers by observing their “manly beauty”, managing to find some “romantic” pleasure from contemplating war’s “disgusting”, corporeal horrors (162-63). He does not turn to the picturesque as an antidote or “escape” from scenes of war’s horror, as had Thunder, but uses his picturesque descriptions to soften the horrors of what he witnesses.

This aesthetic distancing is not always consistently maintained, and at moments in his narrative, as will be discussed below, he feels himself to be

41 Barrell, “Visualising the Division of Labour”, 105.
overwhelmed with sorrow so that “[m]y pen altogether fails me” and “the moral and the sentimental” reemerge in his writing (115). His writing could, at times, inspire sentimental reflection on war’s horrors. When the United States Literary Gazette reviewed Sherer’s Recollections it insisted that it “helps to do away certain errors, and throw some light upon the folly and wickedness of a love of war, and an admiration of military achievement”. Our appreciation of military “pomp and glories” the Gazette concluded, was because we “consider [war] in the mass, and not in detail”. Sherer’s book and its focus on his personal experiences at war helped to dispel these false glories, allowing the reader to, instead, “follow the individuals who compose this mass, and observe the feelings which govern them, the deeds upon which they are bent … suffering which it is terrible to read of, and, perhaps, the violent death towards which many are pressing”. Habitually, however, Sherer concludes his reveries on the destructive impacts of warfare by offering a prayer of thanks that Britain has never witnessed the ravages of modern war. “Happy are ye, my countrymen”, he exclaims, who have “read only of these things, and are spared such trials!” (188). Sherer views himself as bridging this experiential gap between his peaceful reader and war, yet he similarly strives to spare or protect his readers from the worst of war’s horrors. Just as Coleridge saw the poetic imagination as being the most appropriate means to represent war, to enable it to be properly realized as a felt experience, so Sherer positions himself as a Romantic author, poetically imagining war for the nation as he simultaneously reframed war’s “visible and bodily evils” into “a sight of comfort and of elevation”.

Sherer was, therefore, offering something quite exceptional in presenting modern, or recent war, as picturesque and imaginatively interesting. Many of Sherer’s contemporaries felt that modern war was resistant to any such imaginative interest. As noted earlier, though Scott deployed picturesque elements in his poetic treatment of medieval battle scenes, he considered modern battle as being far too massive, scientific, and lacking in charm to be able to be regarded as picturesque. The satirist Eaton Stannard Barrett similarly observed that though the vast scale of

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43 United States Literary Gazette 1.17 (1824), 257.
44 Bainbridge, British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 72.
46 Bainbridge, British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 126.
recent wars meant the period was one of “epic times”, these times were nonetheless “sadly deficient in the picturesque”. Modern war itself could only be rendered poetical and aesthetically interesting, he felt, where it was imagined by being looked back upon from a “distant future”.\textsuperscript{47} Reviewing Sherer’s Recollections, however, the Eclectic Review was struck by how successfully the work had brought a picturesque style to his description of war, observing:

He has an eye for the picturesque; and a march through Spain afforded ample opportunities of gratifying his taste, in the costume, the scenery, and the military spectacle, while his feelings seem to have partaken of the intoxication of romance. We could have fancied that we were at times reading the imaginative descriptions of Geoffrey Crayon, rather than the account of a sanguinary campaign; so much does ‘the man of feeling’ predominate in these pages, over the ‘scientific soldier’.\textsuperscript{48}

The Eclectic Review had earlier also noted the impossibility of “making war, as a present event, interesting to the imagination”, because the events of “modern war” were too recent, and still carried “burthens” and “griefs” too great, to enable the possibility of their being regarded in any way poetically interesting. War could only be made poetic if a writer was able to create sympathy with the feelings of individual “heroes and warriors”, something that could not be achieved with accounts of modern war because the individual details of recent conflicts were felt to consist of horror and misery rather than of glory and romance. A writer who focused on the individual details of war would thus be forced to “carry the enthusiasm of a cultivated mind into subjects, the familiar details of which are often mean, painful, or disgusting”.\textsuperscript{49} This was precisely the difficulty that Porter had earlier encountered in his Letters as he reflected on the soldier’s personal feelings and war’s “familiar details” through a sentimental mode. Porter sought to foster his reader’s sympathy with individual “heroes and warriors” by emphasizing their sacrificial suffering for the nation, but in doing so he had found himself compelled to detail the appalling miseries and horrors of war, leaving his account filled with painful and repulsive images that threatened to “unman” himself and his readers. But by imagining war as the picturesque traveller, Sherer was able to find a poetically interesting approach to writing of these details, in which his descriptive writing and romantic intoxication

\textsuperscript{47} Quoted in Stuart Semmel, “Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting and Memory after Waterloo”, \textit{Representations} 69.9 (2000): 9-37, 19.

\textsuperscript{48} Eclectic Review 21 (1824), 146.

\textsuperscript{49} Eclectic Review 6 (1816), 1.
could recontextualise the sentimental contemplation of a “sanguinary” military campaign in terms of an appealing picturesque aesthetic. Sherer thus reconciles his British reader’s “eye of taste” to the “mean, painful, or disgusting” details of war, transforming his personal, felt experience of war away from sentimental reflections on horror and pity and into the enthusiastic intoxication of military spectacle, romance and the “happy” pleasures of “only” reading of war.

The success Sherer achieved with his picturesque style, his ability to move the details of war beyond sentimental grief and into picturesque interest, was, arguably, because he had managed to bring together in his narrative the sentiments, or “heart”, of the soldier and of the cultivated, gentlemanly “man of feeling”. He had combined his professionalism and authorial talent, his widely recognized poetic genius and “art of painting in words”, with the authenticity of the soldier eyewitness, and his capacity, which Scott felt to be crucial in developing a picturesque poetry, to grant “truth to the description”. He enabled his audience to find an imaginative interest in war by describing, with “charm and interest” (93), scenes that “[n]o one, but a soldier, can picture to himself” (109). Porter’s earlier *Letters* had revealed a disjunction between the status of the soldier and the man of feeling; he was unable to reconcile the identity of the heroic soldier with his status as a gentleman traveller and an author. Thomas’s *Journal* may have been interesting to the reader for the view of campaigning it provided, but he too could not reconcile the status of the soldier with that of the gentleman or author, his class status disbarring him from claims to taste and authority. Rather than being associated with an authoritative “eye of taste”, Thomas represented a far more corporeal and embodied witness to war. His narrative represented war’s mean or lowly dimensions his personal feelings, as a son, were largely in tension with the harsh demands and miseries of soldiering. Sherer’s picturesque style, however, enabled the “cultivated mind” of the “man of feeling” to share his military enthusiasm and to take poetic pleasure from reading of the feelings and details of modern war. As the *Eclectic Review* concluded of the *Recollections*, “[i]ts author unites the somewhat discordant characters of a military enthusiast and a sentimentalist”. Linked to “Mackenzie and

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51 Quoted in Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 126.
52 *Eclectic Review* 21 (1824), 146.
Sterne”, Sherer, indeed, more readily assumes the identity of the author, particularly that of the “man of letters”. Although he might at times moralise like a sentimental author, it is the picturesque, rather than the sentimental, that establishes his taste, authority and humanity. The pleasure and aesthetic interest of war thus take precedence in his account over the mournful and horrifying. His *Recollections* enabled a far more personal and Romantic approach to be taken to the soldier’s composition of a military memoir. In Gleig’s development of this “style of writing”, a distinctly “subaltern” view of war took shape that allowed the reader to fully share the soldier’s “military enthusiasm”.

**George Gleig’s Subaltern View of War**

George Gleig was also a successful and popular professional writer, his reputation arguably exceeding that of Sherer. Unlike Sherer, for instance, he appeared in the “Gallery of Literary Characters” in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1834, where he is described as having a “brilliant mind”. He was also praised as being “well known to the public”. His writing included a *History of India* (1830-35), a *Sketch of the Military History of Great Britain* (1845), articles for *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*, and numerous novels and biographies, such as *Alan Breck* (1834), *The Hussar* (1837) and biographies of Warren Hastings (1841), Robert, first Lord Clive (1848) and the Duke of Wellington (1853). Born in Stirling, Scotland, in 1796, son of Bishop George Gleig, George Gleig entered the army in 1812 as an ensign in the Eighty-fifth Regiment, and served on campaign with the army in the Peninsula and North America. His career as a military officer was relatively short lived, however. He retired on half-pay at the close of the Napoleonic Wars in order to pursue a career in the church, though he retained a connection with the military, being appointed Chaplain of Chelsea Hospital in 1834 and Chaplain-General of the forces in 1844. Gleig’s popularity and fame as an author, nonetheless, largely stemmed from the public’s enthusiastic reception of *The Subaltern* (1825), an account, though possibly semi-fictionalised,  

54 *Fraser’s Magazine* 10 (1834). 282.
56 The *United States Literary Gazette*, for instance, suspected that “the author must have drawn upon his imagination to finish his descriptions”. *United States Literary Gazette* 3.9 (1826). 333.
of his experiences whilst on service with his regiment during the final stages of the Peninsular War. Running through several editions and receiving considerable and almost unanimous applause from the review periodicals, the book was pivotal in helping to establish Gleig’s “long and prolific literary career”. He was typically announced, in his subsequent publications (and in Fraser’s “Gallery”) as being the “author of ‘the Subaltern’”.

Featured originally as a series of articles in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine appearing in 1825, and published by Blackwood as a separate book later that year, The Subaltern resembles Sherer’s Recollections in a number of ways. Gleig never discussed Sherer’s book as a direct influence, but it is possible to detect a marked degree of similarity in approach. It was also noted at the time that The Subaltern was “written in the same style as that of ‘Recollections of the Peninsula’”. Like Sherer, therefore, Gleig deliberately declined to offer any wider commentary on the campaigns or the movements of the army as a whole. He is adamant that he is not writing a “regular memoir of the campaigns of 1813 and 1814” (64) nor will he “intrude upon the province of the historian” (205). His book provides, instead, a personal account of his experiences at war, one that details his feelings and draws heavily on the Romantic and picturesque descriptions that Sherer had employed. Gleig thus provides a highly personal and aestheticised view of war as he endeavours to “convey to the mind of an ordinary reader” the feelings and the most interesting observations of the soldier at war (50).

The Subaltern was not Gleig’s first military memoir. He had earlier published A Narrative of the Campaigns of the British army at Washington and New Orleans (1821), a book which, as the title suggests, was primarily composed in the form of a “regular memoir”. It detailed the key events and considered the strategic significance of various actions during the British army’s campaigns in North America through 1814 and 15, campaigns in which Gleig had served. The book was viewed favourably by Blackwood’s as being “very superior to any thing of the kind

58 Fraser’s Magazine 10 (1834), 283.
59 United States Literary Gazette 3.9 (1826), 333
60 George Gleig, A Narrative of the Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans, under Generals Ross, Pakenham, and Lambert, in the Years 1814 and 1815; with Some Account of the Countries Visited. By an Officer Who Served in the Expedition (London: John Murray, 1821).
that has lately issued from the press”. This was not simply because it showed more authorial “talents and accomplishments”, but also because, the reviewer felt, the book had kept reference to personal details of the soldier’s experience to a bare minimum. Such details, the reviewer insists, were a typical feature of most military memoirs, but they simply contributed to the “dullness” of these works. The officer’s task, if he was to write of war, was to narrate the historical events and strategic importance of a campaign correctly, so that the reader might be made aware “of the great principles of policy, by which the military conduct of the first generals of the age has been directed”. The officer’s personal perspective could contribute nothing to the historical narrative. The reviewer concluded: “On service, an officer of the inferior ranks of his profession knows nothing, and is allowed to know nothing, beyond the motions of his own regiment or brigade. He is a mere machine; and beyond the confined orbit of his own vision every thing to him is in utter darkness”. Gleig’s earlier Narrative was celebrated, therefore, because it offered a correct and impersonal view of the commanding general’s military policies.

In contrast to this traditional format for military writing, Sherer’s picturesque mode offered a much greater authority to the personal vision of the “officer of the inferior ranks”. Sherer notes that “the best information of a regimental officer of humble rank must be very imperfect” (92), but through his use of the picturesque, Sherer shifts his memoirs away from a narrative of historical “information” to instead offer his personal, aesthetic response to scenes of war. Adopting Sherer’s picturesque “style of writing”, Gleig similarly legitimates the authority of a subaltern view of war, but he also extends Sherer’s style by insisting that he speaks simply as a professional soldier and will limit himself to write only about war. His title itself, The Subaltern, reflects Gleig’s foregrounding of a particular professional identity and indicates how the central focus of his memoirs falls on the experiences of the individual soldier rather than an account of the campaign. His title even echoes private soldiers’ memoirs and their focus on a more representative and anonymous account of soldiering, although Gleig was principally choosing to define his memoirs in this way against the tradition of officers’ military memoirs. The elements of

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61 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 9 (1821), 181.
62 Margaret Cohen notes that the first novel to take its title simply from the “reputable profession” of its central protagonist was James Fenimore Cooper’s The Pilot (1823), which had appeared just prior
Elements of the picturesque travelogue have a role in shaping his narrative, and much as it was for Sherer, picturesque reflections can be seen to serve as markers of his authenticity and taste. But Gleig is, additionally, emphatic that his feelings “were very different from those which actuate an ordinary observer of the face of a strange country” (164). He insists that he will provide something quite distinct from his earlier “brethren in arms” and their memoirs of the Peninsular War, their “‘Journals’ or ‘Letters to Friends at Home’”. Earlier military memoirists, he argues, typically wrote as “military tourists”, preoccupied with describing the appearance and character of the territories through which they travelled (257). Gleig, in contrast, states that he will refrain from commenting on the countryside and manners of the people because he believes that the character of a country is radically transformed by war. “Wherever foreign troops swarm”, he insists, “the aborigines necessarily appear in false colours” (257). However much his book resembles Sherer’s picturesque travelogue of the Peninsula region, the specific locality in which Gleig finds himself, the very raison d’être of a travelogue, is almost wholly immaterial to Gleig because he simply witnesses a region that, he argues, has been subsumed and translated by war. He is not, Gleig adamantly insists, journeying through a “land of peace” (218).

War itself, more than a particular campaign or the beauties of a region, becomes the primary object of interest for Gleig’s picturesque gaze. Where Sherer’s first entry into the Peninsula, sailing into Lisbon harbour, produced a scene “which feasts the eye of a traveller” (3), Gleig is clear that his first entry to the Peninsula, close to the siege of St Sebastian, was “to the seat of war” and that it is scenes of war itself which constituted “the object of our gaze” (23-24). It is a scene of cannonades,
sieges, fortifications, trenches and the assorted materials and events of war that Gleig wishes to see and which he believes “presented a spectacle in the highest degree interesting and grand, especially to eyes, like my own, to which such spectacles were new” (29). Arriving at St. Sebastian he reports that:

I was gazing with much earnestness upon the scene before me, when a shot from the castle drew my attention to ourselves and I found that the enemy were determined not to lose the opportunity, which the calm afforded, of doing as much damage as possible to the ships which lay nearest to them. (29)

He underscores the fact that he has encountered an environment that is determined, infused and translated by war; he watches, and is watched, by soldiers in an environment that is anything but, as Sherer defined it, “most peaceful, most lovely”. He is engaged in a “situation perhaps as interesting as can well be imagined to the mind of a soldier” (25).

