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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

> The First World War was the great military and political event of its time; but it was also the great *imaginative* event. It altered the ways in which men and women thought not only about war but about the world, and about culture and its expressions. No one after the war – no thinker or planner, no politician or labour leader, no writer or painter – could ignore its historical importance or frame his thought as though the war had never occurred, or had simply been another war.
>
> Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined* (1990)[1]

This new collection aims to bring to light a range of rare but culturally important writings produced during World War I. Given the popular and scholarly interest in the war it is surprising how little contemporary work is available. There is a certain body of work, perhaps thought of as the canon of war writing, that is continually available and has been since first publication. But as a percentage of the literary output of the conflict, this canon is small and is largely comprised of poetry: small and unrepresentative, with a predominant focus on the trench experience, the combatant experience, the male experience. It is a long way from the whole picture. This collection seeks to expand the picture, to give a much broader sense of how the war was seen, felt and experienced by the whole population, not just the men in the trenches.

World War I differs from every other war before or since. On 12 August 1914, a writer for the society magazine the *Bystander* summed up the feelings of many when he declared the emerging conflict to be 'the greatest struggle of modern times'.[2] Almost immediately it was clear that it represented a significant departure from the perceived 'scarlet glories' of the nineteenth century, wars fought by professional soldiers for the glory of the empire. And although what we might term modern warfare had begun to develop in the nineteenth century, in conflicts such as the American Civil War and the South African War, these were far removed from mainland Europe, still very much the dominant power-base of the 1914 globe. The many horrors that we now associate with World War I, horrors familiar from the mainstream literatures that remain popular today, seem to be unique to this particular conflict, or at least this particular combination of horrors. Commentators at the time spoke of the emerging conflict as

'nothing less than an onslaught on civilization',[3] a view that owed much to the new technology of weaponry that seemed inconceivable to those who witnessed it: bigger, more powerful shells, terrifyingly effective machine guns, tanks, aeroplanes. '[D]uring the last few months', announced the *Bystander* in June 1915,

> the nation has begun to realize what war means. Zeppelins, poison-gas, the sinking of the *Lusitania* have done the trick. And the realization goes by the name of pessimism, *faute de mieux*. The war (which was to have been over in July at the latest) is now seen in its light as more or less indefinite.[4]

As the months went by, the idea of the English Channel as a 'screen' between Britain and the horrors of the war in Europe began to disintegrate. The fighting seemed less easy to ignore and few were able to escape its effects.

All these things combined to give an experience of warfare that was brand new. As Daniel Pick has put it, '1914–18 is distinctive both in its scale – in its sheer labour-intensiveness – and its capacity to amalgamate so many different forms of destruction'.[5] Yet old fashioned ideas of what warfare *ought* to be prevailed and proved rather out of sync with all this technology. Honour, duty and personal courage remained highly valued attributes, despite being frequently incompatible with technological warfare. It was, as Jay Winter points out, 'in cultural terms, the last nineteenth-century war'.[6] This curious amalgam of the old and the new created a new and different kind of monster, one that it is impossible to forget. As Pick suggests, 'the war offers a new vantage point on the world that preceded it, the schism between one history and another'.[7]

World War I had, of course, been brewing for many years prior to the infamous assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, in July 1914. It had been bubbling away beneath a complex system of alliances and treaties, all of which were ostensibly intended to prevent war, but in fact had quite the opposite impact.[8] Many of the treaties were responding to the growing imperial rivalries of the nineteenth century. All of the major European countries had empires, which they either wanted to protect or expand. Between them, the countries of Europe ruled a large percentage of the world. Envy, fear and bitter old enmities provided a breeding ground for distrust. All it took was one event to ignite the pyre.

In Britain, Germany had been seen as a potential and significant enemy since its formation after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. A large and powerful new nation, with an ambitious Kaiser, wanting to expand its empire to rival that of Britain, Germany publicized its rearming programme throughout the 1890s and 1900s. Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941) was a figure of fascination for the British media, which was simultaneously attracted and repelled by him. For the *English Review* he was 'the Cockatoo War Lord of Europe', a vain and dangerous publicity-seeker.

