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Thesis abstract

Ann-Marie Einhaus

**The British Short Story of the First World War:
Form, Function, and Canonisation**

This thesis provides an overview of British short stories of and about the First World War from 1914 to the present day, with a particular focus on popular magazine fiction. The central question addressed is why a genre as prolific and as widely read as the short story of the First World War did not become part of the war's literary canon. A further subject of investigation is the question of how the formal and thematic features of the short story genre on the one hand, and the war as a topic on the other, affect processes of canonisation. The thesis locates First World War short stories in between two canons: a literary canon of short fiction, which is dominated by a modernist aesthetics of the short story, and a socio-cultural canon of Great War writing, which is defined by a demand for authenticity of experience in writing about war. A wide selection of First World War short stories, gleaned from magazine back numbers, anthologies and collections, is discussed in relation to these conflicting demands. This study explores the changing social functions of Great War short stories and their diverse formal and stylistic approaches to the subject of the war, covering stories from wartime to inter- and post-war Britain. Short fiction addressing the First World War is, however, not seen in isolation, but is placed in the context of other writing about that conflict. It is moreover read in relation to its publishing environment, taking into account the specific conditions under which short fiction is produced and published in a rapidly changing market of periodicals and anthologies.

**The British Short Story of the First World War:
Form, Function, and Canonisation**

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2010

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is two-fold. One purpose of my research is to open up a wealth of hitherto untapped material, of creative writing about the war that is also a source of cultural history. In this respect, the gleaning of stories from magazine back numbers and story anthologies has yielded plentiful results.¹ However, my research also endeavours to answer a number of more specific questions. The key question is why a genre as productive and popular during the First World War as the short story did not become a part of the war's literary canon, unlike the similarly prolific poetry. Following from this central concern, a secondary question this thesis addresses is how far the specific genre characteristics of the short story on the one hand and the stories' treatment of the subject of war on the other are at the root of their non-canoncity. Last but not least, my research strives to determine how these matters change over time, bearing in mind that short stories about the war are still being published.

This study adopts a largely thematic approach to the subject of First World War short stories, covering a range of topics that seem of particular pertinence with no claims to be exhaustive. The stories treated in this thesis were written by both men and women and can thus be seen as representative of the gender divide within the field, although I do not focus on differences between stories written by male and female authors in particular. Similarly, the thesis includes discussions of stories set at different frontlines, but it does not seek to provide a systematic analysis of writings from the different frontlines and services, such as a comparison between stories set on the Western Front and in the Middle East, or between army and navy stories. Finally, there is certainly more to be said about stories addressing colonial participation in the Great War: large numbers of volunteers from all over the Empire came to Britain's aid in 1914, wrote about their war experiences and were written about.² However, the stories I have uncovered in archival research were written by white Europeans and published in British periodicals, and tend to mention colonial volunteers rarely and mostly in passing, excepting only white colonial troops. A Eurocentric

¹ Appendix A to this thesis contains a full list of the short stories included in the research corpus, not all of which could be discussed in depth.

² See e.g. Santanu Das, "Sepoys, Sahibs and Babus: India, the Great War and Two Colonial Journals." *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History*. Eds. Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 62.

approach is consequently the regrettable but inevitable result of the material at hand. This thesis does account, however, for a wide variety of writers from within British society: men and women, combatants and non-combatants, young and old, commercial and coterie, comic and serious, mainstream and avant-garde; a diversity that reflects the actual experience of the war in Britain. The noticeable bias of this thesis is in favour of the home front and the popular magazine market, the most productive arena for short stories addressing the war. The majority of stories about the war were written for a wide audience and published in popular media. Coterie stories also addressed the First World War, but did so with a different ideological and aesthetic agenda. Moreover, the comparatively few avant-garde short stories about the war have received the greatest share of critical attention up until now, and rather than devoting space to already well-researched texts this thesis chooses to discuss new material.

Unlike the majority of studies in First World War literature, this thesis does not conclude its analysis with the so-called 'war books boom' of the late 1920s and early 1930s, or even the literature on the Great War still published in the 1940s and 1950s. Although the number of Great War stories published after 1945 fell sharply compared to the prolific output of the decades between 1914 and 1939, a steady drizzle of stories did appear, in particular around the ninetieth anniversaries of the First World War. In analysing such a wide range of stories, it is of course necessary to draw clear distinctions between the different periods of writing. Whether or not short story writers had personal memories of the war, second-hand or only third-hand reminiscences; what political or ideological agenda informed their writing; what media they published in and which audiences they targeted; all these factors change radically over time, and affect the texts and their possible readings. I have consequently tried to differentiate between those stories published during and in the wake of the First World War, those published in the aftermath of the Second World War, and those that have appeared comparatively recently, in the last two decades of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the new millennium.

In book-length critical studies of the war's literature, short fiction does not usually feature, or receives only passing attention, mainly in connection with modernist writers such as D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, David Jones or Katherine Mansfield. Seminal studies such as Bernard Bergonzi's *Heroes' Twilight*

(1965) and Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), as well as Samuel Hynes's more recent *A War Imagined* (1990), largely ignore short fiction in favour of other genres; the prose memoir, the autobiographical novel, and the poetry of the war. These genres in particular have come to be associated closely with the First World War, and with an anti-war, pacifist ideology that has become a staple of the war's popular memory. Recently, some work has been done on magazine short stories in particular, mostly with a specialised field or target audience in mind: Carol Acton has contributed a fascinating essay on the treatment of the First World War in popular magazines for young working-class women,³ and Michael Paris's work has been groundbreaking in exploring the juvenile literature of the Great War, its origins and continuities.⁴ None of this recent work, however, has taken a systematic look at the greater picture and dedicated itself to the short story of the war in particular. It is in this sense that my thesis makes its contribution to existing research, in opening up a vista on short stories of the war as a whole, with regard to a wide variety of forms and subject matter, as well as their peculiarities of publication and reception.

At the outset, it seems appropriate to explain the use of the term 'British' as used in this study. By 'British' I refer to writers who were either citizens of, or spent the largest part of their adult lives in, England, Scotland or Wales. On occasion, this includes writers such as New Zealander Katherine Mansfield, or Mary Borden, an American by birth. The restriction to British writers was on one level a necessity to limit the number of stories to be addressed, but it also reflects a particular interest in a specifically British cultural experience of the First World War. Just as the conflict was experienced in different ways by individual participants or witnesses, what one might call a national experience and remembrance of the Great War differ considerably. The 'memory culture' of other English-language countries that participated in the war frequently focuses on different aspects of its experience: in Ireland, the war is overshadowed by the violent struggle for independence; in the USA, as well as in many European countries, the Second World War has largely eclipsed the first; in the former

³ Carol Acton, "Best Boys and Aching Hearts: The Rhetoric of Romance as Social Control in Wartime Magazines for Young Women." *British Popular Culture and the First World War*. Ed. Jessica Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 173-193.

⁴ Michael Paris, *Over the Top: The Great War and Juvenile Literature in Britain* (Westport, CO: Praeger, 2004).

colonies Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the memory of the war quickly became inextricably bound up with a nascent sense of national identity and the birth of a new, independent nation out of the war's ordeal. To attempt to combine all these divergent experiences and memories in a single study is impossible, as these differences inevitably inform the literature written about the war in any of the participant countries. Consequently, this thesis limits itself to the British experience and memory of the war as evidenced in its short fiction.

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the main critical contentions on which the following overview and analysis are founded. This includes the areas of short story theory, canonicity, memory studies and the mythology of the First World War, all of which combine to form the theoretical framework for this thesis. Chapter 1 initially looks at First World War short stories in comparison to other, more canonical genres treating the war, and places Great War stories in a historical context of earlier texts addressing war and invasion fears. This contextualisation is followed by a discussion of canonicity, which not only introduces key concepts of the ongoing canon debate but particularly seeks to map a British canon of First World War literature and distinguish it from other literary canons. This section also puts the canon of World War I literature in relation to the popular mythology of the war and to the ideological implications of such a mythologised perception of the war for texts addressing it. First World War short stories are situated within the memory and the literary remembrance and re-construction of the war by introducing a new concept of canonicity applicable to the canon of First World War literature. This new concept is based on Aleida Assmann's work in the field of memory studies. The chapter further introduces a theoretical framework for a discussion and analysis of First World War short stories from a functional rather than canonical perspective, particularly but not exclusively such short stories that can be classed as formula or magazine fiction. Drawing on the notion of narrative configuration proposed by Paul Ricoeur – the idea that literary narratives can function as fictional laboratories within which readers and writers alike rehearse their own experiences, their own life narratives – First World War stories are read as documenting mentalities and extending the scope of research into oral history and personal (re-)tellings of the war. Chapter 1 also provides a working definition of the short story, and suggests reasons why the short story as a genre

is generally more elusive to define and less canonical than other genres in which the war was addressed. This section explores in particular which generic characteristics cause the lack of canonicity of most First World War short stories. A discussion of the complex interrelation between war writing, modernism and popular formulaic forms concludes the first chapter.

Chapter 2 proceeds to look at the specific publishing environment of World War I short stories in magazines, anthologies and collections. This chapter offers a contextual overview of two sample magazines and raises awareness of how different media of publication affect the impact and possible readings of a short story. It also draws attention to differences in fictionally approaching the war depending on audiences and modes of publication. A section each is dedicated to an overview of the *Strand Magazine* and the *English Review* from August 1914 to December 1920, and of general anthologies as well as specialised anthologies of war fiction between 1914 and 1945.

Chapter 3, which constitutes the bulk of this thesis, looks at a representative selection of wartime and inter-war stories addressing the First World War. The primary focus here is on popular magazine fiction, its ways of representing the war and its capacity to offer means of identification to its readers. Some avant-garde short stories are included, however, to contrast formal representational strategies and functional purposes, and to demonstrate that narrative configuration was not limited to formulaic fiction. Chapter 3 is organised both by topic areas and formal features. The thematic structure reflects major concerns of wartime and inter-war audiences, such as death and loss, injury and disability, invasion and spy fears, and the response to 'enemy aliens' in Britain. These various subject areas are also, however, organised around specific subgenres such as romance, spy thriller or melodrama, prose sketch or psychological story, as particular subgenres were often used to address specific concerns.

The fourth and last chapter of this thesis looks at short stories that continue to address the Great War in the inter-war period and during and after the Second World War. Its main purpose is not only to extend the overview to later short stories, but also and primarily to highlight changing perspectives and agendas of such retrospective stories. The altered concerns of particularly those short stories written and published after 1945 and their increasing engagement

with the memory rather than the experience of the First World War are contrasted with the strong element of narrative configuration of earlier stories. This final chapter relates short stories about the war to the evolution of a remembrance culture and popular mythology of the war, and supplements Chapter 2 by looking at changes in the publishing environment for First World War short stories after World War II.

This thesis contributes to the field of both short story criticism and First World War studies in combining previously isolated approaches and applying these to hitherto unexplored material. The combination of concepts from canon and memory studies with the notion of short stories as instruments of narrative configuration creates a new theoretical framework within which to fruitfully read and evaluate the war's short fiction. The broader temporal range adopted is also new, since most studies on First World War literature limit themselves to texts published in a specific period, most frequently the war and inter-war years. The focus on popular and magazine fiction and use of archival material from magazine back numbers and period anthologies and collections further opens up previously untapped resources of literary material.

1. Genre, Canonisation and Great War Short Stories

1.1 Great War short stories and their literary context

Great War short stories encompass a wide variety of stylistic, artistic and ideological approaches and subject matter. While this thesis looks at examples from the full range, it is the largely formulaic fiction published in magazines that is particularly interesting in its strategies of representing the war. Although later stories are a different matter, which will be treated separately in the final chapter of this thesis, First World War short stories in general (and magazine stories in particular) published during and between the wars document a period in which a diversity of experiences and memories of the war were still existing side by side, with little precedence given to any one specific version. The manifold experiences of the war among British citizens, much more diverse than today's narrower popular conception of the First World War as a war of the Western Front trenches, are reflected in short stories of the time with the greatest possible immediacy and variety. Although the war found expression in a number of genres, from histories to memoirs and novels, to the particularly abundant poetry of the war, none of these other genres fulfil quite the same snapshot function as the short story. Longer prose texts tended to be more panoramic and analytical in their treatment of the war, whereas poetry frequently sought to transcend the specific nature of one war and to appeal to universal human values and experiences – whether these are patriotism and sacrifice, or, in Wilfred Owen's famous words, "the Pity of War".

In the past decades, First World War poetry, memoirs and histories have sparked a wealth of criticism, and the mythology of the war and its impact on national and personal memory and identity has undergone thorough scrutiny. There is room in the field of First World War studies, however, for an in-depth treatment of the short story. Due to their form of publication in magazines, short stories were one of the most ephemeral genres in which the experience of the war was reflected. While they may not always be easily accessible to readers and researchers, Great War short stories hidden in out-of-print story anthologies and back numbers of magazines complete our image of the First World War beyond the typical Western Front narrative. Great War short stories, particularly those published in popular magazines, were part of a narrative framework that offered

readers a foil to which they could compare their own war experiences, and within which they could locate themselves.⁵ As Dan Todman points out,

With quantity came variety. [...] There was no immediate overall agreement over what had happened or what the war had meant. Evidence of the war's impact was all around, but very different meanings could be associated with it. But different views and different motivations were not necessarily exclusive. Instead, they often coexisted. [...] The inter-war years saw Britons wanting to remember very different versions of the war. Although none completely obscured the horror and the suffering inflicted by the war, the meanings derived from those experiences varied widely.⁶

Just like actual lives, war stories reflect the multilayered nature of war experience and both challenge and confirm the war's mythology. Their unique contribution during and immediately after the war was to help readers shape their own narrative identities by placing them in a context of readily available fictional war narratives. Their very diversity allowed even those whose experiences have since come to be marginalised or forgotten to discover themselves in what they read, to compare their experiences to fictional models, or to model their own behaviour on that of fictional characters. Most of the war novels and memoirs of the inter-war period offer a sweeping overview of the war's experience from the perspective of only one of its protagonists, and the canonised poetry of the war constitutes short commemorative texts useful for commemoration or generalised anti-war statements. First World War short stories offer something else: a snapshot view of the war from a plethora of perspectives, the totality of which allows us to re-assess our current mythology of the war, and to map a cultural history of the war's experience that cannot be gleaned from any genre located less immediately at the pulse and in the everyday sphere of its contemporary readers.

Just as Great War writing in general cannot be regarded as if it existed in a literary and historical vacuum, short stories of and about the war cannot be analysed separately from writing about the war in other genres. To provide a

⁵ Both Carol Acton and Penny Summerfield note the importance of popular narratives to both the individual experience of war and subsequent expressions of that experience. See Acton, "Best Boys", and Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998). In a more general sense, Northrop Frye comments on the interconnection between popular narrative, human experience and action; see Frye's *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976) 57.

⁶ Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon, 2005) 17.

literary context, short stories ought to be contrasted with these other genres, specifically poetry and longer prose fiction, in terms of publication, reception and canonisation, but also with regard to their specific ways of responding to the war. It is imperative to see how short stories differ from both longer prose texts and from poetry, with which they share the property of relative brevity. Next to the war memoirs of the 1920s, poetry has been one of the most important literary genres to play a part in the popularisation of the war and in the shaping of its cultural memory in Britain. Accordingly, a closer look at the poetry that found its way into the canon of Great War literature after 1914 may reveal which qualities of Great War writing were most successfully remembered once the conflict was over.

While Britons during the inter-war years held a variety of beliefs about what the war had been like and what it had achieved, the 1920s and 1930s also experienced a public remembrance culture that regarded the war as a tragedy in terms of loss of life, but could not yet bring itself to believe it wholly futile. This was to a great extent, as Todman suggests, due to the continued presence of bereaved relatives and their perceived need to believe that their sons, brothers and husbands had died in a worthy cause (Todman 132). Todman argues that while the 1960s are generally seen as the period in which the myth of the war first came into being, it is more accurate to say that this was the point in time where renewed interest and a resulting surge of new publications, film and television programmes, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the gradual demise of bereaved relatives and increased veteran activity combined in a “coincidence of commemorative, commercial, personal and occupational factors” to cement a version of the war that had existed since at least the 1920s (Todman 29). The decades from about 1960 onwards witnessed the gradual formation of the memory of the war as it is still perceived, that is, as the senseless slaughter summarised in the myth of the war.⁷ Hynes describes this myth, or master narrative, as follows:

[A] generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory, and England, went off to war to make the world safe for

⁷ See for example Michael Paris, *The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999) 53; Victoria Stewart, “‘War Memoirs of the Dead’: Writing and Remembrance in the First World War.” *Literature and History*, 14.2 (Oct 2005): 50; Todman 141-145.

democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance.⁸

That this myth is still alive and well at the beginning of the twenty-first century can be seen in recent publications such as Brian MacArthur's *For King and Country* (2008), a glossy hardcover anthology of First World War song lyrics, poetry, letters, news reports, and excerpts from literary and historical sources which follows a distinct course from enthusiasm to disillusionment in keeping with mythical notions of the war's futility. The canonised, disillusioned war poets, also included in MacArthur's anthology, have been part and parcel of this myth since at least the 1960s: they are the so-called 'trench poets' whose poetry has come to be regarded as the authoritative voice of truth about the First World War, despite the fact that they constitute a minority among those who wrote and published poetry during the war.⁹ Hibberd and Onions link the canonisation of the trench poets as the war poets per se with their alleged ability to bear first-hand witness to the war.¹⁰ Regardless of the extent to which war poetry has helped to form British cultural memory of the war, it is certainly true that the focus on the trenches in public perception of the First World War in Britain is reflected in the war's literary canon. While the Western Front constitutes the largest part of British remembrance culture, the home front – and with it all non-combatant experience of the war – remains in a marginalised position and has mainly been popularised as a negative contrast to the 'real' war at the front. Martin Stephen states with some justification that popular conceptions of the home front were established almost entirely by the negative descriptions of ignorant women and pompous old men to be found in Sassoon's poetry.¹¹

⁸ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Pimlico, 1992) x.

⁹ Brian MacArthur, *For King and Country: Voices from the First World War* (London: Little Brown, 2008). For a discussion of the diversity of Great War poetry and its narrowing down to a male, combatant perspective, see Hynes, *A War Imagined*, particularly chapter 2: 'The Arts Enlist'; Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003); as well as Nosheen Khan, *Women's Poetry of the First World War* (New York: Harvester, 1988).

¹⁰ See Dominic Hibberd and John Onions, eds., *Poetry of the Great War: An Anthology* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) 1.

¹¹ Martin Stephen, ed., *Never Such Innocence: A New Anthology of Great War Verse* (London: Buchan & Enright, 1988) 262.

Apart from its strong mutual relationship with the memory and remembrance of the war, the most prominent quality of First World War poetry is its prolific nature. War poems far outnumber texts from all other genres, including even the next in line, the short story. This can be seen in the scope of Catherine Reilly's groundbreaking *English Poetry of the First World War: A Bibliography* (1978), which lists more than 3000 individual war poems. Edna Longley describes poetry as the unprecedented "mass medium" of the First World War in Britain which, despite the fact that most of the war poems composed during the war have since been "remaindered by history", offers scope to be "read, imitated, and quoted in shifting contexts".¹² She thus aptly summarises the phenomenon of Great War poetry in Britain, which stimulated satire and surprise even during the war itself, and has continued to thrive in Britain up to the present day. Longley also stresses the strong anti-war element connected with Great War poetry today, quoting as an example the anthology *101 Poems Against War* (2003), edited by Paul Keegan and Matthew Hollis and published just before the Iraq war, prominently including Wilfred Owen on its cover (Longley 57).¹³ Longley suggests various reasons why poetry became the most important genre of the war, contrasting it with prose in a wartime context:

In theory, [poetry] takes less time to write and read. Diaries and letters contain war impressions that become poems before (if poets survive) they become memoirs. Poetry allows for improvisation, rapid response. And, as it proved from Brooke to Owen, poetry's symbolic and mnemonic force reaches where prose cannot touch (Longley 60).

Short stories are also quickly written and can respond to war experiences with great immediacy, yet their impact on the memory of the war, especially when compared to its trench poetry, is negligible. Besides their relative brevity and the possibility to respond quickly, at least those war poems perpetuated by inclusion in authoritative anthologies and school syllabi must have had a further quality that ensured their lasting precedence over short fiction. A potential characteristic

¹² Edna Longley, "The Great War, History, and the English Lyric." *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*. Ed. Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 57.

¹³ This anthology is a selection of war poems through the ages, from classical Greek epitaphs to modern poetry of the first Gulf War, accompanied by an afterword by Andrew Motion. Motion identifies the poets of the First World War (naming in particular Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Ivor Gurney and Isaac Rosenberg), whose poems make up a considerable portion of the volume, as the first true anti-war poets who "not only questioned the purpose of war, but also challenged previous poetic orthodoxies." Andrew Motion, Afterword. *101 Poems against War*. Eds. Matthew Hollis and Paul Keegan (London: Faber, 2003) 135.

that makes poetry more suitable than short prose may be its tendency to be more easily adaptable, more universal in its rhetoric and outlook; qualities that are exemplified in Wilfred Owen's poetry:

[For] all that Owen's poems make reference to poison gas, dugouts and artillery bombardment, they are much less specifically rooted in a description of trench warfare than, for example, Sassoon's. Owen's effort to transcend the context of the trenches in poems such as 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'Strange Meeting' made his work more easily applicable to subsequent conflicts, or to war in general. The reader does not require specific knowledge of the First World War to draw out a layer of meaning based on Owen's horror at the mutilation and death of young men (Todman 165).

Even those war poems attempting to portray warfare realistically are still bound by certain poetic conventions; they still make extensive use of symbolic imagery, metaphor and other rhetorical devices that help to see what is referred to in the poem in a more abstract manner. It is not surprising, as Todman also observes, that the composer Benjamin Britten chose a selection of poems by Wilfred Owen for his composition *War Requiem*, first performed in the rebuilt cathedral at Coventry on 30 May 1962. Britten's *Requiem* was designed as a musical memorial for the dead of both world wars and as a statement against war in general. Evidently, the composer felt that Owen's war poetry aptly expressed his pacifist message. Indeed, Great War poetry by poets such as Owen, Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves and Ivor Gurney came to be seen increasingly as anti-war in general, not anti-First World War in particular: it became the poetry to end all wars, a moral pacifist message that could be applied to the Vietnam (or, as we have seen above, the Iraq) war just as well as to the war that formed its actual historical context. Esther MacCallum-Stewart notes this phenomenon in her work on contemporary children's literature dealing with the First World War, and observes that in the wake of the anti-war movement of the 1960s:

[t]he writing of the First World War writers and poets was [...] adopted as synonymous with the notions of futility and the pity of conflict. Direct links were made between the war poets such as Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Wilfred Owen and the ongoing conflict in Vietnam. This led to the adoption of the First World War as a metonym for *all* wars.¹⁴

¹⁴ Esther MacCallum-Stewart, "If they ask us why we died': Children's Literature and the First World War, 1970-2005." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31.2 (Apr. 2007): 179.

Although Owen and his fellow soldier poets often referred very specifically to the unique conditions of trench warfare – the poison gas attacks and helpless immobility – that were not to be repeated in the same form, their descriptions were yet vague enough to encompass all of modern warfare. By contrast, short stories of the Great War tend to be much more specifically rooted in the political climate of the war, but even more importantly, their language and subject matter are very specifically those of their time of writing. Since most short stories were published shortly after being written, writers of short stories could rely on their audience's familiarity with current events, which results in frequent allusions and a lack of explanation as far as the bigger picture of the war is concerned. These made the stories date quickly and discourage readers who do not share the knowledge taken for granted by the writer. The topics addressed by these short stories are also frequently too mundane, too trivial to be read in the same universal manner transcending specific historical conditions that one can apply to a poetry of death and sacrifice. As will be shown below, many stories deal with formulaic notions of romance and adventure, or with small, everyday matters such as food rationing and separation. It is significant to note that of those short stories written during the war, almost exclusively modernist stories survived in the literary canon. These stories, such as Katherine Mansfield's "An Indiscreet Journey" or D.H. Lawrence's "Tickets, Please", foreground not the specific conditions of the war, but more universal issues of human psychology and human interaction.

Short stories and poems alike depended on the periodical press and on anthologies for publication. Hynes lists *The Times*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Westminster Gazette* as publications "where war poems appeared as regularly as first leaders", and observes of wartime anthologies of poetry that they "appeared with astonishing rapidity – three in September 1914, another in November, twelve in 1915, six more in 1916" (Hynes 28). This trend continued throughout and after the war, and it is in these anthologies that we can see most clearly how the formation of a canon of First World War literature and the shaping of a popular remembrance culture of the war go hand in hand.¹⁵

¹⁵ For a brief overview of some anthologies of Great War poetry, see Longley 58-59.

Longer prose texts addressing the war display the same selectivity as Great War poetry. If one were to consider only those texts taught in schools and universities and referred to in critical studies of war literature and literary histories, one would think only of the novels and memoirs of the late 1920s as examples of Great War prose. Works such as Siegfried Sassoon's semi-autobiographical Sherston novels (published between 1928 and 1936), Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), or Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928) were war books perpetuated by republication, critical attention and their close connection with the emerging myth of the war as described above, alongside the 'trench poetry' written during the war. Naturally, however, prose fiction about the First World War was not limited to this comparatively small number of critical and pacifist texts published ten years after the end of the conflict. Early examples are John Hay Beith's novel *The First Hundred Thousand* (1916; initially published as a serial in *Blackwood's Magazine* under Beith's pen-name Ian Hay) and its two sequels published in 1917, all of which present the war from a soldier's perspective, but in a cheerful, down-to-earth vein, even after fictional protagonists and real-life author alike had been transferred to the front. From the beginning of the war, novels and short stories were written and published that endorsed the war in the same manner earlier fiction had supported the colonial wars of the nineteenth century, and stood in the same tradition of heroic and patriotically inspiring war writing.

Emulating nineteenth-century juvenile adventure fiction, authors such as F.S. Brereton published heroic adventure novels with telling titles such as *Under Haig in Flanders* (1917) and *With the Allies to the Rhine* (1919), which clearly echoed earlier works like G.W. Steevens's *With Kitchener to Khartoum* (1898). Only the setting had changed, not the general outlook and moral stance on war. A particularly good example of this is Ernest Raymond's novel *Tell England* (1922), which Cadogan and Craig have described as "probably the most representative novel [of the war] in terms of public-school honour and classic chauvinism".¹⁶ In *Tell England*, Raymond describes in positive, affirmative tones the sacrifice of two English public-school pupils who volunteer for service and meet their deaths in action in the Dardanelles campaign. Their death is presented not as the futile

¹⁶ Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, *Women and Children First: The Fiction of Two World Wars* (London: Gollancz, 1978) 88.

waste that became the general interpretation from the late 1920s onwards, but as a meaningful offering in accordance with notions of honour, patriotism and spiritual faith. Other novels, expressly written for a middle-class adult audience (or, as Rosa Maria Bracco calls it, a ‘middlebrow audience’), interpreted the war in a similarly affirmative light, even and in particular after its end.¹⁷ In his studies on juvenile adventure fiction and what he calls the “pleasure culture of war”,¹⁸ Michael Paris has established that war continued to be considered an exciting and worthwhile pursuit for boys and girls alike after 1918, despite the fact that the realities of modern warfare were not uniformly glossed over and indeed frequently outlined in graphic detail. He notes that even in the “sanitised” tales of war and adventure, the realities are never completely veiled and that these texts are often as brutal and gory as they are patriotic and war-affirmative (Paris, *Over The Top* 40). Such narratives of the war, according to Paris, were published well into the Second World War and even after its end. They appeared both as books and in magazines, and encompassed both new editions of older texts and post-war stories by younger writers, often veterans of the Great War (Paris, *Warrior Nation* chapter 5; Paris, *Over the Top* 158).

Despite claims that the war could not have been addressed before the late 1920s because the traumatic experiences it had occasioned for writers and readers alike had to be overcome first, people did read about the war even in the early 1920s, in short stories as well as novels. These stories and novels do not try to hide or ameliorate tragic or unpleasant aspects of the war, but nevertheless strive to present them in the light of meaningful sacrifice – a stance infinitely more valuable to a large readership that had to come to terms with the loss of friends and relatives than the bitter, ironic outlook of the fiction of disillusionment published during the ‘war books boom’ of the late 1920s.¹⁹ Even the disillusioned writers of that surge of war novels and memoirs were not as uniformly critical of the war as is commonly assumed. Janet Watson claims the now canonical memoirs and autobiographical novels by Blunden, Graves, Sassoon and Remarque were invariably “much more about life after the war than

¹⁷ Rosa Maria Bracco, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War; 1919-1939* (Providence: Berg, 1993) 11.