As he states, in becoming a soldier he wanted “to learn what war really was” and to quell “the restlessness of my imagination, which persisted in drawing the most ridiculous pictures of events which never were and never could be realized” (5). Rendering war as an aesthetic, rather than a strategic object, Gleig’s military telescope comes to stand in for a picturesque traveller’s Claude glass. It frames a pictorial military view, picking out sentries, skirmishers, tents, and piled arms as objects of aesthetic scrutiny. Gleig seeks out picturesque landscapes from the very scenes of war themselves, finding in the spectacle of war a more Romantic and beautiful scene than any landscape. Although he is enraptured by the scenery he encounters in the South of France, and exclaims that “[t]he country around was more romantic and striking than any which I had yet seen” (282), he nonetheless goes on to insist that the military component surpasses the interest of the landscape:

It would have been altogether as sweet and pastoral a landscape as the imagination can very well picture, but for the remote view of the entrenched camp, which from various points might be obtained, and the nearer glimpse of numerous watch-fires, round which groups of armed men were swarming. To me, however, these were precisely the most interesting objects in the panorama, and those upon which I chiefly delighted to fix my attention. (282-83)

At times he even discovers views that are appealing almost wholly because of the sight of soldiers and military spectacles that they provide. He observes that the view beyond his picquet is “extremely animating” as it contains scenes of French soldiers
drilling and engaging in musket practice (235) and he is "delighted with the spectacle" provided by a line of skirmishers advancing against the French forces (129). Whole scenes are at times simply composed of soldiers and their equipment. He observes from the church at Arcanques: "the view is at all times magnificent, and it was rendered doubly so to-day by the movements of our army .... It was a magnificent spectacle" (243). He similarly comments of the British encampment after fighting around Bayonne:

I do not recollect to have witnessed, during the whole course of my military career, a warlike spectacle more striking that that which was now before me. Besides my own corps, three battalions of infantry lay stretched in a single green field round their watch-fires, amounting, in all, to about a hundred. Immediately behind them stood their arms, piled up in regular order, and glancing in the flames, which threw a dark red light across the common, upon the bare branches beyond. About twenty yards in rear, two regiments of cavalry were similarly disposed of, their horses being picqueted in line, and the men seated or lying on the ground. Looking farther back, again, and towards the opposite side of the road, the fires of the whole of the fifth and first divisions met the eye, darkened, ever and anon, as the soldiers passed between them, or a heap of wood was cast on to feed their brightness .... To complete the picture, the night chanced to be uncommonly dark. (178-79)

Gleig describes the soldiers and their equipment as though he were witnessing a landscape receding into the distance through a foreground, middle and distance. But where picturesque paintings might include soldiers or banditti as background figures, here the scene is composed simply of the soldiers themselves. More than a conventional traveller, Gleig emerges through his narrative as an observer of the delightful "spectacle" of war, and it is the soldiers, fortifications, fieldworks, camps, horses and piles of arms that constitute the objects to which Gleig turns his gaze (129). The picturesque style that Sherer had developed was being transformed into what might be termed a "military picturesque".

In his earlier Narrative, Gleig similarly defines himself in distinction to the "common traveller", signaling that his interest lies in viewing scenes of war more than simply touristic scenes of picturesque beauty and architecture. Nonetheless, the "personal details" that appear in his earlier work are almost wholly descriptions of his touristic observations of scenery. He struggles to represent the details of

64 Gleig, A Narrative of the Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans, under Generals Ross, Pakenham, and Lambert, in the Years 1814 and 1815; with Some Account of the Countries Visited. By an Officer Who Served in the Expedition, 15.
military scenes in a way that might be interesting to his reader. Although he recognizes “that persons who live quietly at home, can form no correct notions of the state of a country which is, or has lately been, the seat of war”, he is equally concerned that the details of military activities will simply lead to “tediousness”.

Passing the city of Anglet, shortly after it was the scene of heavy fighting by the French and British armies, he reflects:

I have already pledged myself, nor do I mean to withdraw that pledge, to attempt no military description of this important city. To do so with exactness, and at the same time to render the description intelligible, and what is still more difficult, interesting to a man of peace, is a task to which I acknowledge myself incompetent.

He endeavours, he claims, to find a “middle course” for describing scenes of war, a way of writing that avoids “all technical terms, and prolix details” of tedious military description, and yet which can offer more than what might simply be viewed by the ordinary, gentleman traveller. But however much he wants his reader to share his interest in military detail and his enthusiasm as a soldier, what underpins his accounts of the personal details of war is a sentimental attitude that focuses on the horrors and destruction of war. He feels it is impossible to reflect on war as a private individual without introducing a “moralizing strain”, and insists:

I am not one of those who love to evince their sensibility by mourning over unavoidable evils; neither, indeed, would it be consistent with my present views and profession so to do; but in truth I cannot help observing, that war, when stripped of its parade and excitement, and softened down by all the alleviating circumstances of which it is capable, is a fearful thing.

Gleig’s earlier Narrative is thus bound by his recognition that his reader, the “man of peace”, has little enthusiasm for “military description”, whilst his account of war perpetually threatens to collapse into a horrified sentimentality when it considers war in detail. Like Porter’s Letters, his earlier Narrative thus oscillates between the sentimental and the scientific account of war.

With The Subaltern, however, Gleig was able to move beyond these concerns about writing of the details of war, as the military picturesque emerged as precisely
this “middle course” that could allow him to make “military description” acceptable and interesting to the ordinary reader. By naming his work *The Subaltern*, therefore, Gleig signalled a radical departure from earlier officers’ military memoirs. He rejects the idea that he is describing a campaign or a region and insists that he wants to keep attention, instead, on his “own little personal adventures” (82). Similarly to Sherer, he seeks to reconcile the views of the gentleman traveller and the soldier, but he does so by introducing the taste and feelings of the “man of peace” into his professional views of war. He thus introduces his book with a quote from *Othello*, “Little of this great world can I speak, | More than pertains to feats of broil and battle” (iii), suggesting that he speaks from a recognizably distinct subject position associated with his professional status as a soldier, and yet using the literary reference to Shakespeare to reflect his authorial and poetic taste. Like Sherer, he comes to “evince his sensibility” not through a display of sentimental grief and moralizing, which might lead to something “fearful”, but by demonstrating his distinction and taste through his aesthetic appreciation of the picturesque.

Gleig was thus producing, as he argued in later life, an “experiment”. He acknowledged: “It was one of the first works of the kind which appeared, and to this circumstance, perhaps, may in some measure be attributed the general approbation with which all classes of readers received it”. A “middle course” for writing on war, lying between an official military view and the private, gentleman traveller’s sentimental view of war, was thus taking shape and offering itself as the natural viewpoint of the subaltern officer. Notably, by the time Gleig’s earlier *Narrative* was republished in a fourth edition in 1836, any references to his anxieties about finding a “middle course” to describe war, along with much of his sentimental reflections on war’s miseries, were removed from the text. *The Subaltern* had helped to establish fully a new, acceptable and apparently entirely unremarkable way for his readers to contemplate scenes of war and to share the soldier’s personal and professional viewpoint and enthusiasm for war. As the *London Literary Gazette* concluded, with *The Subaltern*, Gleig had “led the way in showing how military operations might be told, so as at the same time to satisfy the practical soldier, and to interest the

unprofessional reader". The tensions between the soldier and the author that troubled Porter and Thomas's earlier narratives were thus absent from Gleig's memoirs. Reflecting on the picturesque aesthetics of war, he was able to unite the shared interest and taste of the reader and the military author.

The Romantic Military Author

Commenting on both books soon after their publication, the Quarterly Review insisted that it was almost impossible to find in the history of "our own literature" any book with "the realities of warfare, set forth at first hand by any professed author fairly and honestly, as we find them in the 'Recollections of the Peninsula,' and in the still abler volume ... 'The Subaltern'". Earlier works that recounted the soldier's personal experiences, the reviewer argues, were "painfully accumulated from the conversation of private letters of individuals, who never dreamt of authorship". What emerges with Sherer and Gleig's memoirs, however, were "first hand", eyewitness reflections on war written by "professed authors". Their writing style certainly shunned "affectation" and they used "plain intelligible language", yet the reviewer insisted that there was an "art in description" to their books, concluding of Gleig's in particular:

what would we not give to have the great civil war of England, or even the contests in which Crichton had a part, painted by an eye-witness, with that expansion and picturesque truth of detail, which this Subaltern has bestowed upon one little fragment of the peninsular campaigns of the Duke of Wellington?

Through this authorial skill, a "picturesque truth of detail" had been brought to the narrative of war, establishing the personal experience of the soldier as a pleasurable, relevant and interesting way for the British reader to apprehend the nation's wars. Sherer and Gleig enabled the military author to acquire a similar popularity and fame as Porter had found as the military artist; as Black has observed, both Sherer and Gleig were able to develop successful careers as popular military authors largely as a result of the commercial success of their military memoirs. As will be shown,

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72 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres (1829), 303.
73 Quarterly Review 34 (1826), 407.
although a melancholy tone emerges through their writing, they are far more effective at keeping at bay the sentimental excesses of earlier memoirists.

Importantly, as they emerged as authors, so they also came to embody a particular, and arguably a Romantic, view of war in their writing. Making war interesting to the man of peace was also about encoding a set of values into their vision of the soldier’s experience that refashioned the soldier around a middle-class vision of the military experience. Their authorial role was coming to operate in terms of what Barbara Benedict identifies as a new, Romantic conception of authorship as the “creative shaping of social mores”. This conception of the author was “most conspicuous” in “Romantic verse”, but we can see this Romantic authority emerge in Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs. They displayed poetic qualities and emphasised the virtues of the soldier’s life on active service, using the picturesque to transform the “scientific literature” of military writing into something of a far more personal and moral significance, part of an “elite literature for the aspiring middle classes”. Despite their claims to a humble style, Sherer and Gleig were, remarkably, widely viewed as displaying a poetic genius in their work, a genius that, notably, appealed to a feminine world of “belle letters”. The *Quarterly Review* observed of Sherer that “[f]ew writers, indeed, who are not poets by profession, have the art of painting in words, with so much vividness and distinctness, the various objects which surround their view”. Felicia Hemans even noted that her poem “The Spanish Chapel”, in which the poem’s narrator wanders through “a green spot of beauty lone | A haunt for old romance”, was inspired by having read “a scene, beautifully described in the *Recollections of the Peninsula*”. Of his work more generally *La Belle Assemblée*, a magazine oriented towards a female audience, claimed that “[g]enius guides the pen”. The *Monthly Review* similarly commended Gleig on the “poetic brilliancy” with which he delineated natural scenes, and elsewhere highlighted his “poetical turn of feeling”. Their picturesque approach was establishing both Sherer and Gleig as

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76 Ibid., 20.


79 *La Belle Assemblée*, or *Court and Fashionable Magazine* 2 (1825), 35.

authors of distinction and taste, highlighting their talents for description and authorship. Though they largely refused overt moralizing on the nature of war, they nonetheless came to identify Romantic and moral values that lie at the heart of the soldier’s experience. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have notably linked the wider cultural dimensions of the period’s “romantic vision” to the desire amongst an emergent middle class to escape urban life into “rural tranquillity.” A similarly Romantic vision permeates the “poetic brilliancy” of Sherer and Gleig’s writing as they refashion war in terms of a domestic vision that brought the cultivated tastes of an aspirant middle class to their account of war. The freedom of their aesthetic style of writing on war, where, rather than doubling the commander’s view they follow their “own little personal adventures”, was thus reflected in their imagining of the soldier’s personal experience as one of virtue, autonomy and fraternity that lay outside the oppressive demands of military hierarchies and an overly luxurious civil society.

Whilst Sherer insists that in his writing he simply “observes”, it is clear that his time in the Peninsula is, nonetheless, inextricably bound with a Romantic view of nature as a more morally pure and authentic realm than civic life. As a soldier at war he partakes of the simple, natural life that he encounters amongst the humble peasants of Spain and Portugal. He thus agrees with Byron that there is, “sweetness in the mountain air, | And life that bloated ease can never hope to share” (223), advising the reader that one need not have “the genius, or the passion of Rousseau” to enjoy the simple pleasures of such a life (100). He concludes of his experiences in the Peninsula:

The rude simplicity of this life I found most pleasing. An enthusiastic admirer of nature, I was glad to move and dwell amid her grandest scenes, remote from cities, and unconnected with what is called society. Her mountains, her forests, and, sometimes, her bare and bladeless plains, yielded me a passing home. (42-43)

Sherer contrasts this simple life to the dull confinement of his post-war experience in the “barrack-room”. Being a soldier at war enables him to escape restlessness and to participate in “the interest of foreign scenes, the animation of daily march, and the careless gaiety of camps” (1). A degree of privation is implied by his rejection of

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civic life, but in contrast to earlier memoirists who typically viewed the suffering of war as a misery to be stoically endured, Sherer takes a virtuous pleasure from this very privation. He thus describes, for instance, how, during an appalling storm, he was able to find shelter at a Portuguese peasant woman’s cottage. Reflecting on her simple generosity, he declares, “where, let me ask, was the hotel in England which, in the caprice of sickness, would have satisfied all my wants and wishes?” (78). Although he declines to engage with wider ethical and political questions concerning war itself, offering nothing like the anti-war editorial commentary that Howell had appended to the *Journal*, Sherer nonetheless offers his experience of the Peninsula as an unparalleled example of humble simplicity and moral purity. He concludes of this woman’s kindness that “no sermon on the charities of life could be more instructive” (78).

Sherer’s remove from “society” does not, however, mean that he has evaded sociability. Rather than viewing the soldier as a “mere machine”, ordered and directed by his superior commander’s will, he locates himself within a military community in which he shares a fraternal comradeship with his “brother officers” (191). Indeed, he feels that “in civil life, men have homes, parents, wives, children, brothers, sisters; but in the profession of arms they become dependant upon friends” and thus “[n]o where is friendship more true, more warm, more exalted, than in the army” (75). Friendships with their fellow soldiers were important to earlier soldier memoirists as well. Thomas informed his reader that upon leaving his army “I left my comrades with regret”. Porter, too, observed that much of the march with the army was spent with his (anonymous) “friend”. But for Porter and Thomas, friendships in the army are less significant than their relationship to friends and family at home. Both writers describe their experience of soldiering as involving, to a large extent, a longing to return to Britain and their domestic circles. Sherer, however, relocates this sense of domestic friendship and family within the army itself. Thus, although he invokes a traditional view of the military life as existing in contrast to domesticity – in his *Essays, Moral and Literary* (1778), for instance, Vicesimus Knox had insisted that the military life was ideally suited to those men

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who were “too restless for domestic life” – the pleasing homosociality that Sherer discovers is, nonetheless, deeply inscribed by his ideals of middle-class domesticity. His imagined ideas of England and of the English gentleman are consistently bound up in images of a comforting home life and the gentleman’s “boasted fireside” (119). The “holidays of the heart”, he firmly believes, occur at “home” (119). Notably too, he regards having a wife an “exquisite happiness” (192) and he lists as the “two serious wants” of a military camp, the absence of “books and the society of women” (98). He does not, therefore, reject the value of home life or of female domesticity in his reveries of being with the army at war. Rather, he reconstitutes a set of familial relations within the army. The pastoral retreat offered by being in the army at war becomes an idealised version of a simple and pure domestic home and he concludes that “a regiment is ever, to a single man, the best of homes” (191).

Gleig too finds release from what he views as the dullness of civic life in his experiences of being at war. From the opening of his account he relates his excitement at the prospect of journeying to war as a soldier. It had:

been the most prominent petition in my daily prayers, for nearly twelve months past, not to be kept idling away my youth in the country towns of England, but to be sent, as speedily as possible, where I might have an opportunity of acquiring a practical knowledge of the profession which I had embraced (4).

His time at war, was, in contrast to his idle youth, a period in which he feels his life was not “uselessly spent” (373). Reflecting on his period spent in the army in 1845, he concludes “for, even in reference to the highest of all concerns, I am not sure whether, to a well-constituted mind, the tented field be not as apt a school of piety and true devotion, as the crowded capital, or even the quite village”. He equates the simple, vigorous experience of campaigning with a “piety and true devotion” that is absent from the idle comfort of normal society. Indeed, returning to peace Gleig argues, was to lose this aspect of the soldier’s life: “I loved my profession, as long as it gave full occupation to my bodily and mental power; but the peace came, and I loved it no longer” (372).

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Nonetheless, at the start of his narrative Gleig records a degree of ambivalence and fear about embarking upon foreign military service. Along with his excitement about departing to see war, he reflects, with “a good deal of the melancholy” (4), on the prospect of leaving his family and the possibility that he may never return to see them. Stating that his home “had always been to me a scene of the purest and most perfect happiness – as I loved my relatives tenderly, and knew that I was tenderly beloved by them in return”, he insists that “it was impossible for me not to experience a pang of extreme bitterness at the idea, that in all human probability I should see their faces no more” (5). Such feelings are reflected in his lengthy discussion at the start of his book on the separations he observes between the private soldiers and their wives, as his regiment prepares to embark for the Peninsula. Gleig watches as lots are cast to determine which women were to accompany the soldiers (only six being entitled, he states, to accompany each company on campaign), and he finds himself repeatedly confronted with “agonizing scenes” of grief as wives and husbands are forced to part with one another. “There are not many instances in human life more striking or more harrowing to the feelings of him who regards it for the first time” he concludes, “than the departure of a regiment upon foreign service” (7). His account thus opens with an acute recognition of war as entirely antithetical to the pleasures and pure happiness of home and family.