> In reality he is the creature of his age – the age of advertisement, false values, press sensation, talk and shallowness ... Like a mastodonic Actor-Manager, he has poured out his banal messages upon the stage of an astonished Europe and got a newspaper 'para' wherever he looked[9]

Ella Hepworth Dixon described him as 'hare-brained *poseur*' and the fact that Wilhelm was old Queen Victoria's grandson and a professed Anglophile did not seem to alter things.[10]

By 1914, Britain, although basking in the glory of ruling the largest empire in the world, was nonetheless aware of the threat so close to home and happily entered into an arms race which appeared to build a theatre of war. The general public knew about it and expected it. Many eagerly awaited it. As the father of protagonist Dennis Blackwood in Rose Allatini's 1918 novel *Despised and Rejected* suggests, 'A little blood-letting won't do the nation any harm'.[11] Talk of war circulated in gentlemen's clubs, in newspapers and in espionage novels and short stories for at least a decade.[12] The idea that this was just what Britain needed to shake itself out of its lethargy was widespread. Noting the packed celebrations which took place in Trafalgar Square on the night of 3–4 August 1914, the *Bystander* editorial described the experience of standing 'at the plinth of Nelson's Column' with thousands of other patriotic Londoners, and of being

> present at the birth of the Great Change ... For whatever the issue of the this war – victory, defeat, or stalemate – it is going to make a new man of the Englishman. After years of fat prosperity and lazy frivolity, it brings him up against the brute realities.[13]

Some people outside of the military machine had already taken action to prepare for it. The widowed Mabel St Clair Stobart set up the Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps in 1908, determined to train women for battlefield nursing, intent on demonstrating that women would be able to prove their worth in the coming war and thus justify full citizenship.[14] Nor was Stobart's an isolated stance. 'Once there was an idea that women in war time must spend their nights in weeping and their days in making flannel shirts', observed the Sunday paper the *Referee* in its article 'The Mobilisation of Women' (16 August 1914). 'Now it seems that women can do and are ready for anything'. They were even, the paper noted, ready to shoot if necessary and its correspondent reported that many women had been taking lessons in target practice.[15]

When war finally came, triggered by the assassination that forced all the alliance systems into play, the country was gripped by what some observers called 'war fever'. '[T]he whole nation', as Raymond Radclyffe recalled in 1916, jumped into 'a white heat of enthusiasm ... Rich people discharged their menservants, and tramped round gasworks with a badge on their arm and a flask in their pocket'. Nor was it only the upper classes thus affected. As Radclyffe noted: 'The patriotism of the poor was pathetic. They crowded the enlistment

offices and a citizen army of a million men was soon enrolled.'[16] Many commentators liked to evoke a sense of the country working together in the interests of a great national enterprise (whether this was true or not). One such observer, playwright Edward Knoblauch, whose patriotic sketch *The Way to Win* (1915) is reprinted in Volume 5 of the present collection, recalled that '[e]veryone now with very few exceptions was bending his will to help run the great factory in which we all had been enrolled'.[17] Knoblauch's description, which evokes Britain's modernity and industrial might and also conjures up a sense of equality amongst her citizens (unlike the absolutist rule the German people were seen to experience), was written in 1939, just as another war was looming. Nonetheless, his is fairly typical of accounts written during 1914–18, many of which emphasize the importance of communal values.

