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DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TIME AND WRITING STYLE IN THE WAR NOVELS OF AMERICAN AUTHORS

Annapurani Amarnath P*, Arasakumari M and Esther Rani

Department of Science & Humanities Vel Tech Chennai Avadi- 600062

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ABSTRACT

Humans always have an overwhelming desire to express themselves through stories and this desire is used in literary tools. American literature was initiated with oral representations of native Indian cultures. Before the arrival of Europeans, there were about 500 native Indian languages and cultures without any written literature. Native American oral literature was full of cultural stories about tribes or hunting or agriculture. Tribes had religions worshipping nature and reflecting this in their oral literature. Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries saw the growth of exploratory literature based on events occurring in new settlements. Each author had a different view on American literature. To understand American literature, one needs to know its multi-ethnicity, variable cultures and heritage.

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INTRODUCTION

The Literature of Exploration

The first contact with America began with the voyage of Christopher Columbus who was funded by Spanish rulers. In his Epistola, 1493, he related the drama in his voyage, where he was forced to log (follow) books found on his ship, until the first land was sighted. Bartolomé de las Casas, transcribed Columbus's journal, in which he wrote Spanish enslavement of Indians. The first colony at Roanoke, near the coast of North Carolina was set up in 1585, which later disappeared. The second colony was established in 1607, at Jamestown and America was portrayed as a land of riches and opportunities. European monarchs gave extreme importance to exploration of American Continent.

Exploration of Roanoke was recorded by Thomas Herriot and published in (1588) "*A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*". Herriot, was sent to Roanoke Colony, North Carolina, the first English settlement in his capacity as an expert in the field of navigation. The book was translated into European languages and repeatedly published for more than two centuries. The sixteenth and seventeenth century Europeans and Americans were fascinated with these new discoveries and exploratory adventures. The role of women in literature also turned around, due to the captivity stories women

wrote. The stories in all thrilled the masses and changed people's perception of literature in America. Captain John Smith, a leader of Jamestown colony was a true romantic and embroidered his adventures with his vision of America in his, Pocahontas. The 17th century saw a new wave of colonists settling down with families. This period's literature saw personal writings and journals. Historical events culminated in documented literary works and many prominent people wrote field reports culminating in a new form of literature, *The Captivity Narrative*. Hanna Duston was one of the good examples of this type of work. The British Americans in the seventeenth century spoke their original language, but their writing skills were acquired across the Atlantic.

Colonial Period Writers

America saw a group of intellectual colonists called Puritans in 1630. The next six decades saw many educated university graduates in the north eastern part of America, known as New England. Puritans who were often self-educated and used education to understand or execute God's will, established colonies in this part of America. A Puritan believed that good writing was to bring full awareness of God and spiritual dangers faced by the soul. The styles varied in poetry, journals and religious history. The Puritans waited for the return of Jesus and their theme always remained constant in looking at life as a test where success led to ecstasy. Both Puritanism and

*Corresponding author: **Annapurani Amarnath P**

Department of Science & Humanities Vel Tech Chennai Avadi- 600062

capitalism relied on ambition. The Puritans belief that they were the selected to go to heaven was widespread and sought wealth and status for themselves. They attributed everything to spiritual values and felt their own profits would further God's plans, thus failing to draw a distinct line between secularism and religion. Their literature often cited the Bible and considered history was a symbol of the religious scenario. Pilgrims, who migrated to Holland from England, known for religious tolerance were the first Puritan colonists who settled in New England. They were Reforming Christianity. Separatists, who did not swear loyalty to the king of England were persecuted and taken to America. William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay Colony, was the first historian of his colony. His 1651 history, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, gave a vivid and gripping account of the colony. William's famous description of America is quoted below:

"Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles...they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather beaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor ... savage barbarians ... were readier to fill their sides with arrows than otherwise. And for the reason it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms ... all stand upon them with a weather beaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue."