Yet Gleig, like Sherer, considers his time at war to have provided a more profoundly true sense of home, through the homosocial domesticity he shares with his fellow officers, particularly his “bosom friend” Charles Grey (195). Noting that officers dispensed with the formal regimental mess whilst on campaign, and “divide themselves into small coteries of two, three, or four, according as they happen to form mutual friendships”, he goes on to describe the intimate friendship he thus formed with Grey: “I was fortunate enough to have contracted an intimacy with one of my comrades, whose memory I have never ceased to cherish with the fondest affection” (34). It is such friendship that Gleig feels keeps him from losing his enthusiasm for war (35), whilst he more generally sees the intimate experience of friendship and sociability as being the features of war that reconcile him to the “horrible points in our profession” (89). He repeatedly emphasizes the pleasures of war as moments of sociability with Grey, noting for instance, that he does not
recollect many happier moments of my life, than when I stretched myself this evening beside a fire, near my friend Grey, to chat over the occurrences of the day. The Quarter-master coming up soon after with a supply of provisions and rum, added, indeed, not a little to my satisfaction. (105)

Elsewhere he describes at length the winter quarters he occupied with Grey, and observes having finished arranging their lodgings “we felt as if the whole world could have supplied no better or more desirable habitation” (153). As does Sherer, Gleig repeatedly draws attention to his enjoyment of the rude simplicity of life on campaign and the happy pleasures of male company that it allows him to experience. No luxurious “saloon, when brilliantly lighted up, and filled with all the splendour and elegance of a fashionable assembly”, he claims, was ever as comfortable as his “humble apartment” and the domestic arrangements he maintained with Grey (167). Detailing their “personal adventures”. Sherer and Gleig both refashion the military experience of duty and hierarchy into an experience of fraternal comradeship and domestic simplicity. In the same way that Austen declared the “domestic virtues” of the naval officer in *Persuasion* (1818), so Sherer and Gleig were transposing virtues of domesticity and usefulness to their account of the military officer at war.85

There is nonetheless a tension in both these books between the pleasures of war that they detail and the author’s awareness that war’s miseries can be antithetical to these very pleasures. However much Sherer and Gleig reflect back on a fraternal experience of war, they are, nonetheless, aware that by the time they came to compose their books, their friends were already gone. Thus, whilst friendship with Grey is central to Gleig’s enjoyment of war, he also observes: “The friend who shared with me so many dangers and hardships, fell at my side by the hand of an unworthy enemy” (372) – Grey having died at the battle of New Orleans in 1814 ten years before publication of *The Subaltern*. Sherer’s effusions on friendship are similarly haunted by loss. He only once introduces “a friend of mine” directly into his narrative and does so simply to report on his friend’s death from wounding in battle (244). His friends enter his work as a spectral absence. As he recalls them and the “happy hours of rational and lively converse, which I enjoyed”, so he observes that they are already “torn from my side” by “death, wounds, and distant service” (227).

War's pleasures can only be regarded in terms of a longing for times past, and a melancholy tone pervades these stories of soldiering. Sherer's invokes what he elsewhere describes as "that undefined aching of the old soldier's heart after the melancholy pleasures (for they still are pleasures) of campaigning", whilst Gleig, too, declares "the year referred to is one on which I now look back, and probably shall ever look back, with the melancholy satisfaction which invariably accompanies a retrospect of happiness gone by" (371). Indeed, Sherer concedes that if the soldier's life had brought him, "contentment, joy, and pride", it is nonetheless a life that he can now only look for in vain, whilst "[a]t the distance of time at which I write, all that was disagreeable in campaigning is forgotten; while that which delighted, is, especially in my present frame of mind, very fondly remembered" (2). Gleig attempts much the same kind of forgetting of war's horrors and sufferings. He repeatedly concludes his accounts of actions and marches by reflecting on his peaceful sleep at the end of each day, figuring sleep through his book as an unbroken "forgetfulness" of war's turmoil and hardship (35).

Neither book, however, can completely evade or forget war's horrors. Sherer urges us at the start of his narrative that a soldier does not suffer, that his death, should it come, is "always honorable" (119), and that "soldiers, and not they alone, talk of the slaughter of battle-fields with a sensation, which, though it suspends the lively throb of the gay and careless heart, partakes, nevertheless of pleasure" (40). Yet, though he assumes the role of what the Eclectic Review defined as the "military enthusiast", he at times finds himself caught up in sad contemplation and moralizing of war's horrors. Upon encountering his own friend's death, he concludes by insisting that "few men see or suffer more than a soldier" (245). Focusing on the individual and re-introducing the interpretive and social, viewing war with "an eye to observe, and a heart to feel" and imagining the "history attached to each lifeless body" (244), he collapses the indifference or "neutrality" that structures the picturesque gaze. Rather than insisting on the pleasures of war's "carnage" (40), war becomes, instead, a compendium of "tales of sorrow" (244). Though he insists on war's beauty and pleasure, Gleig is also repeatedly drawn to describe the horrifying sight of bodies, which, like the absent Grey, haunt his work. Observing the "romantic" scenery around St. Sebastian (71), for instance, he also notes that "I came

86 Sherer. Notes and Reflections, 214.
upon sundry retired corners, where the remains of dead bodies – such remains as the wolves and vultures had left – lay still unburied” (72). At one point, stooping to drink from a stream and “accidentally casting my eye a little to the right, I beheld a man’s arm sticking up from the very centre of the rivulet. It was black and putrid, and the nails had dropt from some of the fingers” (80). Like Sherer’s encounter with his friend’s death, Gleig’s descriptions here suggest a much more immediate and shocking view of war’s horrors than is provided by the aesthetic distancing of the picturesque. These scenes, indeed, recall the visceral horrors documented by both Porter and Thomas on the retreat to Corunna. A grotesque element thus manifests itself in Gleig’s work, as he reflects that “a view of the real effects of war, contemplated in a moment of coolness and inaction, seldom has the effect of adding fuel to the valorous fire, which is supposed at all moments to burn in the breast of a soldier” (63-64). Yet even though he uncovers war’s “real effects” as horror, Gleig refuses to abandon his “enthusiasm” and “military excitement”; war’s horrors might not add “fuel to the valorous fire” but nor do they lead him to introduce the sentimental, “moralizing strain” that might lead to fearful thoughts and which is found in his earlier Narrative and Sherer’s Recollections (35). Horror only emerges in the accidental observations and “retired corners” of his narrative, which do not lead him to reflect, as does Sherer, on the soldier’s experience as being, at base, a “tale of sorrow”. The “military philosophy” Gleig offers is no longer a resigned stoicism, as it had been for Porter (or Thomas), but becomes a passion for war in which he emerges as “an enthusiastic lover of the profession of arms” (371).

Despite the melancholy tone that can disrupt their reflections on picturesque pleasure, Sherer and Gleig’s writing was, therefore, instrumental in shifting a sentimental tradition of military memoirs into something that can be described as a Romantic tradition of military memoirs. Nancy Rosenblum argues that a “Romantic militarism” emerged through the early years of the nineteenth century, as “Romantic writers” came to view war as a site for personal liberty, self-expression and comradeship. As David Bell explains, with war imagined as lying outside of the normal course of civil society through the nineteenth century, it increasingly lent itself to forms of Romanticisation as a site of personal liberty and virtue, an antidote

87 Rosenblum, “Romantic Militarism”, 249.
to the enervating corruptions of civil society.\textsuperscript{88} Bell suggests that post-war military memoirs emerged out of this wider "connection between war and emerging notions of the Romantic self".\textsuperscript{89} It is, however, only with Sherer and Gleig that such a connection was first delineated in the British military memoir as the soldier came to lay a claim to the Romantic selfhood of the author. Such claims to soldierly selfhood were unavailable to earlier military memoirists, for whom the identity of the soldier was unstable and even incoherent. The private man who suffered and wrote his military memoirs and the heroic, national soldier were typically conflated in problematic ways in these texts, disrupting an easy understanding of war’s glories with, in Shaw’s terms, the “excess sentiment” of its horrors. Adapting the picturesque to their writing and displaying a poetic genius, however, Sherer and Gleig could lay claim to the distinction and taste of the author. Indeed, the development of a Romantic tradition of military memoirs can be seen to centrally revolve around this reimagining of the role of the military author as a creative genius. This did not mean viewing Romantic selfhood as a Byronic (or Napoleonic) heroism, and the “alienation of the exceptional individual".\textsuperscript{90} Rather, it meant re-imagining war in familiar, domestic terms and drawing on broadly middle-class notions of individuality and genius as a private cultivation of the self outside of public life.\textsuperscript{91} The picturesque appreciation both writers exhibit towards scenes of beauty thus extended to their enthusiasm for the pastoral experience of war as a time of rude simplicity and tranquility, in which they developed their aesthetic and moral sensibilities and enjoyed humble bonds of friendship, love and charity with their “brother officers”. War’s privations are transformed into its virtues and the soldier is reframed, through associations with authorship, as a man of taste and moral discipline. War may lie outside of the domestic experience of civic life, yet a home is imagined as lying at the heart of their experience of war, as they bring the sentiments of the gentleman to war and help to make reading of war acceptable and pleasurable to their peaceful readers.

\textsuperscript{88} David Bell, \textit{The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It} (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 6.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 312.


The “Human Heart” and the Pleasures of War

In his subsequent writing, Sherer exhibited an increasing concern with war’s miseries. In his *Notes and Reflections*, for instance, he questions his affective response to war and his inconsistent feelings, observing:

I think, and I rejoice to think, that the world has grown somewhat wiser about the sad and melancholy game of war. My own feelings were always alive to the miseries it brings in its train, and yet of such inconsistencies are we all made up, that I confess to the having experienced feelings of contentment, joy, and pride, in the camp and the bivouac, which I may look for again, perhaps, in vain.⁹²

By the time he published *Tales of the Wars of our Times* (1829), Sherer had grown to be even more preoccupied with war’s miseries, turning to the fictional genre of the short “tale” to develop his moral reflections on war’s destruction of domestic love and affection. His first story, “The Lady of Cordova; or, The Spanish Brother”, set in Spain during the Peninsular War, describes the grief of two Spanish lovers, Miranda and Leonara, after Leonara is forced to depart for a war they both believe to be “the eldest born of hell’s dark brood of curses”.⁹³ The only character to expressly take pleasure from war is a mad and manifestly evil Spanish priest, who confesses: “This war I love, because I hate mankind. It is delight to me to see women miserable, and to cut the thread of young men’s lives; – this is my pleasure”.⁹⁴ Far from viewing war as the site for developing intimate fraternal homosociality, therefore, Sherer insists in the preface:

The object of these tales is to portray the miseries of war; but I mean not to fill these pages with bulletins of battles, of which we have had almost a surfeit, but rather with such little histories of private sorrow as every theatre of war which I make the scene of them could doubtless furnish ... [a]ll I pledge myself to preserve is the character of the wars of our times; – to show in what a difficult and unhappy relation to each other individuals of conflicting nations are often placed – to show how domestic happiness is frightened away – how human loves, human friendships, become broken or destroyed by their cruel operation.⁹⁵

If he had earlier offered war as the site for the truest kind of friendship, his continuing preoccupations with the “private” experience of war saw him turning

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⁹⁴ Ibid., 306.
⁹⁵ Ibid., n.p.
towards its “sorrow” and recoiling from war precisely because it destroyed “human loves, human friendships”. As he revisited the personal or private response to war, so he increasingly turned away from “contentment, joy and pride” to an interrogation of war’s sorrows and its destruction of “domestic happiness”.

The *London Literary Gazette* opined that if Sherer’s *Tales* did not become popular, then “the human heart must have lost a large portion of its most ennobling affections”, but a sentimental language of the “human heart” was losing ground to the far more popular vision of war embodied in Gleig’s *The Subaltern* (which the *Gazette* elsewhere reflected had become the most popular military narrative of the day). Unlike Sherer’s somewhat ambivalent response to war, Gleig exhibited and retained an unreserved enthusiasm through his writing career in which he continued to attest to his vision of war’s pleasures. In the preface to the book’s second edition, he comments that “the space of time spent” as a soldier at war was “the happiest in his life” (vi), whilst twenty years later, writing the preface to the 1845 edition, he comments that despite his increasing age and change of tastes, “the years which were spent amid the toils and dangers of active warfare, are those on which I continue to look back as the happiest in my life”. In its embrace of his writing, and of the outpouring of equally Romantic memoirs that followed in the wake of *The Subaltern*, most notably John Kincaid’s *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* (1830), British culture was, more widely, coming to appreciate this same enthusiasm for war. Henry Digby Beste may have paused to note that “‘The Subaltern,’ that is, the author of a popular book under that title, – after one campaign only, talks of wounds and blood and death with an indifference and coolness of which he seems unconscious”, but Beste did not feel that his indifference was due to “any want of humanity in him”. The “human heart”, the “humanity” of the man of peace was coming to coalesce with the soldier’s professional enthusiasm for war. British culture was exhibiting an apparent indifference to war’s horrors as it embraced the Romantic view of war encapsulated by *The Subaltern*.

These were books that made the military author into an acceptable figure in British literary culture, establishing the experiences of the subaltern officer as a

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96 *London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres* no.642 (1829), 303 and 645 (1829), 353.
significant element in the nation’s cultural understanding of war. Unlike earlier works, they even found favour with Britain’s governing elite. *The Subaltern* was one of the very few books that the Duke of Wellington allowed to be dedicated to him. Gleig even observed in a letter to his publisher in 1826 that the Duke had surmised “it gave the best account which had been given of any portion of the Peninsular war”. Jane Porter had also taken it upon herself in 1824 to present Sherer’s *Recollections* to George IV, and she enthused to her sister, Anna Maria, that the book was “[a]dmirable – loveable”. The personal experience of the soldier was emerging as a pleasing and thoroughly acceptable way to read of war, both politically and in the more personal realms of culture and taste. The memoirs of Sherer and Gleig thus paved the way for the numerous and enormously popular personal stories of military adventure that emerged through the late 1820s and 30s. They helped to shape a new and Romantic approach to the composition of the military memoirs, inspiring work which displaced the sentimental elements seen in earlier officers and private soldiers’ memoirs, with what Charles Oman detected as an “appreciation of the picturesque”. The military memoir thus assumed a “romantic form”. It was these adventurous accounts of war that came to be definitive of the British military memoir and, indeed, provided enduring images of the Peninsular War in the British cultural imagination. Even the residual melancholy tone of Sherer and Gleig’s work was lost as a cheerful stoicism came to be definitive of the soldier’s personal experience of war. The subaltern officer emerged, in books such as Kincaid’s *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade*, as a virtuous and chivalric soldier hero.

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When John Kincaid’s *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* was published in 1830 the military memoir had become established in Britain as a recognised and commercially successful literary genre. Gleig’s *The Subaltern* had been highly significant in the transformation of the genre, de-emphasizing the military memoir’s focus on the narrative of a campaign and the experiences of the sentimental “military tourist”,¹ to focus on what the *Monthly Review* termed the “theme of military adventure”.² Private soldiers continued to publish memoirs, but these declined in popularity in comparison to autobiographical narratives written by junior ranking officers, many of whom originated from the Light Division, and whose memoirs were broadly written in the vein of *The Subaltern*. These emerging military authors, like Gleig, embraced the professional identity of the soldier. They exhibited a strong pride not simply in the British nation or army in an abstract sense, but in their own personal professionalism and their experience of active service on campaign. These texts represented the experience of war as an exciting adventure that, arguably, helped to inaugurate what has been seen as nineteenth-century Britain’s fascination with tales of imperial, and military, adventure.³

Kincaid’s *Adventures* was one of the best received and most famous of these “adventure” military memoirs. Enjoying some degree of commercial success, and running to a second edition in 1838, it also received considerable attention and almost unanimous praise from the reviews, particularly the newly formed military journals and newspapers. The *United Services Gazette*, for instance, claimed that it was “one of the pleasantest books of its class with which we are acquainted”.⁴ The *Adventures* also achieved longevity unparalleled by the other military memoirs. It has been reprinted innumerable times since the nineteenth century: in *Wellington’s Men* (1900), a collection of Peninsular War memoirs edited by W. Fitchett, as part of

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² *Monthly Review* N.S. 13 (1830), 534.
a series of “Boy’s Own Adventures”, “Herbert Strang’s Library”, in 1909, and in 1929 as part of John Fortescue’s series of “Soldier’s Tales”, published contemporaneously with the surge of “war books” that appeared after the First World War. The 1909 edition has since appeared in reprints in 1981, 1998 and 2005. Reflecting on the enormous number of military memoirs written by British soldiers from the Peninsular War, Ian Fletcher has recently described Kincaid’s as “perhaps the most famous memoir of all”. Most notably, however, the Adventures, along with the numerous memoirs similarly produced by members of the Light Division, have been identified as the inspiration for Bernard Cornwell’s Sharpe series of novels about the adventures of the Rifleman Captain John Sharpe during the Napoleonic Wars. Cornwell’s novels have subsequently been adapted into a successful series of made-for-television films, thus becoming, along with the made-for-television filmic adaptations of C. S. Forster’s equally adventurous Hornblower series of novels, one of the main ways in which the Napoleonic Wars are represented in contemporary British culture. Indeed, we might consider Kincaid’s Adventures, alongside Austen’s novels and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, as one of the very few texts from the Romantic period that have a truly popular status in early twenty-first-century mass culture, exerting an ongoing influence through re-publication and novelistic and filmic adaptations.