Of course, the resulting conflict was not what people had expected at all. The war of attrition that followed the dramatic opening battles bore no resemblance to popular perceptions of warfare. Gone were the cavalry charges, gone the opportunities for heroism that had always caught the attention of propagandists. Instead there was a sense that Britain did not really know what she was getting herself into. 'Future historians will say that the age went dancing to its doom' prophesized J. D. Symon in 1915.[18] Knoblauch likewise expressed the thoughts of many when he suggested that 'our modern fever of uncertainty dates from that midnight hour of August 1914. We lost an old world never to gain a new one.'[19] Certainly this sense of culture shock involved in the experience of World War I has found many voices, both at the time and since then. Note Philip Larkin's 1964 poem 'MCMXIV':

> Never such innocence,
> Never before or since,
> As changed itself to past
> Without a word – the men
> Leaving the gardens tidy,
> The thousands of marriages
> Lasting a little while longer:
> Never such innocence again.[20]

It was this innocence that led to the extraordinary Christmas truce of 1914, where the men from opposing armies fraternized in No Man's Land playing games and sharing cigarettes.[21] Paul Fussell's 1977 study, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, explores this culture shock, this fall from innocence, in more critical terms. Fussell examines

> the way the dynamics and iconography of the Great War have proved crucial political, rhetorical, and artistic determinants on subsequent life. At the same time the war

> was relying on inherited myth, it was generating new myth, and that myth is part of the fiber of our own lives.[22]

Although the myths of nineteenth-century warfare penetrated the Western Front, the new mythology produced by the great trauma was more powerful and continues to touch our lives today. Subsequent cultural attitudes to war, to art, to the structures of society, can be traced back to the impact of the war on all aspects of British life. Fussell goes on to argue:

> Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends ... But the Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which dominated the public consciousness for a century.[23]

World War I was so dramatically different that full recovery, the restoration of former attitudes and values, seemed utterly impossible. It created a new mythology, upon which perception of all subsequent wars would be founded. And as Fussell goes on to suggest, literature was at the heart of the production of this new myth.

Fussell uses many of the established great writers of World War I to examine his hypothesis. He rightly identifies that much of our current understanding of the war can be traced directly to these literary writings. It is the poets, not the historians, who have given us our contemporary impression of World War I. He argues,

> I have focused on places and situations where literary tradition and real life notably transect, and in doing so I have tried to understand something of the simultaneous and reciprocal process by which life feeds materials to literature while literature returns the favor by conferring forms upon life.[24]

This intersection between life and literature is very powerful in shaping the place of the war in our culture. Fussell uses literatures to demonstrate how the war changed cultural consciousness. In doing so he reminds us that it is the literatures themselves that have shaped our understanding of what this war was.

The recent commemorations of the war, focused around the death of the 'last Tommy', Harry Patch, at the age of 111, offer insight into how this has been achieved. Patch was the last known survivor of the war who had seen active service in the trenches and it is the trenches that have become synonymous with the experience of World War I. With his death, it is as though the war has finally ended. Even before the armistice the 'trench poets' had begun to disseminate impressions of the trenches, impressions that remain fresh today. While early poetry of the war, often emblemized through Rupert Brooke, drew on older myths of courage, sacrifice and patriotism, battle weary soldier-poets of the

later war years, such as Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Robert Graves, presented through their verse the images of trench warfare that continue to dominate cultural perceptions of the whole war. Patch was important because he had served in the trenches, had been wounded there and had lost comrades whom he could never forget. We can recognize him in words that remain familiar to us all. Isaac Rosenberg's poem 'Break of Day in the Trenches' seems to epitomize this cultural memory.

> The darkness crumbles away –
> It is the same old druid Time as ever.
> Only a live thing leaps my hand –
> A queer sardonic rat –
> As I pull the parapet's poppy
> To stick behind my ear.
> Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
> Your cosmopolitan sympathies
> Now you have touched this English hand
> You will do the same to a German –
> Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
> To cross the sleeping green between.
> It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
> Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
> Less chanced than you for life,
> Bonds to the whims of murder,
> Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
> The torn fields of France.
> What do you see in our eyes
> At the shrieking iron and flame
> Hurled through still heavens?
> What quaver – what heart agast?
> Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
> Drop, and are ever dropping;
> But mine in my ear is safe,
> Just a little white with the dust.[25]

