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Fantastical Conflicts: War as a Storytelling Tool in Glen Cook's *The Chronicles of the Black Company*

Evil. Righteousness. Memory. War. These are the themes conjured by Glen Cook's fantasy novel *Chronicles of the Black Company*. War is an ever-present aspect of the fantasy genre; shaping entire storylines and transforming common men into grand warrior-heroes. *Chronicles* is one such example; an epic whose plot revolves almost entirely around brutalizing warfare between a hostile empire and an upstart rebellion. Novels like Cook's raise queries regarding war's inclusion in fantasy as a whole. War must serve some purpose for the fantasy genre; must accomplish some unseen task. From novels like *Chronicles*, it is clear war is so commonplace in fantasy novels because, as a storytelling tool, it conveniently accomplishes three tasks. First, fantasy transports readers into a world wholly of an author's invention and thus, a fantasy war is created to said author's exacting specifications. Next, fantasy novels are able to tell war stories with more easily accessible truth, morality, and deliver distinct divisions between good and evil not found in other war stories. Finally, violence, tragedy, and conflict – all of which are rampant in war – are story elements which develop heroes. The war which embroils *Chronicles* is one which accomplishes all three of these tasks.

The fantasy genre is based foremost around narrative; in this light, Glen Cook's *Chronicles* follows in the footsteps of a myriad of other fantasy novels; revolving almost solely around a continent-spanning war. This gritty tale of war and loss centers around the Black Company, last of the Free Companies of Khatovar – a squadron of elite mercenaries hired by wicked patrons for nefarious purposes. Cook's novel is told through the perspective of Croaker, the Company healer and Annalist. As Annalist, Croaker records Company history as he sees it in a book known to his brothers as the Annals. Like any good fantasy read, *Chronicles* has a powerfully

complicated plotline brimming with commentary. Following the Company's commission under the wing of the Lady's northern empire, the novel is grounded in the conflict between the Company's masters and an army of rebels. John H. Timmerman, in his book *Other Worlds: The Fantasy Genre*, details what is required of such a novel's storyline. "...story requires a narrative plot line, the unfolding of events, the development of characters into living beings who think about actions, who do act, and whose actions have effects. A story moves from a beginning through a middle, to an end, and in the process emotionally or psychologically moves the reader." (Timmerman 5). This quote is especially relevant to *Chronicles*, as the information presented by Timmerman is pertinent for one to understand when analyzing a work of fiction. *Chronicles* follows Timmerman's requirements to an art. Its characters are personable, its backstory rich and flowing, and its storyline pools with challenges for its characters to overcome. Croaker, in a moment of clarity, speaks on the varied backstories of his fellow brothers in the Company. "We all have our pasts. I suspect we keep them nebulous not because we are hiding from our yesterdays..." (Cook 40). In this quote, Glen Cook makes it clear the effort he has put into *Chronicles* and Croaker himself realizes the sheer depths his story will sink to. As each character has its own backstory, their eventual deaths will hit that much harder, moving the audience just as Timmerman describes. This novel slots into the fantasy genre well; a grand story fueled by set processes of story progression. For a novel like *Chronicles* to be considered part of the fantasy genre, it must satisfy a set of categorical prerequisites. Foremost among these labels are two concepts which go hand-in-hand: story and character. A character cannot grow without a story to define him and a story cannot progress without a character to take action. In fantasy, heroes are often crafted of a similar mold – an ordinary man exploring an extraordinary world. This prerequisite – that of the common protagonist – is simple enough to understand. In worlds of such complexity; of magic, monsters, and tension-fueled action, audiences need a window through which to view these intricate storylines. John H. Timmerman discusses this window in *Other Worlds*. "If...story is to bear relevance...these relevances, applications, and insights must arise through characters living the story immediately." (Timmerman 29.) For a story to hold weight, Timmerman argues, its characters must learn as its readers do. Readers should, according to Timmerman, view a fantasy novel through the eyes of its protagonist.