This chapter will argue that Kincaid’s success resulted from how he was able to build upon the earlier success of Sherer and Gleig. By developing their style of writing, inscribing his narrative with similar marks of authorial good taste, he created a military work that was appealing to a civilian audience. To some extent, though, his writing also reflects the private soldier’s memoir with its “plain” style and central focus on the soldier’s personal experiences of war. Indeed, his writing is far more focused on his personal experiences of military combat than was the case with

earlier memoirs by subaltern officers. But unlike the private soldier, Kincaid focuses on the pleasures of war and develops an account that celebrates his personal agency and heroism. The disturbing sight of war’s miseries are largely contained through his performance of a cheerful stoicism. Kincaid’s Adventures thus helped to shift the military memoir away from a melancholy narrative of the returned soldier to a story of the professional “soldier hero”, whose story could be read as a relevant and interesting supplement to an official military history. The military officer emerges from his work as lying at the heart of a shifting conception of the British gentleman and a national memory of the Napoleonic Wars.

The Adventures of the Rifleman

John Kincaid was born at Dalheath House near Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Scotland in 1787. As the second son to a “small lowland Scotch laird” (who died, however, whilst Kincaid was still very young), Kincaid was, he tells us, “destined to be a gentleman … in one of the armed or learned professions”. With a threatened French invasion looming at the turn of the century, he found himself drawn to the “pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war” and decided to obtain a commission as a military officer. This threat of invasion had seen a significant increase in Britain’s auxiliary armed forces, with the development of volunteer units and a local militia to supplement the regular army and existing militia forces, and Kincaid initially joined his local militia as an ensign. He soon transferred to a volunteer regiment as a lieutenant, and in turn obtained an ensigncy in the North York Regiment of the regular militia. In 1809, however, he left the militia to join the Third Battalion of the Ninety-fifth Rifle Regiment as a second lieutenant and remained with the Rifles (renamed the Rifle Brigade in 1816) for a further sixteen years, being promoted to captain in 1826. He eventually retired from the army in 1831. In his Adventures in the Rifle Brigade, first published by T. and W. Boone in 1830, Kincaid recounts his experiences on active service with his regiment as it fought (as

11 Ibid., 6 and 8.
13 Chichester, “Kincaid, Sir John (1787–1862)”.
part of the famous Light Division) through the Peninsula and Waterloo campaigns. It was a theme he returned to five years later with his Random Shots from a Rifleman (1835). Both books appeared in a second edition in 1838.

Kincaid was not alone in writing about his experiences in the Light Division during these years. As a number of commentators have observed, a significant portion of the military memoirs published around 1830 originated from junior ranking officers who had served with the division through the course of the Peninsular War. Along with Kincaid’s Adventures, these texts include the Fernyhough brothers’ Military Memoirs of Four Brothers (1829), John Blakiston’s Twelve Years’ Military Adventure in Three Quarters of the Globe (1829), Jonathan Leach’s Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier (1831), John Cooke’s Memoirs of the Late War (1831), and William Surtees’s Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade (1833). The designation “Light” refers to the way the division was composed of light regiments that were, during the Peninsular War, utilised in a range of supporting roles for the army’s regular, or line, regiments, such as forming an advance guard during the army’s march, covering the army’s retreat and scouting enemy positions. Tasked with this diverse array of combat duties through the course of the Peninsular War, the regiments in the division, in particular Kincaid’s Rifle Regiment, developed a remarkably strong “esprit de corps” and were renowned as an elite combat unit. As Kincaid himself observes: “we were the light regiment

16 Urban, Rifles, 42-43.
of the Light Division, and fired the first and last shot in almost every battle, siege and skirmish in which the Army was engaged during the war".18

Significantly, the “elite” status of the regiments in the division was not related to their social status as would have been the case in an elite Guards regiment, connected with the king and aristocracy. Rather, it lay in their professional expertise and experience as combat soldiers. The fighting style of the Light Division, in particular, epitomised what De Landa refers to as “motorized” warfare, a development of earlier “clockwork” warfare in which it is possible to see the extension of individual initiative to soldiers and the diffusion of authority through the army.19 All infantry regiments in the British army through the Napoleonic Wars were drilled in massed formations with the soldiers trained to stand shoulder to shoulder on the battlefield, moving and shooting together in response to their officers’ commands. Soldiers in “light” regiments however – along with those soldiers in the attached light companies of line regiments – were additionally trained as skirmishers. Such soldiers could, when necessary, be deployed as dispersed groups of individuals to support these larger formations, occupying terrain considered too wooded or broken for troops to manoeuvre in formation or harassing enemy units with their independent shooting.20Soldiers trained and deployed as skirmishers, whether subaltern officers or private soldiers, were thus often not under the immediate supervision or direction of their superiors and were required to use their individual initiative and skills on the battlefield to a far greater extent than other soldiers. This raised problems about the reliability, expertise and even social propriety of soldiers who were required to think and act for themselves. As Mark Urban stresses, eighteenth-century military theorists sought to limit the role of such soldiers. They often posited that soldiers must be “born” to skirmish effectively as it was felt to be almost impossible to train soldiers how to operate independently on the battlefield in a militarily effective manner.21 However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, training practices were being implemented that sought to teach

18 John Kincaid, Adventures in the Rifle Brigade in the Peninsula, France, and the Netherlands from 1809-1815 (London: T. and W. Boone, 1830), 16. All subsequent references are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.
21 Urban, Rifles, 33.
soldiers how to exercise such individual initiative. Regulations for the Rifle Regiment emphasised the necessity of developing the soldier’s “cheerfulness and inclination” for fighting rather than letting him fight simply “from mere command and the necessity of obeying”. The skirmisher, particularly as a subaltern officer, was thus one of the first truly “motorized” soldiers. He was asked to internalise the demands of war, to learn to possess an enthusiasm, a natural disposition and a professional expertise for combat, and to act and think in a manner that had earlier been felt only possible of a “born” soldier.

The reputation of the Light Division was in large part due to the way its elite professional status resonated with the ideals of an emerging professional middle-class society and the principles and practice of meritocracy that were, by 1830, coming to exert a degree of cultural and political importance. Indeed, where the elite Guards regiments still possessed connections with aristocratic life, containing the highest portion of aristocratic officers in the army, Kincaid, like many of his fellow officers in the Rifle Regiment, closely reflected the class of professionals and lower gentry who were playing an increasingly prominent role in an emergent meritocratic society. Urban also suggests that the status of the division was enhanced in the post-war period by the publication of William Napier’s *History of the Peninsular War* (1828-40). Napier himself had served during the war with the Light Division and though his history principally attributes British victory to the genius of Generals Moore and Wellington, he nonetheless repeatedly extols the exceptional fighting qualities of the British soldiers in general, but particularly those of the Light Division. Napier’s enthusiasm and the growing reputation of the division may well have served as an immediate stimulus to the development of these

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22 Holmes, *Redcoat*, 44.
memoirs. I argue that their focus on the soldier’s personal adventures at war was also influenced by Gleig’s “experiment” in *The Subaltern*.

These memoirs are remarkable not simply because of the striking convergence of interest in the division, but also for the very fact that they acknowledged and celebrated this institutional affiliation at all. Prior to the emergence of these stories from officers of the Light Division, only military memoirs from private soldiers’ exhibited any concern with recording the details of their regimental identity, as we can see with the references to regiments in the titles of *The Journal of the Soldier of the Seventy-First* (1819) or the *Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier who Served in the Forty-Second Highlanders for Twelve Years* (1821). This focus on the soldier’s rank and regiment was a necessary mark of authenticity for such books, particularly as the soldier himself often remained anonymous. It also underlined the way these stories held interest for the reading public because they recorded the embodied experience of soldiering. These soldiers are at times proud of their service in the army, yet they do not exhibit any particular attachment to their regiment, frequently recording their disdain of military hierarchies and the difficulty of reconciling the role of the soldier with a sense of their own humanity. The anonymous author of the *Vicissitudes in the Life of a Scottish Soldier* (1827) loudly voiced his complaints about the injustices of military life and the pretensions of regimental honour, concluding of his regimental flag: “for what, in reality, is the honour of a stained rag”. Subaltern officers were almost entirely reticent about their precise status in the army, composing their accounts not simply as soldiers but, equally, as gentlemen travellers and authors. Sherer had enthused in his *Recollections* about the Rifle Regiment, noting that it was “as generally, as it is justly, admired”, but he had deliberately withheld any commentary about his own regiment and its qualities. Gleig, too, however much he introduced himself to his readers as “the subaltern”, also withheld any such information about his regiment from his memoirs, introducing the earliest editions of *The Subaltern* by simply stating “[i]t is now something more than twelve years ago since the ---

regiment of infantry, in which I bore a commission, began to muster one fine May morning, on the parade ground at Hythe".\footnote{31}

As Gleig had done with The Subaltern, Kincaid quotes from Othello in the advertisement to his book, noting that “little of this world can I speak. | More than pertains to feats of broil and battle”. Accruing to himself the cultural legitimacy of Shakespeare as a gentleman of taste, Kincaid also presents himself as a soldier who, like Othello, has an exotic, distinct identity and who will write in “simple” terms about war (viii). However, Kincaid also emphasises his institutional identity as a soldier to a far greater extent than Gleig, by further providing information about his regiment and rank, as “Captain J. Kincaid”, on the title page of the Adventures. He also includes a dedication to his regimental officer “Major-Gen. Sir Andrew Barnard, K.C.B. Colonel of the First Battalion Rifle Brigade, And its Leader During a Long and Brilliant Period of its History” (iii-v). Barnard had served as the commander of the Third Battalion of the Rifles during the Peninsular War, only being appointed to the First Battalion of the regiment in February 1814. By 1830, Barnard’s success at war had seen him enjoy an illustrious post-war career under the guidance of the Duke of Wellington and George IV.\footnote{32} Throughout his narrative, Kincaid similarly seeks to associate his personal story of soldiering with the “long and brilliant” history of the regiment and its commanders. He not only emphatically defines himself as a “rifleman” (49), he also repeatedly expresses his admiration for his regiment and its excellence, noting “there, perhaps, never was, nor ever again will be, such a war-brigade as that which was composed of the forty-third, fifty-second, and the rifles” (195). His attachment to the regiment is reflected in his subsequent Random Shots, in which he offered a further set of anecdotes about his experiences campaigning with the Rifles and reflected on the “regiment” of writers that had, by 1835, been produced by the division.\footnote{33} These other memoirists similarly celebrated the many virtues of the division. For example, Leach claimed that impartial observers were unanimous in pronouncing the Light Brigade,\footnote{34} “the finest

\footnote{31} Gleig, The Subaltern, 1.


\footnote{33} Kincaid, Random Shots, 45.

\footnote{34} The Light Division was created in 1810 by splitting an earlier Light Brigade into two separate brigades and forming these together as a division. Urban, Rifles, 53.
and most splendid brigade that ever took the field”. He added “I will venture to go so far as to assert, that if it has been equalled, it has never been surpassed, in any army”. Cooke similarly contended in his memoirs that the Light Division “were indeed the admiration of all”.

Kincaid’s embrace of a professional, regimental identity is also reflected in the enormous emphasis he places through his narrative on his role as an active combatant at war. Indeed, he repeatedly stresses that his identity as a rifleman is equated with a love of combat, observing that “[t]he sight of a Frenchman always acted like a cordial on the spirits of a rifleman” (241) or that “a rifleman, in the rear, is like a fish out of water” (286). Partly, this emphasis on fighting was a reflection of the extent to which the Rifle Regiment was involved in combat through the war years. So too, the fighting style of the regiment as skirmishers readily lent itself, as Arthur Harman points out, to stories of personal combat and “individual acts of daring – the very stuff of adventure stories”. Due to their exceptional training and experience, soldiers in the regiment were particularly adept at fighting as skirmishers, Kincaid even draws attention to his fellow memoirist Blakiston’s comment “I never saw such skirmishers as the ninety-fifth, now the rifle brigade” (296). Urban also notes that subaltern officers in the Rifle Regiment often fought in much the same style as the private soldiers. Rather than simply directing the soldiers under their command, officers in the regiment were often themselves directly engaged in shooting at and fighting with the enemy. Kincaid thus frequently appends anecdotes about his personal experiences of combat to his discussion of the army’s battles. Reporting an engagement in 1811 near Redinha, Portugal, for instance, he observes that he will “limit all my descriptions to such events as immediately concerned the important personage most interested in this history” (49), and proceeds to recount his involvement in the action:

I was one of a crowd of skirmishers who were enabling the French ones to carry the news of their own defeat through a thick wood, at an infantry canter, when I found myself all at once within a few yards of one of their

35 Leach, Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier, 72.
37 Harman, “‘They Decide Not’”, 265.
38 Urban, Rifles, 289.
regiments in line, which opened such a fire, that had I not, rifleman like, taken instant advantage of the cover of a good fir tree, my name would have unquestionably been transmitted to posterity by that night’s gazette. (49)

Far from offering his narrative as a doubling of the events described in the official Gazette, as had Porter in his Letters, Kincaid’s only relationship to the Gazette here is to refer to the possibility of his being personally named in the casualty list. It is his personal involvement in war that he believes is worthy of interest. Indeed, his descriptions of combat at times involve highly individual acts of daring. He reports how, whilst stationed near Bayonne towards the end of the war, he came across a “strong reconnoitring part of the enemy” (267):

My first impulse was to gallop in amongst them, and order them to surrender; but my three men were still twenty or thirty years behind, and, as my only chance of success was by surprise, I thought the risk of the delay too great, and, reining back my horse, I made a signal to my men to retire. (268)

His self-deprecating tone helps to downplay the possible egoism of these anecdotes, but Kincaid conceives his own role as a soldier primarily in terms of his autonomy and professional expertise. He embraces a personal enthusiasm for war. His representation of himself as a rifleman, a skirmisher, was thus very much to view himself as a “motorized” soldier, internalising the demands of war and motivating himself to engage in personal acts of soldierly courage and heroism.

Thomas was also a soldier in a “light” regiment, but in striking contrast to Kincaid, exhibited little personal agency as a soldier, representing himself simply as an “atom of an army”.39 Detailing his experiences during an engagement near Fuentes de Honore in Spain, in 1811, Thomas states: “We soon came full in front of the enemy. The Colonel cries, ‘Here is food, my lads, cut away.’ Thrice we waved our bonnets, and thrice we cheered; brought our firelocks to the charge and forced them back through the town”.40 Thomas describes his very bodily movements and speech, even his hunger for food, as part of a corporate whole, charging and cheering in unison with the other soldiers in his regiment. Acutely aware of his lack of individual importance as a kind of abjection, Thomas only presents his commanding colonel as exhibiting any degree of personal autonomy. Where he occasionally represents a more individualised experience of combat, he is far from reporting a

40 Ibid., 133.
cheerful “inclination” for fighting and instead reflects on the prospect of being wounded, his fatigue and the morality of killing. Relating an engagement where his regiment was forced to close in hand to hand combat with French soldiers, so that “trial of strength in single combat” commenced, he states:

every man had his opponent, many had two. I got one up to the wall, on the point of my bayonet. He was unhurt: I would have spared him; but he would not spare himself. He cursed and defied me, nor ceased to attack my life, until he fell, pierced by my bayonet. His breath died away, in a curse and menace. This was the work of a moment: I was compelled to this extremity. I was again attacked, but my antagonist fell, pierced by a random shot.41

As an individual experience, combat is viewed by Thomas as mean, random and urgently menacing, and he exhibits minimal, and a morally uncertain, agency. He thus uses a passive construction to describe his killing of the French soldier, Thomas claiming the man was “pierced by my bayonet” rather than stating “I pierced him with my bayonet”. He elsewhere reflects on killing by observing an English sentinel ordered to shoot his opposing French sentinel, who as “often [looked] to the victim; his heart revolting from the deed he dared not disobey”.42 Thomas repeatedly feels himself as a soldier to be compelled to kill against his personal sense of humanity and he only exhibits an enthusiasm for combat and “victory” where he can imaginatively conflate his own combat role with an impersonal corporate identity.43 For Thomas, soldiering is simply a duty; it is experienced as the “necessity of obeying” and stands in stark contrast to the desires of the soldier’s own, personal “heart”.