¹⁸ Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion, 2000) 82; and *Over the Top* 18.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of inter-war middlebrow fiction and its attempts at healing and consolation, see Bracco, *Merchants of Hope*.

about the war itself²⁰ meaning that their disillusioned stance was usually a result of later reflection and difficult experiences in a post-war Britain racked by socio-economic problems than an immediate reaction to actual experiences during the war itself. Watson demonstrates this by contrasting diary entries and retrospectively reworked versions of the same incidents in the writings of Sassoon, Graves and Vera Brittain (Watson 219-260).

Paralleling the poetry of the Great War, only a small fraction of the prose it inspired has been canonised, namely those works that support the established myth of the war as a tragically futile endeavour, or that showed a certain degree of formal innovation. Prose and particularly short stories following 'traditional' patterns and referring back to pre-war modes of endowing the conflict with meaning tend to have been marginalised and have not found their way into the canon of Great War literature. Most short stories addressing the war fall into the realm of popular fiction, and that, alongside their more transient form of publication, their lack of both formal innovation and refusal to treat the war in accordance with the current futility myth may be held responsible for their quick descent into obscurity.

²⁰ Janet S.K. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 187. Remarque's war novel *Im Westen Nichts Neues* was first published in Germany in 1929 (it had previously been serialised in late 1928), and quickly turned into a bestseller despite offending nationalist sentiments. Arthur Wesley Wheen, himself a veteran of the First World War, translated it for publication in English in 1930, and it sold so successfully that it was adapted for the cinema in the same year. *All Quiet on the Western Front* is partly based on Remarque's own experiences of the frontline, but is largely fictional and does not claim to be an autobiography or memoir. Like Henri Barbusse, whose *Le Feu* (1916; published in translation as *Under Fire* in 1917) was a wartime literary sensation, Remarque became a canonical war writer in England despite the fact that he did not write in English.

1.2 The canon debate

Given how much the First World War has come to be associated with its literature, and how far the poetry of the war in particular has shaped popular memory of the conflict, canonicity is an issue of central concern to any study of the First World War. The idea of a literary canon has undergone much scrutiny over the past decades, without resulting in a universally acknowledged consensus. In talking of canon and canonisation, one consequently touches upon a field of inquiry that is among the most contested in literary theory and criticism. While acknowledging what has previously been achieved in terms of defining and describing processes of canonisation, my main concern is to establish a useful working definition of canon and canonisation, and to focus on those aspects that relate to the short story specifically. Canon and canonisation are extremely flexible terms, used in various areas of study transcending the borders of academic disciplines. Religious in origin, the concept of canonicity branches out into many other fields, most notably the literary and artistic ones. We find ourselves faced with radically divergent conceptions of canonicity even within the field of literary studies: a 'practical' canon of classroom texts; an ideological canon furthering the political interests of the ruling class within a given society;²¹ an aesthetic canon whose choice is based on particular literary merit and amounts to a list of texts of timeless aesthetic value;²² a canon of availability, of texts preserved as opposed to texts lost and forgotten in archives and libraries,²³ or (going back to its original meaning) a body of texts with quasi-sacral functions for a given society.²⁴

²¹ Jan Gorak, in his *The Making of the Modern Canon* (1991), scrutinises the difficulty of navigating between the idea of the canon as merely set up in the classroom, a politicised idea of the canon as formed by the criterion of "conformity with the interests of a dominant political or intellectual group", and the notion of canon as a sum of texts with true literary merit, the latter of which he observes has "fallen dramatically out of favour" (Gorak 2-3). The idea of the canon as an ideologically motivated construct is taken further in John Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993). As the title suggests, Guillory interprets canonicity in a Marxist sense as reliant on access to the means of cultural production and education, and the study also adapts Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the fields of cultural production.

²² The most ardent proponent of the canon as a body of texts selected for their timeless merit is Harold Bloom, as laid out in his *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994).

²³ Frank Kermode stresses the versatility of the concept 'canon,' calling it "a list of what is available; a simple defence against the overwhelming mass of data", but his emphasis is that, with any selective principle such as a canon must necessarily apply, "the other sense of *norm* or *rule* is not far away". Frank Kermode, "Canons." *Dutch Quarterly Review* 18 (1988): 258. Kermode contends that the canon – in its sense of a list of authoritative texts – was established through

Looking at canonisation from a more practical angle, the question arises which canon we are referring to: a national canon, a canon for a specific kind of literature, or an academic canon? Given the vast amount of literature produced over time, there can never be any talk of simply 'the canon', even within the field of literature, and even restricting the focus to literature in a specific language, or produced by writers of a specific nationality. While there may be such a thing as a 'national' canon, a range of texts taught in schools and universities and republished and revisited as 'classics' – no matter how hard it is to define which texts belong to such a canon – there is also always a number of smaller, specialised canons. These pertain to specific fields of study, research interests, genre, or subject matter, and can comprise selections as diverse as a canon of eighteenth-century writing, a canon of women's poetry, of Romantic poetry – or indeed a canon of the short story in English, or of First World War literature, all of which have prompted the compilation of specialist anthologies. Depending on the nature of these smaller canons, the criteria applied for selecting texts that are included in such anthologies vary considerably, from aesthetic merit to conformity with cultural beliefs and assumptions. It is helpful to assume that there is no such thing as a universal, all-encompassing literary canon even within the literature of one language for diverse practical and theoretical reasons, and it may be better to think of that elusive concept, the canon, as a conglomerate of smaller canons pertaining to genre, subject matter, period and similar factors.

Similarly, one must not be tempted by abstract considerations to forget about the everyday practicalities informing canon formation. A literary text may be of supreme aesthetic value, but as long as it fails to be printed and made accessible to the right kind of audience, it has no hope of entering any canon at all. Publishing and marketing concerns, outlets of publication, the question of who reads a text and for what reason; all of these factors have a significant impact on canonisation. Not the least of these are accessibility and longevity. A problematic issue attached to the short story and its critical scrutiny in particular

institutional powers, rendering it vulnerable to attack from dissident forces within society (Kermode 258-259).

²⁴ There has been a tendency in cultural studies, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, to return to a concept of canon resembling its original meaning, that is, as a set list of sacred or – in Jan and Aleida Assmann's terminology – 'cultural' texts. See for example Aleida and Jan Assmann, eds., *Kanon und Zensur: Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation II* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1987).

distinguishes it clearly and radically from the novel: that is, the factor of publication and availability. Put simply, a novel will usually be published (sometimes following previous serialisation) in one autonomous piece, and republished as long as it sells. A short story, on the other hand, is usually first published in a newspaper or magazine, and for its republication it depends on the choices made by anthology editors. The exception are short stories by particularly successful authors (who are mostly also successful novelists), which may be reprinted in a collection of short stories by that author, but will usually lag far behind that author's novels in sales. A self-contained publication of a short story, while possible, usually only happens at the costly initiative of the author.²⁵ Consequently, short stories belong to a more transient genre, and many of them are absent from critical studies because they disappeared from view almost as soon as they were published. In most cases, scholars and critics devote their attention to stories written by well-known authors, seen as supplementing their longer prose oeuvre, or stories that serve to exemplify literary trends such as modernism or post-modernism.

²⁵ The findings of a 2003 survey of short story reading habits and publication, carried out by the British Council, confirm that publishers and readers alike prefer short story collections by established authors. For a summary of the report, see Paul March-Russell, *The Short Story: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009) 49-51. A topical example of a privately published short story is James Hanley's violent, 36-page story "The German Prisoner", published in London in about 1935, with an introduction by Richard Aldington.

1.3 Cultural archive and narrative configuration

A practical take on canonisation which allows for a range of factors, not the least the accessibility of a text, can be achieved by adapting Aleida Assmann's theory of cultural memory, particularly her concept of the division of cultural memory into what she calls a cultural reservoir and a functional memory. In her 1995 essay "Funktionsgedächtnis und Speichergedächtnis – Zwei Modi der Erinnerung" ["Functional Memory and Storage Memory – Two Modes of Remembering"], and again in her article "Vier Formen des Gedächtnisses" [2002; "Four Forms of Memory"], Aleida Assmann outlines two types of memory: the so-called 'functional memory' ["Funktionsgedächtnis"], and its complement, the 'storage memory' or 'cultural reservoir' ["Speichergedächtnis"]. These two types of memory are integrated into the larger body of Assmann's theory on memory, and constitute the two layers of the cultural memory of a group or society.²⁶ Distinguishing between a cultural reservoir and functional memory allows for a distinction between the large body of items – texts, images, events, memories or similar – that is theoretically accessible to a given group, and those items that are an actual part of this group's active consciousness.

The cultural reservoir is likened by Assmann to an attic in which cultural artefacts are stored but not normally accessed.²⁷ Although Assmann's definition remains comparatively vague in the earlier essay and comprises all kinds of cultural artefacts, the notion of mere storage can easily be applied to literary texts in particular. In real-world terms, one would have to think of all those texts as part of the storage memory or cultural reservoir that are theoretically accessible in libraries, archives and private collections around the world, but remain on the shelves and in the store-rooms without being read regularly by a significant number of people. Short stories of the First World War, potentially accessible in newspaper archives and old collections, are a good illustration of the cultural reservoir. The functional memory in Assmann's sense, on the other hand, denotes those texts which are continually revisited and read by members of a given group or society: the war poetry of Wilfred Owen is an example of such a textual artefact within the body of First World War literature. According to

²⁶ Aleida Assmann, "Vier Formen des Gedächtnisses." *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* 13.2 (2002): 189.

²⁷ Aleida Assmann, "Funktionsgedächtnis und Speichergedächtnis – Zwei Modi der Erinnerung." *Generation und Gedächtnis: Erinnerungen und kollektive Identitäten*. Eds. Kristin Platt and Mihran Dabag (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1995) 178.

Assmann, this amounts to their having been canonised by means of selective social processes (Assmann, “Vier Formen” 189), meaning that these texts remain in the functional memory only as long as they coincide with interests and values of a social nature (Assmann, “Funktionsgedächtnis” 182). Canonisation in this sense takes on a distinctly social character: the canonised texts are included in a canon because they are relevant to the society or culture that the canon forms a part of, while those texts remaining in the cultural reservoir have no such current relevance. At the same time, all texts in the cultural reservoir may be transferred into the functional memory as soon as they can serve a social purpose. Assmann stresses in particular that functional memory and cultural reservoir cannot exist one without the other. While the functional memory is backed up and at times ‘corrected’ by the information stored in the reservoir, the reservoir itself would be devoid of meaning without the potential of its contents to achieve inclusion in the functional memory at some point in the future (Assmann, “Funktionsgedächtnis” 185).

Broadly speaking, the functional memory of the war – closely bound up as it is with the war’s cultural memory – is an overarching narrative of the war; a generalised tale that has come to reflect and shape public consciousness of the Great War and channels individual memories into a unified story. Samuel Hynes notes that the ‘myth’ of the First World War is not simply a fiction or fabrication, but rather a “simplified narrative that evolves from a war, through which it is given meaning”, a “socially necessary” tale that chooses the one best suited to the society that re-tells and perpetuates it of all divergent narratives and experiences of the war.²⁸ The cultural reservoir, on the other hand, to which First World War short stories largely belong, complements that dominant narrative of the war with its plethora of divergent narratives, which challenge, confirm or run parallel to the war’s functional memory, but form no active part of it unless they are for some reason extracted and introduced to a wide readership.

One reason to transfer a text from the cultural archive to its functional memory is the wish to make sense of an experience, as in the attempts of later generations to throw light on their grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ war, or the need of those who had lived through the war to assign meaning to their

²⁸ Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Allen Lane, 1997) xiii.

experiences. In *Oneself as Another* (1990), Paul Ricoeur scrutinises the functions and benefits of narrative, encompassing both fiction and historiography, for reflections on identity and character, and ultimately its bearings on human actions and ethical choices.²⁹ His basic argument is that human beings interpret their lives by means of story (or plot) patterns borrowed from fictional or historiographical narratives. According to Ricoeur, “self-understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged form of mediation” (Ricoeur 114). Interpreting life as a text, as a narrative that is being written as we live it, helps the self establish its identity across a longer time span encompassing an entire life (Ricoeur 115). By providing a framework for establishing and confirming identity, narrativity helps us solve one of the main problems Ricoeur posits in his analysis of selfhood and sameness, that of a need to establish continuity of character and thus identity over time (Ricoeur 117). Ricoeur argues that selfhood and sameness are both encompassed by narrative identity, but he also explores how narrative theory can mediate between action theory and moral theory (Ricoeur 140). It is here that Ricoeur introduces the idea of narrative as a “laboratory of moral judgment” (Ricoeur 140) in which we can test our judgments and desires against their potential consequences.

Ricoeur proposes that narrativity helps to establish a sense of permanence conducive to establishing sameness-identity for one’s character (Ricoeur 140-141). Developing his earlier work, Ricoeur outlines the idea of “identity on the level of emplotment”. According to Ricoeur, discordant and concordant events, both of which are part of our lives, are combined and mediated through narrative, and in particular through the practice of narrating. In a narrative, both positive and negative facts and events, coincidences and purposeful actions – experiences that further or hinder our plans and ambitions – are combined to make up a meaningful narrative (Ricoeur 141):

The paradox of emplotment is that it inverts the effect of contingency, in the sense of that which could have happened differently or which might not have happened at all,

²⁹ Although Ricoeur had previously considered the importance of narrativity in his three-volume study *Time and Narrative* (1983-85), it is only in *Oneself as Another* that he focuses on narrative not solely concerning its bearings on human perceptions of time, but regarding its “contribution to the constitution of the self”. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) 114.

by incorporating it in some way into the effect of necessity or probability exerted by the configuring act. The inversion of the effect of contingency into an effect of necessity is produced at the very core of the event: as a mere occurrence, the latter is confined to thwarting the expectations created by the prior course of events; it is quite simply the unexpected, the surprising. It only becomes an integral part of the story when understood after the fact, once it is transfigured by the so-to-speak retrograde necessity which proceeds from the temporal totality carried to its term (Ricoeur 142).

The process of narrative configuration, of configuring events and occurrences through emplotment/narration, is clearly a sense-making process, a way of attributing meaning, for those who either narrate or read/follow the narrative. Ricoeur further posits the idea of a unity of life attached to a character, meaning that each character (real or fictional) is regarded as a singular being or occurrence, at the centre of singular events which make up his or her life as a temporal totality. This totality may be threatened by adverse and unforeseeable events and occurrences, such as an accident, but through narrative configuration, even adversities can be incorporated into a life's history as a meaningful event that has some connection with its before and after. In this respect, Ricoeur's concept is excellently suited to a reading of First World War fiction as an instrument of creating meaning through narrativity, given that the war was widely perceived as a rupture, even a 'gap in history', in Samuel Hynes's words.³⁰

Coincidence, according to Ricoeur, is turned into fate through narrativity (Ricoeur 147). Ricoeur adopts Alasdair MacIntyre's idea of the "narrative unity of a life", which is, as he says, "governed [...] by a life project, however uncertain and mobile it may be, and by fragmentary practices, which have their own unity, life plans constituting the intermediary zone of exchange between the undetermined character of guiding ideals and the determinate nature of practices (Ricoeur 158). Through a theory of reading as an activity that allows readers to place their own lives, and their own world, in contact with the world of the text and see the latter as a mirror of and field of experimentation for the former, Ricoeur proposes that reading can help gain clarity on ethical issues (Ricoeur 159). This can be taken a step further to encompass any kind of sense-making process. Ricoeur suggests that because of the instability and elusiveness of 'real' life we need narrative as a means of rewriting our lives into more stable, uniform patterns. Even unsettling narratives challenging widely held beliefs can fulfil this

³⁰ See in particular the introduction titled "A Gap in History" of Hynes, *A War Imagined*.

function for the individual reader, by confirming personal experiences that run counter to communal opinion, and by thus offering alternative means of interpretation. Such a rewriting happens retrospectively, is always open to revision, and offers the means of dividing life into 'chapters' that can be closed off and left behind as provisional endings before the grand ending, death (Ricoeur 162).

For Paul Ricoeur, narrativity constitutes the middle ground between description and prescription, that is, between looking at actions and occurrences and drawing conclusions from them that will influence our judgment and behaviour towards ourselves and others in a positive, ethical manner. Great War short stories are narratives that were widely accessible and varied enough to provide interpretative patterns for their readers to compare their own experiences to and mould their own impressions and memories on, and vice versa. This does have an ethical dimension, but also a dimension of putting into a larger perspective isolated personal experiences, and of giving meaning to the personal by relating it to the general. In the broadest sense, it is in this light that I am looking at the stories included in this study: as a means of interpreting the war, of coping with its manifold aspects and consequences, and of striving to express, and experiment with, insights and experiences unique to the war. That these stories have come to be part of the cultural archive of the war rather than its functional memory does not reflect their value as narrative models to wartime readers, or the interest they hold for interpreting the experience of World War I from the perspective of the early twenty-first century.

Formula literature in general and magazine stories in particular often constitute excellent examples of narrative configuration in action. John Cawelti suggests four hypotheses about the interaction of formula literature and culture: firstly, that formulaic stories "affirm existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with these interests and attitudes"; second, that formulas "resolve tension and ambiguities resulting from the conflicting interests of different groups within the culture or from ambiguous attitudes toward particular values" (reflected in the formula's action, which will almost invariably move towards some kind of harmonious ending); third, that formulas "enable the audience to explore in fantasy the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden and to experience in a carefully controlled way the

possibility of stepping across this boundary” (an exploration usually carried out through the figure of the story’s villain), similar to Ricoeur’s notion of narrative fiction as a laboratory for rehearsing experiences and memories. Fourth and last, “literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in values to traditional imaginative constructs”.³¹ Popular First World War stories fulfil these functions to varying degrees and in a number of ways. Idealised representations of both home front and frontline(s) reassured and comforted those faced with hardship or doubt; romance stories addressed both anxieties about loosening morals and romantic attraction by channelling war-related sexual tensions into the socially acceptable domain of courtship and marriage; frontline stories attempted to depict the experience of combat for civilian readers and rehearsed difficult moral decisions. By addressing all aspects of war and depicting new developments such as widespread war work amongst women, popular war stories did their bit to reconcile readers to the profoundly disturbing experience of the first total war. Modernist or avant-garde stories similarly engaged with the war and its impact, if by different means; either striving to find new ways of representing the challenging new experience of modern warfare, or exploring underlying motives, psychological reactions and emotional responses to a conflict of unprecedented scale. Their audience, however, was much smaller than that of magazine fiction, and their strategies of representation not necessarily easily accessible or comforting to those reading primarily for pleasure, distraction or reassurance. Although she is speaking from a post-war perspective, Bowen’s perceptive observation of wartime society illustrates beautifully the idea of narrative (re-)configuration. In the preface to her collection *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (1945), Bowen points out that “[p]eople whose homes had been blown up went to infinite lengths to assemble bits of themselves – broken ornaments, odd shoes, torn scraps of the curtains that had hung in a room – from the wreckage. In the same way, they assembled and checked themselves from stories and poems, from their memories, from one another’s talk”.³² Bowen’s short stories – any short stories – take their place next to oral communication, poetry and material evidence in validating and interpreting

³¹ John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976) 35-36.

³² Elizabeth Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*. Ed. Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1986) 97.

memories, and completing again what has been ruptured. In a certain sense, what Bowen describes is a miniature version of Assmann's functional memory and cultural reservoir; a personal archive to be referred to as and when needed to invest personal experiences with meaning. In this light, even what might be deemed trivial reading not only served as "the perfect vehicles for sustaining the hearts and minds of the population"³³ during the Great War, but allowed for the continual reassessment and validation of readers' own experiences and memories. As Michael Roper has put it, "one possible motivation for story-telling [was] as a means of actively managing painful experiences from the past".³⁴

The contrast between functional memory and storage memory, or cultural reservoir, serves as an ideal illustration of canonicity and canon formation in the light of a social functionalisation of texts. Canonicity in this sense is not restricted to a purely academic understanding of canonisation. Widespread attention and reception, not necessarily restricted to an academic environment, are to be seen as major indicators of the canonicity of a text. While factors such as literary quality do play an important role in the canonisation of a text where aesthetic criteria are applied, the basic assumption is that even a text of superior literary quality needs to be either widely received over a longer period of time (which is usually the case when it can recognisably serve relevant cultural and/or social functions), or that it needs at the very least be read and received by the right kind of audience, i.e. an audience that has the resources to ensure the text in question remains in print, and is introduced into academic and educational syllabi. Even a text with a potential for addressing social issues, or of high aesthetic quality, will have to find its way into public perception before it can reasonably be described as canonical, particularly if one adopts as the major indicator for canonicity widespread and enduring reception and appreciation. It is therefore important to determine ways for a text to enter this canon of social relevancy and reception. Assmann's concept of the canon as the functional memory of a group or society works well if applied to smaller canons with a socio-political agenda such as the Great War canon, but should be applied with caution to a more generalised

³³ Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women's Literary Responses to the Great War 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 149.

³⁴ Michael Roper, "Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War." *History Workshop Journal* 50 (Autumn 2000): 184.

conception of canonicity in which the decisive criteria are not primarily ideological or functional but of an aesthetic nature.

Among Alistair Fowler's suggestions for instruments of canonisation, which refer mainly to older examples such as Jacobean plays or medieval manuscripts, are publication, reprinting and availability as paperback editions, restrictive censorship, (state) patronage and anthologising.³⁵ He also stresses the importance of the educational system by stating that "[t]he official canon is institutionalized through education, patronage, and journalism. But each individual has also his personal canon, of works he happens to know and value" (Fowler 214). Fowler's indication of the impact of the school system on canonisation is emphasised even more emphatically by John Guillory, whose idea of canon relies heavily on the importance of (national) curricula and syllabi (Guillory 56). The canon, in Guillory's understanding, virtually equals the curriculum – that is, the entirety of texts taught in higher education institutions on a more or less regular basis and thus made accessible to the majority of members of a given society. Guillory further posits that this curriculum roughly equates to the functional memory of a society. Needless to say, it is impossible to determine a reliable list of texts these criteria apply to, considering the scope allowed to teachers and lecturers as to which texts they use in class. Notwithstanding this difficulty in terms of gathering empirical evidence, it can be noted that British popular memory of the war is largely shaped by the teaching of the war's 'trench poetry' and a select number of other texts in secondary schools across the country.³⁶ To view canonicity as solely the result of secondary education, however, would leave out other important factors of accessibility for a general readership such as matters of publication and anthologisation. These, in

³⁵ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 215.

³⁶ The national curricula for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are monitored and continually revised by the central Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and previously the Local Education Authorities. While these curricula outline core skills and abilities that students have to achieve at the various stages of their education, the range of texts and subjects to be studied are largely defined by the various examination boards or awarding bodies. These texts and subjects thus change regularly and differ depending on which awarding body a school subscribes to, making it hard to determine exactly which First World War texts are being studied. Textbooks are more helpful in this respect. Andrew Motion states in the preface to a teaching anthology that the teaching of Great War poetry in school leads to an infusion of the trench poets – and hence the Great War narrative of the Western Front trenches – into the "national bloodstream", thus acknowledging the predominance of the Western Front and the soldierly perspective of the war. Andrew Motion, ed., *First World War Poems* (London: Faber, 2003) xi.

turn, tend to have a certain impact on the curriculum, since only widely available texts are taught in schools. As John Rodden points out, “a well-edited collected volume can facilitate the institutionalizing of new works and the growth of a reputation” (Rodden 230). Publication and anthologisation consequently have to be regarded as important factors in canonising a text.

It is thus a combination of aesthetic value, social relevancy, accessibility, inclusion in curricula and syllabi, and the publishing history of a text that will decide its position in either the functional memory and ultimately a canon, or in the ‘archive’ of the cultural reservoir. If one applies Assmann’s concept to First World War literature specifically, the British canon of Great War writing emerges as roughly equivalent to a functional memory of the war, while all those texts – like most short stories of the war – which do not form part of that canon form the war’s cultural archive. They constitute a body of texts and sources about the experience of the war, and about the cultural or literary treatment of this experience, that can be drawn on to amend, substitute or complement the functional memory of the war. Attempts by feminist critics to integrate into the canon more war writing by women are a good example of a conscious attempt to reclaim material from the archive of (temporarily) forgotten texts and introduce it into the active popular consciousness of the war. Naturally, this subdivision cannot solve the problem of defining what exactly is part of the canon, or functional memory, at any given point, but in stressing availability and reception as important criteria it does offer a means of selection that excludes texts unavailable to the general reader.

1.4 Which canon? Short fiction and First World War literature

In dealing with the canonisation of First World War short stories, I am considering specifically two canons. First, a fairly international canon of short fiction, and second (more firmly rooted in a British context), a canon of First World War literature. Criteria for the inclusion of a short story in a canon of short fiction must by definition be related to how well a given story fulfils or challenges generic expectations and thus displays a greater interest in stylistic and structural properties of texts potentially to be included. The First World War canon is by contrast primarily a socio-cultural canon. Consequently, content is a more important criterion than form, and aesthetic considerations are secondary in particular to the 'truthfulness' and authenticity of a text. There is generally a certain tension present between plot, style and subject matter in First World War writing: short stories often use the war as a plot intensifier and have a greater interest in formal characteristics, whereas non-fictional war texts have little interest in form, and a greater interest in authenticity. War as a topic appears to demand realism, genre demands artistry. In their study of the memory of World War I across different British media, Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider and Claudia Sternberg note such a penchant for realism in prose memoirs, novels and films about the war, and also point to the concomitant demand for truth and 'authenticity' made on war literature.³⁷ This was not an entirely new development connected with the First World War. Michael Paris notes that even popular adventure-story writer G.A. Henty had gained some first-hand experience as a war correspondent and "based his fiction on personal observation, on contemporary reports by war correspondents, and on popular histories" (Paris, *Over the Top* xiii-xiv).

While contemporary critics also expected war memoirs to be well-written and readable, the core issue was the veracity of the author's account of his war experiences, or, with fictional prose, the authenticity of what was depicted in comparison to the real thing, life at the front. Readers and critics alike expected their war books to show them war as it really was, or rather, as they expected it to be, regardless of the fact that there could be no such thing as a universally

³⁷ Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider and Claudia Sternberg, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Mediendiskurse der Erinnerung in Großbritannien: Autobiographie – Roman – Film (1919-1999)* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005) 17-18.

'true' story of the war. Although he declares that his particular praise for books of war fiction and personal reminiscence is bestowed on narratives he considers "particularly well written",³⁸ Cyril Falls in his *War Books: A Critical Guide* more often than not censures a novel whose author, he feels, "appears to know singularly little of certain of the details which he describes" (Falls 294).³⁹ Evelyn Copley notes critically that even such influential post-war critics on war literature as Bergonzi and Fussell "tend to look for antiwar sentiments, often using these as evaluative criteria".⁴⁰ Robert Graves was criticised for the factual inaccuracy of his war memoir *Goodbye to All That* (1929), a hastily dictated volume composed in the midst of his separation from his first wife and under severe financial strain. In response to this criticism, Graves stressed the practical difficulties faced by memoirists of the war given the lack of reliable sources. It had been his inaccuracies about battles and frontline topography that had most irked some reviewers and critics, and Graves pointed out subsequently the impossibility of keeping a diary in the trenches. He also noted the undesirability of relating nothing but pure facts: "I would even paradoxically say that the memoirs of a man who went through some of the worst experiences of trench warfare are not truthful if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities."⁴¹ Siegfried Sassoon deliberately recorded his war experience in the form of a series of autobiographical novels, which yet claimed to be fictional memoirs (and were thus imbued with a sense of non-fictitiousness while being fictional). An example from a frontline other than the Western Front are the experiences of T.E. Lawrence as recorded in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (1926), whose veracity was first questioned by Richard Aldington in the disparaging *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Inquiry* (1955). Although most of his allegations of falsehood or embellishment were later disproved by either witnesses or official documents, Aldington's book hit hardest where a war book was most vulnerable, in that it questioned the truthfulness of Lawrence's account, combined with claims that Lawrence was homosexual. Lawrence's exploits were nevertheless

³⁸ Cyril Falls, *War Books: A Critical Guide* (London: Peter Davies, 1930) xiv.

³⁹ This particular instance of criticism was levelled against Remarque and his novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In other instances, Falls commends a war book because it "reveals the truth" (Falls 296), because it shows us "the authentic British infantrymen" (Falls 292), or for its author's "sincerity and the power with which he described what he had seen" (Falls 273).

⁴⁰ Evelyn Copley, *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993) 5.