In this light, the common man is the ideal hero, as he knows as little as the readers about the world he adventures in. Croaker, of *Chronicles*, is such a protagonist; providing direct commentary on his experiences to the audience. “I was a city boy before I joined the company. I cannot become comfortable with forests. Especially not woods the size of the Forest of Cloud.” (Cook 114). Here, Cook reveals that the protagonist of *Chronicles* is as out of his element as the novel’s readers are. Croaker, a simple city boy, joined the Company many years ago and, through a series of harrowing years, witnessed many fantastical events. Readers feel the raw, fearful awe roiling through Croaker as he views sights far beyond his lone comprehension. This act of connecting reader to protagonist allows an author to create a fantastical world for his characters to reside in without accidentally alienating his readers.

The fantasy genre enables its authors to custom-craft personalized worlds; an act of creation which sets morals unique to each author’s whims; definitions of good and evil which vary from novel to novel. An author, in this sense, becomes the creator of a world which appears entirely as he designs. Unlike other similar genres, fantasy novels completely ignore suspension of disbelief in that their worlds are not simply re-imaginings of readers’ personal experiences. Rather, any given fantasy world holds its own rules and morals – all of which are spawned directly from an author’s imagination. Timmerman, in *Other Worlds*, analyzes this very notion.

“...this world is ‘evoked’ or called forth clean and whole. It is simply provided for us, and we have to cross the threshold to it in our minds.” (Timmerman 50). In this comment, Timmerman demonstrated that fantasy worlds do not require comparison to reality. Morals and concepts which define good and evil are drafted into being by an author and, as a result, permit said author to make more poignant commentary on the power dynamic between right and wrong than he could have otherwise. When the Black Company realizes that their patron – the empire which commissioned them – has been committing acts most heinous, Croaker comments on the evils of the world he inhabits. “There are no self-proclaimed villains, only regiments of self-proclaimed saints. Victorious historians rule where good or evil lies.” (Cook 70). In this quote, Croaker – and by association, Glen Cook – directly references the fact that definitions of good and evil are arbitrary across the wide breadth of literature. An author decides what good and evil both mean within the boundaries of his tale. Cook reveals, in

this commentary by his protagonist, that the author makes all decisions in regards to his novel. The Black Company spends the majority of *Chronicles* denying that their masters commit such heinous acts yet, in the end, are forced to confront their inner turmoil and correctly define good and evil within the boundaries of the world they live in. This act of confrontation is key to Cook's tale, as it sets up conflict – a storytelling concept vital to any novel.

With any good story comes conflict on the part of the protagonist; events of suffering which said character must accept in order to progress even the basest of plotlines. A protagonist's endured suffering is absolutely essential for any story – and for fantasy especially. As stated above, the fantasy genre revolves around story and character above much else. Thus, a character's struggles must become the kernel around which his entire tale twists. Without this core of conflict, a novel cannot possibly intrigue its readers. In his book *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragedy*, Terry Eagleton argues that a hero's comprehension of his own suffering is essential to a well-written story. "The hero must be representative of humanity as a whole but at the same time elevated above his fellows. His suffering... must be conscious rather than blind, and must be accepted by both him and ourselves as necessary." (Eagleton 76). Because a protagonist is the audience's window to the experienced story, his suffering must be internalized and accepted for the audience to do the same. Conflict begets character growth. Without character growth, a story is meaningless. Thus, throughout the course of a fantasy novel, its hero must grow yet this he cannot do without a solid conflict to base his evolution upon. In Cook's novel, when the Black Company is pressed back into a sandstorm before the raw power of a massive Rebel army, Croaker laments his suffering. "So many wounded, and so little I could do for them... all I could do was sew them up and pray, and make the dying comfortable until they went – whereupon we dumped them to make room for the newcomers." (Cook 129). Here, Croaker roils with inner turmoil and, after a spell, accepts his suffering for what it is. As rebels harry the retreating Imperial force, Croaker cares for the dead and dying. His work, though valiant, produces few tangible results. This prompts a crisis of faith – inner conflict – within the annalist-cum-healer. It is precisely this form of suffering which is so integral to fantasy novels. Without internalized conflict, characters cannot recognize or correct their flaws.

Suffering causes character growth within protagonists, as each downfall generates the chance for a hero to rise again, stronger than before. Heroes suffer their conflicts for the sole purpose of eventual redemption. Heroic values are meant to be trampled on. Only by standing against adversity can a hero uphold his moral standards. Much of the joy of reading is encapsulated in seeing one's hero rise from his lowest point. A work of fantasy differs in that all of its character conflict is designed to an author's exacting specifications. Terry Eagleton continues this thought in *Sweet Violence*. "If there is no need for redemption, this may simply mean there is nothing worthwhile enough to be redeemed. Tragedy needs meaning and value if only to violate them."