Bradford also recorded the first colonial self-governance document, Mayflower Compact, which was a forerunner of the Declaration of Independence, a century and a half later. Puritans widely read and disapproved amusements. In writing they wrote nonfiction and pious genres like poetry or sermons and history. The *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the colony of Plymouth from 1602-1625* by Alexander Young focused on the migration into the wilderness of North America from the coastal areas. The text, *The History of New England* recorded John Winthrop's journeys to and from New England between 1630 and 1649. It recorded enslavement of the natives by the settlers during his adventures and the frontier concept focused on native populations and environments. An important distinction to recognize when considering the literature in the 16th and 17th centuries is that the first American piece of literature did not appear until John Smith in the early 17th century. Early American authors based their writings on the English. Literature in the 16th and 17th centuries and were influenced by religion and explorations. Bible, important to Christians was printed in great numbers.

The commonality of the Bible influenced people's opinions on other types of literature. John Smith's, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles* published in 1624, portrayed events around the author in his own words.

New found land Writers

New found land, which retained this distinctive name, attracted those who felt a longing to express themselves in literary form. Stephen Parmenius's Latin verses "Ad Thames in", based on Humphrey Gilbert's experiences were preserved. William Vaughn, an Englishmen, one of the first to establish an American residence, composed an amazing volume called *The Golden Fleece*, which was printed in London in 1626, was the

base for many historians as it guided them through its 350 pages of childish fancies, episodes and rhymed prose. Master Robert Hayman, Vaughn's friend, published in 1628 a volume of *Quodlibets*. Sedgwick, a Charlestown settler who was sent in quick succession against the Dutch, French and the Spanish colonies, reported his expeditions, read by many. Edward Bland's narrative was towards the goal of home, where the natives became the picturesque element for his writings. These involuntary recordings had an important part in the early literature growth as the Indian captivities were narrated vividly thus holding the attention of readers. The first and the best known of these narratives was that of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of Captivity and Restoration*. She was the earliest woman prose writer giving a clear account of her captivity in the Indian camp, during the Indian massacre in 1676. The book fanned an anti Indian sentiment wave. John Williams's, *The Redeemed Captive* (1707), described his two years of captivity by French and Indians. Though such writings produced by women required no special education, literature did benefit from such homely realism. John Gyles private *Memoirs, on Siege of Pemaquid* (1689), collected from his minutes, gave an account of God's Protecting Providence, Robert Barrow's deliverance as related by Jonathan Dickenson (1699), was in many respects the best of all the captivity books. Sarah Kemble Knight's *Journal*, published posthumously in 1825, was a lively piece of writing about the solo trip from Boston to New York and back, in 1704. It escaped the complexity of Puritan writing. Anne Bradstreet's book of poems was also the first American book to be published by a woman. It was published in England due to lack of printing presses in the early years of American colonies. Inspired by the English, the book, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, 1650, showed English influence. Quoted below are a few lines from her poem:

*"If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can."*

A People's History of English and American Literature By Eugene V. Moran – Page 47

Edward Taylor's poems, one of the first in New found land was a classic example of 17th century poetry, but unfortunately, they were discovered only in the 20th century. His writings were varied and authored a 500-page *Metrical History of Christianity*. Michael Wigglesworth was a Harvard educated Puritan minister practicing medicine and the third colonial poet of importance in New found land.

His best-known work, *The Day of Doom*, 1662, had puritan themes. Puritan leaders felt they were rescuing their people from spiritual corruption in England and fashioning new laws and government on God's wishes. New England Puritans like other colonists world over were archaic by choice and conviction. Samuel Sewall's *Diary* recorded 1674 to 1729 events in a lively text. George Keith's explanations about Americans were better than many at that time, tried his best to polish the colonists of unorthodox opinions. Keith's descriptive writings were a source of enlightenment to George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Whitefield kept a diary of his journeys and published them. His seven such published pamphlets were