⁴¹ Quoted in Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale* 16.

immensely popular particularly with a juvenile audience, perhaps – as Dorothea Flothow suggests – because they took readers away from the dreary modernity of the trenches to the exotic glamour of desert warfare, and to individual heroics rather than mass drudgery.⁴²

Fictional accounts of the war, whether in the form of a novel or a short story, always competed with texts claiming to be non-fiction and based entirely on autobiographical experience. Since non-fictional texts claim for themselves a depiction of reality that may by necessity be narrated, but is by definition non-fictional as well as non-fictional, war memoirs and autobiographies potentially promised an account of the war that was considered more ‘truthful’ than that provided by fictional texts. Evelyn Cobley notes that those writing about their own experiences of the frontline in the First World War wrote “to provide an alternative history which was scrupulously accurate in its depiction of everyday events” (Cobley 6), frequently driven by feelings of survivor’s guilt or the need to retrospectively embed what had happened into safe narrative frameworks. In these attempts, the vast majority of writers chose a documentary mode, whether in the form of explicitly non-fictional memoir or fictional autobiographical novel (Cobley 10-12; 24-33). In entering the British canon of First World War literature, short stories addressing the war were thus in competition with a plethora of other texts with higher claims to truthfulness and authenticity: while short stories are, firstly, fictional texts, and were secondly in most cases written by civilian writers, other texts – such as war poetry written by poets with frontline experience, or memoirs and autobiographical fiction written by war veterans – are seen to convey a more authentic account of the war.⁴³ The

⁴² On T.E. Lawrence’s image in publications for children and young adults, see Dorothea Flothow, “Popular Children’s Literature and the Memory of the First World War, 1919-1939.” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31.2 (Apr. 2007): 151-152.

⁴³ Samuel Hynes proposes that 1920s literature and art bear testimony to “attempts to reconstruct history and values” lost in the gap of the war years. In the process of these attempts the mythology of the war as a war of loss and futility was established through the now canonical prose narratives of the war (Hynes, *A War Imagined* 459). Naturally, this interpretation is based on a fixed idea of what constitutes the truth of war, and feminist critics in particular have shown that it is a limiting and falsifying assumption to restrict authentic war experience exclusively to what happens at the front. Debra Rae Cohen points out how the history of the First World War as it was remembered emerged almost exclusively from the “soldiers’ tales” of the 1920s and for this reason represents an exclusively male perspective. See Debra Rae Cohen, *Remapping the Home Front: Locating Citizenship in British Women’s Great War Fiction* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 2002) 2. See also Margaret R. Higonnet, ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987); Claire M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women’s Consciousness: Images of Militarism and Womanhood in Women’s Writings, 1914-64* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1990); Susan R.

development and change of the Great War canon in British culture can and must be seen as intricately connected with changing public perceptions and commemoration of the First World War, and in particular its evolving mythology (Hynes, *A War Imagined* 459).

Within the field of English literature and culture, the canon of Great War literature has come to be an important subsection. First World War literature, and the so-called 'trench poetry' of the war in particular, have been a staple element of modern British school curricula since the 1960s,⁴⁴ and are the topic of numerous undergraduate and postgraduate modules at universities. In *The Pity of War* (1998), the historian Niall Ferguson relates how his early exposure to the poetry of Wilfred Owen in school, aged fourteen, cemented his interest in the First World War.⁴⁵ This prominence of critical war writing does not necessarily reflect the actual experience of the Great War or even represent the totality of wartime literary output, as has been pointed out, amongst others, by Brian Bond in *The Unquiet Western Front* (2002): Bond claims that "the 'anti-war' writers have exerted more influence on public opinion since the 1960s than they did in the 1930s."⁴⁶ He illustrates this point by stating that Wilfred Owen's poetry, today seen as epitomising the experience of modern warfare and its disillusionment, was far less known and liked in 1930 by a general readership than the poems of Rupert Brooke, who later on came to be regarded as merely the naive victim of patriotic enthusiasm.⁴⁷ It was from the 1960s onwards that

Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999) and Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003). Even within the group of combatants, not all spheres of war experience are equally included in the war myth, as Eugene Michail notes in his study of the British 'Salonika Army', "'A Sting of Remembrance!': Collective Memory and its Forgotten Armies." *British Popular Culture and the First World War*. Ed. Jessica Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 244.

⁴⁴ Robert Jeffcoate claims that "The poetry of the First World War has been a staple of the English curriculum for at least as long as I have been involved with secondary schools, which is now getting on for thirty years", while lamenting the very limited selection of poetry that finds its way into the classroom. Robert Jeffcoate, "Teaching Poetry of the First World War in the Secondary School." *Critical Survey* 2.2 (1990): 151.

⁴⁵ See Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, 1998) xxiii.

⁴⁶ Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 28.

⁴⁷ Alisa Miller's recent study *Poetry, Politics and Propaganda: Rupert Brooke and the Role of 'Patriotic Poetry' in Great Britain, 1914-1918* (Diss. U of Oxford, 2008) outlines in particular the enormous flexibility of Brooke's poetry, reputation and ensuing myth, both in terms of political exploitation, and of altered agendas after the war. Brooke's popularity is reflected in the publishing history of his works: Brooke's *Collected Poems*, for instance, first published in 1918 by Sidgwick & Jackson, were reprinted or republished in 1919, 1920, 1928, 1929, 1945, 1979, 1987

critical Great War writing came into its own and helped to form the public perception of the First World War.⁴⁸ This also explains the great number of non-fictional texts included in the canon of Great War literature. The historian Brian Bond agrees with literary scholars such as Rosa Maria Bracco that literary critics and scholars, namely those who are in a position to influence the formation of a literary canon, “have too often focused on enduring literary merit to the neglect of the more ephemeral popularity of competent middlebrow writers” (Bond 29). This neglect is, of course, the result of the conflicting interests of literary criticism and social historiography: where Bond, Bracco and others see a plethora of texts yielding rich insights into popular attitudes and concerns regarding the First World War, literary scholars often see works of popular fiction repeating predictable patterns and catering to mass tastes rather than developing complex aesthetics. Theories of cultural production introduced and refined by Bourdieu and Ken Gelder place emphasis on target audiences; and different First World War texts do indeed hold different merits depending on the audience they originally targeted and the readings applied to them today.⁴⁹

By the 1980s, Great War writing had become almost synonymous with pacifist, anti-war writing, and evoked clear images of the horrors of modern warfare. As John Onions points out, to “contemplate First World War fiction is to turn imaginatively to the Western Front and to its archetypal images” (Onions x). The eminence of the First World War as a literary topic is due primarily to the war’s importance for British cultural memory: the conflict is widely remembered as the ultimate catastrophe of the twentieth century that marked the loss of innocence and entrance into the age of mechanised ‘total’ warfare. Corresponding to this perception of the First World War as a locus of fundamental change for modern society, its literature is frequently perceived as

and 1992. Biographies of or reminiscences about Brooke appeared at regular intervals from his death in 1915 up to the present day, most recently Mike Read, *Forever England: The Life of Rupert Brooke* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997).

⁴⁸ Amongst those concerns of the 1960s that helped to resuscitate interest in the First World War and particularly its anti-war writing, Bond lists the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the end of national service in Britain in 1960, the emergence of an independent youth culture and greater sexual freedom, the Vietnam War and student protests (Bond 51-53).

⁴⁹ For a definition of popular versus literary texts, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993) 82-83; and the introductory chapter to Ken Gelder’s *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field* (London: Routledge, 2004).

exemplifying the turn from traditional Victorian/Edwardian/Georgian writing to modernist and more experimental writing, despite the fact that most narratives and poetry about the war adhered to traditional patterns even after 1918 (Onions 9). The formation of a canon of First World War literature began during the inter-war years, particularly the late 1920s and early 1930s, when most of the now canonical 'classic' war novels and memoirs appeared after a period of relative silence on the war. These texts of the so-called 'war books boom' reiterated the stance on the war that had previously been adopted by the more war-critical among the trench poets, and condemned the war as a futile endeavour and senseless mass-slaughter of young, promising men. Janet S.K. Watson argues that this evaluation of the war was by no means exclusively a result of the war years themselves, but mainly resulted from the socio-economic difficulties of the inter-war years which helped to create the illusion of pre-war Britain as a better world terminated by the conflict.⁵⁰ Literary war texts that were to be included in the canon, whether poetry, novels or memoirs, were characterised by a uniform condemnation of the war, and by certain stylistic traits that recur throughout canonised Great War writing regardless of its degree of experimentation: gritty realism, the frequent abandoning of narrative sense, an ironic narrative voice,⁵¹ descriptions founded on personal experience of the war (frequently referred to as a factor of 'truth', or veracity of narration), and a certain universality in their (pacifist) representation of war (Watson 204; 210). Watson stresses that the greatest interest critics have in Great War texts is orientated towards the future, to how war books can help prevent further war and/or help to come to terms with the past conflict to be able to leave it behind (Watson 215). She thus directs attention to the fact that all popular readings of Great War literature remain closely connected to the idea of a moral message, an obligation on the part of the authors to subscribe to a pacifist ideology. This attitude is visible in the work of scholars such as George Parfitt, who repeatedly condemned war novels on the grounds that their authors have "failed to learn" their (pacifist) lesson from the war, that they glorify it when they should be

⁵⁰ "It was only the difficulties of the 1920s and after that created the disillusioned look back at war; it was not, for most people, a product of the war years themselves" (Watson 186).

⁵¹ See for example Onions's description (Onions 54).

condemning it.⁵² The book's explicitly moral stance is perhaps also visible in its dedication to Parfitt's uncles who fought in the war, a recurring feature of critical studies, including Fussell's dedication of *The Great War and Modern Memory* to a comrade killed in action in 1945.

As is the case with all canons, it is hard to supply a definitive, binding list of authors and texts that constitute the canon of Great War literature in Britain. If one applies the above distinction between functional memory and cultural archive to the canon of Great War literature, those texts will have to be seen as included in the canon that are read, republished, and taught in schools and universities. These texts are not necessarily texts produced during the war years themselves – as Adrian Barlow points out in his *The Great War in British Literature* (2000), texts may be seen as part of a Great War canon regardless of when and by whom they were written, provided they fit in with notions of how the war should best be represented (Barlow 70). Janet Watson lists as canonical only the standard memoirs and autobiographical novels by Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon and Erich Maria Remarque. She simultaneously stresses that these canonised books were invariably “much more about life after the war than about the war itself” (Watson 187). Other authors who are part of the Great War canon are soldier poets such as Wilfred Owen, the “social hero” of the war who, in his poetry, “elucidates moral understanding on behalf of others”, his fellow soldiers, and has thus come to be regarded as “the archetypal war poet” (Onions 9).⁵³ On the fringes of the canon, judging from their frequent inclusion in recent anthologies of war poetry, we also find poets who do not quite meet Onions' description of the soldier writer, such as private soldier Isaac Rosenberg. Of the few women whose texts have managed to penetrate the canon, Vera Brittain and her autobiographical *Testament of Youth* (1933) is probably the best known today. Feminist critics have stressed the richness of war writing by particularly nurses and female ambulance drivers, such as May Sinclair, Mary Borden or Evadne Price, and there have been attempts to make female war

⁵² See Parfitt on John Buchan, Gilbert Frankau and Frederic Manning in *Fiction of the First World War: A Study* (London: Faber, 1988) 20; 70; 90-91.

⁵³ Whether Owen and his few fellow canonised Great War poets are justly regarded as the ‘voice of the soldier’ or not has been a matter of some debate, given that they essentially represent only a specific sub-group within the British army; the young, well-educated junior officer. For my purposes, however, it is more important to recognise that their status in popular consciousness remains intact, rather than to discuss the accuracy of this representation.

poetry more accessible, such as Catherine Reilly's influential anthology *Scars Upon my Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War* (1981).

1.5 Modernism and the Great War

The canon of Great War fiction should by no means be seen as a reflection of what a majority of people in Britain read and appreciated either during or after the war. Harold Orel's survey of reading tastes in wartime and early 1920s Britain shows clear preferences for romance and adventure fiction, and for books with a meaning-giving stance on the war such as Raymond's abovementioned *Tell England*. The now canonical war narratives (as opposed to the poetry), on the other hand, were not published until the late 1920s to early 1930s.⁵⁴ It is equally important to note how closely even the socio-cultural canon of First World War literature is bound up with notions of modernity and literary as well as historical modernism. Modernism and the First World War are frequently considered hand in hand. Not only did literary modernism coincide with the war and the inter-war period, it has also been seen as reacting to the war in texts such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922), or David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937). Jones's poem is a particularly interesting case as it combines traditional reference frameworks with modernist structure and style.

The Great War as the ur-catastrophe of modernity and the twentieth century is commonly regarded as having rendered necessary a literature capable of representing modern reality and consciousness in new and different ways, and there appears to be general agreement amongst disciples of modernism that it offered the best means for this representation. On the continent, the Dada movement attempted in far more radical ways to find a new language for the experience of modernity and to openly oppose the war by its own, nihilistic "war games of the mind",⁵⁵ but it did not find a following amongst avant-garde artists in Britain, where modernism prevailed as an alternative current of expression. Characteristics associated with 'modernist' literature, such as fragmentation of narrative structure, an interest in psychology and the dynamics of human

⁵⁴ See Harold Orel, *Popular Fiction in England, 1914-1918* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

⁵⁵ Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Mariner-Houghton Mifflin, 2000) 210.

interaction and the mind, undoubtedly all lend themselves to the purpose of representing modern experience. Hynes goes as far as saying that the First World War and its sense of radical discontinuity “entered post-war consciousness as a truth about the modern world” (Hynes, *A War Imagined* xi), including post-war literature, and he links the myth-making war books of the late 1920s directly to literary modernism:

The classic narratives of the war that were written in the late Twenties share many elements: common themes, a common language, a common range of tones. But perhaps most importantly, they share a sense of history, and it seems best to enter the great myth-making period on this point, for it is here that the Myth most clearly connects with the Modernist tradition as a whole, and so participates most directly in the imaginative world of art and literature that we still inhabit (Hynes, *A War Imagined* 425).

A broad range of authors wrote about their war experiences using narrative or poetic techniques associated with modernism, and their texts are felt to express most poignantly the experience of modern warfare.⁵⁶ Popular notions of the importance of modernist techniques at the time, however, are exaggerated. While some writers, including writers of short stories and prose sketches, did rely on modernist techniques, the majority of short story writers during and after the war continued to rely on conventional plot-based story-telling for their work. Jay Winter sees the current discourse on the understanding of the cultural history of the First World War as divided into two approaches – an interpretation of the war and its processing in British cultural consciousness as quintessentially ‘modernist’ on the one hand, and as inherently ‘traditional’ and patriotic on the other. Winter self-declaredly wishes to “go beyond the cultural history of the Great War as a phase in the onward ascent of modernism”.⁵⁷ He criticises an understanding of the cultural history of the war as purely modernist on the grounds that even radically modernist writers of the period did not break

⁵⁶ On the suitability of the short story to express the fragmented nature of the modern experience, see for example Barbara Korte, *The Short Story in Britain: A Historical Sketch and Anthology* (Tübingen: Francke, 2003) 19. Contemporary voices such as G.K. Chesterton already noted the connection between the “fleetingness and fragility” of modern life and its representation in short stories: G.K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* (London: Methuen, 1906) 69, quoted in March-Russell 25. Edmund Blunden observed with particular reference to the First World War that “[t]he mind of the soldier on active service was continually beginning a new short story, which had almost always to be broken off without a conclusion”. Edmund Blunden, Introduction. *Great Short Stories of the War: England, France, Germany, America*, ed. H.C. Minchin (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1930) ii.

⁵⁷ J.M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 3.

entirely with the more traditional values and styles by which they were surrounded, but rather interacted with and transformed them, resulting in not so much a cultural and artistic rupture as a gradual development. Especially in terms of mourning and commemoration, traditional modes of expression prevailed over modernist forms in the inter-war years:

The strength of what may be termed 'traditional' forms in social and cultural life, in art, poetry, and ritual, lay in their power to mediate bereavement. The cutting edge of 'modern memory,' its multi-faceted sense of dislocation, paradox and the ironic, could express anger and despair, and did so in enduring ways; it was melancholic, but it could not heal. Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind.⁵⁸

First World War short stories support Winter's claims. They do not form part of the British Great War canon or the functional memory of the war for a variety of reasons. For one thing, they do not conform to the current myth of the war as most of them fail to condemn it, or are set in places and situations not widely commemorated as part of the war. As pointed out above, these stories are brief, fictional glimpses of wartime and inter-war life that do not offer either the contemplative scope of a war novel, the eyewitness (if not always historically accurate) information and authenticity of a war memoir or history, or the overarching pathos and pacifist potential of the canonised trench poetry. Most importantly, however, the overwhelming majority of these stories address issues such as loss and fear by employing established, comforting patterns and formulas rather than techniques of fragmentation and alienation.

⁵⁸ J.M. Winter, "The Great War and the Persistence of Tradition: Languages of Grief, Bereavement, and Mourning." *War, Violence, and the Modern Condition*. Ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997) 39.

1.6 Great War short stories: between coterie and mass market

Defining the short story genre is an undertaking that seems to be as challenging as defining the literary canon, and it serves no practical purpose to become embroiled in lengthy debates over the nature and aims of the genre. Consulting any one of the more recent works on the short story, one will inevitably come across the realisation that the short story, more than perhaps any other literary genre, is extremely hard to define, and that its definition has changed so often over time that it is virtually impossible to agree on any other common denominators than that a short story ought to be a piece of prose fiction, and that it ought to be relatively short. Even its shortness, however, can vary between a few hundred and several thousand words. It is partly this difficulty of definition that troubles all histories and critical studies of the short story, since it is hard to decide which stories to include and exclude, how to compare them and most of all how to discern what Dominic Head calls a “developing aesthetic”⁵⁹ of the short story. Nevertheless, in the context of this thesis a working definition of which texts can be regarded as short stories seems indispensable. In order to achieve a valid corpus, it must be possible to determine whether or not a text belongs in the genre under examination.

Genre definition in general is a difficult business and frequently near impossible, as genres are notoriously difficult to describe and susceptible to change over time (Fowler 18). Dominic Head comments at some length on the problem of balancing the “conflicting requirements” of providing a single, universally valid and ideally simple definition and yet taking into account the historical changes any genre is apt to undergo (Head 2-3). His proposed solution is to concentrate on tendencies rather than absolutes in order to allow for gradual changes. Norman Friedman proposes to differentiate clearly between the genus (or class) of a given text, and the differentiating feature that separates it from other texts of this larger class. In this scheme, the genus of any story is, as Friedman puts it, “narrative fiction in prose”, while the short story is distinct from other types of narrative fiction in prose by its relative shortness.⁶⁰ Although this definition is simple, it is not overly simplistic – Friedman points out that

⁵⁹ Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) x.

⁶⁰ Norman Friedman, “Recent Short Story Theories: Problems in Definition.” *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*. Eds. Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989) 15.

labels for the length of a text are always relative, but nevertheless excellently serve the purpose of fencing off a field of inquiry (i.e. “narrative fiction in prose which is short”). This basic definition can be further refined by looking at themes and structures within the field (Friedman 15-16). Friedman distinguishes clearly between what he calls “genre traits” (in the case of the short story its relative shortness) and “period traits” (such as a modernist, non-narrative reliance on symbols and images in many early twentieth-century stories), to pre-empt any unnecessary confusion of genre characteristics with fashions in literary writing that affect all prose genres (Friedman 20-21). Popular notions of the short story as necessarily geared towards a unity of effect can be integrated into Friedman’s definition as one possible variant of the genre, dependent on the literary taste of its time.

In addition, the matter of length or relative shortness remains to be addressed. To complement Friedman’s broad definition of the short story as a type of narrative fiction in prose that is short, Helmut Bonheim’s observations on the short story seem particularly suited. Bonheim essentially agrees with Friedman that short stories share most stylistic and formal features with longer prose texts, and in fact points out that many anthologies claiming to collect pieces of short fiction tend to anthologise excerpts from novels alongside genuine short stories.⁶¹ Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis will show that this is particularly true of anthologies of First World War stories. To resolve the difficulty of definition, Bonheim resorts to acknowledging the material circumstances of the publication and distribution of texts and defines the short story as “a complete narrative normally too short to be published by itself” (Bonheim 166). He argues convincingly that marketing considerations have effectively influenced all writers – including, it might be added, avant-garde writers – for the past century and a half, and that they are consequently valid criteria to use in a definition of the genre, providing for the short story “a norm and a framework within which the genre has in fact developed and thrived” (Bonheim 166). Bonheim successfully counters objections from those critics who argue that the short story is set apart primarily by its distinctive structural and formal features by observing that publication-related limitations on the length of short stories have resulted in

⁶¹ Helmut Bonheim, *The Narrative Modes: Techniques of the Short Story* (Cambridge, MA: Brewer, 1992) 166.

other limitations that authors needed to work around, such as limits to the number of protagonists, plotlines or settings. In Bonheim and Friedman's understanding of genre definition, characteristics frequently identified for the short story such as high density of action and characterisation, a particular stress on closure, tendencies towards fragmentation and similar features remain period traits; characteristics that are seized upon by short story writers of a particular time because they suit the genre and because they are fashionable. None of these features, however, are genuine generic traits of the short story, and they are likely to change over time. This study will consequently regard as a short story any self-contained, short, fictional narrative published in a periodical, anthology or collection, regardless of internal features such as style and structure.

Most studies devoted to short story theory or history begin by stating that the short story is a chronically neglected genre. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, it has become increasingly hard to uphold this claim as more and more works on the short story are being published, particularly since the 1980s.⁶² Hence, the truly problematic issue is not an absence of critical studies – whether book-length or in essay form – but their extreme heterogeneity of approach, and their tendency to try and apply essentialist genre characteristics that have evolved in the course of the twentieth century, and exclude a majority of short stories from the canon of short fiction by dint of their narrow understanding of what a short story ought to be.

⁶² Charles E. May's edited collection *Short Story Theories* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1976) is a pioneering attempt to bring together divergent critical views on the short story by a range of scholars, repeated in a revised volume *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1994). May also supplied to the body of critical studies a history of the genre in *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (1995. New York: Routledge, 2002). Valerie Shaw combines a history of the short story with detailed chapters on some of its generic idiosyncrasies, such as forms of characterisation, narrative techniques or fragmentation, in her *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (1983. London: Longman, 1995). Dennis P. Vannatta's *The English Short Story: 1945-1980, A Critical History* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1985) explicitly targets post-war short fiction and the short story's development after the heyday of magazine publication, while Claire Hanson in *Short Stories and Short Fiction, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985) offers a slightly broader temporal scope, and in the process seeks to distinguish between two distinct types of short stories, the plot-based short story 'proper' and the psychologically oriented 'short fiction'. Hanson's *Re-Reading the Short Story* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) is a collection of critical essays centring on a range of subjects from definitions of the genre to case studies of canonised short story writers. The focus of Dominic Head's monograph *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) is modernist short fiction, which he regards as epitomising both the short story genre and modernist literary technique. More recent studies such as Frank Myszor's *The Modern Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) and Barbara Korte's *The Short Story in Britain: A Historical Sketch and Anthology* (Tübingen: Francke, 2003) combine a history of the genre and its critical reception with an anthology section and model interpretations.

In 1924, contemporary short-story critic A.C. Ward pointed out that “[t]he Modern Short Story had its precocious youth in the `eighties and `nineties; it now seems to be on the threshold of a burgeoning maturity”.⁶³ The first half of the twentieth century was a heyday of short story writing and publication, owing much to the popularity of fiction magazines and periodicals, which lasted in Britain until roughly the late 1940s. Short-story writer Stacy Aumonier even ventured as far as saying that “the art of writing short stories is probably the only art in which the demand is far greater than the supply”.⁶⁴ Publisher and writer Michael Joseph describes the circumstances in 1923 as extremely favourable to the aspiring short story writer in his writing manual, stating that “[a] wide and increasing market awaits the writer’s work. The already large number of fiction magazines is being added to practically every month, thus testifying to the public demand for fiction of this type”.⁶⁵ He continues to list as many as thirteen new weeklies that began publication after 1 January 1922, including *Corner Magazine*, *Yellow Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping*; followed by twenty-eight existing fortnightly or monthly magazines, a list headed by the *Strand Magazine*. The early twentieth century saw the emergence and continued popularity of a great variety of subgenres of the short story, read by large and varied audiences. Readerships ranging from upper- to working-class, from avant-garde to popular, each with its own publication outlets, offered a fruitful market for short fiction.

Yet of all early twentieth-century story types it is the modernist short story that has received the most critical attention. Claire Hanson, reflecting Joyce, identifies as the central feature of modernist short fiction “a single moment of intense or significant experience” (Hanson 55). Hanson regards the impact of modernism on the social standing of the short story in general as outstanding:

Our understanding of modernist short fiction must finally be influenced by our awareness of its role in a particular contemporary literary context. In the modernist period the short form came to have, for the first time in its history, a status almost equivalent to that of the novel. Many prose writers began their career with short fiction and continued to find the form congenial (Hanson 56).

⁶³ Alfred C. Ward, *Aspects of the Modern Short Story: English and American* (London: U of London P, 1924) 8.

⁶⁴ Stacy Aumonier, Foreword. *Short Story Writing for Profit*. By Michael Joseph. 2nd edition (London: Hutchinson, 1923) vii.

⁶⁵ Michael Joseph, *Short Story Writing for Profit*. 2nd edition (London: Hutchinson, 1923) 179.

She points out several modernist novels originated from earlier short stories, such as Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Although modernist short stories constitute only a small portion of the stories written in the first half of the twentieth century, they are now the most often canonised. Despite the fact that average contemporary readers often found fault with modernist fiction "on the ground that it has no plot and contains no action" (Ward 17), influential critics seized upon the new ideas and formal experimentation of the modernists and, as A.C. Ward found, it was rather the "sluggish perception" of the readers that was to blame for their unfavourable reception among popular audiences (Ward 18). Michael Joseph reacts to this contemporary difficulty of understanding modernist stories when he regrets, in the introduction to his writing manual, that he has had to "omit reference to writers of the calibre of Tchegov [sic], Henry James, Katherine Mansfield, Rebecca West, Walter de la Mare, Aldous Huxley, G. B. Stern, May Sinclair, Maurice Baring, and Elizabeth Bibesco" (Joseph xiii). He explains that, while these authors "are playing an important part in the development of the modern short story", their avant-garde conception of short story writing would "not help the would-be contributor to the magazines" (Joseph xiii). Joseph explicitly posits modernist stories against the 'magazine short story'; against the kind of good, readable prose for a public interested in quality entertainment but without particular literary ambitions.

This notion of the short story as an essentially modernist form, conceived perhaps in the wake of New Criticism's regard for modernist fiction and perpetuated in a range of more recent critical studies, has contributed significantly to the marginalisation of much that British short fiction has to offer. Rita Felski notes the normative dimension of modernism as a movement beyond the mere literary, a movement one was either in favour of or opposed to "in a way that one cannot be for or against the Renaissance".⁶⁶ As modernist affiliations were increasingly seen as visible signs of a "repudiation of the past and a commitment to change and the values of the future" (Felski 13), traditional narratives were perceived as anti-modern and thus of less value. Essentially, Felski argues that modernist texts came to be privileged in the canon because of

⁶⁶ Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995) 13.

their status, audience and affiliations, and points out “the often rarefied aesthetic concerns of writers such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and the formalist and antireferential emphasis of New Criticism as an institutional practice and technology of reading” (Felski 23). In their textbook *Understanding Fiction* (1943), which focuses exclusively on short fiction, American New Critics Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren postulated that in order to be ‘serious fiction’ a story must have more than a plot: it must have “a certain modicum of characterization, a certain concern with the psychological basis of action, a certain interest in moral content and general meaning”.⁶⁷ What they suggest is effectively that stories which focus on action rather than psychology, and which fail to have a general message, are not worthy of serious study, and by inference not worthy of canonisation. An “insensitive style”, “crude characterization and arbitrary psychology”, or any “defects in logic and mechanical plot management”, result in a story that can at best entertain the readers of popular family magazines (Brooks and Warren xviii). Vague as Brooks and Warren’s notions appear to be on the subject of what constitutes a ‘good’ story, New Critical ideas about what a short story ought to be came to dominate the emerging canon of short fiction and led to a bias in favour of stories that fulfilled expectations of innovation in terms of style, structure or subject matter, to the detriment of conventional tales regardless of their narrative quality. As Paul March-Russell observes, this trend continues into late twentieth-century criticism of the short story, visible in a tendency on the part of academics “to favour what Eileen Baldeshwiler has termed the ‘lyrical’ story over the ‘epical’”, that is, the smaller number of character-based, psychologically oriented stories over the great number of plot-based short narratives (March-Russell 25). Just as the canon of First World War literature quickly came to be selected according to the principle of alleged truthfulness or authenticity, the short story canon became dominated by the criterion of innovation.