(Eagleton 26). In this, Eagleton reveals a simple truth of storytelling – that if a hero has nothing to press him down to the mud, readers as a result have no need to read on; no burning desire to watch their hero overcome the challenges before him. This follows a basic rule of storytelling – the division of a tale into three acts. In the first act of any tale, its protagonists are at the top of their game. As the plot progresses to the second act, said heroes are brought to their lowest point; beaten down by adversity. Then, when all hope seems lost, the heroes discover within themselves a newfound vigor and rise. This moment – the dawn of the third act – is when a novel's redeemed heroes put their changed morals to the test. *Chronicles* follows this story arc, in that its heroes stamp on their own morals, pressing themselves down. "We had drifted into a trap where we might have to face the biggest choice in Company history. We might have to betray for centuries of Company mythos on behalf of the greater whole." (Cook 306). In this quote, Croaker reveals his personal feelings – that the Company must eventually betray their contract; breaking their moral standards to prevent the rise of evil. After serving villains for so long a period, the Company is forced to fall further into disgrace in order to become morally righteous. The Black Company's fall from grace engulfs Glen Cook's novel. Yet, in the end, though they endure much hardship and loss, the Black Company stands firmly on the side of righteousness – redeemed from their previous atrocities.

As war contains a wealth of suffering and violence, it serves as the perfect spawning ground for character growth and redemption within *Chronicles*. In the novel, warfare is the choicest method with which Glen Cook could have expressed the fall and subsequent rise. The Company starts at the top of their game; thousands

strong, respected above all other mercenary companies, tasked with the most important missions. By the book's end, war has diminished the Company's ranks and their reputation has been tattered. Only war – sheer suffering on a grand scale – could have been enough to bring the Company so low. This dynamic of high to low is discussed by Eagleton in *Sweet Violence*. "...the most powerful make the best protagonists...because their more extravagant plunges from grace render the tragedy more grippingly terrible for the spectators." (Eagleton 86). This quote by Eagleton shows that character falls are most potent when said characters start from the highest point possible. In this way, readers can view a fall in its entire breadth. Croaker, at the beginning of the novel's third act, spends time commenting on the company's broken state. "Times are desperate for the Black Company. We cannot afford casualties. Any man lost would be a friend of many years." (Cook 411). In this, the Company is shown to be an example of the powerful protagonist mentioned by Eagleton. Together, the Company begins the novel as elite mercenaries serving the evil Lady and end up as a band of old, broken brothers supporting the White Rose – and with her, the forces of good. The Company fell so it could rise from evil's grasp. Without war to diminish the Company's forces, they would not have seen the light. In this, it is shown that only war was enough to bring the Company down.

War stories such as the Company's do not permit open audience interpretation and thus, in turn, makes war an incredibly difficult subject to write on. The genre of the war story cannot deal with morality. Rather, these tales revolve almost solely around specified witness accounts and thus it becomes difficult to interpret much meaning from a traditional war story. Tim O'Brien, author of the esteemed book *The Things They Carried*, discussed the intrinsic truth behind war stories in the aforementioned book by commenting the following. "A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things they have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it." (O'Brien). In this quote, O'Brien argues that war stories cannot have deliver an ethical message. To O'Brien, a war story which attempts to deliver such messages cannot possibly be true enough to believe. Tales of violence and open warfare from the battlefields of reality are not open to morals. Therefore, authors who wish to utilize warfare as a method of character growth are presented with a significant issue. If war stories hold no intrinsic meaning,

how can a character learn from and grow after such an experience? Margot Norris, in her book *Writing War in the Twentieth Century*, discusses this paradoxical quandary. “Because war is a world-unmaking event, a reality-deconstructing and defamiliarizing activity, one of the challenges of war writing is how to make...its sense of experienced ‘unreality’ real.” (Norris 24). In the aforementioned quote, Norris details precisely what makes writing war so strenuous. The fact of the matter is that those who experience war often cannot detail their experiences with much precision. Accurately representing this muddled sense of reality is something which many authors struggle with. Glen Cook strikes a balance at the heart of this quandary. After witnessing a grueling magical rite, Croaker explains to his readers what he recalls of the mystical process. “I watched, and still I do not know what went on. Nor can I describe the Lady...despite having been near her all night. Or maybe for several nights. Time had a surreal quality.” Here, Croaker experiences the concept of unreality brought up by Margot Norris. Glen Cook’s *Chronicles* has uncovered a solution to the issue of writing war in fantasy. Cook has told his tale through the perspective of a common man and thus, what Croaker experiences is accurate to real-life war stories. Yet there are several other key issues which plague authors drafting fantasy wars.

