

**A READING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE “WAR ARRATIVE”
AS “HISTORY”: A SELECTIVE STUDY OF BONIFACE PERERA,
MALARAVAN AND SHOBHASAKTHI**

Vihanga Perera

*Department of English, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka
owlgeorgeperera@yahoo.com*

The current objective in reading Boniface Perera’s *Avi Bimaka Hadha Gaesma* (2011), Malaravan’s *War Journey* (first published in English in 2013) and Shobhasakthi’s *Gorilla* (published in English in 2008) is to form a discussion of how these writers have constructed narratives of war as an instrument in the writing of “history”. Each text is structured as a biography or as a narrative influenced by “true incidents”, thus claiming a historicity and the legitimacy to construct the “reality” of conflict.

The paper engages in reading the overlaps, contradictions and conflicts among the three “histories” in question. The use of the “war narrative” as “history” often objectifies the people and the geo-cultural landscape, appropriating and reducing them to the dictates and priorities of a partisan “war history”. The three texts in question will be probed in order to discern how they contribute to the construction of an “absolute history” in war (depending on each writer’s subject position), while upon mutual juxtaposition the neatness of each fabric ruptures: as contradictions, anomalies and hiatuses appear in the “histories” the narratives strive to sustain.

Malaravan and Boniface Perera, at times, relate to the same battles and to the militant psyche of opposite agents involved in the same combat. The “histories” they strive to construct, at crucial points, show remarkable similarity in sentiments and aspects such as “valour”, “national pride”, the “barbarity of the enemy” and “the legitimacy of battle”; except that the two writers “counter-narrate” each other. Shobhasakthi’s text, at one level, further undermines “masculine” and “nationalist” variables that are concurrent in Malaravan and Perera: thus, contributing to another layer of dissonance with the general notion of “history” as a monolith.

The study is partly geared at demonstrating the ambivalence of “history”, as it is promoted and channelled through narratives of war, and the texts under scrutiny will be used as a collective case study to illustrate this end. The study, being descriptive, will not promote or preoccupy itself with “conclusions” of sorts, but will submit its demonstration to the reader in an age where the streamlining and the re-writing of “national history” as “absolute truth” is a current and disturbing reality.