Rosenberg's poem contains multiple images that have come to represent trench warfare: the poppy, the rat, the 'sleeping green between' of 'No Man's Land', transformed into the 'torn fields of France', the dead contained there, the 'shrieking iron and flame' of the shells, the dust of death. In many ways, this poem is a consummate picture of World War I as we understand it. This poem was written in 1916. Like much of the work reproduced in this collection, it is an immediate product of the war experience. Rosenberg was killed on 1 April 1918, having served on the Front Line for two years. There is no reason to doubt the absolute authenticity of this poem as a representation of not just the experience, but also the atmosphere of trench warfare. It has about it an insouciance, an ambivalence

that communicates both the tragedy and the boredom of the situation. And it is dramatic. It captures the imagination by presenting an impression of warfare that is unique, disturbing and unforgettable. It gives us the landscape of war together with the humanity. It is hardly surprising that this impression is as strong today as when the reading public first had access to it.

The dominant cultural perception of World War I remains this one. The images contained in Rosenberg's verse are familiar to most of us. World War I poetry continues to be taught in schools and for many it is this emotive representation, the tragedy of the trenches, that fosters further interest. In the decade that followed the Armistice a further significant body of war literature began to appear. For the soldier writers, such as Rosenberg, poetry was an obvious and appropriate genre; it is, after all, difficult to write a novel – or even a short story – in a trench. Longer accounts of the trench experience began to appear in earnest in the late 1920s, the path being lit by the phenomenal success of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, first published in 1929. Remarque's novel, which tells the story of boy-soldier 'everyman', Paul Baumer, set just the right tone to capture the imagination of the post-war reading public, a great many of whom had first-hand experience of the life Remarque describes. The sharp first-person, present-tense narrative structure of the novel gives it a similar kind of immediacy to the trench poetry, despite the passing of a decade. Although the focus is on German troops, the activities of Baumer and his comrades are so generic that they can easily bridge national boundaries, an ironic anti-war twist that assisted Remarque's sales across Europe. Within a year *All Quiet* had been translated into twenty different languages. Remarque was by no means alone in enjoying this kind of success. This novel was accompanied by a cluster of successful book-length studies of the trench experience, including *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) by Siegfried Sassoon, *Goodbye To All That* (1929) by Robert Graves and Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929). With the exception of *Death of a Hero*, these books have remained in print.

These titles represent but a few of the flurry of World War I publications of the 1920s and 1930s. Novels and memoirs such as those listed above built on the impressions of the war popularized by the trench poets, filling in the gaps and nuances with details, often graphic and disturbing. By the mid-1930s cultural perceptions of the war were enshrined in a mythology of their own which, despite the publication of a number of official histories, was principally derived from the specific literatures of war produced by trench soldiers. It is little wonder then that Harry Patch could still capture the public imagination ninety years after the end of the war. Yet Patch himself echoed the sentiments of many of his fellow trench-writers. He requested a funeral service that would commemorate the losses of the war, but not glorify them. He had determinedly spoken out against war since he first came to public attention shortly after his one

hundredth birthday, as society began to realize that World War I veterans were passing away. Patch said,

> Why should the British government call me up and take me out to a battlefield to shoot a man I never knew, whose language I couldn't speak? All those lives lost for a war finished over a table. Now what is the sense in that?[26]

The last representative of the trench soldier questioned the war that continued to define him, just as his literary comrades had ninety years earlier.

Wartime Reading and Writing

The fact that the influential post-war novels and autobiographies by Aldington, Sassoon and others have tended to remain in print since first appearing has had several effects. It has added to their power, but equally has prevented significant alternative literary impressions of the war from capturing the public imagination. In many ways this is understandable but it is also rather odd, given that a recurrent topic of discussion in the literary pages of newspapers and magazines in the years 1914–18 was the lively state of the publishing industry (much livelier than people had initially predicted). In 1916, A. B. Cooper put the number of new books published in 1916 at 6,000; of these 1,600 were works of fiction.[27] There was a sense that people could not stop writing. In 1917 the *Bookman* made the point that the current shortage of paper was due 'not to the war, but to the chronicling thereof' and this was, the reviewer felt, something to be proud of. It showed that '[i]n penmanship, as well as gunmanship, we are therefore beating the Hun at his own game'.[28]