While creating a war story, one often wishes to craft an ethical backdrop encapsulating the war process though doing so is both ill-advised and incredibly difficult to pull off. Real war stories have no morals. When the bullets start flying, no concept of good and evil can be comprehended by those who experience such wanton violence. Margot Norris deconstructs this issue in *Writing War in the Twentieth Century*. “Although it would be possible to construct a coherent argument about the relationship between representation, numbers, and violence in the literature of modern war, a more nuanced ethical reading is achieved if one avoids the temptation to create a master narrative that gives a single argument victory or justification.” (Norris 9). Norris argues here that war stories are meant to be written without definite ethical concepts. Rather, war stories roil in a moral grey area. With this in mind, war stories and fantasy would certainly appear as oil and water; polar opposites unable to mix because fantasy novels like *Chronicles* sire conceptualizations of good and evil. Tim O’Brien’s analysis of said morality in war stories is a harsh critique of the truth residing within such tales. “In a true war story, if

there's a moral at all, it's like the thread that makes the cloth. You can't tease it out. You can't extract the meaning without unraveling the deeper meaning. And in the end, really, there's nothing much to say about a true war story, except maybe 'Oh.'” (O'Brien). This is the crux of O'Brien's argument on war stories. To paraphrase, O'Brien believes that war stories are a genre which is meant to turn the stomach and nauseate readers, not elicit a moral response. War stories are, to O'Brien, ideally concerned solely with truth and representation. Glen Cook even acknowledges this in a section of direct commentary by Croaker. “You...now realize that I shy off portraying the whole truth about our band of blackguards...I do not often show that side because these men are my brethren, my family, and I was taught young not to speak ill of kin.” (Cook 93). In this quote, Croaker reveals the difficulty of both ensuring a story is true and finding a moral center at the same time. No sense of moral righteousness is present in war and thus, not much can be gleaned from a tale's depths. This is the core of the paradox surrounding fantastical war stories. On the surface, war stories and fantasy seem not to gel; as genres which are incompatible. This superficial analysis, though, is not quite as potent as it appears.

Despite the aforementioned issues, fantasy novels still manage to place war writings on a pedestal; ensnaring audiences' attentions in grand displays of brutalizing violence. Why, if violence is so abhorrent as O'Brien claims, are such story elements included in fantasy novels? Uncovering what purpose violence serves within fictional literature assists on in comprehending the ways in which authors combine war and fantasy. John Limon, in his book *Writing after War*, ponders this very subject. “I believe I have noticed that the literature of war perennially concerns itself with this odd self-challenge: why, since war is ugly, does writing beautify it?” (Limon 4). This observation, coupled with O'Brien's commentary on the feelings conjured by war, raises eyebrows at a serious quandary. In order to arrive at a definite conclusion to this paradoxical issue, one requires more information. Joseph Carroll has delved deep into this issue within his essay *The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War*. In this essay, Carroll argues the following: “Fictional violence delineates extreme limits in human experience. We do not necessarily enjoy reading about violent acts, but we do enjoy finding out about the extreme limits of experience.” (Carroll 431). This quote by Carroll, when gelled



with the paradox posed by Limon, demonstrates why war is so intriguing to readers. The depravity involved in wars like those included in *Chronicles* differ far from readers own safe, sheltered lives. Though war stories turn the stomach, as O'Brien argues, these tales of depravity, bloodshed, and violence have enough power to lock readers' interests, capturing a deep-seeded fascination with brutish, gory action. Within the pages of *Chronicles*, Croaker invokes this power to hold an audience in rapture. Croaker's position as Annalist requires him to read to the Company from the Annals once a month; crafting a sermon to inspire the men and remind them of the Company's legacy. Croaker comments the following after the novel's first instance of an Annals reading. "I lost track entirely. Old Straw was hell with a pen. I read for three hours, raving like a mad prophet, and held them spellbound. They gave me an ovation when I finished. I retreated from the lectern feeling as though my life had been fulfilled." (Cook 109). Using this quote as an example, Glen Cook's novel shows that war is also intriguing to in-novel characters. To the soldiers of the Black Company, the past's tales are elaborate enough to assure the troops that they have truly established a brotherhood which stretches back for centuries. This assurance is what makes Croaker's sermon so powerful. In this case, a war story has been given meaning within the context of a novel – an act which directly contrasts O'Brien's arguments. What about *Chronicles* permits the novel to assign meanings to war stories? The answer to this question lies ultimately within the facets of the fantasy genre itself.