reprinted many times, of which the important two were, A Monumental Memorial of *A Late Voyage from Boston in New-England To London* and *A Journal of the Taking of Cape-Breton of the Soldiers of the Expedition*. Religious dogmatism of puritans started dying slowly. Roger Williams set up Rhode Island colony with the help of native Indians, after being banished from Massachusetts in 1636. He was a lifelong friend of the Indians. He proposed separation between the church and state which is a fundamental principle of America even today. His books had, the first phrase books of Indian languages. His book, *A Key Into the Languages of America*, 1643, gave bold descriptions of Indian life, mixed with comments, anecdotes and a concluding poem. He wrote lively defenses in support of religious toleration for Christian and non-Christian sects, thus paving the way for secular literature growth. His observations of circumstance changes and descriptions were reflected by Madame Sarah Knight, a matron.

Cotton Mather, the master pedant. Wrote about New Found land in over five hundred books and pamphlets. His *Magnalia Christi Americana*, chronicled the settlements in America in a set of biographies. The narration represented Americans as "Saints' Lives." as quoted below

"I write the wonders of the Christian religion, flying from the deprivations of Europe to the American strand."

The Writing of American History By Michael Kraus, Davis D. Joyce Page 28 John Woolman, was an ardent humanitarian and the first anti slavery writer.

He published, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, in 1754. He proposed a path of passive disobedience to authorities and laws that were unjust; His writings were pioneer efforts before Thoreau's, *Civil Disobedience*, in 1849. South American literature was more secular. The literature reflected social and economic systems of its plantations. Immigrants went to the south for economic opportunities, but never for religious freedom. South had mostly poor farmers and institutions released the poor from manual labor, thus fulfilling their aristocratic dreams. Church was central to their social life as opposed to the puritan theory of conscience. Their culture revolved around the idea of gentlemen. William Byrd, who had a collection of above three thousand books, was the largest in the South. He epitomized the southern spirit. His London diaries were the opposite of New England Puritans and full of dinners, parties and womanizing. Byrd was best known for his lively diary of 1729, *History of the Dividing Line*. It was about trips, into the wilderness, to survey the line dividing neighboring colonies of Virginia and North Carolina.

Robert Beverley recorded the history and authored, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, in a humane and persuasive style. Humorous satire was a part of literature in the colonial South. Colonial period also saw the emergence of Black writers. Equiano from West Africa was the first black who wrote an autobiography, *Gustavus Vassa the African*, in 1789, an early example of slave narratives, where he gave an account of his native land and the horrors and cruelties of his captivity and enslavement in the West Indies. Jupiter Hammon, a black American poet remembered for religious poems was a slave on Long Island, New York and known for his "An Address to the Negroes of the State of New York", in 1787. He advocated freedom for children of slaves and his, "An Evening

Thought," was the first poem published by a black male in America. In the midst of hardships in early America, ironically some of the best poetry of the period was written by an exceptional slave woman, Phillis Wheatley. This first African-American author was born in Africa and purchased by the pious John Wheatley. The family recognized her talent and Wheatley made his daughter, to help her to read and write. Her poetic themes were religious in a neoclassical style. Her best known poems were, *To S.M.*, a Young African Painter and on seeing his Works. *To A Lady On Her Coming To North-America With Her Son, For The Recovery Of Her Health* was a poem of encouragement to a talented black and *To a Lady on the Death of Three Relations* showed her religious sensitivity. The poem unsettled contemporary white critics, since it was conventional. It also unsettled the blacks, since it did not protest the immorality of slavery

American Revolutionary Writers

Though American Revolution fanned hopes for a new American literature with the exception of political writings, very few works of note appeared. The British reviewed American writings implying the excessive dependency of American writings on English literature. Though Native literature became a national obsession, the zeal slowed down due to difficult economic and political conditions that hindered publishing in America. An American editor wrote in 1816

"To be dependent on a foreign mind for what we can ourselves produce is to add to the crime of indolence the weakness of stupidity"

Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States (Cambridge Cultural Social Studies) Paperback - October 28, 1996, Sarah M. Corse Page 28

Cultural revolutions grow in sharing inner thoughts, since they are deep hearted expressions. Further Revolutionary writers were unable to find American roots. Most of the writers cultivated English modes and the American literary style lagged behind. This new challenge of building a nation attracted many to politics, since it gave financial security and honor and writing did not pay enough.