There was also considerable discussion – at least amongst literary critics – about the role of the imaginative writer in wartime; how the conflict should be represented; and how one's leisure time should be spent. Was it, for example, appropriate to read fiction or go the theatre? Something of this mood is captured in the following excerpt from the *Sketch* (March 1915):

> The Bully: He hoisted himself into the railway carriage with both hands, sank heavily into two seats, and then proceeded to survey the company. He was about six foot six in height and weighed about thirty stone.
>
> Immediately opposite him was a lad reading a book.
>
> 'Reading novels' roared the big man in a voice that drowned the rattle of the train. 'Beats me how anybody can read novels when the greatest war in the history of the world is going on. What do you say, Sir?' He turned to the man on his left.
>
> The man on his left made a non-committal answer.[29]

Readers in 1914 would have got the reference points here, namely that one of the outcomes of the wave of patriotism which swept the country in August 1914 was a lack of tolerance for anyone who did not appear to embrace the conflict whole-

heartedly. Another result was an outpouring of books about warfare, a type of literature which emerged as a sub-genre in its own right, so much so that in April 1916 *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* offered prize of 100 guineas for the best book of personal experiences in wartime. Fiction, on the other hand, seemed to imply frivolity. In October 1914 the *Tatler* declared 'newspapers and war books ... the only possible literature'.[30] The same month, the *Graphic*, a magazine catering to a much wider (and lower-class) audience, began running a new column, 'Books about the Great War' (the label 'Great' thus appearing very early on), in which fifteen or more titles were regularly featured. Nor did interest die down. As late as 1917, the *Observer* reckoned that 'every second "serious" book now published has something to do with the war'.[31]

Factual books seemed preferable to fictional ones because their readers could at least claim to be taking the conflict seriously rather than trying to escape it. The *Sketch* also presumably expressed the thoughts of many when it noted that it was 'difficult to concentrate on a novel in days when a casual Admiralty or War Office dispatch may stir the heart like a Border Ballad or a Roman legend'.[32] As will be seen in the introduction to the short story later in the present volume,[33] this difficulty may be why this genre maintained its popularity during the war years; short stories could at least be read quickly, in a single sitting. Novels, by contrast, required more lengthy emotional investment and did not offer the satisfaction of immediate closure.

There was, however, an alternative school of thought which argued that for a people battling with the anxieties and deprivations of wartime, fiction – like the theatre and music hall – offered the ideal respite. 'The amusement of the depressed population is a patriotic duty', announced the *Bystander* in its article 'The Debacle of the Arts' (December 1914).[34] This particular magazine was very keen on what it cheerfully termed 'keeping the public pecker up',[35] either by reading or going to the theatre, and thought that it behoved everyone to keep cheerful. At the same time, it was recognized that authors needed to take extra-special care in choosing their subject matter. According to the *Bystander*:

> The question naturally arises: the war or not the war? Do you want to read thrilling tales of the trenches or of our real life at home today; or do you still want the old stories of love and smart society and psychological problems?[36]

Part of the reason why such discussions emerged was that topics which before the war had seemed exciting and modern – divorce, adultery, syphilis, degeneration, all introduced against the backdrop of beautiful country estates – now seemed trivial and rather meaningless. This was especially so, announced the *Bystander*, because 'everybody knows that most of the houses so described are in reality filled with our wounded, and the hostesses themselves, as often as not,

are sweeping their own floors'.[37] In 1916, Mary Boazman suggested that 'good riddance' was the correct response to the disappearance of the pre-war

> unheroic hero who was so busy analyzing his feelings that he forgot to feel them ... an epicure in sensations, with whom love was a brain-storm generated by some female being as queer and uncomfortable as himself ... wildly excited by the acquirement of a room of his own[38]