Though traditional war stories are near impossible to attach meaning or morals to, the fantasy genre allots these grisly tales the right to express such concepts. Two key problems unfurl before authors during the process of writing war stories. Fantasy, as a genre, is able to conveniently resolve these issues. The theory that the genres of war story and fantasy do not gel is sadly superficial and holds little water. Essentially, this solution boils down to a single concept – omnipotence. In *Writing after War*, John Limon claims that no matter what, war stories cannot contain the whole truth of an entire war. "Knowledge of war is faulty insofar as only survivors write memoirs yet war is war only if it generates nonsurvivors." (Limon 6). Limon shows here that, within traditional war stories, the survivors of war write record events as they remember it occurred. Only those who make it out alive are able to give their fractured rendition of what happened out at war. The thoughts of the dead

are inaccessible and therefore no sprawling view of any real-life war is available for viewing. This is not the case in a work of fantasy. That which permits fantasy to insert morals into its war stories is engrained in the genre's core makeup. The evidence presented in John Timmerman's *Other Worlds* shows that it is the act of fantasy world-building which allows this. "...the world of fantasy matches our world in reality. It is not a dream world, a never-never land, but a world in which characters confront the same terrors, choices and dilemmas we confront in our world. The reason for creating such a world is to confront more openly and daringly a spiritual reality too often ignored in our world of system and fact." (Timmerman 49). Here, Timmerman presents the elements which permit these two contradictory genres to meld. A fantasy world is created on the whim of an author; every detail designed to his exacting specifications. Each event which occurs within *Chronicles* was a conscious decision by Glen Cook. An author is, in fantasy, omnipotent – able to control the truths within his novel. This may seem self-evident but is perhaps the most important aspect to understand when one considers the merge of war stories with fantasy. Tim O'Brien argues that audiences often ponder the truth of war stories. "Is it true? The answer matters. You'd feel cheated if it never happened. Without the grounding reality, it's just a trite bit of puffery, pure Hollywood, untrue in the way all such stories are untrue." (O'Brien). O'Brien's logic here is sound; supporting the argument that fantasy and war stories do not mix. Yet what O'Brien has not considered here is that, in some cases, a war story is not meant to be true. Fantasy, as discussed above, transports a reader to a world which is entirely fictional. Thus, O'Brien's concerns with truth are unfounded when a war story melds with fantasy. This is why *Chronicles* and novels of its ilk are able to tell war stories involving distinct moral dilemmas. Fantasy authors have complete control over their novels and this, above all else, is the factor which debunks O'Brien's claims against moral values within war stories. Fantasy wars are not beholden to truth; to the accuracy of prediction. Rather, they are beholden solely to an author's imagination.

In conclusion, the inclusion of war in fantasy novels such as *Chronicles* is convenient for a number of key reasons. Foremost, the fantasy genre enables authors to include in their novels more easily accessible ethical stances. This is done through the creation of an entirely new world spawned from an author's imagination. In