Conversely, Kincaid embraces his love of the “hard skirmish” with the enemy (54). He regards his individual involvement with combat as the defining experience of his own identity as a soldier and as constituting the principal pleasure of war. In contrast to Gleig and Sherer, Kincaid thus largely refrains from introducing poetic descriptions of military events or directly invoking the picturesque in his account of war, in favour of stressing his own role as a combatant and military professional. Though he at times reflects on a “magnificent military spectacle” produced by the movements of the army (75), or the “terrific grandeur” of a mass of soldiers’ campfires (55), this descriptive commentary is only ever

41 Ibid., 116-17.
42 Ibid., 202.
43 Ibid., 86.
introduced in brief and intermittent ways. Patrick Brantlinger argues that Frederick Marryat’s nautical adventure novels, the first of which, *The Naval Officer* (1829), appeared the year before Kincaid’s *Adventures*, are structured around episodes of intense action. Here “the moment of combat is always the high point, the meaningful danger, to which the rest of the tale, no matter how colourfully and energetically contrived, serves merely as backdrop”.

Although Kincaid’s anecdotes range much wider than simply his experience of military combat and he combines this with wide ranging reflections on the military experience, his narrative primarily proceeds by focussing on such high points of “combat”, moving through a series of distinct episodes of fighting, or skirmishing, with the enemy. Even the sub-headings through his narrative are taken from the names of battles and he notes that as soldiers they largely kept track of time whilst on campaign by “counting back to the date of the last battle” (86). Where he communes with nature or describes his experience of “peaceful” bivouacs and camps it is only ever presented in his account as a “delightful sojourn” (177) from the harsh rigours of “battle, siege and skirmish”. As the *Monthly Review* observed, “[a]s little trouble does he take in painting the scenery of the battlefields through which he ranged, or the array of the forces brought into them on either side. He describes only his own movements, and those of his immediate companions in arms”.

It was arguably because Kincaid so emphatically wrote as a professional soldier that his story could be so centrally focused on his personal tale of heroic combat. Disregarding the kinds of concern about appearing an egoist that earlier memoirists exhibited, Kincaid simply claims:

> Every man may write a book for himself, if he likes, but this is mine; and, as I borrow no man’s story, neither will I give any man a particle of credit for his deeds, as I have got so little for my own that I have none to spare. Neither will I mention any regiment but my own, if I can possibly avoid it, for there is none other that I like so much, and none else so much deserves it. (16)

Kincaid emphasizes his professional status as a soldier rather than offering his work as a “regular memoir” or document of the historical events of a campaign. Instead, he defers to Napier or other writers for historical information about the war and the

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45 *Monthly Review* N.S.13 (1830), 534.
46 *My emphasis.*
movements of the army. He emphatically declines to offer a formal description of the engagement at Redinha because, “everybody has read Waverley and the Scottish Chiefs, and knows that one battle is just like another” (49). Deferring to historians and even fictional accounts of generic battles, by Scott and Jane Porter respectively, his work disavowed any status as “history” and focussed instead, like Gleig, on his “personal adventures” at war. However, even more so than Gleig’s *The Subaltern*, these personal adventures are equated with his role and status as a professional soldier. His enjoyment of military service is founded on his manly “liking” of the regiment and the pleasures of military combat. His narrative is thus much more about the soldier as a participant in war, a combatant and military expert, rather than simply a witness to war’s aesthetic appeal. To some extent reflecting the style of private soldiers’ memoirs, with their concern for documenting the “interior of military service” rather than the spectacle of war, Kincaid nonetheless presents an independent experience of combat that was befitting the identity of a gentleman at war. His work imagines combat in relation to individual autonomy and personal prowess rather than an atomistic mass experience, as it had been for Thomas.

So despite this focus on the individual soldier at war, Kincaid nonetheless writes a highly institutional story. His personal adventures are not presented as a historical or personal counter-narrative to war, as they had been for earlier writers like Porter and Thomas, so much as they serve to supplement an official military and historical view. As *The Times* claimed of Kincaid’s subsequent *Random Shots:*

> it is a useful appendix to the larger work of Napier, and other military commentaries; without pretending to display the strategy of armies, or the policy of courts, it makes the reader better acquainted with military life, than the ponderous labours of more scientific writers.

Importantly, Napier himself introduced a personal dimension to his history of the wars, enlivening his own more scientific account by including details about the heroic actions of a variety of individual soldiers. In the first volume of his *History*, for instance, he describes Sergeant Newman’s individual efforts to delay the French advance guard during the British army’s retreat to Corunna and recounts the capture, by the French army, of the author’s own brother. In line with the other memoirs

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from officers of the Light Division, Kincaid’s *Adventures* and his later *Random Shots* were serving in much the same manner as these anecdotes of individual heroism found in Napier’s history. Personal adventures are offered in these books with little of the fear of appearing an egoist that is found in earlier memoirs, because these individual stories are so intimately linked with military enthusiasm and institutional identity. The personal accounts of war they offer thus have far less potential to clash with official versions of military history. They no longer offer something that Pasley, Coleridge or the Duke of Wellington might feel to be potentially “jarring” to a correct understanding of military events. Charles Esdaile goes so far as to suggest that these memoirs from soldiers of the Light Division were helping to propagate an image of “tough, efficient, can-do, go-anywhere, do-anything heroes who played a major role indeed, the major role, in Wellington’s victories”.49 Traditionally holding little recognised place in the historical outcome of a battle through the eighteenth century, the individual soldier at war, the “skirmisher”, was emerging through these memoirs as a focal point of military action because his personal story was being emphatically read as a “useful appendix” to the history of military institutions and of war in general.

“Gallant and Noble Authors”: Authorship, Masculinity and the Subaltern Officer

Reviewing Lieutenant Quillinan’s *Dunluce Castle* (1814) in 1819 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* had quipped that a military officer’s poetry was likely written in an effort to seduce “young ladies” and to encourage “elopements from boarding-schools”. These comments reflected a commonly held concern in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British culture about the soldier’s virtue and his pretensions to authorship. The soldier was a poor candidate as a “poetic” author, the reviewer felt, because he exhibited “no grace or favour in the eyes of persons of refined and delicate taste”.50 Yet, just as Austen fell in love with Captain Charles Pasley, after reading his *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (1810), in which he exhibited a manly writing style that reflected a moral purity and concern for the nation, so the nation more widely was coming to fall in

50 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 4 (1819), 575-76.
love with the soldier in the guise of the tasteful, serious and morally reformed military author.\(^5\) Whilst Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs participated in the definition of war as a homosocial, foreign adventure that contrasted markedly with a mundane domestic home life, so too, they establish a necessary connection between these two realms by reforming the figure of the soldier himself. They demonstrated that he ventures into war carrying with him “domestic virtues” and personal integrity. The poetic genius that Sherer and Gleig brought to the composition of their memoirs was, therefore, leading to an increasingly common association of the subaltern officer with ideas of his gentlemanly professionalism, virtue, and good taste, in ways that helped make the military memoirs relevant and interesting to an increasingly middle-class reading public. Thus, whilst Napier’s enthusiasm for the Light Division undoubtedly played a significant role in prompting the publication of these memoirs by officers of the Light Division, their appearance can also be attributed to Sherer and Gleig’s earlier memoirs and the shifting conceptions of the military author that they helped to introduce. Even the startling reputation that Napier acquired can be attributed to his widely applauded literary talents and the “Romantic” nature of his writing.\(^5\)

To view Kincaid in this light requires negotiating the apparent fact that his Adventures is written as a rejection of domestic associations. It is arguably with Kincaid’s Adventures, as suggested by the title and its concern with the soldier’s professional identity as a rifleman, that the military memoir first came fully to embrace the soldier’s experience as a form of “personal adventure”. After all, the narrative concentrates on episodes of “adventurous” combat far more than detailing the soldier’s experience of travelling or his domestic arrangements in camp. His experiences of campaigning are also almost completely devoid of female company, Kincaid informing his readers that “month after month, and year after year,


\(^5\) Jay Luvaas, The Education of an Army: British Military Thought, 1815-1940 (London: Cassell, 1965), 14. The United Services Journal even published an anecdote in 1829 about Napier’s authorial talents: “For the following very fair testimony to an author’s merit we can vouch from our own knowledge. A lady having procured Col. Napier’s History, was so much interested in it as to continue reading it all day; her delight and ardour increasing, she read it all night; with unabated pleasure she ceased not to peruse it during the whole of the following day; and absolutely, in order to finish it, sat up the second night! Whether this be most conclusive of the soldier’s genius or the lady’s perseverance, our readers must decide”. United Services Journal and Naval and Military Magazine pt.2 (1829), 502.
continued to roll along” without he or his fellow officers ever seeing a “lady” (95). Nor does Kincaid exhibit any of the anxiety about leaving his friends at home that marked earlier narratives. He reports that he returned home during the short break in fighting between the end of the war in 1814 and its resumption with the Waterloo campaign in 1815, but he offers no information about his domestic life beyond the fact that, having returned to Britain, he was immediately “summoned … to the field” (302). Even his descriptions of friendship with his fellow soldiers show far less concern for his domestic arrangements than we find in Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs. He still describes a highly pleasing homosociality with his fellow officers, detailing convivial regimental dinners and the sociability of bivouacs (45-47; 246-47). He does not, however, represent friendship in terms of close or personal friends in the way Gleig described Grey as his “bosom friend”. Friendship is not presented as a compensation for an absent domestic life. Kincaid only refers to “friendship” with his “brother officers” in a collective sense (96), essentially describing what Sarah Cole has identified as military “comradeship”: a form of friendship that focuses on transient, institutional affiliations and regimental group solidarity far more than on intimate, personal ties between individuals. For Kincaid, therefore, liking his “brother officers” is synonymous with “liking” his regiment and his professional role as a soldier. His work is thus no longer haunted by the melancholy loss of personal friends and close domestic ties, because Kincaid simply constructs his existence in terms of a world of homosocial adventure.

Notably, this disjunction between domesticity and homosocial adventures has been seen as a defining characteristic of the stories of imperial adventure that first developed in Britain from the 1830s. These stories demonstrated little concern for domestic issues and seldom reflected on “domestic motifs” of marriage and settled home life. Following Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s work on the emergence of a middle-class identity at the start of the nineteenth century, Graham Dawson insists that imperial adventure stories, emerged out of a splintering in the British “cultural imaginary” between domesticity and adventure. The emergence of

54 Bruntlinger, Rule of Darkness, 12.
56 Ibid., 52.
what has been termed an “ideology of domesticity” in the eighteenth century, led to an increasingly rigorous “gendered division of labour” through the Romantic period and the emergence of separate male and female spheres, as work and home life respectively. There has been considerable debate questioning the validity of these assumptions about “separate” gendered spheres. Reflecting on the significance of these gender division for British masculinity, John Tosh suggests that it nonetheless is possible to conclude that by the early nineteenth century, masculinity in Britain was increasingly identified with a man’s profession and working life. It was a shift that brought with it a concomitant sense that “home” and domesticity represented an idealised private, and more feminine, sanctuary from public activities. Dawson argues that the result of this gender division for British literary culture was the emergence of two quite distinct “imaginative worlds” that fostered the development of distinct forms of stories either around marriage and domestic life or else around tales of foreign, imperial, and typically military, adventure with little interest in these domestic issues.

Yet this development of domesticity also implied countervailing tendencies. British masculinity was coming to be imagined both in distinction to the domestic sphere, and as incorporating what were, essentially, domestic virtues and a code of polite conduct and good taste. As Dawson observes, a wider emphasis on domesticity also brought with it a “reform of manners” that emphasised personal, domestic virtues as lying at the heart of masculine behaviour. The period was identified with the transformation of “the public world according to the moral yardstick of private domestic life”, leading to a “vigorous pursuit of moral reform” within the public arena and a redefinition of masculinity in which the gentleman was to be equally “at home in the public as well as the private sphere”. Michèle Cohen likewise observes a cultural shift through this period that saw an earlier “hegemonic masculinity” associated with aristocratic politeness and “gallantry” give way at the start of the nineteenth century to a redefined ideal of masculinity associated with

60 Dawson, Soldier Heroes, 64.
61 Ibid., 64-65.
“chivalry”. Defining “gallantry” as “sentimental homage to the fair sex”, Barbara Taylor similarly shows that the concept was increasingly criticized from the mid-eighteenth century as being incompatible with a manly British national character. Gallantry was associated with an undue concern for effeminizing and morally dubious pursuits, like polite conversation, sociability and sexual intercourse with women, and with the requirement to please others rather than with a concern for manly authenticity. Manliness was set against effeminate fashionable appearances and polite sociability with women, yet it was equally identified with “domestic virtues” that emphasised personal integrity, authenticity and a concern with protecting, rather than seducing, women.

Dawson insists, therefore, that adventure stories at the start of the century typically sought to ground a homosocial and masculine world of “adventure” in an attachment to domestic life and virtues as reflected in this culture of reformed masculinity. Frederick Marryat’s novels, for instance, can be seen as offering examples of masculine conduct to the professional gentry and middle classes in relation to what Timothy Fulford describes as the “[c]hivalric manhood” of the naval officer that brought together domestic virtues with manly courage. Though typically viewed as inaugurating a tradition of imperial adventure fiction, developing stories of naval life as a world of itinerant masculinity with little concern for domestic marriage, Marryat can thus also be viewed as the “initiator of the Victorian literature of conduct”. His novels sought to hold “the domestic character of naval officers up as an example to the nation”. Cohen believes that an emphasis on chivalric manhood did not widely influence cultural understanding of military officers and soldiers through the period or “provide models of heroic martial masculinity” outside of the navy. Yet Sherer and Gleig were, in a similar way to Marryat, introducing these personal emotions and this domestic virtue to the

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64 Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man”, 327.
65 Timothy Fulford, Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 9.
66 Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, 70.
68 Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man”, 321.
adventurous figure of the soldier. By exhibiting authorial genius they enabled the soldier’s story to be interesting to the civilian “man of feeling”, and they represented domestic virtues as lying at the heart of the homosocial world of the military officer.

Kincaid’s *Adventures* were certainly not viewed as exhibiting the authorial genius that was found in Gleig and Sherer’s memoirs. *The Subaltern* was recognised by the *United Service Journal* as “a work of a different order” to Kincaid’s memoirs, because it exhibited an unequalled capacity for poetic, descriptive writing. However, the *Adventures* were seen to exhibit a talent for description that echoed the claims of authorial “style” that Gleig and Sherer had earlier helped to establish as a defining feature of soldiers’ writing. Just as Gleig’s *The Subaltern* was seen to be using “plain intelligible language”, so Kincaid’s text was viewed as exhibiting a “picturesque” quality and an ability to describe events, one reviewer felt, “as if the scene were going on before us in its living, moving reality”. Reviewers, indeed, widely praised his style as an embodiment of the soldier’s essential character. Reviewing Kincaid’s subsequent *Random Shots*, the *United Services Gazette* commented: “In many of the more ambitious military works of the day there is an affectation of fine writing which does not harmonize altogether with the ‘rough and ready’ performances of those who have seen service”. Kincaid himself develops this association between his “rough and ready” style and his status as a soldier, when he quotes from *Othello* in the advertisement to his book:

Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless’d with the set phrase of peace:
For, since these arms of mine had seven years’ pith,
Till now, some nine moons wasted, they have us’d
Their dearest action in the tented field:
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle;
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself; yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver. (viii)

Versed in war’s “broil and battle”, the soldier makes up for his lack of polite grace with a rough forthrightness that was viewed as an essential embodiment, not merely

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69 *United Services Journal and Naval and Military Magazine* (1830), 478.
72 *Monthly Review* N.S.13 (1830), 543 and 534.
73 *United Service Gazette* no.131 (8 August 1835), [6].
of his character, but, arguably, of a national identity. Appropriating an identity as Othello, as it had been for Gleig, allowed Kincaid to reflect Shakespeare’s status as an icon of Englishness, but it also granted him a universal significance whilst at the same time embedding his text within a readership that possessed his own familiarity with Shakespeare. What had been seen as a weakness in soldiers’ writing, its roughness or lack of refinement, was thus exploited by Kincaid as a marker of its distinction.