The contention that modernist fiction and the short story are somehow to be seen as a unity still has proponents in the field of literary criticism. More recently, Dominic Head has argued in favour of seeing the short story as the

⁶⁷ Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Fiction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959) xii. The volume was first published in 1943 and republished in a revised version in 1959, but the “Letter to the Teacher” from which I quote remained unaltered.

quintessential modernist form.⁶⁸ Head identifies fragmentation and a preoccupation with an episodic rendering of events, as well as “a stress on literary artifice in the short story which intensifies the modernist preoccupation with formal innovation” (Head 2), as major features of early twentieth-century short fiction. The notion of “literary artifice” probably refers to formal features of modernist short stories such as the rendering of characters’ thoughts and associations in stream-of-consciousness, a “conflict of voices” which Head claims is “an integral part of their disruption and complication of the narrative” (Head 33), and a refusal to provide conventional plots. In effect, Head claims that although the short story evolved over time like other genres and changed accordingly, it reached its climax in literary modernism, which it epitomises in both its formal properties and outlook. Although Head’s opinion is certainly not shared by all short story critics, it is nevertheless conspicuous that those short stories of the First World War which have found their way into the canon, into critical studies and literary histories in however marginal a position are almost invariably stories connected with modernism.

In his article “Registering War: Modernism, Realism, and the Can(n)on”, Chris Hopkins remarks upon the selective processes that led to the exclusion of non-modernist fiction from university curricula that:

Until recently there was little question that modernism dominated the university curriculum for the twentieth-century novel: Joyce, Lawrence and Woolf were the big British names, with Hemingway as an American variation. This prioritization suggested that unprecedented literary innovation was the most marked feature and value of the modern novel.⁶⁹

The neglect of the majority of First World War fiction, as well as the majority of short stories, originates in the fact that innovation was and in many ways still is valued by academic critics as the “prime literary quality” a text ought to possess, while “little of the fiction of the war is generally classed as modernist or strikingly radical in its procedures” (Hopkins 38). Although the Great War “is

⁶⁸ Head refutes the idea of short stories being based on the notion of unifying, single effect advocated by Edgar Allan Poe and Brander Matthews, and claims instead that they rely on *disunifying* devices as the “seminal features of the literary effects produced in the genre” (Head x) and which show the short story “through its formal capacities, to be a quintessentially modernist form” (Head xi).

⁶⁹ Chris Hopkins, “Registering War: Modernism, Realism, and the Can(n)on.” *Focus on Robert Graves and His Contemporaries* 2.5 (Winter 1996): 38.

invoked as a factor in some of the most radical departures of modernism (particularly in Woolf, Lawrence and Hemingway)” that are included in the canon of texts taught at universities, “the texts dealing directly with that war remain marginal” (Hopkins 38). I would claim that this is primarily because those texts that deal with the war in the most direct manner are also those that depict it in the least experimental, most traditional ways. Only a minority of writers responded to the war in an innovative way that could potentially be termed modernist. Most texts, and most short stories in particular, follow traditional patterns that adhere to straightforward plots, closed endings, and conventional techniques of characterisation and description. The assumption may be tempting, but the literature of the Great War, and especially the short story of the war, cannot justly be said to be ‘quintessentially modernist’. Rather, processes of canonisation and the selectivity of scholarly critical interest have led to a strict selection for curricula and literary histories of those texts that do address the war on modernist terms, thus giving the misleading impression that the war invariably provoked formal innovation in contemporary literary responses to it.

Hynes, although he cautions against equating Great War writing and modernism unquestioningly, sees a close connection between the two that justifies a reading of Great War literature as modernist in spirit if not in technique, and claims that “war writing and Modernist writing interpenetrated each other” (Hynes, *A War Imagined* 458).⁷⁰ He neglects to mention, however, that the texts he refers to, the novels and poetry he considers in his study, already constitute a specific selection of texts in accordance with the emerging myth he describes. For the majority of war writing, and certainly for the majority of short stories, his evaluation does not hold; they are no more ‘modernist’ in their stance on the war and its effects than they are in terms of formal properties. They are, simply and perhaps disappointingly to modern readers, works of popular fiction written for purposes of entertainment and reconciliation, propaganda and moral education, but not with any express aim to reflect the experience of modern warfare and its effects in artistic, literary terms. Consequently, modernist or avant-garde short stories of and about the Great War

⁷⁰ Trudi Tate, while cautioning against a careless use of the label ‘modernism’, proposes to see modernist writings of the war as a “peculiar but significant form of war writing”. Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998) 3.

form part of a much larger corpus of texts, most of which must be regarded as popular or formula literature. Rather than the defining literary movement of the period, as modernism has come to be viewed in retrospect, we ought to consider it but one aspect of an “increasingly diverse literary market” at the time.⁷¹ Modernist short stories and their accompanying sense of disillusionment about the war are in a minority compared to the great number of stories interpreting and rendering the war in different, more conventional ways, not only during but also after the conflict.⁷²

Perhaps most importantly, not all modernist texts of the period would automatically address the war: Virginia Woolf’s wartime and inter-war short fiction, for example, unlike some of her novels and non-fictional work, make only passing references to the war, such as in her short story “The Mark on the Wall” (1921). It is essential not to slip into a simplified, dual understanding of the cultural history of the war as ‘modern’ vs. ‘traditional’, an understanding that is not supported by the evidence of short stories addressing the First World War, as these stories cover a wide range of stylistic and ideological positions not only located firmly within either the modernist or the popular, traditional camp, but also in a variety of in-between stages.

Stories located more or less firmly in the popular camp received only fleeting public attention, and rarely ever elicited any critical treatment. This may partly also be due to practical reasons: being too short to be published individually (some exceptions as always confirming the rule), and yet frequently too long to be included in anthologies, collections and serial publications in greater numbers, the great majority of short stories are published, read and quickly forgotten. While some of the now canonical modernist short fiction stood a better chance of republication through critical acclaim and their authors’ personal connections with the publishing sector, most ‘magazine stories’ at best

⁷¹ Nicholas Daly, *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 23. Tate similarly stresses the intermingling of different literary milieus in the early twentieth century and the impossibility of drawing clear boundaries between ‘modernist’ and non-modernist war writing by pointing out that “modernists and war writers reviewed one another’s books, and war writings were discussed in avant-garde journals such as the *Little Review* and the *Egoist*” (Tate 2-3).

⁷² For a discussion of modernism’s minority status in wartime and inter-war literary culture in Britain, see for example Malcolm Smith, “The War and British Culture.” *The First World War in British History*. Eds. Stephen Constantine, Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (London: Arnold, 1995) 180-181.

found their way into a single annual selection of the periodical they first appeared in. Their perceived status as literature for entertainment affected negatively both their chances of republication, and their artistic prestige. Indeed, Mary Louise Pratt sees the main reason for the short story's comparative neglect in its "status as craft rather than art".⁷³ Closely connected with the commercially oriented magazine market, its only regular publishing outlet, these short stories came to be identified with the journalistic texts alongside which they were published. Short story writers themselves did not necessarily feel above considering themselves craftsmen as well as artists: the enormously successful Stacy Aumonier, asked to write an introduction to a short story manual in the early 1920s, openly voiced his opinion that short story writing, like all arts, could be learned (Aumonier vii-xii).

Magazine stories were supposed to entertain and to sell well, and consequently valued a thrilling plot and engaging action over the psychological acuity called for by New Critical standards. Pratt criticises the assumption that because short stories tend to explicitly serve the purpose of commercial entertainment they cannot be considered as serious works of art (Pratt 110). Suzanne Ferguson adopts a socially-oriented approach to explaining the short story's standing within the generic hierarchy. She begins her essay "The Rise of the Short Story in the Hierarchy of Genres" (1989) by comparing what she calls the "society of genres" to human societies, stating that a similar class system of a more permeable nature applies in which genres continually alter their status by rising and falling in prestige. Ferguson essentially claims that socio-political forces influence the hierarchy of genres, in that influential members of society may promote an elite literary culture inaccessible to the less powerful, while mass-market literature addresses concerns and ambitions that a broad audience can relate to.⁷⁴

First World War short stories provide ample illustration of this point. As we will see below, short fiction published in popular weeklies or monthlies, such as the *Strand Magazine*, differs from more artistically minded stories published in

⁷³ Mary Louise Pratt, "The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It." *New Short Story Theories*. Ed. Charles E. May (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1994) 110.

⁷⁴ Suzanne Ferguson, "The Rise of the Short Story in the Hierarchy of Genres." *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*. Eds. Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989) 176.

journals with a smaller circulation, such as the *English Review*. Two writers as different in their artistic ethos as D.H. Lawrence and 'Sapper' H.C. McNeile may both be writing about war injuries, but their approach to the subject, their depiction of it and reasons for choosing to write about veterans' disabilities vary considerably. Far from being problematic, this divergence between stories written of and about the First World War, and their great variety of subjects, outlook, style and agenda are their greatest benefit to the cultural and literary historian.

One also needs to stress the importance of the cultural functions fulfilled by popular stories. Unlike modernist short stories, which often mix subgenres or subvert established patterns, magazine stories tend to be easily sorted into distinct subgenres, each with its own generic patterns and formulas. One subgenre that thrived noticeably both in the wake of the First World War and after its end is the spy or espionage story. Spy novels and stories, those of John Buchan in particular, were immensely popular among contemporary readers, although they have since been largely forgotten. Most importantly, however, the Great War spawned its own subgenres of short stories. The period of time between 1914 and 1918 and the aftermath of the war saw the emergence of what may be termed the frontline or trench story, a subgenre closely related to the new trench poetry of the war. It was almost invariably written by soldier-writers, although some writers attempted trench stories from the vantage point of the home front. Trench stories strove to present the hardships, but also quite frequently the redeeming features, of life at the front. While the outlook on the war varies within this thematic subgenre, frontline stories as diverse as those published in 'Sapper' H.C. MacNeile's *Men, Women and Guns* (1916) and Richard Aldington's *Roads to Glory* (1930) are united by their endeavour to illustrate a way of life that is by definition restricted to combatants, and thus excludes the largest part of the population.

A corresponding subgenre flourishing in wartime and inter-war Britain is the nursing story, which attempts the same for women's experience of the war. In the context of popular magazines and collections, nursing stories appear in comparatively smaller numbers, but nevertheless constitute a noticeable trend in wartime and post-war literature. As the trench or frontline story is frequently also an adventure or ghost story, some but by no means all nursing stories

partake of the romance genre, as we shall see in the later analysis. A further distinctive subgenre of the First World War is the mourning story; that is, stories dealing with issues of loss and mourning and attempting to offer strategies for coping with loss or mapping out the nature of grief. We will be looking at two very different examples that may fall into this category below, Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" (1922) and Ben Ray Redman's "The Enduring Image" (1930).

One can identify a broad range of subgenres that were in use at the time of the First World War, and consequently feature in the research corpus of this study. For example, one can distinguish between traditional, nineteenth-century subgenres such as romance, adventure, ghost or supernatural stories; stories about the pursuit of fishing, hunting or sporting; military stories, and detective or crime stories. These were joined by stories with specific settings such as local colour or 'exotic' stories, and by late nineteenth-century subgenres like the sketch or prose poem. Furthermore, one can list the journalistic sketch, stories dealing earnestly with social problems or addressing social issues in terms of outright satire; 'modern' stories such as the modernist psychological story, science fiction, and spy or espionage stories. Finally, we have the aforementioned three distinctive subgenres that developed in the immediate context of the First World War, namely the trench or frontline story, the nursing story, and the mourning story. First World War stories encompass all kinds of literary movements, artistic conceptions of storytelling, ranges of literary quality and readership, and in their very diversity give a far more differentiated picture of the experience of the war than any canonised texts can offer. The fact that most of these stories found themselves excluded from the war's functional memory, the canon of Great War literature, is mainly due to issues of alleged authenticity and representation; that they did not enter the canon of short fiction either is a result of the non-conformity of the vast majority of these stories to what a 'good', modern(ist), short story ought to be.

2. British Great War Stories in Context, 1914-1945

2.1 The publishing context of British Great War stories

The following overview of British short stories of and about the First World War in their publishing context will focus on different publishing outlets for Great War stories, and the choice of stories made for publication by their editors. The three most important publishing contexts for short stories are periodicals (the medium in which short stories usually appeared first), general anthologies or collections, and anthologies that specialised in war fiction.⁷⁵ The purpose of such an analysis is to determine the specific conditions faced by Great War stories in entering the canon of short fiction in general, and of Great War literature in particular. Lasting availability is arguably the most important prerequisite for the canonisation of any text, although it is naturally no guarantee of a text entering a literary canon. In the prefatory note to his collection *Far-Away Stories* (1916), William J. Locke states as his reason for republishing some of his short stories that he does not want them “to remain buried for ever in the museum files of dead magazine-numbers – an author’s not unpardonable vanity”.⁷⁶ The writer’s remark, casual as it may seem, exemplifies a core problem of the genre with respect to publication and reception, reflecting the definition established above: a short story is a story that will not be published on its own for a variety of reasons, commercial and otherwise, and consequently depends on magazines and collections.

Of the three publishing outlets, magazines and newspapers are the most ephemeral media.⁷⁷ The majority of periodicals are read and then discarded, meaning that unless a magazine story is republished in one of the other two media, it will disappear into a few libraries and archives, most likely never to be read again. Anthologies and collections of stories by individual authors, on the other hand, tend to have a longer shelf life, but appeal to a more restricted

⁷⁵ For the analysis in this chapter and Chapter 4, roughly twenty specialised war anthologies and over one hundred general story anthologies published between 1914 and the present day were taken into account, including series such as *New Writing* and *Best British Short Stories*. A full list can be found in Appendix B.

⁷⁶ William J. Locke, *Far-Away Stories* (1916. London: John Lane, 1926) vii.

⁷⁷ As Paul March-Russell observes, “[a]lthough magazine circulation has ensured an enduring role for the short story in Europe and the United States, it has also fostered the idea that the form is ephemeral. Magazine stories do not have the same physical or cultural status as fiction published in book form” (March-Russell 43).

audience. Story anthologies often target either a specialist audience of critics,⁷⁸ or a student audience in an educational context. Authors' collections are most likely to appeal to those readers who are familiar with the respective writer's work and buy a collection of stories because they enjoyed other books written by the same author.⁷⁹ Again, this is a restricted audience, and as with periodicals and anthologies the impact of the individual short story is dampened by its position amidst other texts. Suzanne Ferguson points to this element of distraction when she says that "[w]hat they come with – other stories or other kinds of printed material – may distract readers from perceiving them as discrete works of art" (Ferguson 178). Valerie Shaw claims likewise that the setting of a short story in a magazine, next to advertising and news reports, "has scarcely been to the advantage of any writer dependent on the periodical market" (Shaw 8), and Paul March-Russell points to the "aesthetic concern" that a reading of short stories within an anthology potentially "violates Poe's contention that a short story is to be read as a single and self-sufficient unit" (March-Russell 53), given that its impact may be diluted by the reading of another story before and immediately after its perusal.

A brief thought experiment can illustrate the influence of its publication environment on the reading of a short story. In the following, I will look at a short story in the three different publication contexts of magazine, anthology and author's collection. Joseph Conrad's Great War short story "The Tale" lends itself to this purpose, due to the reputation of its author and the resulting republication of the story in a number of anthologies and collections. Conrad's story is a tale within a tale: a navy officer on leave meets his lover, whose exact relationship to him remains mysterious. To end an emotionally draining conversation, the woman demands a story to make her forget the grim realities by which the lovers are surrounded. The officer's tale, however, inevitably addresses the war. In the early days of the war, a naval officer (a thinly veiled 'fictional' version of the man himself) commands a ship hunting for German spies, submarines, and illegal supply ships. He comes across a neutral Scandinavian

⁷⁸ See Sabine Buchholz, *Narrative Innovationen in der modernistischen britischen Short Story* (Trier: WVT, 2003) 2.

⁷⁹ Paul March-Russell finds that "[s]ingle-author collections tend to sell or to be borrowed from public libraries if the writer's name is already familiar, usually if s/he is a popular novelist" (March-Russell 53).

ship in dense fog, whose captain he strongly suspects of smuggling supplies for German submarines. Talking to the captain of the ship, the officer's suspicions are strengthened into certainty, but he cannot find sufficient material evidence. The captain of the neutral ship claims to be lost, stranded in the fog dangerously near the English coast. Acting solely on his intuition, the navy officer orders the suspicious ship to set out again immediately, against the Northman captain's wishes and having provided him with false coordinates. The neutral ship duly hits a ledge of rock and sinks. The navy officer finishes his tale by expressing anxiety about the justness of his decision. Since he can never have absolute certainty as to whether or not the crew of the neutral ship was guilty of collaboration, he will have to live with the responsibility of his decision for the rest of his life.

"The Tale" was first published in the *Strand Magazine* in October 1917. In this issue, Conrad's story appeared next to various fiction and non-fiction contributions, including two more war stories and a short one-act play. The two other war stories were both contributed by well-known authors of the time: Frederick Britten Austin's story "They Come Back" illustrates that writer's continuing interest in speculative history and envisions the end of the war and subsequent fraternisation of social classes in Britain, resulting in an utopian version of British society in which each man receives his dues according to his merits. May Edginton's "War Workers", on the other hand, is a comic story about two prim elderly spinsters who secretly covet a parcel of expensive lingerie donated to their welfare committee by a famous actress. The short play is a polemic propaganda effort set in Germany and illustrative of German 'frightfulness', in which a scientist presents to the Kaiser a resurrected German soldier whose body has been patched up and who, now a soulless fighting machine, ends up throttling the emperor himself to death. Read in the company of these texts, and considering that the story itself is furthermore illustrated with the same kind of melodramatic drawings that accompanied stories published in the *Strand* (see illustration below), "The Tale" reads like a standard magazine 'thriller'. It has some love interest in the frame narrative, a strong touch of melodrama, the trappings of detective fiction, and the suspense of a mystery story. Its finer points, on the other hand – such as the apt description of a taunting moral dilemma – pale in comparison with the dramatic nature of its plot.

Conrad, who had to support a family through his income as a writer, would certainly not have refused writing a story appropriate for publication in as lucrative and well-paying a magazine as the *Strand*. While it is difficult to determine how much exactly Conrad received for “The Tale”, documented payments made to other contributors can give an idea of the sums involved. In 1908, Winston Churchill received £150 per contribution for a series of nine articles. At the same time, Kipling was paid £90 and W.W. Jacobs £110 per short story, which was later raised to £350 as Jacobs’s popularity increased.⁸⁰



First page of Conrad’s “The Tale” in the *Strand Magazine* issue for October 1917.

When we consider it in a different context, however, our reading of “The Tale” changes significantly. Subsequent to its magazine publication, the story appeared in Conrad’s posthumous collection *Tales of Hearsay* (1925). The collection consists of four stories, written between 1884 and 1917, of which “The Tale” is the only story addressing the First World War. The other stories are set in Russia after the Napoleonic Wars (“The Warrior’s Soul”, written in 1917), in Poland struggling against Russian autocracy (“Prince Roman”, 1911), and on a ship bound for Calcutta (“The Black Mate”, 1884). All of these stories, regardless of their setting and plot, are essentially character studies, exploring in their turn the nature of mercy and compassion, courage and human folly. Placed alongside

⁸⁰ See Reginald Pound, *The Strand Magazine, 1891-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1966) 4; 122.

three other stories by Conrad, it is exactly this quality of “The Tale” as a psychological investigation of ethical behaviour which comes to the fore, while its more sensational elements become merely instrumental to the portrayal of the narrator’s dilemma.

A third context again subtly alters our possible perception of “The Tale”. After its appearance in *Tales of Hearsay*, the story was included in the American anthology *Best Short Stories of the War* (1931). This anthology was edited and introduced by British journalist and writer H.M. Tomlinson and comprised war stories by authors of mixed nationality, including German writers. In Britain, the same anthology had been published the previous year under the title *Great Short Stories of the War* (1930), edited by H.C. Minchin with a foreword by Edmund Blunden. Collected among sixty-five other stories, all chosen carefully for their critical outlook on the war and emphasis on its futility and the importance of humanity and compassion in the midst of the horror of war, “The Tale” again changes its focus and becomes an anti-war story. The tormenting doubts of its main protagonist take on a new meaning beyond personal trauma and turn into a political statement, namely to reveal the destructive effects of war both in terms of the loss of lives and the emotional scarring of the survivors.

The three possible publication outlets for short stories not only affect the way a story is being read initially, but also the longevity of its reception. The magazine market for instance was simultaneously a blessing and a curse for the genre. From at least the 1880s onwards, magazines promoted the publication of short stories next to serialised novels, and the more periodicals branched out to cater for specific audiences, the more varied a selection of stories was published (Hanson 11). In the beginning of the twentieth century and particularly in the inter-war period, a plethora of British magazines were published weekly, monthly or quarterly, and their flourishing coincides with a period of immense commercial success for the short story. Both phenomena ended soon after the Second World War and were replaced only partially by the new medium of broadcasting.⁸¹ Although their publication in magazine format makes short stories accessible to a wider readership and opens them up to a circle of editors for potential inclusion in anthologies or collections, being published in a

⁸¹ See Thomas Owen Beachcroft, *The English Short Story* (London: Longmans Green, 1964) 35.

magazine may be detrimental to the short story's generic prestige. That literary critics in particular regard magazine publication as a doubtful means of achieving a readership is evident in the following statement by Mary Louise Pratt:

Magazine stories are made to order, their tone, subject matter, language, length controlled in advance by the other more powerful discourses in whose company they appear. They are entertainment. The magazine context implies distracted reception in brief moments between other activities. They are for a mass public – the whole point is to achieve as massive a public as possible. [...] Magazine fiction is planned for obsolescence (Pratt 110).

Considering that at least the more artistic magazines, such as the *English Review* or the *Criterion*, were too expensive to be discarded immediately and frequently collected in bound volume format, and considering that some of the best works of art were commissioned and 'made to order', Pratt's estimation seems to have limited validity. However, Pratt presumably had in mind mass-produced stories as they would have appeared in cheap 'penny dreadful' magazines. As long as readers and critics believe in the inferiority of magazine publication, it will tend to lower rather than further the image of the short story. Thomas A. Gullason echoes Pratt when he points out that the short story suffers from its image as a "filler", "something of short duration, a thing of the moment" whose association with popular periodicals "makes it seem like a cheap potboiler."⁸² This estimation is particularly true for the heyday of fiction magazines in the first half of the twentieth century, while their dwindling away and the resulting decline in publication of stories in anthologies and authors' collections have paradoxically decreased the short story's audience but increased its critical prestige. While it is essential for any text to be published and read, the durability and influence it enjoys depends not only on how many people read it, but also on who these readers are. A short story published in a popular magazine may be commercially successful and its author paid well, and it is read by a wide audience. However, unless it is included in anthologies and collections, the story will quickly sink into oblivion.

The publication of a short story in an anthology, on the other hand, secures for this story a more lasting reception. Although anthologies have a restricted audience compared to novels and to the often more widely read

⁸² Thomas A. Gullason, "The Short Story: An Underrated Art." *Short Story Theories*. Ed. Charles E. May (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1976) 21.

magazines, some of them are still commercially successful: Valerie Shaw cites Alan Ross in claiming that the annual anthology of *London Magazine* stories sold almost as many copies as many novels in the 1950s and 1960s (Shaw 8). In short story anthologies and collections, short stories receive specialised attention, but at the same time they have to compete with a greater number of very diverse texts. Since the Second World War, from the 1960s onwards in particular, anthologies have frequently targeted an educational audience and may consequently be particularly influential, as their readers in schools and universities read them in a context that implies their importance in the English curriculum. In contrast to anthologies of poetry or general literary anthologies like the Norton series, however, I would argue that there is no such thing as a single authoritative short story anthology widely read and discussed, either in schools or universities or for the general public.

Collections of short stories by single authors differ from multiple-author anthologies in that their unifying factor is the writer, not necessarily an underlying theme or subgenre – although many writers, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, wrote short story cycles or sequences with a specific theme and/or recurring characters. In authors' collections, short stories that have already appeared in a magazine may be supplemented by previously unpublished stories, thus widening the range of texts available. At the same time, the audience of such collections is as limited as that of most anthologies: the more popular the writer, the larger its audience; the more obscure, the smaller the readership. Story collections are moreover harder to publish than novels.⁸³ An exception are the 1920s and 1930s, for which period Michael Joseph claimed that “publishers are beginning to look with a more favourable eye on short stories” (Joseph 3). Nevertheless, even Joseph presents this as an agreeable change in attitude rather than a general trend for the first half of the twentieth

⁸³ Thomas A. Gullason describes the attitude of publishers towards story collections in the latter part of the twentieth century by observing that “publishers tell promising short-story writers ‘Give us first a novel and then we will publish your short stories.’ If the writer succeeds in his novel, he will obviously be encouraged to write more novels – and not short stories. After non-fiction, the novel has a good chance to reach and surpass the break-even point for publishers. Short-story collections rarely reach the break-even point” (Gullason 18). Valerie Shaw also reminds us that “publishers [...] prefer ‘big things’” and provides some examples of short-story writers (such as Katherine Anne Porter and A.E. Coppard) who felt they had to ‘resist’ publishers’ wishes for a novel (Shaw 2-3). Most recently, Paul March-Russell provides a summary of a survey of short story reading and publication carried out by the British Council in 2003, which confirmed publishers’ wariness of publishing short-story collections by first-time authors.

century, noting that previously, since the turn of the century, publishers had “fought very shy of the volume of collected short stories” (Joseph 2).

For an analysis of periodical publication, the magazine market will be represented by one of the most widely read magazines in Britain of the period between 1914 and 1920, the monthly *Strand Magazine*. To balance this popular middle-class magazine, I will also look at one of the more commercially successful amongst the literary magazines, the *English Review*, which was published during this period on a monthly basis like the *Strand Magazine*, but aimed at an audience with a keener interest in both political analysis and literary writing. I have looked at both magazines for the period of time from the outbreak of the war in August 1914 to December 1920. Analytical criteria were the frequency with which war stories appeared in these periodicals on the one hand, and the extent to and manner in which the war is addressed in them on the other. While stylistic and formal differences are briefly noted in this chapter, a more detailed formal as well as thematic analysis will be carried out in the next two chapters. The two publications were chosen as examples of the diverse and flourishing magazine market at the time because they were both widely available and targeted a large, middle-class readership and a comparatively large intellectual audience respectively, as evidenced in the quality and pitch of their contributions and the advertising copy included in the magazine issues. Unlike smaller, more explicitly avant-gardist magazines such as Wyndham Lewis’s *Blast* (1914-15), these two publications at least partially reflect public tastes and opinions.

During the 1910s and 1920s, the *Strand Magazine* was one of the most popular magazines in Britain to publish short stories. The magazine was largely apolitical with a focus on entertainment and self-improvement, but during the war years it displayed a staunchly patriotic attitude in keeping with general trends in Britain. Each monthly issue contained between five and ten stories by British and international authors, often in serial or semi-serial form.⁸⁴ Its proprietor, George Newnes, came himself from a lower-middle-class background. He was the son of a minister and worked as a haberdasher before making his fortune with his first publication venture, *Tit-Bits*, in 1881. His endeavour “to give

⁸⁴ By semi-serial I am referring to stories that could be read autonomously but featured recurring characters.

wholesome and harmless entertainment to hard-working people craving a little fun and amusement” stemmed from a first-hand knowledge of the readings tastes and requirements of the working population.⁸⁵ As a rule, most of these stories either describe feats of physical daring, miraculous escapes, exotic adventures or romance overcoming varying obstacles. Although the *Strand* had started off as a periodical primarily of interest to male readers, most issues by 1914 also contained one story expressly aimed at children, and a range of romance stories designed to appeal to female readers, making the *Strand* a family magazine with suitable contents for all ages and interests. This desire to offer stories for a range of tastes will be shown to continue during the war, when most stories would follow the same basic patterns and simply adopt a wartime setting for standard romance, adventure or detective plots. Magazine fiction in popular magazines such as the *Strand* was almost invariably formula literature, following specific generic conventions. As Jane Potter has observed for popular romance, such pre-war formulas were “easily transformed for use in wartime”, and indeed, the “narrative possibilities offered by the war were limitless” for the writer of magazine fiction (Potter, *Boys in Khaki* 76; 7). Michael Paris, too, notes how writers of juvenile adventure fiction found it easy to adapt their existing, rather rigid formulas to a new war (Paris, *Over the Top* 11). Modelled on American story magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Strand* quickly became “a perennial best-seller”, and arguably “exercised an important and beneficial influence upon English short-story writing”⁸⁶ by offering lavish remuneration to those writers whose stories conformed with its editorial requirements.⁸⁷

Besides short stories, the *Strand* published reportage and celebrity commentaries on current issues, as well as interviews, informative and lifestyle articles. In his introduction to a 1992 collection of short stories first published in the *Strand*, Frank Delaney characterises this diversity and the magazine’s editorial policies: “Readability was all. Newnes’s success lay in taking care that each reader should emerge from the pages having shared easily in public entertainment, while privately – though not furtively – having acquired socially

⁸⁵ George Newnes, quoted in A.J.A. Morris, “Newnes, Sir George, first baronet (1851–1910).” 12 Aug. 2009. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35218>>. Most biographical information on Newnes is also derived from this article.