At the same time, however, the *Bystander* reckoned that 'light stuff' was proving more popular with novel readers, 'even among the most seriously minded'. In November 1915, it recommended Maud Churton Braby's *The Honey of Romance* – set in a publisher's office – Marie Cher's *The Immortal Gymnasts* and Miss Sydney Treymayne's *The Auction Mart* as 'suitable for war-time reading', none of these authors being much interested in military matters and certainly having been nowhere near a trench.[39]

One of the reasons such choices seemed to matter was that the popularity of reading appeared to be on the up, in proportion to people's reluctance to go out in the evenings in the blackout. The *Observer* also attributed the increase in reading to straightened financial circumstances and to 'the pinch of war conditions ... driving more and more folk from the expensive social pleasures to a book at the fireside'.[40] As a result, and at a time when many literary critics still viewed themselves as 'cultural policemen',[41] whose duty it was to regulate the intake of impressionable readers, there was a good deal of concern about *what* was being read. Women, in particular, were seen to read 'voraciously', being rather too prone to taking up 'the kind of novel that is so dreadfully common among us – the imitation clever novel, and the machine-made sensation novel'.[42]

Not surprisingly, perhaps, there was also a move towards rereading the older authors of the previous century: Austen, Dickens, Trollope. 'One cannot wade through the ordinary trash of the summer novel when the "angel of death" is abroad in the land. Its triviality jars', explained a writer for *Tatler* in September 1914.

> For respite one goes back to the books which one already knows and loves ... They may have nothing to do with war or patriotism or even courage and renunciation but because they elevate and sustain they add strength to all these things.[43]

In another article 'What Shall we Read in War-Time?' (1915), the *Graphic* recommended Wordsworth, Browning and Southey, plus (bizarrely) the less-than-cheerful *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.[44] Rereading these in a time of uncertainty meant, of course, that the reader knew what s/he was getting. Additionally, several of these older authors seemed to function as comforting sources of quintessential 'Englishness' at a time when the nation's values

were under attack. Dickens seemed especially potent and theatre managements seized on his works, just as they had when the novelist was alive. *David Copperfield* was the Christmas show at Her Majesty's Theatre in December 1915, under the direction of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who also played Micawber (well) and Daniel Peggoty (less well). At a time when producers were running scared of plays dealing with wartime themes (at least for the moment) and sought refuge in revivals of old crowd-pleasers, Tree's production was lauded by the *Graphic* as '[a] very English play for an English Christmas' with its scenery and costumes seen to 'form a most instructive guide to an England which can never return again'.[45]

By 1915, there was also a move to create a national 'War Library', the intention of which was to send 'great' works of English literature to soldiers in the trenches. This seemed another peculiarly modern notion, as the *Graphic* noted in 'The Pen to the Rescue of the Sword' (August 1915). The magazine was sceptical and suggested that the Duke of Wellington would also 'probably have scoffed at the idea'. The same writer reported that whilst 'our soldiers and sailors enjoy reading, particularly if they can get a thrilling adventure story or an illustrated paper', the average soldier 'does not care for goody goody books'.[46] It seemed something of a shock to the higher-minded literary critics that what soldiers seemed to like were not the novels of George Meredith but detective stories and comics,[47] and sometimes accounts of army life on the Western Front or naval warfare, especially if written by one of their own: A. E. W. Mason, Ian Hay, Boyd Cable, Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, Sapper or Bartimeus. These were writers without any great pretentions to being 'stylists', or so it was claimed, but who at least knew what they were talking about and who tried to put on record the heroism of overlooked individuals at a time when soldiers risked becoming dehumanized and forgotten.

