

Book Review

Pinaki Roy: **The Scarlet Critique: A Critical Anthology of War Poetry**, Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2010, 333 + xvi pp. ISBN 978-81-7625-991-0 Book Review: – **Jaydip Sarkar**

In his *Introduction* to Pinaki Roy's second critical anthology, *The Scarlet Critique*, James Campbell laments the fact that war poetry of the twentieth century is relevant even in the twenty first century world. It is an accurate observation – an irony directed against the socio-political predicament the modern and 'civilised' human beings are bringing on a daily basis for themselves through their imperialistic and racialist depravities. The latest confrontation in Libya, another culmination of such greed and barbarism, is not proving to be productive for either the external aggressors or the defenders. If anything, it is taking mankind a step towards apocalypse – a global cataclysm where there will be no winners. It is where the relevance of Roy's 2010 publication comes in. Apparently a pedagogic exercise, it makes maturing individuals – researchers and university and college students – aware of the dangers of belligerence.

In fact, the history of belligerence is as old as that of human civilisation itself. The twentieth century, with the instances of two worldwide confrontations and other major wars like the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Iraq Invasion, and so on, had had been especially violent. In such a situation, what a poet, to whose sensitive mind the futility of militarism and warring, and the mindlessness of violence are exposed earlier than to the commoners', can do 'is warn' – to borrow Wilfred Owen's phrase. In his *The Scarlet Critique*, Pinaki Roy has selected twenty-eight such visionaries whose experience of or intuition about combat had animated them into trying to depict the true, annihilating, all-engulfing nature of belligerence. Roy's selection covers three centuries of poets, combatants and civilians, beginning with Francis Scott Key of the Anglo-American confrontation and concluding with Philip Larkin, an efficient post-Second World War poet. *The Scarlet Critique: A Critical Anthology of War Poetry*, even with its plethora of information and critical analyses, is written in simple language, admittedly with scholastic citations deliberately avoided. However, that does not ever undermine the book's epistemic worth.

Roy, an Assistant Professor of Malda College and a resident of the provincial northern Bengal town of Balurghat, who has consistently published essays on war literature and Holocaust novels in international journals, appears to be well-aware of the fact that that though war poetry is on the curriculum of almost every Indian university and post and undergraduate college and continues to attract numerous researches, quality and cheap reference materials on combat literature are scarce and expensive. Roy's book, though not exactly cheap, is readily available, student-friendly, and with its exhaustive coverage, appears to be