⁸⁶ Morris, “Newnes, Sir George”.

⁸⁷ For the *Strand Magazine*’s rates of pay see Pound 2; 4-5; 44; 70, 74; 97; 122.

useful knowledge.”⁸⁸ Delaney estimates the number of readers who perused the magazine every month at two million in the immediate pre-war period, multiplying sales figures by the number of readers assumed to have shared each issue sold.⁸⁹ On the basis of these figures, Delaney claims that “[h]ardly an adult of measurable literacy could have been unalert to the magazine’s existence”, a fact that allows him to assign the function of a barometer for public opinion to the *Strand* in this period (Delaney ix). While this may be looking at the matter in hand from the wrong perspective – the editorial choices of the *Strand* certainly reflect the opinions and political outlook of its proprietor and editorial staff more than the public consciousness of Britain in the abstract – the selections in the *Strand Magazine* may be seen to have shaped and reflected public opinion of the British middle class readers of the *Strand* to some extent. These middle-class readers included those who had volunteered and were on active service in the army: like many periodicals, the *Strand Magazine* encouraged its readers to sponsor gift subscriptions for soldiers at the front or donate their own copies after reading, and in March 1917 published a special ‘Humour Number’ for soldiers at the front. As David Finkelstein has pointed out for the Edinburgh-based *Blackwood’s Magazine*, successful middle-class magazines of the period “provided appropriately optimistic reading material for soldiers at the front”, presented in “suitably small, easily digestible chunks”.⁹⁰

The *English Review* had a much smaller circulation than the *Strand Magazine*, but it was one of the commercially more successful and longer-lived literary magazines in Britain. While many artistic magazines were of short duration – the best known example is the much more radical *Blast*, of which only two issues were published – the *Review* survived for twenty-nine years, founded in 1908 by Ford Madox Ford (then Ford Madox Hueffer) and discontinued only when it merged with *The National Review* in 1937. In their survey of British poetry magazines, David Miller and Richard Price characterise the *English Review*

⁸⁸ Frank Delaney, Introduction. *Short Stories from the ‘Strand’*. Ed. Geraldine Beare (London: Folio Society, 1992) vii-viii.

⁸⁹ Of the *Strand Magazine* in the 1890s, Clive Bloom already claims that each issue reached “a general readership of between 300,000 and 500,000, especially so when a new Conan Doyle story appeared” (Bloom, *Bestsellers* 33).

⁹⁰ David Finkelstein, “Literature, Propaganda, and the First World War: The Case of Blackwood’s Magazine.” *Grub Street and the Ivory Tower: Literary Journalism and Literary Scholarship from Fielding to the Internet*. Eds. Jeremy Treglown and Bridget Bennett (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998) 109.

as a journal with distinctly internationalist tendencies, publishing a wide range of avant-garde authors from England and overseas.⁹¹ Before the outbreak of the First World War, in the early 1910s, the *English Review* had a peak circulation of 15,000 to 18,000 copies.⁹² During the war years, the *Review* was edited (and from September 1915 onwards partly owned) by Austin Harrison.⁹³

Harrison had studied languages in France and Germany and had previously worked as editor and journalist for *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian* and Reuters news agency. In these jobs, he spent several years in Germany and some time in Russia. Before being invited to edit the *English Review*, Harrison edited and wrote for Lord Northcliffe's *Observer* and *Daily Mail*, first as political editor, later as drama critic. In his editorial choices, he was not only a convinced internationalist and champion of authors censored at the time for their sexual explicitness – his unofficial title for the magazine was “The Great Adult Review” – but also a keen political observer who used his position as editor to comment at length on the war and the state of the British nation. On the basis of his first-hand knowledge of pre-war Germany and particularly German press censorship, Harrison was a harsh critic of the country and its emperor. He had published a critical book on the German political agenda, *The Pan-Germanic Doctrine*, as early as 1904, and after the outbreak of the war published a second volume of political commentaries and articles, most of which had first appeared in the *Review*, under the title *The Kaiser's War* (1914).

Unlike the *Strand Magazine*, the *English Review* did not primarily publish short fiction, neither before nor during the war. Each issue was opened by a poetry section of varying length, from one short poem to several longer works in verse. These were followed by a varying mix of mostly political articles, commentaries, short stories, reportages and open letters or statements, to be concluded in most issues by a review section, also of varying length. Out of an

⁹¹ David Miller and Richard Price, eds., *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Bibliography of 'Little Magazines'* (London: British Library-Oak Knoll, 2006) 19.

⁹² See Martha S. Vogeler, “Harrison, Austin Frederic (1873–1928).” 5 Feb. 2008. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40734>>.

⁹³ The September issue of the *English Review* in 1915 includes the following “Editorial Statement”: “MR. AUSTIN HARRISON has now become the principal shareholder in THE ENGLISH REVIEW (1911), LIMITED, the Proprietors and Publishers of THE ENGLISH REVIEW, the Rt. Hon. Sir Alfred Mond, Bart., having disposed of all his Shares in that Company” (214). The following biographical information is derived from Martha S. Vogeler, *Austin Harrison and the English Review* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2008).

average number of twelve to sixteen items, only two or three would generally be short stories (although this is admittedly still a comparatively large percentage compared to the editorial policy of other magazines) and three to four poems, which were consequently far outnumbered by non-fiction contributions. This reverses the policy of the *Strand Magazine*, where the straightforward entertainment provided by short fiction was interspersed with non-fiction articles. The *English Review*, by contrast, placed a stronger emphasis on (as its name suggests) reviewing and political commentary whilst also allowing some space for short fiction.

Although the *Strand Magazine* and *English Review* are different types of magazine, there are similarities which make both publications particularly suitable as sample periodicals for an analysis of the publishing context of Great War stories. Given their respective target audiences, both magazines were perused by a large readership. Likewise, both magazines reflect the patriotic, anti-German stance that dominated British public opinion into the 1920s, despite the fact that the *English Review* combined its professed abhorrence for German militarism and backing of the Allied cause with ample criticism of the British government and its methods of waging the war. At the same time, the different editorial programmes of the two magazines – light entertainment on the part of the *Strand*, serious reading and criticism in the *English Review* – allow an insight into two divergent target groups of readers. Although it might be argued that a focus on these two magazines excludes the working-class experience of the war, this is only partly true. The ‘middle-class’ readership of the *Strand* encompassed a much wider section of early twentieth-century society than one would assume, from “the most humble shopgirl to newspaper proprietors”.⁹⁴ Moreover, as Carol Acton and Michael Paris have shown for working boys’ and girls’ magazine fiction, working-class war narratives differed from middle-class ones in degree rather than kind.⁹⁵ While the *Strand Magazine* was light reading for a wide variety of readers from the lower-middle to (potentially) upper classes, the *English Review* was pitched at an intellectual audience with a strong interest in international politics and art. Martha Vogeler describes Harrison’s intended

⁹⁴ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) 280.

⁹⁵ See Paris, *Over the Top*, particularly chapter 1, and Acton, “Best Boys” 176-177.

audience as “a wide range of readers, from graduates of the Board schools created about the time of his birth to university and professional men and women” (Vogeler 80), both in and beyond London. Although advertisements and the subject of many articles betray a bias towards the upper middle class to whom Harrison himself belonged, he explicitly claimed as desired readers those “who have made Dent’s Everyman series a success” (Vogeler, *Austin Harrison* 86-87). A comparative analysis of both magazines consequently covers a wide variety of readers from the lower to the upper middle classes.

2.2 First World War Stories in two sample periodicals, 1914-1920

2.2.1 The Strand Magazine

The *Strand* did not immediately react to the war with the same fervour displayed by periodicals such as *Punch* or *John Bull*. The October number of 1914 featured reportage on an American girl’s zeppelin flight over Germany, with no reference to the war whatsoever – a rather remarkable fact considering that fictional responses to the war such as Arthur Machen’s “The Bowmen” appeared as early as September 1914 in the pages of the newspaper *Evening News*. The first war story to appear in the pages of the *Strand* was Frederick Britten Austin’s adventure story “The Air-Scout”, which appeared in the November issue of 1914. Even this story does not exactly identify its setting as relating to the ongoing conflict; the two opposing nations remain unnamed and any relation to the war that had begun only three months previously are implied rather than made explicit. The most likely reason for the *Strand*’s delayed reaction to the war is that it had to plan ahead to ensure lasting good quality in its contributions: the *Strand* at that point went to press five weeks ahead of publication (Pound 122). Consequently, stories and articles were bought in advance, and were not always up to date. In addition, authors as well as editors had first to react to the war, and stories addressing the conflict needed to be written and submitted before they could be published. During the last months of 1914 and the whole of 1915, the war is reflected in the *Strand* for the most part in non-fiction contributions, articles and commentaries on topics as varied as German cultural achievements, English war heroes, military decorations and similar issues, such as a short series introducing the British Empire’s Indian allies and their determination to aid the British war effort.

In terms of fiction, the war found its way into the November 1914 issue in the shape of a story by Violet M. Methley, which is potentially designed as an implicit comment on the war: “The Signal” shows a brave French signalman outwitting two Prussian villains in a 1793 historical setting. The following issue, for December 1914, again features only one war story, Edgar Wallace’s “The Despatch-Rider”, in which an emancipated and headstrong English ‘flapper’ is caught up in the war during a motoring tour of France, and is reunited with her estranged fiancé when she carries despatches for the army in an unofficial capacity during the first turbulent weeks of the war. “The Despatch-Rider” is a typical example of an adventure story with ‘love-interest’ in the usual style of the *Strand Magazine*, and employs the war setting as a means of heightening suspense before the lovers are reunited.

Throughout the year 1915, the war is represented on the fictional side almost solely by a series of stories by popular writer Richard March, whose recurring hero, humble office-worker Sam Briggs, enlists in the army and is dispatched to France after humorous and edifying exploits in training camp.⁹⁶ Only five out of the twelve 1915 issues include other war-related stories, most of which use the war as a mere backdrop for romance or humour and are set on the home front. From January 1916 onwards, however, March’s Sam Briggs serial is replaced by one to three (rarely more) independent short stories per issue addressing the war in various ways. There is a clear tendency for these stories to fall into established categories: comic stories or romance using the war as a backdrop, science-fiction stories involving new war technology as yet unheard of, ‘heroic’ stories contrasting Allied courage and chivalry with German atrocities, and perhaps the most popular category, spy stories about German agents unsuccessfully attempting to gather information or carry out sabotage in Britain. Some stories, most notably a number of shorter tales by professional soldier-writer ‘Sapper’, are also set at the front, but stress the comical or bizarre aspects of warfare rather than its horrors. Authors also began to prematurely envision

⁹⁶ Once at the front, Briggs lives through a series of rather ludicrous adventures involving several miraculous escapes and the single-handed taking of large numbers of German prisoners. Briggs’s exploits are faintly reminiscent of Arthur Conan Doyle’s ‘Brigadier Gerard’ stories, which were also published in the *Strand Magazine* in the 1890s and 1900s. Like Gerard, Briggs is protagonist and narrator at the same time, gives entertainingly unlikely accounts of his exploits and is awarded almost as many decorations and commendations as his French precursor. Unlike Gerard, he is overly modest rather than exuberantly vain.

the end of the war: Frederick Britten Austin's stories "They Come Back" (October 1917) and "Peace" (September 1918) describe the end of the war from a British and a German point of view respectively.

Following the Armistice, there is a sudden increase in stories dealing with alleged German atrocities in Belgium and Northern France, such as E. Temple Thurston's "The Nature of the Beast" (December 1918), Lewis Anselm da Costa Ricci's "The English Way" (January 1919) or Frederick Britten Austin's "A Problem in Reprisals" (March 1919), all of which direct the readers' attention back to crimes allegedly committed by the former enemy and speaking out more or less directly against forgetting these past proofs of German 'frightfulness'.⁹⁷ A wish to influence public opinion with regard to the impending peace treaty and reparation claims on Germany may be seen as underlying the choice of publishing such stories at this point in time. It is moreover interesting to note that stories set partly or entirely during the war continued to appear in the *Strand* until well into 1919 (particularly romance), before they gave way to stories addressing life in post-war Britain or the issue of the Allied occupation of the Rhineland. Again, a possible explanation is the fact that editorial choices were always made to some extent in advance, and that material which had been bought or commissioned before the war ended had yet to be published. The publication lag of war fiction in the *Strand* thus reflects the situation of a society that had grown accustomed to war only to find itself suddenly and disconcertingly confronted with the task of returning to peace.

Of the large body of stories published between August 1914 and December 1920 that do not address the war in any way, many are set either in the US (frequently written by American authors) or in other neutral countries. Alternatively, their action unfolds in a preserved pre-war Edwardian Britain, as in P.G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster stories. It is particularly striking that the special 'Humour Number' of the *Strand Magazine*, published in March 1917 and expressly recommended as ideal reading material to be posted to the trenches, includes no war story whatsoever – despite the fact that ample humorous war stories were written and published both before and after this issue. The most likely explanation for this choice is that the editors felt soldiers on active service

⁹⁷ Da Costa Ricci, a prolific writer of naval stories, is better known under his pseudonym 'Bartimeus'.

would rather be distracted from the war than reminded of it. Moreover, most stories in the *Strand* that dealt with the war were romance, adventure or detective fiction that had simply been transplanted into a wartime setting. Perhaps it was felt that this kind of story was not appropriate reading for those who experienced the harsher realities of modern warfare.

The mere fact of their publication even in a widely circulated periodical such as the *Strand Magazine* did not ensure lasting fame for these war stories. To secure long-term reception, they depended on republication in collections and anthologies, but only two out of the approximately 140 war-related stories that appeared in the *Strand* between August 1914 and December 1920 were chosen for Geraldine Beare's anthology *Short Stories from the 'Strand'* (1992): Joseph Conrad's "The Tale", and D.H. Lawrence's "Tickets, Please".⁹⁸ In his introduction to the volume, Frank Delaney reveals that they were not chosen for their connection with the war (which, especially as far as "Tickets, Please" is concerned, is tenuous in any case), but because of their authors' status, the overall literary quality of their writing, and the stories' capability to reveal insights into the respective writer's literary development (Delaney xiii).

Three specialised anthologies of stories published in the *Strand Magazine*, Geraldine Beare's *Crime Stories From the 'Strand'* (1991) and *Adventure Stories From the 'Strand'* (1995), and Jack Adrian's *Detective Stories from The Strand* (1992), each include a small number of World War I related stories. However, these stories mostly include only background references to the war and cannot be described as treating the war as a primary subject. In *Crime Stories From the 'Strand'*, the only story actually set during the war is 'Sapper's' "A Point of Detail" (1917), which deals with a murder case in the trenches. Three other stories feature more or less significant references to the war from a post-war perspective: one of the characters in Roland Pertwee's "The Voice That Said 'Good-Night'" (1927) is a First World War veteran who had served in Mesopotamia; a protagonist from Rudyard Kipling's "Fairy Kist" (1928) has

⁹⁸ Although Lawrence published stories in the profitable *Strand Magazine* when he could – always desperately pressed for money during the war years – his admiration and approval were with the *English Review* rather than the *Strand*. See James T. Boulton, *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, Volume I: September 1901-May 1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 139-140. Although his estimation of the *Review* cooled in later years when Harrison refused to print certain stories he considered too "steaming" even for a Great Adult Review, Lawrence was nevertheless "willing to have his name on its blue cover for as long as Harrison was its editor" (Vogeler, *Austin Harrison* 168).

contracted a fever at Salonika and suffers from its long-term consequences, and Quentin Reynolds's story "The Man Who Dreamed Too Much" (1936) is set in inter-war Germany. In *Adventure Stories From the 'Strand'*, the editor has included two stories dealing with the First World War. Edgar Wallace's spy story "Code No. 2" (1916) describes the clever theft of secret code material through a Swiss-born German agent, while Stacy Aumonier's "The Kidnapped 'General'" (1923), which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, is a comic story with several layers of embedded tales about a shell-shocked veteran's exploits after the war. The third anthology, *Detective Stories from The Strand*, also includes Quentin Reynolds's "The Man Who Dreamed Too Much", but no other war story.

Many popular authors of the time are left out of these anthologies. One such example is Frederick Britten Austin, who was a prolific contributor to both British and American magazines and published no less than nine of his war stories in the American monthly *Saturday Evening Post*, widely read in Britain as well as the USA, between October 1917 and December 1920. The majority of these stories also appeared in the *Strand Magazine*, and were considered successful enough to be collected in a single volume, *Austin's According to Orders* (1918). They are, however, without exception jingoistic and xenophobic, which may be the explanation for their later omission from short story collections – by the late 1920s, public opinion in Britain had swung from fervent dislike of the former enemy to a friendlier and more humanitarian view.⁹⁹

Two main points are striking with regard to Great War stories in the *Strand Magazine*. Although the magazine published a number of stories addressing the war, these are both balanced by non-war related fiction and, for the most part, take the war as a backdrop rather than a central subject. Aimed primarily if not exclusively at a civilian audience, they cater for home front needs, provide a welcome distraction, reinforce a sense of the justness of the British cause, and address the realities of war in a manner designed to reassure readers. Most of all, however, the vast majority of stories included in the *Strand Magazine* are essentially formula literature following Ken Gelder's definition of popular

⁹⁹ The gradual change of British policies with regard to the former enemy, especially under the influence of the harsh peace treaty of Versailles, is outlined in Christoph Jahr, "Der lange Weg nach München. Britische Außenpolitik unter dem Eindruck von Versailles." *Versailles 1919: Ziele – Wirkung – Wahrnehmung*. Eds. Gerd Krumeich und Silke Fehleemann (Essen: Klartext, 2001) 113-125.

fiction: they are clearly aimed at a mass audience, and written for commercial purposes.¹⁰⁰ Cadogan and Craig point out for a range of women's and children's fiction of the war that nothing in them "was intended to be of permanent literary value", noting also that the war offered a convenient backdrop for popular fiction by providing potential for adventure and "emotional drama" (Cadogan and Craig 51-52). Their observations are in keeping with what can be observed of *Strand* short stories: they are entertaining tales that employ the war as a setting for standard plots and often formulaic conflicts and resolutions, rarely delving into the realm of psychological or political observation beyond a general approval of Britain's war aims and policies, and the value of soldierly sacrifice. In formal terms, these stories following established genre formulas: romance, adventure and crime plots are by far the most popular of these. Even Lawrence's "Tickets, Please" did not startle its magazine readers with formal innovation; while the subject matter of vengeful women ticket collectors may have been disquieting, the story's narrative structure is straightforward and relies on a traditional third-person narrator.

2.2.2 The *English Review*

Considering Austin Harrison's background in journalism, it is not surprising that the *Review* addressed the war mostly through the non-fictional genres of reportage and commentary. As early as September 1914, the *Review* introduced a new section headline separating general contributions from explicitly war-related pieces. Initially, this rubric was titled "The Kaiser's War" (September 1914), rapidly changed to "The Kaiser's World War" (October 1914) and then settling on "The War of Liberation" (November 1914) – an ambiguous headline that might refer both to occupied Belgium and France, and to notions of liberating 'civilisation' from the threat of German militarism. This latter heading remained in use until 1917, when it was changed first to "Imperial

¹⁰⁰ See Ken Gelder, *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field* (London: Routledge, 2004). Gelder's main means of distinguishing between what he calls 'popular' and 'literary' fiction are target audience and commercial outlook of a text or its author. Acknowledging the phenomenon of the 'literary bestseller', Gelder considers as works of popular fiction not those texts that sell particularly widely, but those that aim to reach a wide market. The empirical problems inherent in this approach are obvious, as proof of an author's intention is hard to establish, but Gelder attempts to circumvent these difficulties by taking into account criteria such as where a text is published, how it is marketed and whether or not it caters to genre expectations. See Gelder chapters 1-3.

Reconstruction" (April 1917) and then to "War and Reconstruction" (June 1917 to July 1918) before the concept of a special war rubric was abandoned in mid-1918.¹⁰¹ This section contained almost entirely non-fictional contributions, including, in September 1914, two scathing editorial commentaries by Harrison, denouncing the cultural policies of the German emperor and setting out the tasks of the Allies as liberating Belgium and stamping out German militarism.¹⁰² Nevertheless, later articles and commentaries prove that the magazine was by no means uncritical of how this war was conducted on the part of Great Britain. In a series of articles published in the summer of 1915, Harrison agitated for the introduction of conscription, and claimed in all his war-related articles that recruitment on a voluntary basis would be no use against the highly organised German war machine. In his column on financial issues, regular contributor Raymond Radclyffe rarely failed to criticise the handling of war expenses by the government, both before and after Lloyd George took over as Prime Minister from Asquith in December 1916. Regular reports from the war zone by correspondents such as H.M. Tomlinson, and by active service personnel writing under their initials or under a pseudonym (since those on active service were prohibited from publishing) supplemented these political commentaries from the home front and provided first-hand insights into life at the front.

The dominance of non-fictional contributions is not to imply that no war-related literary contributions found their way into the *English Review*. Indeed, the magazine's poetry section was the first to respond to the outbreak of war: In the August number of 1914, Aleister Crowley contributed a sequence of humorous poems parodying the style of various English poets from Chaucer to the early twentieth century, rewriting the chorus of the popular nineteenth-century music-hall "Jingo War Song" by G.W. Hunt. The September issue opened with John Masefield's poem "August, 1914", now famous for its wistful celebration of the pre-war idyll that popular perception has since made of England in the Edwardian Age. Poetry by active service personnel was published continuously throughout the war, although it did not always take the war as its subject. In

¹⁰¹ The change in headlines to more reconstruction-orientated slogans coincides with and was probably influenced by David Lloyd George's creation of a new 'Ministry of Reconstruction' in July 1917. See Rodney Lowe, "Government." *The First World War in British History*. Eds. Stephen Constantine, Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (London: Arnold, 1995) 36.

¹⁰² See *English Review* 70 (September 1914). The articles in question are entitled "Psychology and Motives" (233-247) and "The Task of the Allies" (248-261) respectively.

January, March and September 1918 and once more in February 1919, the poetry section of the *English Review* was given over entirely to 'Soldiers' Poetry', featuring exclusively poetry by active soldiers and officers, the best-known but not by far the most prolific contributor being Siegfried Sassoon.

Although most short stories in the *Review* did not touch upon the war, some war-related stories were published at intervals, such as a sketch by R.B. Cunninghame Graham entitled "In a Backwater" (October 1914). This piece is more or less indistinguishable from reportage and centres on the reception of the war news in a rural community. A farmer in the Home Counties, preoccupied with his wheat harvest and the recent death of his wife, is further troubled by the war news he gleans from his *Daily Mail*. He is particularly horrified at reports of dead soldiers and horses lying in Belgian cornfields in their hundreds, and his somewhat slow and rambling conversation with the story's unnamed narrator returns to this image time and again. Another story by Cunninghame Graham, "Brought Forward", appeared as the second war-related story in the February number of 1915 and describes how the death of his close friend and colleague in action prompts a Scottish worker to enlist, seeking to avenge his friend. Other war-related short fiction that appeared in the *Review* was, for example, D.H. Lawrence's "England, My England" (October 1915), which will be discussed in more detail below.

Also published were Stacy Aumonier's "The Grayles" (March 1916), a bittersweet tragicomedy about a pacifist family whose only son enlists out of a mistaken belief that his father and sister want him to fight, and returns disabled; Gilbert Frankau's "A Rag-Time Hero" (January 1917), a scathing social satire on cowardice and patriotic hypocrisy; and "Casualty" by Arthur Eckersley (April 1917), dealing with the anguish of a young recruit who is disabled in an accident just before his dispatch to the front and suffers from the fact that he cannot uphold the long military tradition of his family. Two short stories by Hugh Pollard, "Morphine" (February 1918) and "Hazard" (May 1918) address the small yet painful tragedies and moral dilemmas of war, dealing with a doctor whose attempt to cure one man from a drug habit leads to horrific suffering for a dying soldier, and a desperate game of cards settling who is to command a suicidal attack. Alec Waugh's "An Autumn Gathering" (May 1918) already adopts a sympathetic perspective towards Germany, as it relates the story of two young

German lovers, Pieter and Gretchen, parted by the war just after their engagement in 1914. Pieter dies in the British autumn offensive on the Somme in 1915, and his last letter to Gretchen is found by a young English officer, whom it prompts to reflect on the cruelty of a war that destroys an entire generation of passionate and hopeful young people but who ultimately has no choice but to continue regardless of this insight. Similarly, D.H. Catterick's "Reginald" (October 1918) depicts the esteem felt by a group of British marksmen for a particularly devious German sniper, and their regret at having to kill him. Other, later stories scrutinise the effect of war on human behaviour and character, such as Blamire Young's "Clarence" (December 1918), in which a boisterous officer is put to shame by the far more real, if less glamorous, achievements of a lowlier colleague. Arthur Mill's "Wreckage of War" (March 1919) is a short, disillusioned sketch of a soldier returning from war service in the Near East to find England a sad and desperate place and his friends and acquaintances all altered for the worse. "For it" by A.E. Mander (October 1919), which follows a young lieutenant from training camp to the front and his eventual death and begins with the epigram "When we are drifting into the next war – *let us think of the last*". A more psychological interest in coming to terms with loss, injury and circumstances altered by the war is visible in three further stories: Baroness von Hutten's "Mothers" (January 1920) compares different ways of coping with the loss of an only son, ranging from suicidal despair to grim determination; "The Old Dovecote" by David Garnett (February 1920) shows how even those who returned from the war to a loving home sound and whole may yet feel that what they were looking forward to returning to has changed beyond recognition, and D.H. Lawrence's "The Blind Man" (July 1920) is a study of how war-related blindness has subtly changed the relationship and power balance between a husband and wife, and the wife's best friend.

The long intervals at which these stories were published during and especially after the war show that Harrison continued his pre-war policy of promoting diversity and artistic quality in the short fiction chosen for publication, as does the fact that the many stories published without any reference to the war include works in translation by internationally renowned authors such as Anton Chekhov and Yone Noguchi, whose story "The Skin Painter" appeared in the December issue of 1917. The war was dealt with in

articles and commentaries on current affairs, but largely kept out of editorial choices for literary contributions. On the whole, war-related stories were even scarcer in the *English Review* beyond December 1918 than during the war, as the war and its after-effects, particularly the peace conference and Treaty of Versailles, continued to be addressed in articles and commentaries rather than short fiction. Those war stories that were included for the most part differ strikingly from those published in the *Strand Magazine*. Particularly Lawrence's "England, My England", but also the other authors' contributions, do not simply adopt a wartime setting for a pre-conceived adventure or romance plot. Instead, these stories concentrate on a psychological analysis of motives and reactions, attempting to shed light on issues such as the decision to enlist, on war-related fears and the sense of social obligation the war inspired in many.

Lawrence's "England, My England" is a representative example of an *English Review* war story. Its basic plot is easily summarised: a young married couple, who have been slowly growing apart due to the sharp contrasts of their respective character and temper, are irrevocably estranged when the eldest of their three young daughters is crippled in an accident. When the war breaks out the husband enlists with his wife's approval. Mentally more than physically unsuited to be a soldier, he suffers from the crudities of military life and his wife's readiness to feel dutiful towards him as a soldier but not as a man, and he is killed a short while after he has been sent to Flanders. This story exists in two versions, an early version published in the *English Review* and an extensively revised one that was collected and first published after the war in *England, My England, and Other Stories* (1922).

In the early magazine version, whose mere 5,900 words make it less than half as long as the collected version of almost 13,000 words, the focus on the war is conspicuously stronger.¹⁰³ This earlier version is divided into two parts. The first and shorter part is set in England and describes the process of marital estrangement, whereas the second and considerably longer section of the story is set in training camp and at the front. In the *Review*, the closing paragraphs of the story describe not only the husband's death in great detail, but also his killing of

¹⁰³ The striking difference in length may be attributable to Harrison's strict editorial requirements. Martha Vogeler notes that Harrison was frequently criticised for demanding rigorous cuts of his contributors (Vogeler, *Austin Harrison* 80).

three German soldiers with his service revolver before he himself is stabbed to death and viciously mutilated. In the revised version, more than three quarters of the story are devoted to describing the early relationship, marriage and gradual estrangement of the couple, while only a short section at the end of the story describes the husband's enlistment, training and death at the front, where he dies of his wounds and is found already dead by passing German soldiers. The focus of both versions of "England, My England" is on the emotions and psychological motivations of the protagonists' actions, but while the early version published in the *Review* shows a greater interest in the main protagonist's reaction to the war, the later version places greater emphasis on the disintegration of his marriage and the intricacies of the estrangement between two lovers.