America lacked literary audience, publishers, editorial assistance and legal rights for writers. Authors paid money to printers to get their work published and only the wealthy could afford to indulge in writing. Charles Brockden Brown, author of several Gothic romances, was the first American author to attempt a living through his writing, but ended his life in poverty. Journalism was the only respite for writers which offered financial remuneration. Moreover, the American audience preferred famous European authors, purely out the respect that their rulers had on the European writers, thus creating a lack of an audience and depriving American authors of an audience.. The audience again wanted light and short essays without any experimental work or long essays. The lack of copyright laws stagnated literary growth in America. Printers pirated English books and refused to pay American authors on new and unknown writings. The printers stated, they were servicing the people by reprinting foreign books, though for profit. Benjamin Franklin, though poor, was a printer by trade and got his works published. Franklin reprinted European classics to educate his fellow Americans. Matthew Carey, paid agents in London to get unbound pages of books on ships

touching America in a month, to be reprinted and placed in American bookstores, almost at the same time it was published. Pirated editions became heap, thus damaging American authors and known authors like Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens. Authors like James Cooper suffered due to this piracy and failed to get adequate remuneration and his book, *The Spy*, in 1821, got pirated within a month of its publication. American book pirates misused the copyright law of 1790, which allowed pirating books with a nationalist intent. Publishers were not willing to change, though Noah Webster who compiled an American dictionary, created a law to protect the work of American authors.

Piracy proved profitable to them and furnished the first generation of revolutionary American writers. However, this cheap supply of pirated foreign books in the first 50 years of America, educated the Americans about many forms of literature. American Enlightenment of the 18th-century was a movement of rationality. Scientific inquiry was prominent opposed to religious belief and people wanted democracy opposed to monarchy. Thinkers and writers devoted their writings towards justice, equality and liberty, the natural rights of human beings. Benjamin Franklin called America's first great man of letters, embodied rationality in his writings. A poor democrat born in the midst of an aristocratic age was the finest example of liberalization. He always tried to help ordinary people become successful by sharing his insights in a self-help book, thus initiating a new American genre. Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*, began in 1732 and was published for many years. Franklin's *Autobiography*, a self-help book, covered scientific schemes for self-improvement with thirteen virtues like temperance, resolution, sincerity, justice, cleanliness...etc. He never lost his democratic views and was an important participant of the 1787 Constitution drafts. He always promoted universal literature. He also became the president of an antislavery association.. To quote his words

"A small leak will sink a great Ship"

"Fools make Feasts, and wise Men eat them"

"Eat not to Dullness. Drink not to Elevation."

St. John de Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, in 1782, informed the Europeans on American wealth, pride and peace. His twelve letters that depicted America as an agriculturist's paradise praised the colonies for their prosperity, industriousness and tolerance. It was a vision that later inspired Jefferson, Emerson and other writers. He was one of the earliest to develop a considerate view in America, the first to exploit its image and thus contributing to its growing literature. The revolutionary literature was found in pamphlets, which were and are an important and popular form of political writing. The two thousand odd pamphlets published during Revolution were read out in public, delighted patriots and filled the role of drama. Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense* sold above one lakh copies within three months of its publication. He wrote

"The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind,"

Political writings had to appeal to the voters for democracy. Universal education was being promoted by founding fathers with proliferation of newspapers. Newspapers were widely read

during Revolution as they had very simple language. Even Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence was simplified by his committee. Contrary to political writings the literary writings were not simple or direct. In poetry, poets though educated, stumbled with elegant neoclassicism,. Patriots wanted the American Revolution narration to be epic and literary patriots wanted the narration in an elevated language, lauding the feats of the heroes of revolution. Many writers tried but very few succeeded.