Cohen has observed that sincerity and plain speaking had emerged by the start of the nineteenth century as defining characteristics of a particularly British form of chivalric manliness. The domestic virtues of the naval officer in Austen, for instance, were precisely founded on his portrayal as “honest, transparent and a gentleman”. Notably, the private soldier memoirist, like Gleig and Kincaid, was also widely recognised as producing a “plain unvarnished tale”, or writing with “a plain soldier-like manner”, that lent their writing a degree of virtuous simplicity. However, as the reception of Thomas’s Journal shows, the private soldier inhabited a problematic relationship to authorship that was never entirely free of suspicions of fraud and in which his class status and associations with vice (and even a degree of radicalism) excluded him from being accorded marks of distinction and taste. Even junior ranking officers, prior to Gleig and Sherer, were associated with a lack of virtue and scholarliness that precluded their simple “style” of writing from being readily accepted as tasteful. Through their display of poetic genius, Gleig and Sherer had not only developed the soldier’s “plain style” as an essential element in their writing, but had enabled this style to serve as a key indicator of authorial taste, distinction, and national identity. The Quarterly Review, writing in 1832 on the startling increase of authorship amongst the “belligerent classes”, went so far as to argue for an intimate connection between the professional soldiers’ writing and

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76 George Blennie, Narrative of a Private Soldier in One of His Majesty’s Regiments of Foot. Written by Himself; Detailing Many Circumstances Relative to the Irish Rebellion in 1798, the Expedition to Holland in 1799, and the Expedition Too Egypt in 1801; and Giving a Particular Account of His Religious History and Experience. With a Preface by the Rev. Ralph Wardlaw (Glasgow: A. & J. M. Duncan, etc., 1819), vi.
77 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres no.442 (1825), 437.
English literature. The reviewer insists that what made English literature distinctive was the professional activity and authenticity of its writers, claiming that “the first popular works in our language came from the pens of authors distinguished in active life”. This authorial activity gave to "our literature" an "air of practical pith, shrewdness and sagacity". By 1830 the plain, professional dialect of the soldier was coming to take root in English writing and language, emerging as an embodiment of British identity as an honest, moral "pith". As a reviewer of John Patterson’s The Adventures of Captain John Patterson (1837) commented, “[t]he honest homeliness of the style of this narrative is quite after our own heart.”

Through his Adventures Kincaid consciously defines himself as a soldier and rifleman in very similar terms to what he describes as the “unsophisticated” style of his narrative (351). The United Services Journal reflected that the book is a facsimile of the man, — a perfect reflection of his image, veluti in speculo. A capital soldier, a pithy and graphic narrator, and a fellow of infinite jest, Capt. Kincaid has given us in this modest volume the impress of his qualities, the beau-ideal of a thorough-going soldier of service, and the faithful and witty history of some six years’ honest and triumphant fighting.

As the “beau-ideal” of a soldier at war, Kincaid nonetheless emerges as an embodiment of “domestic” gentlemanly virtues, in which his embrace of honesty, authenticity and chivalric courage are set against images of the inauthentic “gallantry” of soldiers concerned simply with fashionable appearances. He notes, for instance, how during his wartime experiences:

> Smoothing irons were not the fashion of the times, and, if a fresh well-dressed aide-de-camp did occasionally come from England, we used to stare at him with about as much respect as Hotspur did at his ‘waiting gentlewoman’ (18).

Again identifying himself as the soldier with the ruggedly authentic Shakespearean character of Hotspur, Kincaid implies that he and his “brother officers”, with their disregard of appearances, represent the true English gentlemen in contrast to the effeminate man of fashion. The battlefield itself is thus regarded by Kincaid as being no place for the “amateur” poseur, and he relates an anecdote of a man sheltering under an umbrella during a battle whose avoidance of a cannon-ball appeared “so

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78 Quarterly Review 47 (1832), 133-34.
79 Metropolitan Magazine 28 (1837), 15.
80 United Services Journal and Naval and Military Magazine (1830), 478.
ridiculous that it excited a shout of laughter” from Kincaid and his fellow soldiers (78). At one point Kincaid observes that he was told off by the Duke of Wellington for “cutting a caper” on his horse during battle, though he insists that his horse had simply been startled by an explosion. Kincaid is horrified to think that he was seen by Wellington as a “young officer” showing “bravado” (218). He similarly observes that soldiers of the “elite” Life-guard regiment appeared “young” because any individual amongst the regiment left the field if they fell in the mud, as though at a military field day rather than a battle. He comments that the scene showed the truth of the old parable, “the uglier the soldier the better” (325).

In contrast to the ridiculous and effeminate “amateur” or “young” soldier who is simply concerned with appearance and “bravado”, Kincaid and his fellow officers are portrayed as proficient professional soldiers, experienced in the hazards and rigours of campaign and battle. Defining himself as a “veteran” soldier (48), familiar with “war’s roughest, rudest path” (4), he offers his account as the “enlightened views of a man of war” (13). Others in the Light Division were making similar claims about their experience or veteran status as soldiers. Leach even titled his memoirs Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier. As the United Services Journal remarked in 1835, “battle is the soldier’s school; and no man, be his rank what it may, can be looked upon as a soldier till he has passed through the fiery ordeal”. That war plays a formative role in shaping the authentic and manly soldier is an idea that permeates Kincaid’s work as he presents himself as the embodiment of the “ugly”, rough soldier. He thus describes his involvement in the storming of the fortress of Cuidad Rodrigo as a moment of soldierly pride:

It had ever been the summit of my ambition to attain a post at the head of a storming party: – my wish had now been accomplished and gloriously ended; and I do think that, after all was over, and our men laid asleep on the ramparts, that I strutted about as important a personage, in my own opinion, as ever trod the face of the earth. (116-17)

Although his experience of the storming forms the apex of his professional identity as a soldier, Kincaid also undercuts any idea of vainglorious heroism by noting, ironically, that he initially mounted the wrong ladder in his efforts to lead the storming party and that he emerged from the storming with his clothes torn to rags,

81 Leach, Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier.
82 United Services Journal and Naval and Military Magazine (1834), 295.
reflecting that he was “too unclean to appear as a hero” (117). Referring to his own “strutting” and “importance” with a self-deprecating irony, he emerges, however, as a figure of manly and authentic heroism. Significantly, the representation of individual adventure and heroic combat that was widely felt to be an essential element in making historical wars “interesting” or “picturesque” to the civilian reader, had emerged as an essential feature of Kincaid’s memoirs.

But though Kincaid defines his soldier’s experience through his intimate knowledge of fighting, he also constructs his actions in chivalric terms that detach his experience of combat from associations with the brutality normally associated with acts of violence. He is keen to show that despite his love of fighting, “John Bull” was “not a blood-thirsty person” (53). As Tosh argues, violence was one of the key elements that was divorced from masculinity through the progress of the nineteenth century. For example, the duel had lost much of its cultural acceptability in Britain by the 1830s, and had largely waned as a practice by 1850. Kincaid stresses the professionalism and gentlemanly bearing of the soldier, noting that the fighting was punctuated with moments of “civility” between the French and British (37), or that the fighting itself was “gentleman-like” (243), ordinarily undertaken with a degree of “professional generosity” (269). So too, he clearly differentiates the British officer’s courage and martial abilities from acts of violence that appear unnecessary and abhorrent. As the French army retreat from Portugal in 1809, he notes that every species of barbarity continued to mark the enemy’s retreating steps. They burnt every town or village through which they passed, and if we entered a church, which by accident, had been spared, it was to see the murdered bodies of the peasantry on the altar. (54)

He subsequently observes that it was easy for the British army to follow the retreating French because they had left a clear trail of wrecked houses and “butchered peasants” behind them (65). In contrast, Kincaid frequently describes how he and his “brother-officer” rescue individuals from such wanton acts of cruelty (56). He thus rescues a family from a house set on fire by the retreating French, protects a woman from assault by knocking the offending soldier “to the bottom of

the stair head foremost", and even saves a French officer from riotous drunken British soldiers after the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo (114-15). His image of the professional soldier, therefore, has a rigorous moral dimension that positions the soldier’s legitimate use of force as a chivalry protecting the defenceless against acts of barbarity, murder and wanton cruelty. Whilst Kincaid celebrates violent combat throughout his narrative, he nonetheless repeatedly portrays himself as an authentic, chivalric gentleman, maintaining a moral framework in which the soldier is caring, virtuous, authentic and brave.

Kincaid’s writing thus helped to give rise to the military memoir as the story of a virtuous “soldier hero”, who embodied “domestic virtues” in much the same way as the nation’s naval heroes.\(^{85}\) The *Monthly Review* reflected that Kincaid’s subsequent *Random Shots* was not simply amusing light reading. It claimed, rather, that his writing “improves whilst it engages the heart of the reader” and that the “[a]musement, laughter, and excitement” the reader derives from the book, “are each and all perfectly compatible with the enforcement of useful information, elevating sentiments, and social improvement”. The *Review* thus concludes that “[w]e have caught part of the author’s esprit de corps, and we think, not a slight relish for that manly fresh humanity which pervades all his sentiments”.\(^{86}\) Kincaid’s writing was not simply providing adventurous entertainment, but was deemed interesting for its display of the soldier’s exemplary status and its capacity for social and moral improvement. A “manly fresh humanity” was thus coming to adhere to the writing of the soldier.

The domestic reader thus stood in a relation of homage and admiration of the brave soldier at war. War may be, Kincaid insists, a site almost wholly devoid of women (8), but so too, he imagines a mutual relationship between domestic bliss and his life as a soldier. Recollecting the one possibility of marriage he encountered through his time at war, he insists: “I felt as if she would have been the chosen companion of my waking dreams in rosier walks, as I never recalled the fair vision to my aid, even in the worst of times, that it did not act upon my drooping spirits like a glass of brandy” (8). And just as a vision of domestic life can come to the aid of the soldier, so, in turn, the reader of the military memoir, as the *New Monthly Magazine*

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\(^{85}\) Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

\(^{86}\) *Monthly Review* N.S.3 (1835), 15.
had commented of Gleig’s *Subaltern*, stood as an enraptured “Desdemona” to the soldier “Othello”. The “truth and simplicity” of the soldier’s tale was leading the reader to “love him for the dangers he has passed”.\(^{87}\) Jane Porter was one such Desdemona who detailed her passion for soldiers’ writing in a review article of several military memoirs in *La Belle Assemblée*, entitled “On the Peculiar Effects of Gallant and Noble Authors”.\(^{88}\) Addressing the apparent incongruity of reviewing the work of a military author in a journal “expressly dedicated to the gentle sex”, Porter insists:

> when it is recollected that our fair readers have sensible heads as well as tender hearts; and that amongst them are the wives and mothers of our brave countrymen already enrolled in the lists of our army or navy – or of young aspirants, ambitious of having their names written there – it ought not to be considered out of place, that to these wives and mothers we address the following gratulations, that the records of the seaman’s and soldier’s hard service, by flood and field, in the ‘boarding-grapple,’ and on the ‘deadly breach,’ are no more left to the cold, generalizing pen of a mere literary historian.\(^{89}\)

The military memoir and its record of gallantry, willing obedience and courage was coming to have a defined place within the nation’s memory of the war, uniting the domestic arena of youths, wives and mothers in admiration (and emulation) of the brave soldiers figured in these works. Far from the military author being seen as carrying a terrifying potential to seduce the gentle sex, he now stood in a relationship of separation yet familiarity and sympathy with the domestic sphere. The soldier could now be viewed as a “gallant and noble author”, his writing overshadowing the “pen of a mere literary historian”, because he emerges as a figure of exemplary conduct and national significance. These memoirs by officers of the Light Division, including Kincaid’s, thus realized the potential of Gleig’s “experiment”, in which the genre of the military memoir was increasingly fixed around a subaltern view of war and in which the subaltern officer could assume a legitimate role in the history of the nation through their professional status, inner virtue and military enthusiasm.

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\(^{87}\) *New Monthly Magazine* 18 (1826), 27.

\(^{88}\) *La Belle Assemblée* 14 (1831), 188. My thanks to Tom Maclean for alerting me to this review and providing the attribution of authorship to Jane Porter. In a letter dated 28 October 1831, to the publishers Colburn and Bentley, Porter returns a copy of *Memoirs of the Late War* (1831) and notes that one of the reviews she has made of the work, will appear next month in *La Belle Assemblée*. Letter from Anna Maria Porter and Jane Porter to Messrs Colburn and Bentley, 28 October 1831, Dunedin Public Library Alfred and Isabel Reed Collection, Otago, New Zealand.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 188.
Cheerful Stoicism and the Soldier’s Immortal Body

Jane Porter found herself not only startled by the fact that women had begun reading military memoirs, but also by the extent to which the soldier’s tale was now able to be read as a story of national service. The most remarkable feature of these memoirs, she thus suggests, was that they had helped to transform the soldiers’ story away from individual expressions of grief and into something that we might associate with a glorious “ideology of sacrifice”. She outlines the development of military memoirs:

when our English military men not only began to make private memoranda of the campaigns in which they were engaged, but afterwards formed them into regular narratives, and were prevailed on to publish them to the world – till this happy and most befitting fashion was set by some of our brave friends on their triumphant return from the plains of Egypt, it was, in all sober sadness, considered but a romantic flight from romance or playbook to talk of ‘the bed of honour in the tented field,’ or of ‘the grave of glory to the fallen soldier.’ For, even suppose an official gazette does sometimes notice a subaltern officer by name, in respect of any circumstance of peculiar merit connected with it, the generalizing historian, who never knew the beat of a soldier’s breast at the promise of fame, seldom takes into account that his country owed any such debt to a man, however brave, who fought or fell beneath the rank of a commander.90

Crucially she observes that references to the individual soldier’s sacrifice for the nation were seen as mere fictions, or “romantic flight from romance”, before the appearance of these memoirs. The individual soldier was not granted a recognised or legitimated place in the history of the nation’s wars – lacking a public “voice” or identity of his own, the soldier only appeared in relation to the “official gazette”. Even where the subaltern officer might be mentioned by the historian, Porter goes on, there is no sense that “his country owed any ... debt” to the brave soldier who “fought or fell beneath the rank of a commander”. Those soldiers “in more subordinate degrees, who executed their superiors’ commands with a gallantry of spirit, and a perseverance in obedience, which knew no distinction between life and death”, Porter concludes, are offered no place by the historian. Their sufferings

90 La Belle Assemblée 14 (1831), 188.
are brought forward at the bottom of the page only, to complete the account
of loss or gain in the returns of killed, wounded, and missing: as a merchant’s
clerk would rate the units and figures of his master’s profit or deficit.91

Prior to the publication of Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs, as this thesis has
argued, military memoirists struggled to attain these kinds of manly or “romantic”
representation of the soldier’s sacrifice for the nation without conveying an “excess
sentiment”. Jane Porter views a tradition of personal memoirs originating with the
start of the century, referring back to accounts of Britain’s Egyptian campaign such
as George Baldwin’s Narrative of the Ever Memorable British Campaign in the
Spring of 1801 (we might also add that the start of the century saw the emergence of
the romantic military panoramas of Jane’s brother Robert, such as his Storming of
Seringapatam). These earlier memoirs, however, often exhibited uncertainty about
how exactly the soldier’s personal experience of war and personal suffering might be
viewed in relation to the nation. In memoirs such as Robert Ker Porter’s Letters or
Thomas’s Journal, the personal experience of war appears as simply too much an
exposure to sentimental misery for any assertion of glorious death and sacrificial
heroism to be maintained without reservation and qualification. The personal
experience of war did not have a manly resonance, but, rather, brought to light a
more problematic personal grief that could “unman”, embarrass or trouble the reader.

Gleig and Sherer, however, were able to represent a more professional
identity for the soldier, enabling this “excess sentiment” to be far more effectively
kept at bay. The development, more generally through the Romantic period of a
professional officer corps (a movement away from the amateur or theatrical
traditions of soldiering that prevailed amongst the officer class through the
eighteenth century) was, in many ways, about divorcing the soldier from local
attachments and his civilian identity, and fostering instead nationalist attachments to
king, country and fellow soldiers.92 In his Subaltern Officer (1825), published soon
after Gleig’s Subaltern had appeared, George Wood adopted Gleig’s stance of
writing as this professional soldier whose loyalties lay primarily with the nation. He
thus entitles his book, similarly to Gleig, the Subaltern Officer and quotes the same
passage from Othello as an expression of his soldier’s identity and writing style.

91 Ibid., 188.
Notably, too, Wood saw it as his task to explicate the suffering of the subaltern officer, stating:

one principal object which I have had in view, has been to correct the too general misapprehension, that the suffering and hardships of war are almost exclusively the lot of the private soldier. Those who peruse the following pages will perceive, that persons in the situation which I had the honour to fill in the Army during the most eventful period of my Country’s struggles, were no less exposed to pain and privations than those placed under them.93

Disclosing his “principal object” of displaying the subaltern’s “pain and privations”, he goes on, however, to insist that his “narration” will serve as an example of heroic sacrifice for the youths of his day to emulate. He hopes that it may:

have the effect of reviving, in the minds of Britons, those deeds of arms which by them never should, and I trust never will, be forgotten. For although a nation be wrapped in profound tranquillity, such a nation as this, which has been justly styled ‘The anchor and hope of the world!’ should not permit a single spark of its martial spirit to expire. Indeed, in time of peace, it should be even more on the alert, to stimulate the rising generation to heroic feeling, by keeping that national fire alive what has blazed so conspicuously in the hour of need, and which, I trust, no time will damp and no foe extinguish.94

If Howell had earlier hoped that the Journal’s narrative of the private soldier’s personal suffering might dissuade young men from joining the army, Wood, conversely, views his display of individual suffering in relation to “deeds of arms” that can help maintain the flames of a “martial spirit” amongst the nation’s youth. Rather than such representations of suffering challenging national commitment to war, “pain and privations” are made to stand in a particular location of reverence for the civilian reader, to stimulate a “rising generation to heroic feeling”. By assuming the status of a fully professional soldier, Wood’s personal “pain and privations” can be more effectively presented in relation to the imagined community of the nation. His pain appears as a national sacrifice rather than in relation to a private experience and the personal ties of friends and family.