doing so, authors are able to establish clear definitions which break down the concepts of good and evil – the meanings of which are specific to each individual fantasy world. In addition to this, fantasy novels revolve heavily around characters who progress their stories by overcoming challenges set before them. As war is chock-full of violence and suffering, it serves as a solidly convenient vessel for authors to provide such conflict. The violence contained in warfare is more than enough to inspire character change. Last, writing a war story within the fantasy genre enables an author to inject morals into what is, typically, a genre barren of both ethics and the classic good-versus-evil dynamic. This is because fantasy authors definitively determine the innate truths within their novels. War stories based in reality are, as Tim O’Brien argues, devoid of morals because they lack a full image of war. In fantasy an author has contained within his mind the entire breadth of a war and therefore dissolves O’Brien’s proclamation. As a result of this dissolution, an author of fantasy has the opportunity to implant a message into his tales of travesty and war. As fantasy novels are inherently based on narratives, garnering their messages is a tough process – one which requires much close reading. One can, if given enough time, uncover the message which Glen Cook delivers within the pages of *Chronicles*. This message is best gleaned from Croaker’s commentary on the loss of his precious Annals. “I must answer to the shades of brethren who have gone before. Those Annals *are* the Black Company. While they exist, the Company lives.” (Cook 502). Here, Croaker’s Annals – war stories from the Black Company’s long-limbed history – take on literal meaning. The Annals become the Company, representing a legacy of honor and the bonds of brotherhood which tightly interconnect each soldier. Glen Cook has given meaning to war stories here, within the context of his novel. Cook’s message is, in the end, that war stories have the potential to bind men together, forming unshakeable bonds of kindred spirit. This message, hidden within the narrative of *Chronicles*, was incorporated in Cook’s novel through war – among the most convenient, potent storytelling tools in a fantasy author’s toolbox.

## Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank Dr. Morse for her enthusiasm and dedication during the drafting process. Her interest in my topic assured me that my research question was reasonable. As this topic is a bit out of the ordinary, it was heartening to know that a professor had my back. My meetings with her helped to wrap my mind around what ended up being a rather complicated topic. I could not have written this paper without her. I would also like to thank Jessica Guerin, my peer review partner. Her assistance allowed me to garner outside opinion and thus rewrite the most egregious issues in regards to my essay. Again, I could not have done this without her. Last, I suppose, I will thank Glen Cook for writing *Chronicles of the Black Company*. It was one hell of a read and made for a unique, multi-faceted research subject.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

Cook, Glen. *Chronicles of the Black Company*. New York City: Tor, 1992. Print.

This novel is a dark and gritty tale about a company of hardened mercenaries known as the Black Company. This tale, I feel, portrays fantasy war in a view directly from the ground, from the perspective of a protagonist who cannot operate magic nor truly control much of the fantastical world around him. The book's protagonist is Croaker, the Company's medic and chief annalist – recorder of the Company's history. I feel as though I can accurately slot this book in as a prime example with which to identify how fantasy wars affect both readers and characters. As Croaker and the Company are, for essentially the entirety of the book, embroiled in brutal warfare on a massive scale, *Chronicles of the Black Company* was a solid novel to use as my artifact. I was able to connect it back to most of my secondary sources with relative ease.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried: A Work of Fiction*. New York; Broadway, 1998. Print.

### Secondary Sources:

Berdensie, Garrit-Jan, and Mark Williams. *Terror and Text: Representing Political Violence in Literature and the Visual Arts*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2002. Print.

Part I of this source was the most helpful, I feel. Entitled "The Ethics of Representation", this section deals with the ethics involved in writing and representing complicated or dark topics. A portion of this section analyzes the book *Waiting for the Barbarians* – a novel we ourselves discussed in class last quarter. This analysis is on moral dilemmas – a subject with which my artifact deals heavily with. Thus, this first section of *Terror and Text* was especially relevant to my research paper. The rest of the book is not as suitable as this first section though. Therefore, I simply stuck with the Part I and left the rest of the book behind. In the end, I did not use this source

to provide any direct quotes or evidence to back up my thesis. Rather I utilized this text as background information with which to provide a backdrop for my main arguments. *Terror and Text* was not as useful as I first believed it to be.

Burns, Tom, Elicio Cornelson, Volker Jaeckel, and Luis Gustavo Viera. *War and Literature: Looking Back on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Armed Conflicts*. Ibidem Press, 2014. Print.

Carroll, Joseph. "The Extremes of Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide, and War". 2012.

Eagleton, Terry. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Blackwell Publishers. 2003. Print.

This, I feel, is the book I have been looking for. Within its pages is contained a wealth of information on the abstract subjects I plan on discussing in my research paper. Like many other books I have found, this tome will not be useable in its entirety. Chapter Two – entitled "The Value of Agony" proved especially useful when I talked on the impacts violence and conflict have on a novel's readers. Chapter Four, "Heroes" provided information for me to use when analyzing the fantasy genre and when discussing how character stress impacts readers. From this source I gleaned many a quote to use as evidence for my thesis.