Dwight's epic, *The Conquest of Canaan*, was an ambitious but boring draft. English critics made a mockery of it and even his friends including John Trumbull remained unenthusiastic on the epic. Satirical poetry after revolution fared better than verse. Depicted emotions, conventional phrases became ammunition for satire and revolutionary oratory was ridiculed. John Trumbull's good-humored *M'Fingal*, 1776-82, was appreciated by all, went into many editions and was reprinted for almost half a century. This satire appealed to Revolutionary audiences, since it contained social criticism with political topics and comments. First American comedy, *The Contrast*, produced in 1787, by Royall Tyler humorously depicted an American officer wife imitating English fashions. The play also introduced the first Yankee character. Modern *Chivalry*, published by Hugh Henry Brackenridge lampooning the excesses of age was another notable satirical work. He had based his novel on Don Quixote. Philip Freneau the poet was captured and imprisoned by the British in the revolutionary war. His poem "*The British Prison Ship*" was a condemnation of British cruelty. He initiated Romanticism to escape imitation and vague universality. His other revolutionary works included *Eutaw Springs*, *American Liberty*, *A Political Litany*, *A Midnight Consultation* and *George the Third's Soliloquy*, brought him fame as the "*Poet of the American Revolution.*" Freneau became the editor of anti-Federalist *National Gazette* in 1791 with Thomas Jefferson's help. His wrote poems like, *The Virtue of Tobacco* which was published in newspapers and specially for the average reader, thus creating literary awareness amongst the American average individual. Other forms of literature were also found in America. The *American Geography*, by Jedidiah Morse, promoted knowledge on the vast and expanding America.

Journals and accounts were nonliterary but interesting writings of truth, produced by frontiersmen or explorers like Meriwether Lewis, Zebulon Pike. One of them included the purchase of a vast portion of the North America by Thomas Jefferson from Napoleon in 1803. Many accomplished women writers were rediscovered including Susanna Rowson, one of the first professional novelists of America. In her, *Charlotte Temple*, 1791, she treated American Indians with respect and painted feminist and abolitionist themes. Forgotten novelist, Hannah Foster in, *The Coquette*, 1797, depicted women torn between temptation and virtue. Letters were also important documents for the period and Adams letter to her husband John Adams, second president of the United States, urged guarantee for women's independence in new American constitution.

Self development was a major theme in romanticism, self awareness being the first step. It was based on the theory, If self and nature become one, self-awareness would open up the universal knowledge and the individual's moral duty would be

to reform social inequalities and thus help relieve humans from sufferings. New compound words like self-realization and self-reliance were re-defined. Artistic effects and techniques were developed to heighten human psychological states. Romanticism was found appropriate for most American poets and creative essayists. The Romantic spirit which stressed individualism accepted the common person and was dependent on inspired imagination for ethical values. Ralph Emerson, David Thoreau and their associates were inspired by Romanticism. This inspiration reflected in Emerson's consistent call for American individualism and based on his personal experiences. He imposed his ideas of national vision, cosmic Over-Soul and the doctrine of compensation in his first publication, *Nature*, 1836. It had practical aphoristic expressions with spiritual vision which made Emerson exciting. This resulted in critic, Matthew Arnold commenting that the most important writings of the nineteenth century in English had been Wordsworth's poems and Emerson's essays. Emerson influenced a long line of American poets. Most of his spiritual insight came from his readings of Eastern religion, especially Hinduism. His poem, Brahma relied on Hindu sources to assert the cosmic order beyond the limited perception of mortals. His poem, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, 1857, confused Americans who were unfamiliar with Brahma, Hinduism's eternal soul of the universe. Thoreau's, *Walden*, 1854, ironically opened up self-discovery of Americans, standing apart from other books.