"England, My England" in its earlier version reflects the overall nature of war stories in the *English Review*. Like Lawrence's story, all those stories in the *Review* dealing with the war address the war as a human, interpersonal or psychological problem rather than using it as a backdrop for romance or adventure plots. Although they are otherwise as diverse in their choice of subject matter and setting as the stories published in the *Strand Magazine*, this focus on the effects of the war in a psychological sense sets them apart from the typical *Strand* tale. Reassurance and moral support of the war effort are anything but a striking feature of *English Review* war fiction, as opposed to the choice of stories published in the *Strand Magazine*. While *Strand* stories are largely specimens of formula fiction, most of the stories in the *English Review* are formally more willing to deviate from a plot-based, generic structure. As shown above, some of these stories for instance adopted a sketch-like structure, and resemble reportage in their focus on observation rather than action. Even plot-based stories do not fit comfortably into the moulds of formulaic subgenres. Lawrence's "England, My England" certainly cannot be read as an adventure or romance story, despite its subject matter.

2.3 First World War stories and anthologisation

2.3.1 General anthologies 1914-1945

Anthologised stories differ from stories published in a magazine in that they are assembled under an equally superficial and arbitrary common denominator, such as their writers' nationality or gender.¹⁰⁴ Topical or genre connections are another mutual element that is frequently used to bind together a selection of stories, such as comic stories, sea stories, adventure or detective stories, romance, tales of the supernatural, or indeed war stories. A third important criterion is the short stories' time of writing. Whether they are collected as nineteenth-century stories, 'recent', 'modern' or 'contemporary' stories, the only linking element of stories in such collections is the moment of their production. The latter kind of anthology tends to appear as part of a series, particularly in inter- and post-war Britain, when many established periodicals, including the *Strand*, ceased publication and editors and publishers tried to establish new outlets for short fiction. In the following, a selection of different anthologies will be scrutinised briefly as to the war stories included in or omitted from them.

None of the criteria for selection listed above encourage an inclusion of First World War stories, and it is hence not surprising that, looking at a range of general story anthologies that were published between 1918 and 1945, only very few stories addressing war are included. In three 1920s anthologies, at a time when Great War stories could reasonably be expected to feature in such a publication – especially considering the continued publication of war stories in magazines – no stories are included that address the First World War in any way. Although they all contain stories by contemporary writers such as Saki, Katherine Mansfield, John Galsworthy or Hugh Walpole, neither Humphrey Milford's *Selected English Short Stories* (1927), nor Ernest Rhys's *English Short Stories from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century* (1921, republished 1926), nor Richard Wilson's *English Short Stories: An Anthology* (1921, republished 1957) feature short stories dealing with the war. Published at the end of the decade, Edward J. O'Brien's *Modern English Short Stories* (1930) does include a small number of tenuously war-related stories amongst its twenty-eight contributions,

¹⁰⁴ On the problematic issue of arbitrary selection criteria for short story anthologies see Timothy Clark, "Not Seeing the Short Story: A Blind Phenomenology of Reading." *The Oxford Literary Review* 26 (2004): 6.

but these stories, such as “Mr Franklyn’s Adventure” by J.M. Allison, as a general rule merely allude to the war. Katherine Mansfield’s “The Fly” and “The Lock” by Edward Sackville West, on the other hand, do scrutinise the after-effects of the war on the human psyche. These stories were gleaned from an annual series of story collections, where war stories generally did not fare much better. An exception is the *Best Short Stories* series, published throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The series was edited by Edward J. O’Brien and repeatedly included stories with a First World War theme, or alluding to the war – among others, O’Brien chose Katherine Mansfield’s “The Fly” for the 1923 volume. This is most likely due to the greater temporal proximity to the war and to the correspondingly greater output of war stories, to O’Brien’s interest in innovative fiction beyond the purely commercial, and particularly to the fact that O’Brien derived his stories from contemporary magazines that were still publishing war-related fiction on a regular basis. Other series, in contrast, include few to no war stories. The English Association published *English Short Stories of To-Day* in four series, in 1939, 1958 (ed. Dan Davin), 1965 (ed. T.S. Dorsch) and 1976 (ed. Roger Sharrock). The four volumes include only a handful of war stories, most of which rather unsurprisingly deal with the Second rather than the First World War and at most refer briefly to the latter conflict by way of comparison or historical positioning. The only story dealing straightforwardly with the Great War appeared in the 1939 First Series anthology: “Defeat” by Geoffrey Moss deals with the friendship between the English narrator and a German officer, interrupted by the war for over ten years and revived in French-occupied Rhineland. In 1939 the story appeared at a politically sensitive time after the remilitarisation of the Rhineland, as it describes in detail some of the complications of occupation and popular sentiment in defeated Germany, particularly among returned army officers who face the complete breakdown of their careers. The German officer is killed in his function as a ‘Green Policeman’ struggling against Rhenish separatists, having been deliberately disarmed and rendered defenceless by the French occupational forces. Even fewer stories addressing the First World War, and none by British writers, are included in John Lehmann’s *New Writing* series, published between 1936, 1939 and 1942-43. General anthologies and annual collections of short fiction were clearly not a fruitful outlet for war stories, as they quickly oriented themselves to either

established classics of the genre, or new fiction that no longer cared to address the war.

2.3.2 Anthologies of war fiction

While general anthologies can be expected to abandon the theme of war once war is no longer an everyday reality, anthologies and collections of war fiction are pledged to continue publishing tales of war. The anthologies considered in this section were published between 1915 and 1936, and specialise either in First World War writing or in texts about war generally. Many war anthologies are mixed collections of not only short fiction, but also excerpts from longer works such as novels or histories, and of war poetry. A greater number of the anthologies examined below are directed explicitly at children and young adults, an observation in keeping with the generally high proportion of (Great) War literature that is aimed at young readers. As discussed above, war writing has a tendency towards the historiographical or at least autobiographical, expressing a desire to achieve as truthful and authentic a representation of war as possible. As a result, most war anthologies include a significant number of excerpts from longer works of non-fiction or autobiographical fiction.

Considering the political outlook of stories published in wartime periodicals, it is not surprising that those anthologies of war stories published during the war itself also took a positive, patriotic stance towards the war and focussed on tales of heroic conduct, courage and endurance. In an article on wartime publishing practices, Jane Potter argues that British publishers between 1914 and 1918 had other goals at heart than just profit. While commercial viability was obviously a necessity, most of the London publishing houses at the time felt obligated both by a general sense of social responsibility and by personal stakes in the war – such as the war service of close friends, family, or employees – to consider patriotic issues, and even those publishers who opposed the conflict were alive to the need of supporting soldiers and civilians under the burden of war.¹⁰⁵ The fact that preference was given to texts that took a positive

¹⁰⁵ Potter's examples include Edward Arnold, who promised those of his employees willing to enlist job security on their return, or Hodder & Stoughton, who donated a share of their profits to the war effort. See Jane Potter, "For Country, Conscience and Commerce: Publishers and Publishing, 1914-18." *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History*. Eds. Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 13-18.

slant on the war and stressed the value of patriotic sacrifice has been noted repeatedly for anthologies of war poetry and holds true for collections of stories as well.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the most important aim of these anthologies seems to be to stress the valour and daring of the British troops, a goal eloquently put in their very titles, and their stress is clearly on heroic achievement: examples include *Thrilling Deeds of Valour: Stories of Heroism in the Great War* (1916), *The Post of Honour: Stories of Daring Deeds Done by Men of the British Empire in the Great War* (1917, ed. Richard Wilson), or *Wonderful Stories: Winning the V.C. in the Great War* (1917). An important secondary emphasis is put on the veracity of the accounts of heroic deeds given in the short stories, which corresponds to post-war concerns about the authenticity of war writing. Implicit in most titles, and explicit in a number of prefatory notes and introductions, is the claim that these stories can be taken at face value, that they are eyewitness accounts of what has really happened. Walter Wood, editor of the collection *Soldiers' Stories of the War* (1915), claims in his introduction:

All of the stories in this volume are told by men who were there personally, and who, with one or two exceptions – cases of soldiers who had returned to the front – read the typescripts of their narratives, so that accuracy should be secured. The narrators spoke while the impressions of fighting and hardships and things seen were still strong and clear; in several cases full notes had been made or diaries kept, and reference to these records was of great value in preparing the stories. When seeing an informant I specially asked that a true tale should be told, and I believe that no unreliable details were knowingly given.¹⁰⁷

The fact that Wood was able to publish a second volume as a sequel to his collection only a year later – *In the Line of Battle: Soldiers' Stories of the War* (1916) – seems to prove that his concept was successful, as does its repetition in other anthologies. Arthur St John Adcock's collection *In the Firing Line: Stories of the War by Land and Sea* (1914) represents its stories as quasi-journalistic accounts of the war in its earliest stages. Supplementing his own writing with (allegedly) real letters and diary entries by British soldiers, Adcock paints a gruesome picture of German atrocities in Belgium, which allows him to depict the British Army as the saviours of an injured people. His anthology was part of the *Daily Telegraph War Books Series*, begun prior to the outbreak of the First World War and consisting to that date of 15 volumes, mostly dealing with the British

¹⁰⁶ See for example Edna Longley on poetry anthologies (Longley 58-9).

¹⁰⁷ Walter Wood, ed., *Soldiers' Stories of the War* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1915) v.

colonial wars. The Great War was thus placed securely in the context of previous conflicts. Besides courage, heroism and gallantry, modesty seems to be a paramount virtue in the eyes of the editors and presumably the readers of these wartime anthologies. Walter Wood and his fellow editors stress the unwillingness of their sources to talk about their own achievements, and Richard Wilson states in the author's note to his *The Post of Honour* (1917) that he had to use newspaper sources to come by the material for his stories because "the British V.C. does not talk of his exploits".¹⁰⁸

A further striking observation is the wide geographical range of the short stories included in wartime anthologies. Modern popular memory of the war centres almost entirely on the Western Front, and it is the poetry and prose of soldiers who served in France and Belgium that is remembered as canonical war writing today. The texts collected in wartime anthologies stand in stark contrast to this selectivity in that they cover the war in all its theatres, from Flanders to Mesopotamia, and a wide variety of branches of the British military. The anthology *Thrilling Deeds of Valour* (1916) alone, a collection aimed at children with a large number of colour and black-and-white illustrations collecting a range of stories of an unabashedly patriotic nature, includes stories set amongst the Royal Engineers, among British midshipmen in the Dardanelles who carry ammunition to the soldiers on land under heavy fire, Australian soldiers fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula, a story set on a war cruiser in the Atlantic, and among Russian troops capturing a German general. It also comprises an account of the exploits of the flying corps, of British army nurses and doctors fighting disease and despair in the Balkans, of British troops fighting in Mesopotamia under difficult conditions, and even a home front story set on the Shetland Islands. Similarly, *Wonderful Stories: Winning the V.C. in the Great War*, which had gone into a second edition by 1917, contains stories from all fronts, including the Balkans, Mesopotamia, and service branches such as the navy and its submarine corps. Through their wide range of settings, these stories offer a means of imaginary participation for all readers. Regardless of where friends and relatives were deployed, readers were certain to find a corresponding tale. In wartime anthologies of Great War short stories, there is no sign of editors' and writers'

¹⁰⁸ Richard Wilson, ed., *The Post of Honour: Stories of Daring Deeds Done by Men of the British Empire in the Great War* (London: Dent, 1917) 7.

choices being narrowed down to the Western Front by the later myth of the war, although there is a visible emphasis on the combatant experience of the war. However, all aspects of the war, including home front and nursing, find consideration and are included in collections in what may be an attempt to render the war accessible in all its facets, particularly to young readers. The way in which the war is presented is part of a continuing tradition of heroic war writing and the comparatively new field of war reportage that developed during the colonial wars of the mid to late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹

War story anthologies published during the war are light-hearted and yet serious in their presentation of courage and heroic conduct, and the end of the war did not bring about a sudden, radical change in short story anthologies and their evaluation of the conflict or editorial choices. Collections such as Sir James Edward Parrott's *The Path of Glory: Heroic Stories of the Great War* (1921) retain the wartime focus on heroism and British moral and physical superiority. This particular anthology comprises nineteen stories and sketches, all written by Parrott and selected from his *Children's Story of the War* (1915-19) in ten volumes. A foreword by the author dedicates the book to "The Unrecorded Brave of the Great War" and describes in great detail how Britain, believed by the Germans and its own citizens to have lost its strength and patriotic valour, rose to the challenge of the war, made the most gallant sacrifices and emerged from the war victoriously.¹¹⁰ The stories are all allegedly true accounts of actual events during the war and supply names and dates for a greater appearance of authenticity. They are obviously written for children and strive with great pathos to provide positive role models of heroic conduct and patriotic sacrifice. As was the case in most wartime anthologies, this collection includes stories on a wide range of services and theatres of war: from Allied women and children assisting British soldiers, over flying corps, navy and British submarine crews (dramatically dubbed 'Heroic Toilers of the Deep'), to medical officers and nurses, and even colonial troops from India. Even after the end of the war, and in the midst of public debate over issues of public commemoration and private

¹⁰⁹ On the history of war correspondence see Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2004). The interplay of war reportage and literature is scrutinised in Barbara Korte, "Being Engaged: The War Correspondent in British Fiction." *Anglia* 124 (2006): 432-448.

¹¹⁰ Edward James Parrott, *The Path of Glory: Heroic Stories of the Great War* (London: Nelson, 1921) 22.

grief, a positive evaluation of the recent conflict seems to have been possible, especially in the light of having to make sense of loss and change.¹¹¹

A number of anthologies of war stories published in the early 1930s, though not all, continue this trend of positive evaluation. These form a striking contrast to the harsher, disillusioned interpretation of the late 1920s war memoirs and several collections of stories published around the same time by the same authors who had reworked their war experiences into novels and autobiographies. While Richard Aldington's collection *Roads to Glory* (1930) gives an unremittingly negative and disillusioned interpretation of the war, Allan Junior's anthology *Humorous Scottish War Stories: Selected from the 'Daily Mail'* (1930), published in the same year, takes a completely different stance. The thin volume contains forty-seven anecdotes written in Scots dialect by different authors, all designed to illustrate the humour and wit with which Scottish soldiers supposedly encountered the hardships of the Great War. In his foreword, the editor states:

The sense of humour is the ability to see the funny side of life. It is the source of that courage which refuses to take the bludgeonings of fate lying down. It comes up smiling every time and never takes the count.

It is the safety valve of existence; the mechanism which prevents disaster when disaster seems imminent. It is that something in the heart which when misfortunes come gives a man what Burns called 'a heart abune them a'.

[...] Those hardy warriors of the north had an eye for the ludicrous even in that grim struggle and in this collection of anecdotes, which the courtesy of the Daily Mail has made possible, it will be seen that the good humour of Sandy and Jock did not a little to bring some sweetness into the bitter experiences of that eventful time (Junior 3).

While the 'bitterness' of the war is acknowledged, these stories do not present the war in the light of utter futility that informs the prose of Aldington and many of his contemporaries, such as R.H. Mottram or Siegfried Sassoon. In a similar

¹¹¹ The issue of how to deal with the bodies of the many soldiers fallen and interred abroad, and of how to adequately mourn the dead, was of particular momentousness immediately after the war and in the 1920s. Bitter quarrels ensued on the matter of headstones and the design of war cemeteries in France; Rudyard Kipling, who had himself lost an only son and was asked to compose epitaphs and inscriptions for these cemeteries, was involved in the public debate over combining piety and respect for the dead with practical considerations, such as the cost and effort that would be involved should every family be allowed to choose the design of their loved ones' resting places. For an account of the difficult work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission see Fabian Arthur Goulstone Ware, *The Immortal Heritage: An Account of the Work and Policy of The Imperial War Graves Commission During Twenty Years, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1937), and Julie Summers, *Remembered: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (London: Merrell-Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2007).

vein, Wingrove Willson's anthology of sea stories, *Naval Stories of the Great War* (1931) expressly does not seek "to glorify warfare", but to provide its audience of young readers "with some idea of the perils and privations faced by the sturdy men who kept the seas for Britain in the dark days of 1914-18" and to inspire in them "a kindly thought for the heroes who sacrificed so much and fought so bravely 'neath our glorious flag".¹¹² Here, too, war is not presented as a matter to be trifled with and its costs are acknowledged, but the necessity and moral superiority of British involvement in the First World War is not questioned. The collection once again stresses heroism and comprises stories by various authors, dealing with feats of (in this case naval) daring such as the blocking of Zeebrugge harbour in April 1918. Anthologies such as Willson's confirm a trend noted by Michael Paris for inter-war juvenile fiction in particular, to the effect that heroic fiction of the war years not only continued to be republished, but new stories also appeared in collections as well as story magazines, or indeed in novel form (Paris, *Over the Top* 158-159).

Not all inter-war anthologies, however, continue this entirely positive evaluation of the war. The year 1930 also saw the publication of Captain H.C. Minchin's abovementioned hardback anthology *Great Short Stories of the War* (1930). This substantial volume, introduced by Edmund Blunden, collected a wide selection of Great War short stories (and some excerpts from novels) by authors of different nationalities, including German and Austrian. While it also includes a small number of stories in a traditional heroic mode, such as 'Bartimeus's' "The Port Lookout", it is dominated by stories of the 'school of disillusionment':¹¹³ Richard Aldington, R.H. Mottram and Liam O'Flaherty are represented by particularly disturbing depictions of the frontline, as are their French and German counterparts Henri Barbusse and Erich Maria Remarque. Even those stories included that were contributed by usually more light-hearted authors such as John Galsworthy and Stacy Aumonier ring a tragic note. Galsworthy's "Defeat" describes the hopeless situation of an unhappy German prostitute in wartime London, while Aumonier's "Them Others" stresses the tragedy of personal loss and the universality of grief and anxiety across national

¹¹² Wingrove Willson, ed., *Naval Stories of the Great War* (London: Aldine, 1931) 5.

¹¹³ The term "school of disillusionment" was used as early as 1930 by Cyril Falls in his guide to war fiction (Falls 298).

boundaries. In his prefatory note, Minchin claimed that *Great Short Stories of the War* was “the first substantial collection of short stories of the Great War to be published”, hoping that it would have a lasting value and influence while admitting to the fact that “[m]uch that has been written recently about the war is for the hour only and will cease to be”.¹¹⁴

A somewhat slimmer volume is Eric Partridge’s *A Martial Medley: Fact and Fiction* (1931).¹¹⁵ This anthology consists of only eleven stories, published in a limited edition of 1,000 copies in 1931, but was subsequently republished at least once by the Books for Libraries Press in 1970. The contributions all appear to be genuine short fiction and not excerpts from longer works. Although some of them are non-fictional and although no ‘canonical’ war writers are included, the presence of the disillusioned school is visible in the editorial note, which stresses the authenticity of the collection:

As Mr. Richard Aldington has so pertinently said, there is still room for books on the war of 1914-1918. We believe that this is a good book: if careful planning and enthusiastic collaboration (with lengthy first-hand knowledge as the *sine qua non* of each contribution) can make a good book, the contributors [sic] have ‘done their bit.’

The volume is divided into three parts for the convenience of those who have a decided preference for fiction over fact, or vice versa; the middle section is primarily for those who must have information.¹¹⁶

Even anthologies of the more sensational kind that were clearly primarily designed for entertainment, such as the anonymously edited *Fifty Amazing Stories of the Great War* (1936), could take a critical stance of a kind. While this collection is founded on the basic assumption of the war’s overall necessity and the importance of sacrifice and heroic action, the stories included yet strive to stress the hardships and horrors of war – if only to highlight the courage of those willing to make the necessary sacrifice. The substantial volume includes many stories by writers no longer widely known, and various first-hand accounts by participants in the war, some of whom – like the comic cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather or war correspondent Geoffrey Malins – were well-known at the time of publication. The only writers represented that can be regarded as part of today’s canon of Great War literature are Herbert Read, an excerpt of whose *In*

¹¹⁴ H.C. Minchin, ed., *Great Short Stories of the War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1930) e.

¹¹⁵ Partridge himself was an Australian veteran of the war.

¹¹⁶ Eric Partridge, ed., *A Martial Medley: Fact and Fiction* (London: Scholartis, 1931) 5.

Retreat (1925) is anthologised in the volume, and R.H. Mottram, who is represented with an autobiographical story about his own war experience. While inter-war anthologies of short stories cannot be said to entirely run counter to the emergent mythologisation of the war and the related process of canonisation, these publications still offer a more varied outlook on the war, and are more in keeping with wartime attitudes than one would assume. Unlike story collections published by the comparatively small number of critical, disillusioned war memoirists, these stories mostly uphold the war as a hard but essentially necessary (and potentially even beneficial) experience. The next chapter will illustrate this tendency with reference to the stories of 'Sapper' and several other writers of short fiction.

Magazines published a substantial number of First World War stories, although they imposed their own various restraints in terms of saleability and popular appeal, artistic requirements, length and similar. Notwithstanding these restraints, a great variety of war stories were available to the reading public in leading British periodicals such as the *Strand* and the *English Review*. These stories were obviously received with interest and were read widely, as they continued to appear with greater frequency towards and even beyond the end of the war. They did not, however, manage to become more lastingly available, since few stories – with the exception of some by authors well known today such as D.H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad – found their way into story collections and anthologies. Of the much smaller number of stories published in the *English Review*, a larger percentage still rings familiar with a modern audience. This is mainly because the *Review* published many authors who have come to be associated with the modernist movement, who were frequently reprinted in topical collections and achieved a more lasting fame as artists than most of the popular authors of the more commercial magazines. When comparing the type of stories published in the *English Review* with those of the more popular magazines, one feels inclined to agree with Mary Cadogan's observation that "[w]ar was topical and had to be brought into stories in the cheap periodicals" (Cadogan and Craig 58), whereas 'high-brow' fiction could afford to treat war in its implications for society and the human psyche. At the same time, some of the short stories published in the *Strand Magazine*, such as Conrad's "The Tale" and Stacy Aumonier's "The Match" (July 1916), certainly form exceptions to this rule,

which seems natural given that many authors would publish in either type of magazine.

Specialised war anthologies likewise offer a broad spectrum of war stories, albeit with a patriotic bias particularly during the war itself, whereas general anthologies and collections for the most part omit war fiction in favour of 'classic' pre-war short stories or more recent, post-war fiction. The fact that short fiction of the war years and inter-war period, as published in magazines and anthologies, presents its readers with a rich array of stories addressing a multitude of aspects of the war suggests that narrative identification in Ricoeur's sense was facilitated by this diversity of approach. Given that war stories offered fictional and semi-fictional accounts from almost any theatre of war and a range of different perspectives, they were likely to provide a means of comparison for their contemporary readers regardless of the setting or nature of their own war experience. Popular stories in particular, like those published in the *Strand* or *Blackwood's Magazine*, moreover continued to follow established narrative patterns, thus guaranteeing an additional element of reassurance and escapism for war-fraught nerves. This function gradually became redundant after the end of the war, as will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter of this thesis. Moreover, most magazine stories were formula literature, such as detective, romance or adventure stories adapted to wartime themes and settings. This factor certainly added to their topicality in limiting their re-publication after the war.

3. The Interplay of Form and Function in British First World War Stories

3.1 Mood, narration and technique

Dennis Vannatta begins the introduction to his history of the short story by pointing out the importance of social contextualisation, claiming that to “understand fully any specific body of literature or any specific genre, we must, of course, understand something about the society from which it springs” (Vannatta ix). This is as true for the short story of the First World War as for the literature of any period, and particularly for Great War stories published in magazines, which had an interest in addressing current issues and concerns of their potential readership in order to ensure successful sales, but also in the sense of Ricoeur’s notion of using fictional narrative as a laboratory to compare and rehearse memories and experiences. This chapter will be looking at different social functions fulfilled by short stories of and about the First World War as a means of narrative configuration, whilst simultaneously scrutinising their formal properties and modes of presentation. The concerns addressed within the framework of a range of genre conventions have naturally varied over time. Issues that might have been at the forefront of readers’ minds in the early months of the war, such as the question of how to get involved in the war effort as quickly as possible, became less significant as the conflict progressed; after the end of the war, reintegration, recuperation and the rebuilding of stable patterns began to dominate over dealing with makeshift wartime arrangements and acute loss and grief. The following discussion contrasts divergent treatment of contemporary issues and concerns in different subgenres. As subject matter, social functions and treatment of the First World War changed significantly after 1945, those Great War stories written and published during and after the Second World War will be treated separately in the final chapter.

Stories of the Great War adopt a variety of approaches to the war. They differ in their formal properties, style, subject matter, and the generic conventions they adopt. Some of these stories belong more or less unambiguously to the realm of popular literature – such as most stories published in periodicals like the *Strand Magazine* – while others are more explicitly ‘literary’ fiction. This distinction follows the definition of popular

versus literary fiction provided by Ken Gelder, who builds on Bourdieu's theory of the divergent fields of restricted and large-scale cultural production.¹¹⁷ Both Bourdieu and Gelder work on the premise that 'literary' texts are aimed at other artists in the first place, and that other artists' praise is the highest measure of their success, whereas a 'popular' text is written to achieve popular commercial success. While it is perfectly possible to point out First World War stories which exemplify both ends of the spectrum, such as May Edginton's magazine romance "There's a Silver Lining" (*Strand Magazine*, August 1917), compared to Mary Butts's modernist sketch "Speed the Plough" (*Speed the Plough* [1923]), most stories will not fit comfortably into either category. The fact that a range of writers wrote for both artistic and popular magazines; the adaptability and complexity of a story such as Conrad's "The Tale"; the necessity even on the part of many 'literary' writers to earn their keep by their pen, all disallow a narrow binary distinction between art and commodity. Bourdieu himself acknowledges that many factors determine the value of a work of art. While publishers, critics and influential fellow authors may be important to the making of a writer's reputation, the general public also play an important part in appreciating and evaluating art by purchasing or collecting it (Bourdieu 78). Gelder similarly draws attention to an important point when he notes, "Authors of literary fiction can have bestsellers, too, and conversely, not every work of popular fiction sells successfully" (Gelder 3). A rigorous distinction is consequently neither possible nor desirable. Bourdieu himself stresses that the two types he refers to – of popular, large-scale, middlebrow art on the one hand and restricted avant-garde art on the other – are nothing more than extremes, or "limiting parameters" (Bourdieu 127).

Bearing in mind the permeable boundaries between magazine fiction and 'literary' short stories, there can be no absolutes when talking about First World War short stories. Nevertheless, a rough distinction between these two poles is still valuable to gauge the literary agenda and audience appeal of a short story. In the following, any references to the 'popular' or 'literary' nature of a story should be regarded as attempts to place them in the spectrum with regard to audience

¹¹⁷ See in particular the essay "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed", in Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.

appeal, not as a value judgment. While it may be tempting to distinguish not only between 'popular' and 'literary' fiction but also between 'good' and 'bad' short stories, this kind of evaluation would be a gross misrepresentation of the material at hand. 'Popular' short stories, just as popular fiction in general, are not necessarily badly written or lacking in topical or contextual depth just because they were written for the appreciation of a broad audience, as any reading of Dickens will prove. As we will see below, many 'commercial' short story writers were highly accomplished authors who produced intelligent, moving and complex stories about the war. Similarly, a story written with a small, select, 'literary' audience in mind is not necessarily a 'good' story purely by virtue of being experimental, unless one adopts innovation as the sole hallmark of value.¹¹⁸ Any given text needs to be read bearing in mind the audience it was written for.

The comparison of stories published by the *Strand Magazine* and the *English Review* demonstrates that First World War stories were written for different kinds of audiences. As Chapter 2 has shown, stories published in the *Strand* were for the most part commissioned to match the magazine's editorial policy of entertaining and educating its readers. They had to meet the general educational level of a readership that ranged from lower to upper middle class, and thus take into account that many readers would be fully literate, but would not necessarily have a scholarly interest in literature, and expected light reading over the weekend and after work. Accordingly, stories published in the *Strand Magazine* are likely to be readable and entertaining in the first instance, while any formal innovation has to be contained within this framework of readability. The *English Review*, on the other hand, was a publication with a smaller circulation aimed at a more intellectually minded readership with a decided interest in politics, art, and artistic development. They are consequently more

¹¹⁸ Suzanne Ferguson stresses a discrepancy in the evaluation of 'literary' as opposed to 'popular' stories when she states that "individual works of popular art [...] are regarded by both their creators and their audience as consumable. Designed for immediate gratification, they are not expected to give pleasure and edification over a long period of time. In the case of narrative art, popular stories, long and short, are generally disseminated in less permanent media than highbrow fiction, now as in the past. The simple fact of physical preservation is often a piece of evidence for the prestige of a work in its own time" (Ferguson 177). While it is debatable whether or not producers of 'popular' stories necessarily regard their work as ephemeral, her statement is accurate in relation to popular short stories, which appeared almost exclusively in the extremely short-lived media of weekly and monthly periodicals.

likely to be formally and stylistically demanding, and yet they could by no means afford to be unreadable: like the *Strand*, the continued existence of the *English Review* depended on sales.