Yet Wood, like Gleig and Sherer, retains a sense of his personal identity as lying outside of his time as a soldier. Wood ultimately celebrates his release from the soldier’s hardships and the oppressive “orders, reprimands, or martial law” of

94 Ibid., ix.
military life, in order to resume the “happy Liberty” of the civilian. Gleig had similarly positioned himself in his narrative as a gentleman author, looking back with a degree of melancholy on “happiness gone by”. He speculated that his “feelings” as a soldier may have little place in his current civilian life, they are “[p]erhaps … not such as, in the present state of society, any prudent person is justified in encouraging”. Sherer, too, wrote at a “distance” from his experience of war. The dominant way in which the soldier-narrator appears in the memoirs of Porter, Thomas, Sherer, and Gleig is as the returned soldier. For these memoirists, the soldier is inherently coupled with a return to peace, however troubled and uncertain that “peace” might be.

Kincaid, in contrast, performs a manly and sacrificial suffering for his reader as an even more emphatically professional soldier, a soldier who never returns home to resume a civilian identity. Kincaid, indeed, opens his *Adventures* by detailing his first experiences as a regular soldier on campaign (thereby simply ignoring his service in volunteer and militia units inside Britain), and he concludes with his regiment marching on Paris, never referring to his return home from war. His subsequent writing in *Random Shots* simply revisited these same experiences, and even in later life he continued on as the “Honorary secretary of the Committee formed of the Officers of the Old Light Division”. As a military author, therefore, Kincaid writes at a complete remove from any associations with a civilian identity as a man of peace. He simply presents himself as a professional soldier associated with the military institutions to which he belongs and identified with the adventurous, public and masculine world of war.

As the professional soldier, Kincaid principally asserts his familiarity with war’s privations and hardship. His identity as a rough or old soldier is largely predicated on this experience of suffering. His story is full of highly graphic and even what might be read as disgusting references to the corporeality of war; wounds and pain are a constant feature of his experience. He reports, for instance, how he

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95 Ibid., 247.
98 His subsequent *Random Shots* does provide some details about his earlier experiences in the volunteers and the militia, though largely in the context of explaining how he eventually took his officer’s commission with the Rifle Regiment. See Kincaid, *Random Shots*, 12-16.
99 Letter from John Kincaid to the Duke of Richmond, 8 May 1847, in the West Sussex Record Office (Chichester), Gurwood MS 1576, f.71.
slept alongside a wounded Highlander who dies through the night, noting that “[a] ball had passed through the back part of his head, from which the brain was oozing, and his only sign of life was a convulsive hiccup every two or three seconds” (77). Elsewhere he describes two men caught in an explosion, where:

On falling to the ground, though lying on their backs or bellies, some extraordinary effort of nature, caused by the agony of the moment, made them spring from that position, five or six times, to the height of eight or ten feet, just as a fish does when thrown on the ground after being newly caught. (348-49)

For Kincaid, what defines the old soldier is precisely his exposure to and embrace of war’s hardships and suffering. As he comments in his subsequent Random Shots “our very privations were a source of pride and boast to us”.  

Kincaid also, however, develops a “cheerful” version of a stoical “military philosophy” in which his embrace of the demands of war allows these images of pain and suffering to be properly understood by his readers as indicative of his heroism. In particular, he introduces a jocose attitude towards fighting and death, suggesting that “[w]e lived united, as men always are who are daily staring death in the face on the same side, and who, caring little about it, look upon each new day added to their lives as one more to rejoice in” (94). Commenting on the fact that wounded soldiers were generally stripped of their clothes during or soon after a battle, he jokes “I was grieved to think that the souls of deceased warriors should be so selfish as to take to flight in their regimentals, for I never saw the body of one with a rag on after a battle” (80). Just as he elsewhere reflects that “our souls, in fact, were strung for war” (256) so he imagines the soul of the soldier as being identical with his regimental status. His humour thus helps to disassociate the soldier from the private grief associated with the “melancholy duty” of burying the dead (80). He jokes too, that “John Bull” glories “in gaining a brilliant but useless victory against great odds” (148), or that his fellow soldiers exhibited “a rage for passports into eternity” (129). Such assertions serve to fashion a professional identity for the soldier, in which, rather than serving under the duress of “martial law” and a mere sense of duty, the soldier wilfully and cheerfully accepts war’s suffering and hardship. Describing, conversely, an amateur soldier who had newly arrived in the
Peninsula, Kincaid draws attention to his ridiculous “huge cocked hat, and a hermaphrodite sort of scarlet coat, half military and half civil”. From Kincaid’s perspective, as one whose soul is “strung for war”, the amateur soldier’s theatricality suggests a mixing of civil and military identities as a kind of ungendered monstrosity. Kincaid’s work instead, positions a rigorously defined boundary between a feminine civilian realm and the manly, and stoical authenticity of the professional soldier.

The soldier, Kincaid thus implies, willingly and happily embraces death and suffering. Of his subsequent Random Shots, the Monthly Review suggested that the jocular tone with which Kincaid treated “sad and even horrible events” produced a “buoyancy”, rather than a “levity”. It served, therefore, as a mark of his strength of spirit and ability to rebound from hardships rather than an improper frivolity in the face of misery. This cheerful stoicim produced, the reviewer felt, a tone of “deep pathos” that lifted his reflections above those of the “most sombre sentimentalist”. Though Kincaid’s writing still related “sad and even horrible events”, the overall melancholy tone that inhabits earlier soldiers’ memoirs, from Porter’s Letters through to Thomas’s Journal and even on into Sherer and Gleig’s memoirs, is thus largely occluded by Kincaid as he performs a cheerful acceptance of the hardships of soldiering. Detached entirely from the private, civilian world, refusing to describe himself as the returned soldier or to reflect on war’s violence either with a sentimental pity or melancholy longing for lost friends, the appalling horrors of war no longer trouble Kincaid’s display of stoical heroism and suffering. The suffering he presents to his reader is imagined, instead, as being simply a soldier’s affair. After fighting the battle of Vittoria, for instance, he reflects that being killed in a battle was simply “all in the way of business” for a soldier (232). Indeed, the London Literary Gazette reflected on Kincaid’s narrative:

Accustomed to scenes of bloodshed, his mode of telling these stories certainly appears to us to be sometimes rather too flippant and facetious; but we home critics have no right to judge those too strictly who have had their heads broken in warfare, and so often risked life and limb as to come at last to set small value upon either.

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102 Kincaid, Random Shots, 109.
103 Monthly Review N.S.3 (1835), 15.
104 London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres no.687 (1830), 188.
It is much harder for the reader to misread Kincaid’s suffering as an “excess of sentiment” because he so fully embraces the professional identity of the cheerfully stoical soldier. Kincaid largely displaces any possibility that we might respond to his pain simply as a private experience. The reader might still recognise “bloodshed”, but is left responding with a respectful awe of the soldier’s profession and his heroic courage.

As a memoirist, we might even suggest, Kincaid emerges as the very ideal of the citizen-soldier, occupying what Favret describes as the soldier’s “abstract, collective and immortal body” that “lives with and through the fiction of the nation”. His corporeal suffering still draws the reader’s sympathies, but his experience of war is also, at a certain level, beyond the immediate comprehension or judgement of the civilian reader. His personal story thus resonates with a soldierly heroism and ideals of national sacrifice. It is perhaps not surprising that adventurous military and nautical novels emerged contemporaneously with the memoirs of the Light Division around the beginning of the 1830s, not simply with the publication of Marryat’s *The Naval Officer* (1829), but equally with such works as the anonymous *Allan M’Dougal, or, Scenes in the Peninsula. A Tale. By a Military Officer* (1831), Oliver Moore’s *The Staff Officer; or, The Soldier of Fortune. A Tale of Real Life* (1831) and William Maginn’s *Tales of Military Life. By the Author of ‘The Military Sketch Book’* (1829). As Jane Porter’s comments imply, images of military adventure and heroic sacrifice are always, at some level, a kind of “playbook” fictionalisation of the individual soldier’s tale. Through his *Adventures*, however, Kincaid “authentically” represents himself as precisely this fiction of a “camp-born” soldier. His very soul is “strung for war” and his story is useful as a record of the exemplary “character” of the soldier as “spirited, cheerful, docile, unselfish”. The “fictional” soldier was thus no longer associated with the vice ridden and theatrical

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107 *La Belle Assemblée* 14 (1831), 188.
108 Ibid., 188.
military camps of an earlier aristocratic culture of war, but was associated with the authenticity and chivalric nature of the professional soldier who served the nation, his manhood and integrity forged in the ordeals of war. Detached from any associations with his own personal or domestic life and inured to war’s hardships through his cheerful stoicism, Kincaid was able to emerge as an enduring figure of national military heroism and sacrifice.

**Military Adventure and the Soldier Hero**

Appearing just prior to Kincaid’s *Adventures*, Gleig’s novel, *The Chelsea Pensioners* (1829), was written as a series of short tales or “narratives of military adventure”, purportedly told by members of a (fictional) club of British officers formed from veterans of the Napoleonic Wars. Each member of the club, Gleig asserts, possessed “a service of three years spent in the field or before the enemy, one or more wounds, an unblemished character, and a hundred a year”. In the immediate post-war period, the idea of a United Services Club, where military officers could socialise together away from other civilians, was met with considerable concern in Parliament. Here, nearly fifteen years later, Gleig was able to write a successful novel in which he does not simply define a club that is solely for military officers, but imagines one that is for the proven veteran officer, who is scarred by wounds and who combines his military service with the gentlemanly attributes of an unblemished character and an income of a hundred pounds a year. The suffering, gallant soldier, his virtue and manliness tested in combat, was emerging not only as a key means for representing the experience of war, but had come to be intimately associated with forms of British gentlemanly conduct, virtue and masculinity.

In many ways, Kincaid’s *Adventures* were implicated in this shifting perception of masculine conduct. The military officer was no longer associated with amorous gallantry, but with the chivalric gallantry of armed service and his courageous exposure to wounding in combat. A far more inherently nationalist view

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111 *Gentleman’s Magazine* 99 (1829) 146.
of the soldier was thus developing, that saw traditional fears of the standing army largely displaced in favour of a recognition of the heroism, duty and gentlemanly conduct of the nation’s military officers, as exemplified by a figure like Kincaid. Undoubtedly, a major element in this transformation was the emergence of the military author as a figure of virtue and national significance. Indeed, reviewers were increasingly adamant by 1830 that the military memoir was required reading for the British nation. These memoirs were thus helping to form the traditions of national military heroism that Michael Paris, and others, have seen as formative of British culture and in particular, the popular military adventure stories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kincaid’s book, more widely, provided an enduring and pervasive image of the soldier. When his Adventures were reprinted in an abridged form in 1909 as part of “Herbert Strang’s Library” of books for boys, at the high point of imperial adventure fiction and British jingoism, the editor emphasized that, “[t]he reader cannot but be struck, not only with the heroic courage with which our soldiers faced death, but with the unfailing cheerfulness that buoyed them up even under the most terrible privations and sufferings.” Published just five years before the outbreak of the First World War, Strang’s remarks indicate how Kincaid’s Adventures (and the memoirs of Gleig and Sherer) had fashioned enduring images of the British soldier’s cheerful stoicism that would be tested so severely in the war to come. Kincaid’s exemplification of soldierly heroism, the image that he created of a universal soldier or “soldier hero”, is arguably what has given his book such a lasting influence as a story of military adventure.

Conclusion

“A Plain, Unvarnished Tale”: Military Authors and Romantic War

This thesis has argued that the Romantic period saw the emergence of the military memoir as a distinct and prominent literary genre, one which shifted from a relatively marginal to a surprisingly dominant position in British literary culture. The Romantic period military memoir began as an adaptation of themes associated with the story of the suffering traveller within the framework of the impersonal campaign narrative. Though these works helped to establish sympathy between the military and civilian realms, they remained ideologically ambiguous, detailing war’s miseries and horrors in a manner that could be problematic to state-centred views of war. Subsequent to the success of Sherer and Gleig’s picturesque approach to writing of war in the mid 1820s, however, the military memoir flourished as a distinct and enjoyable type of literature. These memoirs assumed a prominent status in the period’s literature by the late 1820s, representing a style of writing that was felt to be peculiarly British in character and which could successfully commemorate the nation’s wars for a middle-class audience.

The success of the military memoirs also established the central role of military adventure in the later Romantic period’s literary response to war. In 1832 the United Services Journal acknowledged the significance of individual adventures in fuelling interest in military writing, observing that the “ordinary reader ... wants nothing but adventures and battles – ‘Recollections’ and ‘Reminiscences’”.¹ The London Weekly Review similarly observed that

> of the adventures of individuals we never grow tired, wherever the scene may happen to be laid. If, therefore, the writer of a personal narrative confines himself closely to his own experience, he will be in great measure original and may safely reckon upon interesting a great majority of his readers.²

In 1829, the New Monthly Magazine identified “two sorts of military work”: texts that “relate to strategy, and the great movements of campaigns, [and] are intelligible only to military men of science” and “the more personal adventures of the soldier”,

² London Weekly Review 2.64 (1828), 577.
which had found favour with a far wider audience. The Magazine insisted, however, that to make such writing interesting to “readers of taste and judgement”, then “the author must evince ... the highest acquirements of literature, the science of his profession, considerable powers of mind, and an intimacy with the notions and habits of the refined and educated classes”.

Whilst the military memoir was preferred to more formal historical military writing, by the mid 1830s it was losing its cultural prominence. The interest which the memoir had inspired in the adventurous nature of warfare was being transferred to a far broader range of texts. Military history thus began to adopt elements of the personal narrative and was seen to exhibit a distinctive soldier’s authorial style. Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine praised Lord Londonderry’s Narrative of the War in Spain and Portugal (1828) as “a plain, straightforward tale, told without affectation and without reserve”, and for combining “the authenticity of history, with the attractive character of a personal narrative ... which will be read by all classes with infinite satisfaction”. The Monthly Review even suggested that Londonderry may have been assisted in the composition of his Narrative by the author of The Subaltern. These elements of a “plain, straightforward tale”, and the credibility of the military author’s experience of war were manifested most successfully in Sir William Napier’s celebrated History of the Peninsular War (1828-40) and a selection of the Duke of Wellington’s orders and despatches from the Peninsular War, published as General Orders of the Duke of Wellington from 1809 to 1815 (1832). Napier’s book generated some controversy over its interpretation of events during the Peninsular War, but it was readily adapted as the most significant and interesting history of the wars. Jay Luvaas observes:

the book fought its way to public favour because of the eloquent and vigorous manner in which Napier had commemorated the deeds of Wellington’s great army. By the time the last volume was published in 1840,

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3 New Monthly Magazine 27 (1829), 94.
4 Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 23.138 (1828), 735.
5 Monthly Review N.S.8 (1828), 246.
Napier’s fame as the greatest military historian England had produced was secure.\(^7\)

Indeed, his work can be seen as marking the emergence of a modern military history as distinct from an earlier body of scientific military writing. Wellington’s published despatches were similarly praised as the epitome of good style and valuable writing on war, the *United Services Journal* claiming, “we are inclined to think an interleaved copy of this book, containing the personal remarks of his Grace would be more useful than any former military memoir or reveries let them come from whom they may”.\(^8\) By the mid 1830s, Napier and Wellington had both assumed a dominant and enduring location in recounting and commemorating the wars. As Richard Ford commented of the Duke’s published despatches in his *Handbook for Travellers to Spain* (1847), “[t]his is the TRUE English book”:

The Duke’s writings are the exponent of the man; a plain unvarnished tale; no fine writing about fine fighting: *dum scribebat legenda, scribenda perfectiebat*. The iron energy of his sword passed, like Caesar’s, into his didactic pen, and inscribed on tablets of bronze, more enduring than the Pyramids, the *truth*. Every line bears that impress. Every line bears that honest ENGLISH impress without which there can be no real manliness or greatness.\(^9\)

If Blackwood’s had insisted in 1819 that “it may reasonably be concluded, that Shakespeare would no more have proved a Wellington in the field, than Wellington could become a Shakespeare in the closet”\(^10\), the Duke was now commonly recognised as a “man of letters”, even coming to be regarded as “one of the most powerful writers in the English language”.\(^11\) Wellington had assumed the role of the military author, helping to entirely efface the possible controversy and illegitimacy that had earlier clouded the reception of this figure. Military memoirists themselves were, by the 1830s, increasingly drawing on historical accounts in the composition of their texts. Luvaas observes that sections from Napier’s *History* surfaced in many of the books written after 1830, “when fading memories were reinforced by unacknowledged passages from the History”.\(^12\) The military memoir was no longer

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\(^7\) Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, 14.