Thoreau was influenced by Hindu and Buddhist philosophies and his concentration methods resembled Asian meditation techniques. He tested the theories of Transcendentalism, in his masterpiece *Walden*. His essay, Civil Disobedience, passive resistance based on the morals and disobeying unjust laws was an inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi's movement for Indian independence and Martin Luther King's struggle for black American's civil rights in the 20th century. Walt Whitman's, *Leaves of Grass*, 1855, had, a Song of Myself, permanently altered the course of American poetry. It was lauded as one of the most original poems ever written by an American. The poem's unrhymed free-verse form, democratic sensibility and extreme Romantic assertion was encouraged by the general public in America. Whitman's invention was a democratic America. He called for a new category of literature to revive the Americans. To quote Whitman, "*The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States is essentially the greatest poem.*".

Realism, Humour and Colorists

When the American civil war occurred, northern parts were full of industries while the southern parts had agriculture. Idealism was promoted in America after the civil war for progress. Self-improvements calls were made by all including literature. Business boomed in the Northern parts due to war productions and they experienced man/machine management. Intercontinental rail system and transcontinental telegraph gave industrial access to materials and communications. Contract laborers were imported and millions of foreigners flowed into America. The country was transformed into an industrial nation. Though after 1st world War America became a major world power, this growth of industries pushed the country into alienation which people experienced. Novels of the period

depicted the alienation of individual due to economic forces like *A Girl of the Streets*. In this period of alienation, Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, was the first to capture iconoclasm and humorous American slang. His, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, gave American writers an indication of their national identity, a medicine for alienation. Mark Twain's style was different from the 19th century American writers who tended to be too ornate, syrupy or showy, in their attempt to write with elegance like the English. He based his writings on energetic, practical and colloquial American speech. For him and other writers of Realism it was not merely a literary technique, but to them, it was telling the blunt truth and coming out of conventions. His writings were away from society and liberating like in *Huck Finn*, a poor boy giving thought to his conscience, helps a Negro slave escape to freedom. *Huckleberry Finn*, stimulated multiple literary interpretations. One interpretation is that it is about initiation, death and rebirth. Huck is introduced to human nature's complexities by Jim's adventures. It also reflected Twain's model of a harmonious community. Relationship between instability, reality and illusion characterize the theme in the novel. The authors moral echoes in the pilot's responsibility to steer the ship to safety. William Dean Howells, a supporter of realism, interwove social conditions with American middle-class emotions in his novels, *A Modern Instance*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. Idealism, ambition and love motivated William's characters, since he was aware of the moral corruption of business tycoons in the American Gilded Age. Frontier humor and Regionalism merged in Mark Twain's Realism. Realism literary approaches began in the 1830s with its roots in native Indian traditions. Village amusements in storytelling flourished in villages, mining camps, riverboats and campfires different from city amusements. The humor found in frontier regions with each frontier region having its own colorful characters were woven as stories like John Henry, Casey Jones, Mike Fink. These story collections found their way into books. There was a propagation of new comical American words like flabbergasted, rampageous and ring-tailed roarers. Expressions and phrases drew strength from natural hazards like "*I'm a tornado*", "*blow like a falling tree*".

The style of color writing, rendering facts and reality, produced its finest works after the Civil War, before which writers painted the landscapes. American literary writers celebrated influenced by this local color.

Harte author of, *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, was the first colorist to taste success and also one of the first to introduce low-life characters like gamblers, robbers and prostitutes into literary works. His work was admired by Charles Dickens, mainly due to the seeming derelicts found in his writing. Many women like Mary Wilkins Freeman, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Sarah Jewett were remembered for their writing on new found land. Jewett's, *The White Heron* in *Country of the Pointed Firs*, showed her originality, observation of character and sensitivity in 1896. Her local color depiction of protagonist's fishing communities influenced many. 19th century women made up the major audience and many women wrote novels or poems or humorous pieces. The writings also turned towards social protest, when social inequality or economic hardships was an

issue. Southern writers, George Cable and Kate Chopin wrote about racial injustice and inequality of sex. Kate Chopin's brave novel, *The Awakening*, 1899, was about a woman trying to find her own identity through passion. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, is often paired with the awakening, the works of these two authors were rediscovered by feminist critics of the 20th century.

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