Depending on the audience they were aimed at, First World War short stories follow varying approaches and pursue different aims resulting in some considerable differences in their narrating of the war. The majority of the large number of First World War short stories that were written and published in Britain are popular tales adhering to varying genre conventions. The *Strand* selection in particular exemplifies the popularity of traditional subgenres such as romance, adventure or detective fiction. John Cawelti notes for formula literature that it generally employs images, themes, and symbols specific to its cultural and historical context (Cawelti 30), suggesting that 'popular' fiction not only tends to follow more rigid generic patterns, but is also closely bound up with the time of its writing. It is partly on the grounds of this topicality, which results in a dating and subsequent forgetting of much magazine fiction, that literary critics tend to assume its inferior quality. Cawelti proposes, however, that the very qualities that tie 'popular' fiction to the moment of its production may also be seen as its greatest assets:

It may be that, when he most powerfully embodies the thoughts and feelings unique to a particular period, the artist is, at the same time, creating something that, by virtue of its special relation to its own times, cannot attain more than an ephemeral place in the history of culture. The ability to express the spirit of the moment may not be as important an artistic characteristic as the appeal to universal human concerns in a lasting way; nonetheless, I have come to believe [...] that this is a distinctive kind of artistry worth studying in its own right (Cawelti 300).

It would be wrong to suggest that all popular short stories of the Great War were unjustly forgotten merely for their topicality – aesthetic and stylistic considerations are also part of the process of canonisation, and many of these magazine stories were of indifferent literary quality. Different stories about the war, however, will tend to address the conflict in different ways and with different goals in mind. The very diversity of First World War short stories bears witness to the complexity of experience informing them, and they offer an insight into numerous ways of narrating war experiences at a time of profound crisis for British popular consciousness. On the 'popular' end of the spectrum, we have

stories using established patterns and formulas to provide reassurance and a safe context for embedding difficult and potentially traumatic subject matter, such as romance plots for the negotiation of war injuries. On the 'literary' end, we find stories that attempt with varying degrees of success to express a general sense of dislocation and insecurity, or specific experiences of the violence of war, through formal innovation and by employing modernist technique. In between these two poles are a variety of stories that are hard to place in either camp, stories whose audience, in retrospect, is hard to determine, and which at times combine stylistic innovation with traditional story patterns, or astute psychological observation with conventional narration. Modernist authors like D.H. Lawrence published stories in the *Strand Magazine* alongside commercial fiction, and they were not felt to be out of place.¹¹⁹

A comparison of two stories is helpful to illustrate the variety of narrative modes and approaches within First World War short fiction. Ben Ray Redman's "The Enduring Image" and Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" both deal with the subject of grief and loss in the aftermath of violent death. Both stories depict ways in which a bereaved person copes with the loss of loved ones; both were written and published during the inter-war decades. Redman's story was collected in his volume *Down in Flames* in 1930.¹²⁰ A young Scottish woman, Joan Gorden, is still mourning her fiancé Alan Leish three years after he has gone

¹¹⁹ Lawrence's short fiction is not necessarily exemplary of those aspects of literary modernism which contemporary readers would have struggled with most, namely formal and structural experimentation and particularly the absence of a clearly discernible plot. As Dominic Head points out, "Lawrence's stories are predominantly conservative in structure and form. There are local exceptions to this [...], but the stories usually exhibit a highly disciplined use of the conventional story form, placing great emphasis on careful plotting" (Head 34). Nevertheless, Lawrence's subject matter and careful psychological treatment certainly distinguish his short fiction from more commercial stories of the time, in which plot, not characterisation, are at the forefront.

¹²⁰ One can assume that at least some of the stories in that volume would have first appeared in a newspaper or periodical, as was customary at the time; unfortunately, it is in most cases either impractical or impossible to determine when and where a story was first published unless by coincidence, particularly if, as in this case, the only listing for a story in the *Short Story Index* refers to the book publication. The online *FictionMags Index* (<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/FMI/0start.htm>) is an amateur project providing indices for a wide range of popular fiction magazines, which, however, relies heavily on contents lists of book auctioning sites and is consequently both incomplete and of limited reliability. A project proposing to compile an *Index to British Popular Fiction Magazines, 1880-1950*, reputedly to be published on CD-ROM by the British Library and undertaken by Mike Ashley, appears to be still in the planning stages. Individual indices exist for some magazines – such as Geraldine Beare's *Index to the Strand Magazine, 1891-1950* (Westport, CO: Greenwood, 1982) – but these cover only a small selection of possible publication outlets.

missing on a flying mission over Flanders. She spends hours on a cliff by the seaside that she associates with Alan and refuses, in a friendly but determined manner, the shy attentions of Alan's friend Kenneth, who has returned from the war with a crippled foot. With a pair of German binoculars Kenneth has given her, Joan habitually observes the sky from the cliff. The story takes a dramatic turn when one day Joan believes to be witnessing, through the binoculars, a ghostly vision of her fiancé's death.¹²¹ In her painful excitement, Joan slips and falls to her death. Redman here combines an issue that was still at the forefront of his readers' minds – loss and continued grieving over the death of a friend, relative or lover – with features typical of popular fiction: an element of idealistic romance in Joan's faithfulness to her dead fiancé that also echoes male anxieties over female faithfulness in the absence of the soldier; a supernatural element in the uncanny vision Joan has of her fiancé's supposed last flight through the German binoculars; and a sensational ending in which the story's heroine tragically falls to her death, the name of her dead lover the last word on her lips:

The glasses never left her eyes, and now she could see the pilot's helmeted head above the fuselage. His white face was straining downward. Trailing smoke and thin threads of flame, the plane plunged nearer; and that white face grew larger, more distinct. Then came for Joan an instant of racking unbelief, followed by a numbing surge of recognition. Staggering at the cliff's edge, she shrieked aloud a single name and tore the glasses from her eyes. [...] Gazing at nothing save an empty sky, Joan lurched forward. Loose earth and stones gave beneath her feet. With hands fluttering helplessly, she fell.¹²²

The story is a conventional narrative told by a narrator standing outside the story who, even if he might not be termed omniscient, appears reliable in his intrusive interpretations of Joan's feelings and actions for the reader. Beginning and ending on the cliff in Kintyre, the story has a simple circular structure and, with Joan's death, a closed ending in the most literal sense. Joan's death seems almost inevitable: her faithfulness to the dead lover forbids her to move on and live her life, because living would entail an eventual abandoning of her grief. The

¹²¹ Joan's uncanny vision through the binoculars is reminiscent of M.R. James's ghost story "A View from a Hill", which features a pair of binoculars that allow one to see through the eyes of the dead. While the binoculars in James's story derive their power from the fact that they are filled with the distilled juice of human bones, Joan's binoculars are those of a dead German soldier, picked up by Kenneth on the battlefield following Alan's crash. See M.R. James, "A View from a Hill." *Collected Ghost Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992) 291-305.

¹²² Ben Ray Redman, "The Enduring Image." *Down in Flames* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1930) 281.

sensational ending of the story and its focus on plot and dramatic effect do not signify, however, that this is a badly written narrative. The character of Joan is drawn precisely and convincingly; the shy advances of her fiancé's best friend, and Joan's reaction to her loss, are rendered aptly and sympathetically, without melodramatic flourishes.

Mansfield's "The Fly" was first published in the liberal American weekly *The Nation* on 18 March 1922, was subsequently collected in Mansfield's volume of stories *The Dove's Nest* (1923), and has been frequently anthologised since. In "The Fly", a father and successful director of his own firm – throughout referred to as 'the boss' – is suddenly reminded of his dead son by a casual remark six years after his son was killed in the war. While musing on his feelings of grief, he is distracted by a fly struggling to escape from his inkpot, which he eventually drowns in his ink. When he has disposed of the dead fly, the 'boss' tries to recapture his previous train of thought, but cannot remember what he has been thinking about. Mansfield's story in general and the fly as metaphor in particular allow for numerous interpretations, and this openness and ambiguity of meaning is certainly a deliberate strategy in keeping with modernist reactions against strict patterns of genre and interpretation. A reading of the story as a study of the nature of grief and mourning, however, is particularly fruitful. This reading is the more plausible given Mansfield's own experience of loss during the First World War, in which her younger brother Leslie and numerous male friends were killed.¹²³ The story can be seen as an illustration of how grief becomes less and less acute over time, how mourning may become a conscious effort as time takes the edge off the pain, using the fly and its gradual death as a symbol for a process of mourning that ideally ends in acceptance or forgetfulness. As a mourner desperately holds on to his grief as the last connection to the deceased, the fly desperately holds on to life, but with ever feebler efforts. Unlike Redman's story, "The Fly" has no dramatic action, no sensational ending in which the story comes to a close. It ends on a note of puzzlement and bereftness, with the boss "wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was..."

¹²³ On Mansfield's grief and its literary expressions, see for example Christine Darrohn, "Blown to Bits!": Katherine Mansfield's 'The Garden Party' and the Great War". *MFS* 44.3 (1998): 513-39.

He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember".¹²⁴

Mansfield's 'boss' increasingly finds mourning full of effort. Being startled into remembering his dead son by a visitor, he locks himself in his office afterwards, where he "wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep..." ("Fly" 70), but finds himself unable to do so and is distracted by the fly instead. This effort is contrasted, even within the story and by the boss himself, with earlier stages of his mourning process:

In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words ['My son!'] to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son ("Fly" 70).

The subtlety of Mansfield's use of free indirect discourse and her general focus on the protagonist's own thoughts and feelings contrasts starkly with the more intrusive narrative voice of Redman's "The Enduring Image". The boss, albeit indirectly, explains his grief to us himself; Joan's grief is mediated and interpreted for us by Redman's outside narrator:

It was three years since Alan had gone missing, and to her it might as well have been one day or twenty centuries. The sense of time had deserted her it seemed, leaving her poised in duration as some eternal gull might hold herself forever motionless against a ceaseless wind. But her suspension was effortless, unconscious. Events flowed past her, men and women came and went, her social self responded to them: she clasped hands, talked and walked, played bridge and golf, danced through long nights; and people would have said Joan Gorden still inhabited their world. But she had gone from them three years ago, as definitely and finally as Alan Leish had vanished in the Flanders sky. To her they were phantoms, and their world a dream. Reality for her lay in the past, and on this cliff where she and Alan had so often sat together; where they still sat, it sometimes seemed to her ("Enduring Image" 269).

Redman's interpretation of grief and mourning differs dramatically from Mansfield's. Joan Gorden's grief is eternal and unchanging, even in the face of continuing obligations and new suitors for her affections – a tragic and yet in many ways a comforting thought that presents love as an overwhelmingly strong

¹²⁴ Katherine Mansfield, "The Fly." *Women, Men and the Great War*. Ed. Trudi Tate (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995) 72.

force, to be relied on in keeping the memory of the deceased alive. Mansfield's depiction is in many ways more realistic, as it shows the limitations of the human capacity to suffer, yet it is paradoxically less comforting than Redman's depiction of a grief so lasting it can only end in death. This may partly be explained by the fact that Mansfield shows the abatement of grief and lessening of its intensity not as a relief, but as a kind of loss in itself. Her multi-layered study of grief thus gains a complexity and sophistication that is absent from Redman's more straightforward story, which, while also addressing the issue of grief, foregrounds a dramatic action to capture the reader's interest.

"The Fly" and "The Enduring Image" illustrate some of the general differences between the many varieties of story adopting the war as their subject. Some of these differences have already transpired in the comparison of the choice of stories published in the *Strand Magazine* and *The English Review*: a tendency to integrate the war as part of daily life into stories otherwise following successful formulas or addressing issues of current interest to a wide readership in the predominantly popular selection of the *Strand*, as opposed to stories using the war to explore more fundamental psychological concerns, which constitute the predominant choice for the *English Review*. Naturally, these distinctions can never be absolutely authoritative. Jay Winter argues quite aptly that while modernist fiction, with its strong affinity to irony, paradox and dislocation, was well suited to express the experience of modern warfare during and in the aftermath of the First World War, it failed to offer consolation or healing of the trauma war had inflicted on British society. On the contrary, "[t]raditional modes of seeing the war", such as elegiac poetry, as Winter points out, "while at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses" (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 5).

In looking at the corpus of war stories this thesis is founded on, perhaps the least surprising discovery is the distribution of stories according to their time of writing. A little less than half the total number of war stories in the corpus, 206 stories, were written in the inter-war period of 1918 to 1939. However, stories appeared with greater frequency during the war itself. A total of 209 stories out of the stories in the corpus appeared or were written in the four years between August 1914 and November 1918. The Second World War had the same effect on

the writing and publication of short stories about the First World War as on other genres: only eighteen out of the almost four hundred stories in the corpus were written after 1945, and most of these in the wake of a literary revival of Great War fiction in the 1980s and 1990s. These later stories will be addressed in greater depth in the final chapter, as their outlook and socio-cultural bearings are fundamentally different to earlier war stories.

Somewhat unexpected, on the other hand, is the general outlook on the war taken by stories in the corpus as shown in the chart below. Those stories classed as journalistic sketches have been excluded from the chart. The terms used are designed to capture the general mood of the stories in question. Humorous stories do not necessarily applaud the war or make light of its costs, but present their subject matter in a comical fashion. Melancholic stories, on the other hand, might endorse the value of sacrifice and ultimate necessity of war, but stress its tragic aspects without the benefit of comic relief. Emotionally ambivalent stories hover in between these two poles and constitute the equivalent of what might be called ‘tragicomic’ in drama, whereas neutral stories focus on action rather than emotion in their treatment of the war. It seems to be in keeping with research such as Janet Watson’s, and with more recent revisionist opinion on the Great War, that today’s predominantly tragic interpretation of the war was largely the product of the inter-war years.¹²⁵

	1914-18	1918-39	after 1945	TOTAL
HUMOROUS	75	27	3	106
AMBIVALENT	6	12	2	20
MELANCHOLIC	25	93	5	123
NEUTRAL	75	61	8	144
TOTAL	181	193	18	393

Watson points out that even writers savagely critical of the war in later years, such as Siegfried Sassoon, were aware of the fact that “the disillusionment these

¹²⁵ Annette Becker observes that for the majority of people – and artists – “the rejection of the war was a post-war phenomenon.” Annette Becker, “The Avant-Garde, Madness and the Great War.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1, Special Issue: Shell-Shock (January 2000): 73. Also see the historical re-evaluations of Brian Bond (2002) and Gordon Corrigan (2003).

accounts all articulate was a postwar phenomenon, the product of distance in time and space from wartime experiences" (Watson 2). She stresses moreover that both during and after the conflict, the war itself was not a uniform experience for any of its individual participants, and neither were opinions on the conflict, an evaluation that seems corroborated by the great diversity of short stories offering many divergent presentations and evaluations of the war. At the same time, the comparatively large number of humorous and neutral (mostly suspense-oriented and action-packed) stories written about a conflict still largely interpreted as the ur-catastrophe of the twentieth century appears baffling, unless one realises the very urgent need for positive thinking brought on by a continued crisis situation. This applies even to stories dealing with death and loss, which for the most part display the same "aim of offering an explanation, or indeed a justification, for the deceased's involvement in a conflict that is still ongoing" noted by Victoria Stewart for memorial volumes for dead soldiers (Stewart, "War Memoirs" 45).

Popular fiction during the war in particular tried to cater for this need, in many cases very self-consciously and not without precedent: Hynes identifies in Rudyard Kipling a crucial literary model for writing about the military. This applies particularly to the image of the 'typical' British soldier: "Kipling had done more than recognize Tommy Atkins – he had invented him; that is, he had created a literary type, and the style that would make it possible to write about common soldiers without glorifying them" (Hynes, *A War Imagined* 50). Writing about the Empire and the life of British colonial troops all over the world, Kipling made his readers aware of a social class hitherto regarded as necessary but uncouth, and endowed the private soldier with an image of simple-minded heroism that echoed upper- and upper-middle-class values. Particularly in his collection *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892), Kipling presents the working-class British soldier to his middle-class audience as rough but courageous, fair-minded and heroic in his own way, thus providing role models for those of his readers who decided to volunteer on the outbreak of the First World War. By 1914, the lasting popularity of *Barrack-Room Ballads* was visible in the fact that it had gone into its twentieth edition and an even greater number of reprints; it was also republished in 1914 as part of the *Service Edition of the Works of Rudyard Kipling*.

Its influential nature finds expression in a tragicomic short story by 'Sapper', who describes in "Private Meyrick – Company Idiot" how a former warehouse worker joins the army as a volunteer inspired by his readings of Kipling and finds himself stamped out as company idiot because his slowness is taken for stupidity. Stung by the general scorn of his fellow soldiers and officers, Meyrick dies trying to mend a cut communications wire during a German attack, and posthumously receives the approval he has been longing for: although the wire he had repaired under fire turns out to have been the wrong one, his superiors recognise his heroic intentions and honour his sacrifice despite its futility. The story not only has Meyrick acknowledge his admiration for Kipling's "Tommy Atkins" as his reason for enlisting, but is also interspersed with significant quotes that contemporary readers would have recognised, as for example when Meyrick explains his desire for proving himself by claiming (in a rendering of colloquial idiom reminiscent of Kipling's own style) that he "dreams sometimes as 'ow I'm like them he talks about, when 'e says as 'ow they lifted 'em through the charge as won the day."¹²⁶

Allusions to Kipling in First World War writing could also take on more indirect forms of intertextual reference, such as in the title of Blanche Wills Chandler's collection of World War I sketches and stories, *Tommies Two* (1917), which emulates the title of a short story collection by Kipling, *Soldiers Three* (1888). In a short prefatory note to her Kiplingesque collection of sketches Chandler expresses her aim to provide comic relief:

To have nothing better to offer as my share in the Great War than a collection of would-be funny stories, to cater for the merriment in these days of endless tragedy is a sorry part to play. But when an Editor recalls the expressions of approbation sent to him from the Front and when I remember kindly letters strangers have written to me, I take courage. If these sketches win a smile from one man in the trenches or lighten for one moment a heavy heart at home, I am not ashamed to have written them.¹²⁷

Chandler's preface suggests that comic entertainment in wartime might potentially have been criticised as frivolous. However, psychological and sociological studies have shown that humour is as vital a means of dealing with

¹²⁶ H.C. MacNeile, "Private Meyrick – Company Idiot." *Sapper's War Stories Collected in One Volume* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) 424.

¹²⁷ Blanche Wills Chandler, *Tommies Two* (London: Sampson Low, 1917) i.

the world around us, both on an individual and on a social level, as the tragic mode which might be considered more appropriate. Drawing on classic conceptions of comedy and tragedy, Arthur Asa Berger argues that, while the tragic is predominantly personal (as it is concerned with personal failure and personal destiny), the comic is social in its relation to social codes, which it either affirms or subverts.¹²⁸ Berger also stresses that humour does not stop short of any subject, regardless of its solemnity or potential hurtfulness, and may function as a “safety valve” to help deal with “anger and anxiety” (Berger 160):

Humor fosters creativity, helps prevent obsessive behavior, encourages playfulness and openness, purges us of violent emotions or feelings of excessive guilt, reveals that authority is often invalid, liberates us, helps promote social cohesion, and provides great pleasure (Berger 162).

Accordingly, comic First World War stories assisted readers in coping with traumatic experiences, anxieties and emotional conflicts; in trying to laugh off unpleasantness and tragedy. Stories like Chandler’s offered a temporary way out of everyday despondency, as did humorous accounts of military training and the frontline such as Ian Hay Beith’s *The First Hundred Thousand* (1916).

Even a ‘disillusioned’ writer like C.E. Montague, whose short story collection *Fiery Particles* (1923) appeared just one year after the publication of his aptly named volume of scathingly war-critical essays, *Disenchantment* (1922), rendered the experience of frontline and trenches in a humorous manner.¹²⁹ His story “The First Blood Sweep” is told by the shrewdly observant soldier-narrator of all Montague’s war stories. In “The First Blood Sweep”, Hanney, a young soldier fresh to the trenches, discovers that there is a raffle going on in which every man in the company draws the name of another, and wins ten pounds if that man is the first to die. Unfortunately, it is his platoon-sergeant who has drawn his name, and Hanney fears Sergeant Gort may be tempted to send him out on dangerous errands on purpose to win his ten pounds. To make the matter even more difficult, Hanney himself has drawn the sergeant’s name. In the end, it is the sergeant who dies first, sacrificing himself by taking over a dangerous

¹²⁸ Arthur Asa Berger, *An Anatomy of Humor* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1993) 10.

¹²⁹ Cyril Falls in *War Books* commends Montague for his “valuable quality of being able to display his bitterness and ram home his criticism without ranting”, noting that Montague can at times be “delightfully humorous” (Falls 287).

sentry post in the young private's stead, where a German shell kills him. Although plot and subject matter of the story have tragic potential, its narrator unflinchingly presents the comic side of things and adopts a tone oscillating between jocularity and sarcasm, as in his description of young Hanney's reaction to the disillusioning realisation that Gort, whom he has taken an immediate liking to, has drawn his name in the death raffle and may well be anticipating his death with an eye on profit: "[T]he Kid's joy fell right in like a soufflé."¹³⁰ David Cannadine observes a similar tendency amongst British troops to joke in the face of danger and discomfort as a means of coping with the situation, often to the point of appearing callous or unfeeling:

[A]mong their own comrades, their apparent indifference was more a defence mechanism than an indicator of true feelings. Quips such as 'There go the cemetery reinforcements' and 'There's a shortage of coffins up there', with which retiring troops might bombard those about to go up to the front, were not so much expressions of callousness, as attempts to render horror and death bearable by making them funny.¹³¹

Even melancholic presentations of the war, however, especially in popular form such as the story by Redman discussed above, could be perceived as comforting and healing. To know that others shared the same experiences, that grief and loss were communal feelings embedded in a meaningful social context, could also fulfil a comforting function. As Kipling suggests in his poem "London Stone", written for Armistice Day 1923, there is a sense of solace in the fact that others are visibly "Grieving as we're grieving".¹³²

Short stories of and about the First World War differ not only in their way of treating specific subjects, and in their stylistic particulars. They also tend to adopt a variety of subgenres of the short story, or treat generic conventions and formulas in divergent ways. Magazine short stories tend to be easier to assign to established subgenres such as detective, ghost or supernatural story, romance, science fiction or spy story. Other stories are more elusive: while they deal with love, they need not necessarily follow typical romance patterns of love

¹³⁰ C.E. Montague, "The First Blood Sweep." *Fiery Particles* (1923. London: Chatto & Windus, 1936) 113.

¹³¹ David Cannadine, "War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain." *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*. Ed. Joachim Whaley (London: Europa, 1981) 206.

¹³² For a full discussion of the poem and the idea of a "fellowship of mourning" in Kipling's writing in the aftermath of the Great War, see Daniel Karlin, "Kipling and the Limits of Healing." *Essays in Criticism: A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism* 48.4 (Oct. 1998): 331-356.

overcoming varying obstacles. Although many stories have elements of the supernatural, they are not necessarily ghost stories in the true sense of the word, in that they explore the nature of fear rather than employing fear as a thrill for their readers. For this reason the 'modernist' story is usually regarded as more fluid in generic terms, as are the psychological story, the sketch and prose poem, or character studies and reflections that are hard to place within any fixed subgenre.¹³³ The difference between following or challenging genre expectations can be illustrated using two humorous frontline stories, Wyndham Lewis's "The King of the Trenches" (written in the 1930s but first published in 1967 in an expanded edition of *Blasting and Bombardiering* by Calder and Boyars) and 'Sapper' MacNeile's "The Sixth Drunk" (1916).

Both stories are set at the Western Front and focus on the human element and absurdity of modern trench warfare. In "The King of the Trenches", Menzies, a young subaltern of half Peruvian and half Scottish origins, finds himself under the orders of Captain 'Burney' Polderdick. Polderdick is a highly decorated professional soldier, amiable but stark mad, allegedly due to an old temple injury. Menzies watches with sympathy and detached amusement how Polderdick blunders and shirks, contrives to order trench mortar attacks at the worst moment and escapes from every fight by feigning rheumatic attacks with a decided method to his madness. When things come to a head and Polderdick tries to defend a completely misplaced battery by insisting that he is the King of the Trenches, he is ordered back to England and Menzies experiences this as a personal loss.

"The Sixth Drunk" was first collected in 'Sapper's' volume of short stories *Men, Women and Guns* in 1916, but was most likely previously published in the *Daily Mail*, as most of the author's stories were. The story centres on Irish soldier Michael O'Flannigan, repeatedly penalised for being drunk and disorderly before his regiment is even posted to the trenches. Once he is at the front, in November 1914, O'Flannigan chiefly looks forward to his daily ration of rum. When a German infantry attack interrupts the issuing of the rum rations, the Irishman runs amok and single-handedly clears a whole trench of German attackers,

¹³³ Dominic Head comments on the tendency on the part of the modernist short story to reject traditional conceptions of the genre, and assigns it to the category of the "less well structured, often psychological story" as opposed to plot-based narratives (Head 16).

inspiring his fellow soldiers to fight back and repel the attack. Mortally wounded, O'Flannigan dies a hero honoured by his regiment.

The differences between the two stories lie not only in their approach to the depiction of everyday madness in the trenches, but also in their modes of formal presentation. Lewis's narrator appears erratic, frequently repetitive, deliberately disjointed and at times contradictory. His introduction of the two main protagonists in the very beginning of the story demonstrates these characteristics:

Why was the lieutenant pale? Why did he gaze so fixedly from beneath his new Gor'-Blimey? Because his mother came from Lima. That was also why his face was serious, and his nerves removed to a plane of reasonableness seldom reached by heat and shock. He had a certain gentle lisp and breathlessness. Sandhurst had not curtailed his charm, which reached back to civilized Savannas.

He was astonished on the 4th May to see an unusual figure standing near him in the Trench. It was staring at his Flying Pig [a trench mortar battery], and twirling a stick. It twirled and twirled the stick and looked at the Flying Pig. Then it gave the fascinating siege ordnance before it a blow and exclaimed 'Ha! Ha!'¹³⁴

Polderdick is perceived as a figure, an object rather than a person, and the narrator – focusing on Menzies's perceptions – deliberately uses the impersonal pronoun "it" to refer to the major. Throughout the story, this detached stance is continued. Menzies observes Polderdick's exploits with an anthropological interest, a sympathetic but impersonal curiosity such as Lewis applies to all his literary characters. The peculiarity of the situation in which Lieutenant Menzies finds himself, the contradictions in his own character and particularly the madness of Captain Polderdick all transpire from this opening; particularly the paradox of the "civilized Savannas" contrasted with the British military establishment at Sandhurst is a subtle yet unambiguous critique of the conditions Menzies meets in the trenches. The story is told in scenes illustrative of Polderdick's peculiar behaviour rather than as a narrative built up towards a climax; it is a character study of Polderdick as seen through Menzies's eyes, and follows Menzies's speculations as mediated by the story's external narrator. "The King of the Trenches" refuses to assign particular meaning to any event and its stress is on the bizarre elements of trench warfare. Frontline stories such as

¹³⁴ Wyndham Lewis, "The King of the Trenches." *Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and Other Stories* (London: Vision, 1973) 60.

'Sapper's' "The Sixth Drunk" follow a different narrative strategy: while they may also focus on the bizarre nature of modern war, they yet adopt traditional narrative patterns, provide a specific event as the narrative focus of the story and follow a coherent plot that imbues a seemingly senseless experience of war with some meaning. In "The Sixth Drunk", this event is O'Flannigan's spontaneous sacrificial deed, which creates a posthumous hero despite the fact that it has been undertaken for the wrong reasons, i.e. an overwhelming craving for alcohol. O'Flannigan is also introduced to the reader in the beginning of the story, but in a less roundabout manner, in that we are given not only his name (we do not initially learn Menzies's or Polderdick's names), but also a full report of his offences followed by a straightforward description of his physical appearance:

'No. 10379 Private Michael O'Flannigan, you are charged, first, with being absent from roll-call on the 21st instant until 3.30 a.m. on the 22nd, a period of five hours and thirty minutes; second, being drunk; third, assaulting an N.C.O. in the execution of his duty.'

The colonel leant back in his chair in the orderly-room and gazed through his eyeglass at the huge bullet-headed Irishman standing on the other side of the table.¹³⁵

Unlike the narration of Lewis's story, which centres on the perceptions of Lieutenant Menzies throughout, the outside, third-person narrator of "The Sixth Drunk" does not use O'Flannigan as the story's focaliser. Instead, the reader is guided through the story by ample comment and humorous interpretation of the protagonist's exploits and character. While 'Sapper's' story with its heroic action, unambiguous narrator and clear plot fulfils expectations of a traditional soldier's tale and, as Jessica Meyer has argued, imbues the war with meaning in the sense that its hardships 'made men' out of civilians,¹³⁶ "The King of the Trenches" appears to toy with genre conventions in its refusal to adhere to a coherent plotline, its meandering narrative style and focus on situation comedy rather than development of action.