Given the popularity of this school of writing with the readers of 1914–18 this collection does not neglect trench warfare, but instead seeks to build on received impressions, to provide alternate contemporary representations. Amongst the short stories reprinted in the present volume, work by Ian Hay is included with 'Full Chorus' (1917), as well as Richard Bird's 'A Schoolboy Ranker' (1915), a story from the *Captain* magazine, and also Herbert Read's Imagist-influenced 'Killed in Action' (1919). All three stories present images of the trenches and the trench experience, and were written during the war. One of the things that links these texts together is that, unlike work produced in the 1920s, they are not characterized by lengthy post-war reflection, there is less time to come to terms with the trauma – if at all. It is often noted that one frequent characteristic of a good deal of writing about the war produced in the 1920s is a sense of mourning, the way in which such writing sometimes seems to map concepts in another celebrated text of the early twentieth century: Sigmund Freud's

'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917). In his essay Freud defines mourning as the painful but healthy process of severing the mourner from the deceased. As Freud sees it, effective mourning necessitates 'working through' grief and thus freeing the 'ego' so that it may attach itself to a new living person or ideal. When mourning is unsuccessful it retains a covert relationship to the deceased; it identifies with the lost object with the result that 'object loss' is transformed into 'ego loss' and the mourner succumbs to melancholia, a state of grief, self-criticism and self-blame.[48] In the short stories written during, rather than after, the conflict there is little time for reflection; the writers are too close to think about 'working through' and what characterizes them is their immediacy. Thus in Richard Bird's 'The Schoolboy Ranker' there is no suggestion at all that Charles Errington (aged eighteen) is in any way traumatized by his time under fire. The exception here is Richard Aldington, whose post-war story 'Deserter', about a working-class soldier destroyed by his own naivety but also by forces he cannot control, is both a valediction and an expression of rage.

In terms of the novels reprinted in this collection, *Richard Chatterton, V.C.* by Ruby M. Ayres (1915), like Richard Bird, examines trench warfare through the more conventional lens of patriotism, heroism and self-fulfilment. But Ayres, writing very early in the war, considers the conflict from the position of a non-combatant, despite the fact that she assumes to write of experience of the battlefield. Her imaginative representation is clearly coloured by the cultural perceptions of the previous age, not by the reality of World War I. What she actually signifies is the mood of the British people in 1915, every bit as real and important as the trench experience itself, albeit very different.

Ayres is more typical of this collection than Hay, Bird, Read and Aldington. Almost all the writers collected here were non-combatants, experiencing the war from the Home Front as it took place, and responding to these civilian experiences in a range of different ways.[49] These are immediate, contemporary reactions that demonstrate the ways in which the war impacted on all sorts of people. We have already glimpsed the world of the combat soldier through Owen, Sassoon and Remarque. These writings offer us the worlds of everybody else.

Writing the Home Front

The Home Front of World War I is an unfamiliar place. But given that the combat soldiers actually formed a minority of the population, the Home Front gives as authentic an impression of the experience of the war as the trenches of France. The enthusiasm with which the Home Front greeted the war has been well documented. The crowds in Trafalgar Square and outside Buckingham Palace awaiting the declaration of war, the long queues of men determined to enlist, remain familiar. Much of what followed has been subsumed into the more popu-

list, combatant representations of the war. Propaganda was rife from the first days, the need to save 'poor little Belgium' from German brutality, the subject of newspapers and recruiting posters from August 1914 onwards. Many writers were drawn into this propaganda machine, convinced that using their skills to promote the war was the only decent, patriotic thing to do. In 'War and Creative Art' (December 1915), J. D. Symon wrote of 'a literature of war that will not be denied'.[50] As Samuel Hynes asserts, 'English writers were ... quick to support the war *as writers*', war poetry appearing in *The Times* every day from 5 August 1914 onwards.[51] In September 1914, propagandist C. F. G. Masterman, the new head of the Department of Information, summoned some of the best-known writers in the country, most of whom were well beyond military age, and effectively signed them up for war service.[52] The 'Authors' Declaration', as it became known, was published in *The Times* and stated, 'the undersigned feel bound to support the cause of the Allies with all their strength, with a full conviction of its righteousness, and with a deep sense of its vital import to the future of the world'.[53] The signatories numbered fifty-four in total and included John Galsworthy and Flora Annie Steel, examples of whose works may be found in this volume. These writers, in making this commitment, not only sought to defend and promote the war, but to write it in ways that reflected the wider public experience of the conflict. As they were not combatants, this obviously differed from the soldiers' perspective.