\(^8\) *United Services Journal and Naval and Military Magazine* pt.III (1832), 290.


\(^10\) Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, 6.33 (1819), 292.


\(^12\) Oman, *Wellington’s Army, 1809-1814*, 29; Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, 17.
presented as a counter-narrative to war, but was increasingly offered as a supplement to an official and established military history.

Significantly too, the theme of military adventure was widely taken up by novelists at the end of the 1820s. *La Belle Assemblée* suggested in a review of Charles White's *The Adventures of a King's Page* (1829), “a campaign in the Peninsula [had] become an almost indispensable ingredient in a modern work of fiction”. The later 1820s saw the emergence of a distinct genre of military fiction with the publication of numbers of military and nautical novels. Most notable of these novels was Frederick Marryat’s *The Naval Officer* (1829), a work that Patrick Brantlinger views as inaugurating an era of “imperialist adventure fiction”, which “flourished from the seafaring writers who emulated him in the 1830s”. These novels were often highly autobiographical in character and were clearly inspired by the success of the military memoirs. The term “military novel” was coined by the *Quarterly Review* in 1828 to describe Thomas Hamilton’s *The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton* (1827) because it treated of similar details as a military memoir, creating much the same effect of “lively sympathy in the reader” for the adventures of a soldier. Indeed, one of the first reviews of Marryat’s work located it alongside the autobiographical *Peace Campaigns of a Cornet* (1829), and insisted the book was interesting because of its authentic portrayal of a naval officer’s “gasconading and adventurous” life at war. When the *Edinburgh Review* selected nine such novels of military adventure for review in 1830, it similarly insisted that their authors composed them more “like the biographer and the tourist” than the novelist, and titled the review “Tales of Military and Naval Life”. But the appearance of these works further displaced the significance of the military memoir by transforming the soldier’s story into semi-fictional narratives that were, the *Edinburgh Review* observed, even more likely to be “read and admired” than the recital of actual recollections.

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15 *Quarterly Review* 37 (1828), 521.
17 *Edinburgh Review* 52.103 (1830), 123.
For the *Edinburgh Review*, the portrayal of the soldier's suffering was a central element in the value of these military novels. Such works, the *Review* claimed,

render us better acquainted ... with the dreadful realities of war, and its appalling train of concomitant miseries, and dissipate the delusive halo by which those who view it from a distance are dazzled and deceived ... we are more affected by the simple tale of his individual sufferings than by the high-sounding recital of the fall of thousands.\(^\text{18}\)

The *Monthly Review* similarly saw the soldier’s tale as having value precisely in its faithful record of suffering. Reviewing Londonderry’s *Narrative of the War in Spain and Portugal*, it noted that his simple soldier’s style, his “artlessness” and credibility as a witness, was crucial in developing the reader’s sympathies for the stories of soldiering:

What a disastrous blow to all our sympathies, when reading over the affecting story of a battle in which our countrymen fought, we discover that it is the lamentation of a professional author, instead of the genuine affliction of the ostensible writer, that engages us! Our firmness has unquestionably been sometimes put to the test by the pathetic description of a General of Division; nay, a tender-hearted ensign has beguiled us of a genuine tear by the details of a letter, ‘written on the field of battle’; but as for the simulated sorrows of a bookwright, as he mourns over the ravages of war, we can only compare them to the abstract countenance of woe which an undertaker is so well able to put on just as the funeral begins to move.\(^\text{19}\)

Such accounts of suffering could be seen to represent war’s miseries and to expose the “dreadful realities of war”, leading to a body of recognisably anti-war writing with private soldiers’ memoirs that continued throughout the nineteenth century.\(^\text{20}\) Thomas Jackson’s *Narrative of the Eventful Life of Thomas Jackson* (1847), in particular, deserves far wider attention as one of the most harrowing accounts of war’s miseries to be written in the nineteenth century.\(^\text{21}\) More commonly, however, these images of suffering were deployed in order to underpin an “ideology of

\[^{18}\text{Edinburgh Review 52.103 (1830), 123.}\]
\[^{19}\text{Monthly Review N.S.13 (1830), 501.}\]
\[^{20}\text{See Steedman, *The Radical Soldier’s Tale*.}\]
\[^{21}\text{Thomas Jackson, *Narrative of the Eventful Life of Thomas Jackson, Late Sergeant of the Coldstream Guards, Detailing his Military Career during Twelve Years of the French War, Describing also His Perils by Sea and Land; His Many Hair-Breadth Escapes from Death; the Hardship, Privation, and Barbarity he Endured from the Enemy, While a Prisoner and Wounded, in Bergen-Op-Zoom. His Subsequent Life: in Which he Meets with Many Opposing Events and Sharp Adversities, All of Which he Ultimately Gets Through, by the Help of God, and Lives in Peace. Written by Himself* (Birmingham: Josiah Allen & Son, 1847).}\]
sacrifice” that might effectively commemorate the wars and inspire the nation with military enthusiasm. As the Monthly Review’s reflections on Londonderry’s Narrative suggest, authentic representations of the soldier’s suffering had an important role to play in constructing sympathy with the nation’s soldiers. The military memoirs and the wider war literature they inspired represent an important way in which Britain’s middle classes came to respond to warfare, helping it to embrace the nation’s soldiers, including aristocratic figures such as the Duke of Wellington, as virtuous icons of the British nation. Arguably, war literature and its concern for the soldier’s “body in pain” can be identified with the emergence of modern war at the start of the nineteenth century and its associations with a civilian print culture.

The success and interest that was widely claimed for the military memoir after 1825 can also, however, help us to reflect on literature more generally between 1825-37, a time that is widely recognised as representing, as Paul Schlicke suggests, a “fallow period” in British literature. The only literary productions from these years that have attracted “widespread attention” are the silver fork novels concerned with depicting fashionable high society, though there is increasing attention to such authors of the period as Mary Russell Mitford and Felicia Hemans. The military memoirs, their influence on fiction and the emergence of the military author are all notable features of this period, adumbrating the development of a new kind of literary culture that emerged in the Victorian period. The military memoirs also established the public’s taste for authentic and adventurous stories, helping to place an emphasis on a “plain, unvarnished” style of writing that, by 1830, was felt to characterise the virtues and identity of both the British soldier and gentleman. More work, therefore, needs to be undertaken on the genres of the military and nautical novel that were prominent forms of writing of these years, but which have attracted almost no attention in the field of literary criticism. Indeed, the wider development of war writing through the Romantic period is still only partially investigated, and the literary response to the American War of Independence and Britain’s colonial campaigns, for instance, remain largely unstudied. Most importantly, however, the late 1820s and early 1830s gave rise to the figure of the military author, a

development which not only helped establish the lasting value of military writing, but which can be seen as having a wider influence on an idea of “muscular” authorship in the Victorian period. Carlyle’s heroicization of the man of letters, for instance, can be seen to reflect the influence of the military author and a valorisation of personal experience and authenticity in literature over the effete style of a “bookwright”.

Military memoirs continued to be published, but as a genre they largely ceased to attract any particular attention, and, with its veterans aging, accounts of the Peninsular War largely ceased to published between the 1850s and 1890s. At the end of the century, however, the memoirs were “rediscovered”, most notably by Charles Oman, but also through the publication of a number of extant manuscripts or collections of letters by Peninsular War veterans, along with the republication of earlier military memoirs.23 In his recent study of the emergence of war as a theme for literature and art, A. D. Harvey argues that “[t]he Romance of War was to a large extent a late nineteenth-century discovery”.24 But the late nineteenth century achieved this by rediscovering the “Romance” that had earlier been articulated through Peninsular War memoirs. They were amongst the first documents to reflect on modern war as a site for romantic adventures, constructing it as an exotically foreign experience and translating suffering into heroic stoicism. These military memoirs had, in many ways, been responsible for creating Romantic war, helping to develop a modern war literature that has established enduring associations between war and adventure in British culture.25

This study has thus attempted to not only show the prominence of the military memoirs in the late Romantic period, to recover their importance for an earlier literary culture, but to suggest also that we need to reorient how we think about war literature. In particular, we need to recognise war literature’s complex response to the “body in pain” and its intimate relationship with the emergence of modern cultures of war and print. Recent studies of Romantic culture have stressed the formative influence of war. It has been seen to have an underlying importance for the democratic impulse and the “remasculinization” of the period’s poetry, Scott’s

23 Urban, Rifles, 286.
24 Harvey, A Muse of Fire, 63.
war poetry arguably also helping to establish “the fashion for romance” (though we might add, interest in poetic romance finally waned with the emergence of the military memoirs and their stories of authentic romantic adventure). Additionally, however, the very existence of a definable war literature can be attributed to the splintering of civilian and military worlds that marked the emergence of a modern culture of war in this period. Indeed, it is only within a distinctively civilian print market that it is possible to recognise the existence of a distinctive military author, a figure who underpins our contemporary understanding of war literature. War literature, in this sense, represents a distinctively civilian mode for reflecting upon and commemorating the nation’s wars, providing stories of the citizen-soldier that reinforce the separation of domestic and military realms, but which equally help to bind those at home with wars fought in their name. Far from seeing Romantic culture as having no interest in war, therefore, we could justly claim the period as lying at the origin of a recognisable war literature that continues to shape how we respond to war today.

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Appendix

This Appendix lists British military (and nautical) memoirs and associated collections of letters or published journals of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. It includes memoirs published from the start of the wars in 1793, through to those published in 2006. It is principally compiled from seven bibliographies, created by: Charles Oman, William Matthews, Anthony Bruce, John Burnett (along with David Vincent and David Mayall), Paddy Griffith, Benjamin Colbert, and Robert Burnham. I have also included a small number of additional titles that I have located through the British Library, Bodleian Library and the National Army Museum. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and it does not include all military memoirs published during the Romantic period. For example, it omits memoirs of the American War of Independence, or any work published during the 1780s. It is, however, indicative of the extent of the military memoir and soldiers’ writing in the Romantic period.

I have further subdivided the bibliography into six sections: 1792-1814; 1815-1824; 1825-1835; 1836-1854; 1855-1918; and 1919-2006. The sections, particularly the first three, are intended to help highlight key stages in the publication history of the military memoir. Within each section, the titles are organised alphabetically. Where I have not located the first edition, I have endeavoured to provide the edition number, if available. It is worth noting that large numbers of these memoirs have been republished in recent years, particularly since the 1980s by publishers such as Ken Trotman, Greenhill Books, and others specialising in military history. To limit the extent of this Appendix, the details of republications have not been listed.


Anonymous. *A Journal Kept in the British Army, from the Landing of the Troops under the Command of Earl Moira, at Ostend, in June 1794, to Their Return to England the Following Year.* Liverpool, 1796.


Anonymous. *An Accurate and Impartial Narrative of the War, by an Officer of the Guards; ... Containing the Second Edition of a Poetical Sketch of the Campaign of 1793, Revised ... And ... Enlarged; ... Also a Similar Sketch of the Campaign of 1794, To Which is Added, a Narrative of the Retreat of 1795 ... With Engravings, Etc.* 3rd ed. London: Cadell & Davies, 1796.

Anonymous. *Letters from Flushing; Containing an Account of the Expedition to Walcheren, Beveland, and the Mouth of the Scheldt, under the Command of the Earl of Chatham. To Which is Added a Topographical and Statistical Account of the Islands of Walcheren and Beveland / by an Officer of the Eighty-First Regiment. [with a Map and Plans].* London, 1809.


Anonymous. *Plan of the Siege of Valenciennes by the Allied Army, Commanded By ... The Duke of York ... By an Officer in the Army.* London: W. Faden, 1793.


Anonymous. *The Story of the Unfortunate but Heroic Highlander / Related by Himself.* Wellington: Printed and sold by Houlston and Son; sold also by all other booksellers, 1809.


Beatson, Alexander. *A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultan; Comprising a Narrative of the Operations of the Army under the Command of Lieutenant-General George Harris, and of the Siege of Seringapatam.* London, 1800.


Bristow, James. *A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow, Belonging to the Bengal Artillery, During Ten Years Captivity with Hyder Ally and Tippoo Saheb.* [London]: Calcutta printed; and London: Re-printed for J. Murray, 1793.


Cope, Susannah. The Life & Extraordinary Adventures of Susanna Cope, the British Female Soldier, Etc. Banbury: Cheney, 1810.

Cordiner, James. A Description of Ceylon ... With Narratives of a Tour Round the Island in 1800, the Campaign in Candy in 1803, and a Journey to Ramisseram in 1804. London, 1807.

Dirom, Alexander, the Younger. A Narrative of the Campaign in India Which Terminated the War with Tippoo Sultan in 1792, Etc. London: G. Nicol, 1794.


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Jones, John. An Impartial Narrative of the Most Important Engagements Which Took Place between His Majesty's Forces and the Insurgents, During the Irish Rebellion, in 1798. Dublin, 1799.

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Lamb, Roger. An Original and Authentic Journal of Occurrences During the Late American War, From Its Commencement to the Year 1783. Dublin, 1809.

Lamb, Roger. Memoir of His Own Life: By R Lamb, Formerly a Serjeant in the Royal Welch Fuzileers and Author of "a Journal of Occurrences During the Late American War". Dublin: J Jones, 1811.

MacKenzie, Roderick. A Sketch of the War with Tippoo Sultaun; or, a Detail of the Military Operations, from the Commencement of Hostilities ... In December, 1789, until the Peace Concluded, in February, 1792. Calcutta, 1793.


McGrigor, James. Medical Sketches of the Expedition to Egypt from India. London, 1804.


264
Miller, M., Lieutenant, R.N. *Letters Written During a Captivity of Upwards of Six Years in France. By an Officer of His Majesty's Late Ship Wolverene*. 2 vols. Yeovil, 1814.


Moor, Edward. *A Narrative of the Operations of Captain Little's Detachment, and of the Mahratta Army, Commanded by Purseram Bhow, During the Late Confederacy in India, against the Nawab Tippoo Sultan Bahadur*. London, 1794.


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Willyams, Cooper. *An Account of the Campaign in the West Indies, in the Year 1794 ... With the Reduction of the Islands of Martinique, St Lucia, Guadalupe, Marigalante, Desiada, Etc., and the Events That Followed Those Un paralleled Successes, and Caused the Loss of Guadalupe.* London, 1796.

1815-1824

Anonymous. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antique Statues, Paintings and Other Productions of the Fine Arts, That Existed in the Louvre, at the Times the Allies Took Possession of Paris in July 1815. To Which Are Added [...] Hints to Those Who [...] Visit the [...] Field of Waterloo.* Edinburgh, 1816.


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266
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Cumberland, George. *Views in Spain and Portugal Taken During the Campaigns of His Grace the Duke of Wellington. By George Cumberland, Jr., Only 30 Copies Printed.* 1815.


Eaton, Charlotte A. *The Battle of Waterloo, Containing the Accounts Published by Authority, British and Foreign, and Other Relative Documents, with Circumstantial Details, Previous and after the Battle ... To Which is Added an Alphabetical List of the Officers Killed and Wounded, from 15th to 26th June, 1815 ... Illustrated by a Panoramic Sketch [by Jane Waldie] of the Field of Battle, and a Plan ... By a near Observer. Sixth Edition, to Which is Added the Hanoverian ... And Dutch Accounts, Etc. [by Charlotte A. Eaton. With Other Matter. Edited by J. Booth and Hannibal Evans Lloyd.]*. London, 1815.

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Gourgaud, Baron Gaspard. *The Campaign of 1815; or, a Narrative of the Military Operations Which Took Place in France and Belgium During the Hundred Days.* London, 1818.


Hills, Robert. *Sketches in Flanders and Holland; with Some Account of a Tour through Parts of Those Countries, Shortly after the Battle of Waterloo.* London, 1816.

Hope, James. *Letters from Portugal, Spain and France During the Memorable Campaigns of 1811, 1812, & 1813; and from Belgium and France in the Year 1815.* London: T and G. Underwood, 1819.


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