**OVERVIEW**

“Wars happen because the ones who start them

think they can win.”

From Margaret Atwood: “The Loneliness of the Military Historian”

FROM *The Sympathizer*

* War upends everything
* Nothing is as it seems.
  + OR, it is as it seems AND also something else
  + Colonials pretend benevolence but are destructive and hypocritical and irresponsible (priest / mother)
* Idealism and other isms age and wear out
* Ideas demand that people do things they resist because of other ideas which they embrace
  + Narrator wracked by guilt and haunted by ghosts
* Identity sometimes defined
  + by desire (Bon and Man)
  + by external forces (Bon and Man and Narrator)
  + by resistance (Lana—against her parents)
* Simplicity is a gift (Bon) and a curse (“ordinary American citizen”)
* Seeing both sides is a curse and a gift
  + Vietnamese not sympathetic: “Like all hybrids you’re defective.” (190)
  + His mother after schoolyard fight (208-9)
  + “You are not one of us.” (291)
* Anti-Americanism is fiercely articulated
  + “Innocence” is bought at a high price (paid by others)
    - Self-delusion is a national trait
* *Immigration and Refugee Life extremely difficult*
  + Assimilation as a goal is more costly than Americans admit
    - Clocks set to Saigon time
    - Bon: “It’s like I’ve been hiding in someone else’s house

FROM WWI:

If these are some of the main ideas from then, in what ways are there overlaps?

1. *Individuals get drawn into situations they cannot control.*
2. *Much of warfare is illogical and contrary to self-interest.*
3. *Individuals in time of peace develop specific values that are part of their culture.*
4. *During time of war, they are asked (by that culture) to change those values.*
5. *The collision creates dissonance, shatters norms, reveals individual identities in ways that were not intended.*
6. *Survival depends on a range of qualities and behaviors and capacities.*
7. *Survival depends sometimes on denying or repressing instinctive as well as learned behavior.*
8. *The difference between who makes wars and who fights wars drives wedge between generations and classes.*
9. *The question of gender was even more dramatic in 1914-18 than now, but there are some resonances—rigidity of roles; variety of emotional responses; variety of intellectual responses; difference in capacity to act.*
10. *Popular culture allowed non-combatants to remain ignorant of reality of warfare by coloring it in appealing images.*
11. *War does include beauty and nobility and intimacy.*
12. *Some military survivors carry baggage forward, including anger, PTSD, disillusionment, alienation, guilt.*

**FROM** *Exit West*

* War disrupts individual lives in catastrophic ways.
* There seems to be little that an individual can do in such situations except
  + Escape—or die
* Different individuals respond differently to the situations created by war, so there are side fractures.
* War creates collateral damage to individuals and cultures and structures in
  + Immediate societies
  + adjacent societies
* War creates fear
* “Otherness” seems to be both cause of and casualty of war?
* Some people “recover” and “move on;” others do not

From Margaret Atwood “The Loneliness of the Military Historian”

“But it’s no use asking me for a final statement.

As I say, I deal in tactics.

Also statistics:

for every year of peace there have been four hundred

years of war.”