The importance of writing the war was, as has been seen, established right from the very start. In order to understand the culture that lived through the war, often watching from a distance although not a very great one, it is essential to consider the literatures they produced. And there are a great many of them, offering multiple interpretations of society in 1914–18. Many of the works in this collection reflect the war from the perspective of the Home Front, engaging with the lesser-known, but very significant, issues that affected life there. The fear of all things German is one such issue. Galsworthy's short story 'Defeat' (1917) takes as its heroine a London resident who is doubly marginal: a prostitute *and* a German; another story, 'The Bright Side' (1919), looks as the misery wrought by internment. Rose Allatini also records the insanity of anti-German paranoia in *Despised and Rejected* through her character Crispin, whose main objection to the war is the demonization of Wagner in England, denoted by his refusal to fight against the country that had produced Bach and Beethoven. Although this may sound absurd, the fear of Germans ran deep in the early months of the war, and German citizens, their shops and businesses were attacked, particularly after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 ignited public hatred.[54] In her novel *Children of No Man's Land* (1919), which deals with problems of ethnicity and marginality in wartime Britain, G. B. Stern uses the sinking of the *Lusitania* to

trigger a fictional account of a riot against German civilians, resulting in the destruction of a baker's shop.

> The shop was deserted. Violent hands ripped down the curtains that divided off the back-parlour, and about a dozen roughs hurled themselves up the stairs, chanting 'Schnabel: Schnabel!' in hideous sing-song. Their feet could be heard trampling the upper premises in search of the owner: 'Come aht of it, yer bloody funk! Wot abaht the Lusitania?' ... Crash of splintered glass, as the scales and weights were sent flying through the front window of the shop. The majority of the avengers were working off their blood-lust by hullabaloo and wreckage; tossing about the buns and cakes; swinging and smashing the rows of big sweet-bottles; sending a hurricane of piled up bread-baskets over the floor.[55]

Such scenes were not unusual, particularly in inner cities with concentrations of immigrant populations. The *Bystander* laid the blame for such behaviour squarely at the feet of the media – the 'halfpenny Press' which had 'tacitly invited the miserable dregs of our population to take the law into their own hands'.[56] This, too, was a theme taken up by short story writers. For example, in 'The Dog it was that Died' (1919), John Galsworthy returned to the newspapers and magazines that 'drip hate'. Harburn, a Kipling-style journalist, hounds his former friends because the husband is German and becomes 'possessed by a sort of abstract hate'. 'You go in for fairness', he tells the narrator, 'and all that slop; take 'em by the throat – it's the only way'. The narrator wonders about the British people's misplaced sense of themselves as governed by 'fair play'. Yet he also shows that such 'mania' is only ever self-destructive.[57]

Volume 3 of the collection, the novel *Good Old Anna* by Marie Belloc Lowndes (1915), deals directly with another aspect of this anti-German hatred, the accusations of spying. Although the notion, explored in the novel, that an elderly German housekeeper might be involved in a spy ring, may seem far-fetched now, many Germans in Britain did not feel safe with just cause. In 1915, Ella Hepworth Dixon wrote in the *Sketch* of 'the spy-maniacs who see in every fat and elderly naturalized German (who usually has a son or two fighting at the front or training in England) a remorseless foe and probable traitor'.[58] Famously D. H. Lawrence and his German wife, Frieda, were forced to move around the country because of such a suspicion, despite it being completely unfounded, whilst John Galsworthy's German brother-in-law and nephew were interned – part of the thinking being that all resident aliens had residual sympathies for the country of their birth. These anxieties made themselves felt in a good deal of the imaginative writing of the time, drama as well as fiction. One of the biggest theatrical hits of the war was a spy play, *The Man who Stayed at Home* (1914), by Lechmere Worrall and J. E. Harold Terry, the action of which takes place in a hotel on the south coast of England run by the widow of a German officer, a location ripe for signalling to enemy submarines. Such work was not without