Hanley, Lynne. *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts, 1991. Print.

This particular secondary source is an interesting choice, I feel. It intrigues me in that it contains information which at times is pertinent to my topic and at other times is completely unrelated. I do feel that there was some analysis which I could have included in my research paper. Despite this, I ended up using this text mainly for background information. This book essentially discusses various war stories from different eras of war. Much of the book is devoted to analysis of specific texts. I will attempt to stray away from these sections and instead focus on the sections which work with the abstract ideas behind the creation and telling of war stories. This book delves deep into sexism and analyses of women's relations to war. While this is an admirable topic, these sections are not relevant to the subject of my research paper and, as a result, I strayed away from them.

Haefele, Louis Gardner. *Rhetorical Weapons: Gender and Violence in Modernist Literature*. University of California, Irvine, 2002. Print.

Hendin, Josephine. *Heartbreakers: Women and Violence in Contemporary Culture and Literature*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. Print.

This book was somewhat useful to me. It is about women and the violence they commit across different forms of media. Though the majority of this tome was a tad too specific for me to use in my research paper, I planned on utilizing one chapter in particular to supplement my section on violence in literature. Chapter Five, entitled "Violence Lite – Entertaining Aggression" provides just enough generic analysis and discussion for me to use the book as a secondary source. The other five chapters were essentially useless for my research paper. As stated earlier, they discuss topics which are too specified for my use.

Kostava, Bilyana Vanyova. "Tim O'Brien's Problematic Truth: Traumatic Experience in Storytelling Through 'How to Tell a True War Story'". Selville, 2010.

Laetz, Brian and Joshua J. Johnston. "What is Fantasy?" *Philosophy and Literature* 32.1 (2008): 161-72. Web.

This article by Laetz and Johnston is akin to *Other Worlds* in that it analyzes the fantasy genre in an abstract light, talking for lengths on abstract ideas like story and mythology. Where this article differs from *Other Worlds*, however, is that it has a couple paragraphs or stanzas dealing with the relationship between fantasy and myth. It talks on history, of ancient Greek myths and legends. I feel as though I could have used this piece to provide some additional background information for this research paper. It helped to add some informative analysis of the abstract ideas behind the fantasy genre. This should complement the information garnered from *Other Worlds*, as "What is Fantasy" is a more modern publication and thus contains newer information. In short, "What is Fantasy" was a solid compliment to *Other Worlds*.

Limon, John. *Writing After War: American War Fiction from Realism to Postmodernism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1994. Print.

Chapters one and three of this book were most relevant to my topic. The rest of the source dives into detailed discussion about stories locked to specific wars. I want to stray away from subjects like this in my research paper. Thus, chapter one – which discusses the essence of war – and chapter three – which contrasts realism and romanticism in war literature – were most useful to my research paper. I cut this source apart and snagged a great many quotes to use as evidence. Without *Writing After War*, I could not have analyzed Tim O'Brien's arguments on war stories nearly as well. This source proved invaluable to my discussions of the war story genre.

Norris, Margot. *Writing War in the Twentieth Century*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 2000. Print.

Rabkin, Eric S. *The Fantastic in Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1976. Print.

This book is somewhat akin to *Other Worlds* in that it discusses the fantasy genre as a whole. Despite this similarity, *The Fantastic in Literature* is much harder to understand than *Other Worlds* and thus was not as helpful. Its deconstruction of the fantasy genre is detailed, if not succinct. This book is older than many of my other sources; published in 1976. Thus, its ideas might be outdated. I used only the choicest details from this source as a backdrop for my research paper.

Timmerman, John H. *Other Worlds: The Fantasy Genre*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green U Popular, 1983. Print.

Timmerman's book is divided into six different chapters which analyze different aspects of the fantasy genre. The second, fifth, and sixth chapters are perhaps the most relevant to my essay, entitled Story, Good and Evil, and The Quest respectively. This book was ultimately the most useful of any source I found. I utilized more quotes from this source than I honestly expected to. *Other Worlds* was invaluable. Information from this source made it into nearly every section of my research paper. The novel I used as my artifact – *Chronicles of the Black Company* – is not discussed within the pages of this book but this did not prove to be an issue. In short, *Other Worlds* was absurdly relevant to my topic; providing a rock-solid wealth of supremely useful information.