¹³⁵ Herman Cyril MacNeile ['Sapper'], "The Sixth Drunk." *Sapper's War Stories: Collected in One Volume* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) 345.

¹³⁶ See Jessica Meyer, "The Tuition of Manhood: 'Sapper's' War Stories and the Literature of War." *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History*. Eds. Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 113-128. Jane Potter notes a similar focus on the "transformative power" of the war in women's romances and memoirs of the war years, indicating that this was a feature shared by most popular literature of the war; see Jane Potter, "'A Great Purifier': The Great War in Women's Romances and Memoirs 1914-1918". *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Eds. Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 85-106.

3.2 Grief, mourning and remembrance

In Ricoeur's concept of narrative configuration, death is one of the most challenging experiences for literature to mediate (Ricoeur 162). By constantly reevaluating life in the light of its eventual end, and by creating narrative structures of meaning instead of a disconnected sequence of coincidences and events, its narrative rehearsal eases the acceptance of death, both our own and that of others. Death and loss are the most obvious consequences of any armed conflict, and it is consequently not surprising that war literature deals extensively with the experience of loss and bereavement. As Jay Winter puts it, "[h]ow to accept the shock of the war, how to remember the 'Lost Generation', were questions with disturbing communal and political repercussions" (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 6), and Great War short stories reflect these issues. Their depiction of bereaved relatives both confirm and challenge Carol Acton's contention that "[p]rescribing and controlling grief through consolatory rhetoric that emphasises the meaning of death in the service of the state [...] becomes an essential element in the overall 'manufacture of consent' through which the state persuades its citizens to participate in war".¹³⁷

The idea of keeping the dead alive through continuing remembrance can be found in much wartime and post-war writing, most famously Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen", written as early as September 1914. The poem outlines a 'programme' for continued remembrance in one of its best-known lines, "At the going down of the sun and in the morning / We will remember them."¹³⁸ The necessity to imbue the sacrifice of the dead with a purpose is visible in the rituals of Armistice Day.¹³⁹ In the field of the short story, mourning and loss are frequently addressed topics, and one can even speak of an emergent (if short-lived) new subgenre of 'mourning stories'. Mourning stories, which may adopt characteristics of various other subgenres of the short story, have as their common denominator the treatment of loss and grief. In various different ways, they strive to depict the effects of death and loss, to offer either consolation or

¹³⁷ Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 3.

¹³⁸ Laurence Binyon, "For the Fallen". *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. Ed. George Walter (London: Penguin, 2006) 235-236.

¹³⁹ See for example Jenny Hockey, Jeanne Katz and Neil Small, eds., *Grief, Mourning and Death Ritual* (Buckingham: Open UP, 2001).

explanation, or at least a sense of commonly experienced bereavement. For the most part, they employ reassuringly familiar generic patterns and take recourse to traditional moral values. Their strategies of representation and consolation differ considerably, but the majority of stories reflect the attitude of respect for and consideration of the feelings of bereaved relatives and in particular parents, many of whom, as Todman points out, seemed to “derive comfort from the idea that their sons’ deaths had been meaningful” (Todman 132).

A rather straightforward approach to grief and mourning is the promise of spiritual solace. In his study *Endings*, Michael C. Kearl places religion high on the list of “social institutions that shield people from the anomic terrors of death by providing reasons for living, explanations for mortality, and opportunities for personally transcending death.”¹⁴⁰ Kearl also claims that religion has “historically monopolized” rituals and sentiments affording meaning to death (Kearl 172). Adrian Gregory has shown that everyday religiosity was an integral part of British cultural life at the time, and that the high diction of sacrifice was “deeply familiar to a Bible-reading and hymn-singing public”, from the working to the upper classes (Gregory 152). Particularly but not exclusively stories written during the war adopt religion as a means of consolation, as for example Annie Edith Jameson’s “The Parcel”, first collected in her volume of stories *War-Time in Our Street* (1917). In this story, set like all others in the same volume in the small fictional village of Chigsby, two loving grandparents are shown packing a parcel for their grandson Dick at the front. When they receive the dreaded news that Dick has died in action, the village community rallies round them and tries to lighten the impact of the blow on the two old people, beginning with the postmaster’s personal delivery of the telegram, over gifts of food and drink, to patient emotional support. The villagers admire particularly the grandfather’s fortitude and his pride in his dead grandson’s sacrifice:

Grandfather and Grandmother breathed deep and hard, as those do who are suddenly winded. Then Grandfather rose, holding out his hand for the telegram.
“It was good on you to come yourself, sir,” he said. “It’s bad news...bad news.”

¹⁴⁰ Michael C. Kearl, *Endings: A Sociology of Death and Dying* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 11. Robert Harrison similarly stresses how Christianity changes the human relation to death by enabling further spiritual communication with the dead and conveying the certainty of their further existence. Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003) 106.

There was a great dignity and fortitude about Grandfather as he stood there. The postmaster could not say anything, but his heart did dumb, unrecognised homage.¹⁴¹

The grandmother's reaction, on the other hand, is initially puzzling to those around her. Instead of accepting what has happened, she seems to fall into a delusional state of mind and tells herself and anyone who will listen over and over again that her grandson is "alive somewheres" ("Parcel" 24), based on a dream she has had of him the night before the fatal news. Initially, her friends and husband attempt to convince her into accepting her loss, until they realise that she is referring not to Dick's continued existence on earth, but to his afterlife. Her belief in his further existence in heaven is the old woman's chief comfort, and her conviction eventually inspires her husband and her friends with hope and endurance. The solace of life after death is stressed most overtly towards the end of the story, when the grandfather and a neighbour listen to the sound of the sea, which is being transcended by the spiritual 'noise' of the dead who have died in protection of England:

They listened to the booming of the sea, but their souls heard the deep and solemn chanting of our Choir Invisible. For it paces night and day round the shores of England now, so that we who hear that great hymn of hope and fortitude may remain undismayed ("Parcel" 26).

While this may seem a rather melodramatic presentation of spiritual comfort, the two protagonists of the story, Grandfather and Grandmother, offer two powerful models of potential solace. The grandfather exemplifies the virtues of patriotic fortitude and acceptance, which imply that the loss experienced is for a higher good, as is also visible in his remark, after his grandson's death, that they "wouldn't ha' kept him back" ("Parcel" 24). The grandmother supplements these 'male' virtues with her spirituality and firm belief in a life after death. Buckrose's story is decidedly sentimental and follows traditional patterns of domestic tragedy and redemption, yet it is intensely humane and appeals through its sympathetic simplicity. To an audience in need of consolation, it could certainly offer comfort, particularly if readers were already firmly rooted in a system of belief that allowed them to embrace the idea of an afterlife. "The Parcel" is told in

¹⁴¹ Annie Edith Jameson ['J.E. Buckrose'], "The Parcel." *War-Time in Our Street: The Story of Some Companies Behind the Firing Line* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917) 23.

a simple narrative style, using a sympathetic narrator who is yet located outside the story, and whose language and characterisation of the story's protagonists seem to match their level of education and their earthy, rural quality. Much of the story is rendered in dialogue, imitating the Northern dialect of the characters in a deliberate bid to imbue the story with greater authenticity.

A different kind of spiritual solace is granted to the war-veteran protagonist of Jeffery Farnol's short story "The Great Silence". This inter-war story was first collected in the best-selling writer's collection *A Matter of Business and Other Stories* (1940) and consists of a dialogue between grizzled and disfigured veteran George and a sympathetic passer-by, in the course of which George comes to realise that there is more to be hoped for than his earthly existence has to offer. Set on Armistice Day a good decade after the end of the war, the story has George voice the misery and squalor of his lonely life, and his longing for his former comrade Tommy. The stereotypically named everyman Tommy was killed in the latter stages of the war and, George feels, has left his friend behind in a cold and unsympathetic world. Talking to a kindly stranger, George reminisces about Tommy, and when he is suddenly taken fatally ill and dies, it is in the elated knowledge that he will be rejoining his dead friend. Although George has previously scorned the institution of the Two-Minute Silence as hollow and pointless with the post-war bitterness of the invalided veteran, he is reconciled to the loss of his friend at the moment of his own death, when a vision of Tommy come to meet him not only eases the passage for George, but renders it a pleasure:

[T]his pale, bitterly scarred visage that had been George's was transfigured by a radiance, a serene dignity it had never held in life, the look of those that shall not grow old, for George had marched away with his young comrade Tom into that Great Silence where no age can be.¹⁴²

The echo of Binyon's "To the Fallen" in this passage is not coincidental; the sentiment of that poem is consciously embedded in the story. The sympathetic stranger, seeking to convince George of the value of the Two-Minute Silence, quotes Binyon's lines "They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old: / Age

¹⁴² Jeffery Farnol, "The Great Silence." *Matter of Business, and Other Stories* (London: Sampson Low, 1940) 146.

shall not weary them, nor the years condemn" ("Great Silence" 141). These lines are proven right when George is faced with the unscathed, youthful vision of his dead comrade.

The idea that those who have died at least remain young and safe forever, and have merely exchanged a potentially painful and sordid earthly existence for a more rewarding spiritual one, is also the stance taken in Anne Douglas Sedgwick's "Hepaticas", first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and subsequently collected in that magazine's best-of collection of stories *Atlantic Narratives* (1918). Widowed Mrs Bradley, who is the focal point of this story, has a particularly close relationship to her only son, Jack. Mrs Bradley is devastated when Jack – who had enlisted at the outbreak of the war – returns home on his first leave and confesses to her that he has felt honour-bound to marry a chorus girl who is pregnant by him. She sees her son's bright future and happiness ruined by the insipidity of his wife, but for his sake takes on the charge of looking after her new daughter-in-law, the aptly named Dollie. When Jack is killed in action just days after the birth of his son, his mother's grief is assuaged by the realisation that he will be spared a miserable future of bitter regret and discomfort with a wife inferior to him in every respect:

[W]hat was this strange up-welling of relief, deep, deep relief, for Jack; this gladness, poignant and celestial, like that of the hepaticas? He was dead and the dark earth covered him; yet he was here, with her, safe in his youth and strength and beauty forever. He had died the glorious death, and no future, tangled, perplexed, fretful with its foolish burden, lay before him. There was no loss for Jack – no fading, no waste. The burden was for her, and he was free.¹⁴³

Not only is Jack safe from a life he would have to share with a woman not his equal, who could not have given him the companionship and support his mother feels he deserves, he also remains alive in and through her; she can see an active, constructive part for herself in mourning by keeping him alive, and taking over his burden in an ultimate act of maternal sacrifice. "Hepaticas" has strong touches of magazine melodrama, particularly the trope of the fatal entanglement of a young man of good family with a chorus girl. These familiar features in the story's plot facilitate the readers' understanding of its message of hope, and their

¹⁴³ Anne Douglas Sedgwick, "Hepaticas." *Atlantic Narratives*. Ed. Charles Swain Thomas (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1918) 54.

identification with the main protagonist. Jack's death does not come as a surprise, as it is foreshadowed both by plot devices such as his father's early death and his mother's forebodings; conventions of family melodrama that magazine readers would have been already familiar with. Other stories, too, stress that the dead may live on in the memory of those left behind. Redman's "The Enduring Image", despite its tragic ending with the death of its heroine, is one such example.

Next to the solace of continued remembrance and keeping alive the dead through memory, patriotism offered comfort for loss and bereavement.¹⁴⁴ As Jay Winter points out, patriotic interpretations of events and circumstances gain their strength from their rootedness in images and values familiar to and positively evaluated by those affected (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 3), thus placing these events in a secure framework of meaning. Viewed in the light of patriotic sacrifice, a highly regarded public act, the death of a loved one may appear easier to bear for those affected, and indeed it was a sense of belonging to a national community of proud mourning that patriotic stories sought to disseminate. This idea is visible in a range of stories, some of which are not as straightforward as one might assume. In Stacy Aumonier's "The Brothers", first collected in *Love-a-Duck, and Other Stories* (1921), it is not the heroic soldier at the front who dies for his country, but his invalid brother, confined at home where he fights a moral struggle with his own conscience: the struggle to decide whether or not war is worth sacrifice. The story has a supernatural element in that it shows the invalid, Robin, to have an uncannily strong, if one-sided, spiritual connection with his older brother Giles. When Giles joins the army and is sent to the Somme, Robin follows him in his mind's eye and begins to suffer the same injuries and symptoms as his brother, who is wounded and comes down with a fever while at the front. While Giles recovers and eventually returns home unscathed, Robin falls victim to his anxiety and the shared physical symptoms. A sympathetic friend who had witnessed Robin's mental and spiritual struggles engraves on his

¹⁴⁴ The solace of patriotism and of keeping the dead alive through remembrance are combined in May Herschel-Clark's sonnet "The Mother", which expressly draws on the sentiments expressed in Brooke's "The Soldier" to depict a bereaved mother in fortitude of remembrance: "And think, my son, with eyes grown clear and dry / She lives as though for ever in your sight, / Loving the things *you* loved, with heart aglow / For country, honour, truth, traditions high." May Herschel-Clark, "The Mother", *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. Ed. George Walter (London: Penguin, 2006) 109.

headstone the words "He died for England".¹⁴⁵ These initially puzzle Giles, but remembering with Milton that "They also serve who only stand and wait", he comes to understand his brother's sacrifice and, like their mother, finds comfort in it. Robin himself had expressed his patriotic fervour to his friend, the sculptor Lawson, in unambiguous terms during an argument about the moral justification of the war, prior to an unsuccessful attempt to volunteer for active service himself:

"Don't you think that we on this island have as great a right to fight for what we represent as any other nation? With all our faults and poses and hypocrisies, haven't we subscribed something to the commonweal of humanity? – something of honour, and justice, and equity? [...] As I walked up by the chalk-pit near Guelstone Head, and saw the stone-grey cottages at Lulton nestling in the hollow of the downs, and smelt the dear salt dampness of it all, and felt the lovely tenderness of the evening light, I thought of Giles and what he represents, and of my mother, and what she represents, and of all the people I know and love with all their faults, and I made up my mind that I would fight for it in any case, in the same way I would fight for a woman I loved, even if I knew she were a harlot..." ("Brothers" 280).

These are sentiments closely related to those voiced by Rupert Brooke in his sonnets of 1914, which were perceived as eminently comforting by the general public and the church alike. If anything, the feeling expressed in "The Brothers" is more complex and moving, as Aumonier allows for doubt and ambiguities much more than Brooke. His description of a young man falling victim to the war on the home front and through indirect exposure to modern warfare is not as far-fetched an idea as it might seem. So-called 'civilian war neuroses' were not uncommon at the time; they are described in a number of fictional texts about the war and its effects. In her study of war and modernism, Trudi Tate investigates at length the very real nature of civilian war neuroses, taking the form of nightmares, insomnia, anxiety attacks, feelings of persecution to extreme symptoms such as paralysis or loss of voice. Tate draws primarily on medical texts and articles from *The Lancet*, but also points out references to civilian 'shell shock' in several literary texts, such as Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) and Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916), and particularly H.D.'s writing on war trauma and neurosis such as the story "Kora and Ka" (Tate

¹⁴⁵ Stacy Aumonier, "The Brothers." *Love-a-Duck, and Other Stories* (London: Hutchinson, 1921) 286.

11-14). The fact that Aumonier's story, like Sedgwick's "Hepaticas", employs the language and sentiment of popular melodrama again facilitates a magazine audience's understanding of the story.

Patriotic stories could be more straightforward in their approach to death and consolation, such as John Hartman Morgan's upper-class tale "The Lieutenant", collected in Morgan's programmatically named *Gentlemen at Arms* (1918). Patriotic sacrifice and valour are at the heart of this story. It follows the life of a son of the old landed gentry, Anthony, from his birth to his death on the Western Front aged twenty. Registered for a prestigious public school and his college at Oxford at birth, Anthony grows up to be the model of a young gentleman. His family name can be traced back into the Middle Ages, and he lives up to his wealth and reputation by being a perfect gentleman in mind and manners: Anthony is depicted as fair-minded and courageous as well as a brilliant young scholar who wins a Classics scholarship. After his first year at university, however, the war breaks out and he enlists – naturally in his father's old regiment. A successful candidate in Officer Training, he is soon sent to the front and embarks on a model military career, which culminates in his earning the Military Cross after only a few months of active service. In a tragic turn, however, Anthony is killed after a short leave home, saving another man from certain death. The story focuses throughout not only on his excellent character traits and abilities (particularly as an officer who is fair and considerate to his men) and his close relationship to his mother, but also on his innate patriotism. It is made absolutely clear that Anthony's major reasons for fighting are the strong sense of courage and justice he developed through his mother's instruction,¹⁴⁶ as well as his love of country and feelings of patriotic duty. Hartman Morgan was a Brigadier-General in the British Army, had been educated at Oxford and spent some considerable time in Germany as a student. His social and educational

¹⁴⁶ There are clear references to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, most specifically in the mother's request of her son to 'fight Apollyon' for her. Fussell observes that references to Bunyan's novel would have been readily obvious to almost any reader: "Everybody had been raised on it". Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 137. The use of the *Pilgrim's Progress* as a point of reference that combined ideals of patriotism and Christianity was common throughout the war, as Peter Buitenhuis notes in *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda, 1914-18 and After* (London: Batsford, 1989) 21-22. Parfitt elaborates on *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a literary model for war fiction at length, referring in particular to John Buchan's *Mr Standfast* (1919) and Henry Williamson's *The Patriot's Progress* (1930) (Parfitt 12-25).

background is strikingly similar to that of his protagonist Anthony, as are his views on 'fair play' and duty. Morgan's ethos appears strongly based on a positive view of public school education as a unifying and elevating influence on those who are privileged to enjoy it, a view that informs "The Lieutenant", particularly the following passage describing Anthony's development as a pupil:

He passed from the hands of a tutor to the public school for which his father had put his name down on the day of his birth. [...] He came back after his first half with an immense stock of knowledge, not to be found in books, and a vocabulary which was unfamiliar to every one at home except his father [...]. It is a vocabulary which once learnt is never forgotten; men of his school speak it in the hill-stations of India, on the African veldt, in the back flats of Australia, and wherever two or three of them are gathered together.¹⁴⁷

Young Anthony is thus firmly placed in the company of men who are cornerstones of the empire and keep alive the public-school spirit at home and abroad. It is in this spirit that Anthony volunteers for active service at the outbreak of the war, and his mother can bear the loss of her son because she understands and values his sense of duty and patriotism. Anthony explains to her that he needs to join up because he cherishes the lessons of obligation and duty she herself has taught him as a small boy, and "from that moment she knew it was useless, nor did she try to dissuade him, for she would not have had it otherwise" ("Lieutenant" 6). Morgan's style of writing in this story emanates both conviction and determination in its short, matter-of-fact sentences and precise descriptions, evidence of the fact that the narrator is familiar with all aspects of his subject matter. His third-person narrator is situated outside the story and presents the motivations and feelings of the protagonists with sympathy but without sentimentality. Anthony's moral choices and his parents' acceptance of them are shown to be a matter of course; there is no room for doubt or alternative interpretations, as is visible in a description of how Anthony seems to know and accept his fate with an almost uncanny certainty:

One night he had to go out on patrol – a reconnoitring patrol, which is always a small affair and does not command the full complement of a fighting patrol. He sat in his dug-out writing a letter home on the flimsy of a 'messages and signals' form. The N.C.O. appeared at the dug-out and raised the screen of sacking. Tony folded up the letter, sealed it, addressed it, and marked the envelope, "To be

¹⁴⁷ John Hartman Morgan ['Centurion'], "The Lieutenant." *Gentlemen at Arms* (London: Heinemann, 1918) 3-4.

forwarded only in the event of my death.' Then he examined the chambers of his revolver and rose and went out into the night ("Lieutenant" 11).

"The Lieutenant" appears firmly embedded in a view of life and death, and particularly death on active service, that developed during the latter decades of the nineteenth century and permeated British upper- and upper-middle-class culture. David Cannadine notes that, possibly as a reaction to the Victorian obsession with death, Edwardian England saw a decline of attention to and dealing with death that went hand in hand with a new, heroicised attitude towards mortality:

But if the *celebration* of death was on the wane from the 1880s onwards, the *glorification* of death – of death on active service, in battle, in the front line, for one's country – was markedly on the increase. The growing internal tensions of these years, combined with the ever-widening appeal of ideas of social Darwinism, and the stridently athletic ethos of the late Victorian and Edwardian public school, produced an atmosphere in which soldiering and games were equated, in which death was seen as unlikely, but where, if it happened, it could not fail to be glorious (Cannadine 195).

In Hartman Morgan's story we also detect a certain fatalism, a sense that Anthony's death is preordained by his character and innate heroism. The same sense of predetermination can be detected in a range of war fiction, such as popular novelist Marie Leighton's memoir of her son, Roland Leighton, *Boy of My Heart* (1916): patriotism and a belief in valour and duty may not make good the loss, but provide it with purpose and pride (Stewart, "War Memoirs" 43).

A more aggressive way of dealing with loss is presented in Rudyard Kipling's "Mary Postgate". This story was written and first published in 1915 and subsequently collected in the author's volume *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917).¹⁴⁸ "Mary Postgate" remains a shocking tale to read. Elderly spinster Mary Postgate is employed as companion to a wealthy lady and has brought up her employer's orphaned nephew almost as a son. He joins the Flying Corps at the beginning of the war and is killed in an accident during training. Shortly after his funeral Mary witnesses a village child die in a collapsed barn and is certain that this is the result of bombing by a German fighter plane. She subsequently finds (or, as some

¹⁴⁸ While it is usually assumed that the vindictiveness of "Mary Postgate" can to a certain extent be explained by the death of Kipling's son on active service, this appears to be untrue. Cecil Eby notes that the story was written six months before that event; see Cecil Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature 1870-1914* (Durham: Duke UP, 1988) 172; see also Tate 32.

critics suggest, imagines to find) the responsible German airman in her employer's garden amidst the debris of his crashed plane and refuses to help him. Instead, she watches him die with a vindictive pleasure that closely resembles sadistic sexual arousal. Mary feels that her young charge has been revenged appropriately, and that she can now be more at peace with the deaths she has been forced to face. Referring to "Mary Postgate", Bernard Bergonzi comments aptly how

under the stress of war Kipling [...] produced some remarkably cruel short stories, of which the most famous is perhaps 'Mary Postgate': in literary terms, it is certainly one of his most brilliant compositions. [...] In a penetrating analysis of this story, Mr. W.W. Robson has shown that it is far more than a crude anti-German tract, being, in essentials, a study in the warped psychology of Mary Postgate, who is placed and distanced throughout as a pathetically unattractive figure. Nevertheless, whilst accepting the truth of this interpretation, one may doubt if it was read with such sensitive understanding when it first appeared in 1915: for many readers, in the pressures of a wartime context, the story must have seemed an object-lesson in hating the child-killing Hun (Bergonzi 137-138).

Trudi Tate, on the other hand, reads "Mary Postgate" as "one of the earliest works of fiction to allude to the idea of civilian war neuroses" (Tate 32). Tate stresses that it was written at a time when hatred ran high in British society, shortly after the publication of the Bryce Report on German atrocities in Belgium. The story thus reflects the general "hysterical responses" to events such as the sinking of the *Lusitania* (Tate 32-33). In Tate's interpretation, "Kipling's story brings the war into the centre of civilian lives, turning them into active participants" (Tate 39) – like Mrs Bradley in "Hepaticas", Mary's grief over the loss of her beloved charge can take an active form, if in the destructive revenge she takes on an enemy whom she blames for Wynn's death.

It is arguable whether reading "Mary Postgate" would really have given comfort to anyone who had lost a loved one in the war, but the story certainly captures a sense of rage and vindictive hatred towards the perceived cause of that loss which would have been felt by many concerned. Clearly, however, the hatred that offers at least temporary solace to Mary Postgate was not seen as a fit long-term response to loss even by Kipling, whose outlook on violent death and loss changed after the war. Kipling's mellowed attitude is best visible in his "The Gardener", first collected in *Debits and Credits* (1926). Cyril Falls, who reviewed the volume anonymously for the *Times Literary Supplement*, thought "The

Gardener” the best story in the volume, stating that he “greatly prefer[s] the simplicity of “The Gardener””¹⁴⁹ to the ‘slickness’ of the other stories in *Debits and Credits*. Kipling here shows his readers a woman who loses her illegitimate son in the war, whom she has brought up as her nephew. The story follows her slow progress through the various stages of mourning, and finally her visit to his grave in Belgium. Even during her journey to the Belgian cemetery her son Michael is buried in, Helen Turrell is unable to unburden herself of her secret. A fellow traveller confesses to her that the man whose grave she wants to see was her illicit lover, but although Helen can sympathise with the woman, she cannot bring herself to reciprocate the confidence and expose her own secret. It is only when a man she supposes to be a young gardener sees through her life-long lie at the first sight of her that the reader is given the first explicit hint at the real relationship between Helen and her ‘nephew’ Michael. There is a strong element of forgiveness and healing in the story, above and beyond the rather transparent analogy between the ‘gardener’ of the story and Jesus Christ as the ultimate comfort to the bereaved:¹⁵⁰

He rose at her approach and without prelude or salutation asked: “Who are you looking for?”

“Lieutenant Michael Turrell – my nephew,” said Helen slowly and word for word, as she had many thousand times in her life.

The man lifted his eyes and looked at her with infinite compassion before he turned from the fresh-sown grass toward the naked black crosses.

“Come with me,” he said, “and I will show you where your son lies.”¹⁵¹

No mentioning, here, of the German enemy as cruel and to blame for loss and bereftness: the war is a “holocaust” of young men (“Gardener” 403), a tragedy that does not seem to have an apparent cause. Helen, the bereaved mother, experiences her mourning process as to a great extent embedded in pre-existing structures of mourning and remembrance. She feels she is “being manufactured into a bereaved next of kin” (“Gardener” 406), and the news that there is a grave

¹⁴⁹ Cyril Bentham Falls, Rev. of *Debits & Credits*, by Rudyard Kipling. *Times Literary Supplement* 16 September 1926: 611. The full bibliographical details for this review, including the name of the reviewer, were taken from the online *TLS Centenary Archive*.

¹⁵⁰ See the women visiting Jesus’ tomb in Luke 24:1-12.

¹⁵¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The Gardener.” *Debits and Credits* (1926. London: Macmillan, 1949) 413-414.

to be visited is perceived as but another step in this process:¹⁵² “So Helen found herself moved on to another process of the manufacture – to a world full of exultant or broken relatives, now strong in the certainty that there was an altar upon earth where they might lay their love” (“Gardener” 407). This step takes on an even greater significance in the light of Kipling’s involvement with the War Graves Commission and his own experiences as a bereaved parent.¹⁵³ It certainly corresponded with agitated public debates on adequacies of remembrance, which are also marginally visible in Mansfield’s “The Fly”.¹⁵⁴ Before she finds the grave of her son, Helen Turrell wanders through the cemetery and finds herself lost in a maze of makeshift graves, with wooden crosses temporarily replacing headstones. The gardener’s help in finding her son’s grave gains in significance through the confusion surrounding her, which is described in terms of hopelessness, gloom and hostility:

All she saw was a merciless sea of black crosses, bearing little strips of stamped tin at all angles across their faces. She could distinguish no order or arrangement in their mass; nothing but a waist-high wilderness as of weeds stricken dead, rushing at her. She went forward, moved to the left and right hopelessly, wondering by what guidance she should ever come to her own. A great distance away there was a line of whiteness (“Gardener” 413).

The whiteness, appearing to Helen as the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, is a row of white headstones already erected, and it is there that she meets the gardener who guides her through the maze of crosses. Kipling’s symbolism in

¹⁵² Jay Winter notes the importance of what might be called war-grave pilgrimages from Britain to the cemeteries of France and Belgium, undertaken by thousands of grieving relatives and friends. He points out that these pilgrimages, “for many both physically and emotionally difficult”, were often undertaken in groups and in the company of fellow sufferers, as is the case with Helen Turrell (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 52).

¹⁵³ On Kipling’s work for the Imperial War Graves Commission, see Karlin 334-35; Ware 61, and Michael Jubb, “Rudyard Kipling and the Message of Sympathy to the Relatives of Soldiers Killed in the First World War.” *Notes and Queries* 32.3 (Sept. 1985): 377. See also Joanna Scutts’s excellent article on the interrelation of remembrance, literature and mourning, “Battlefield Cemeteries, Pilgrimage and Literature after the First World War: The Burial of the Dead.” *ELT* 52.4 (2009): 387-416. Steven Trout reads “The Gardener” as a deliberate tribute to the efforts of the Imperial War Graves Commission, and points out that cemetery gardeners in the 1920s were for the most part British veterans, which adds a further dimension of meaning to the Christ-like figure of the gardener in the story. See Steven Trout, “Christ in Flanders?: Another Look at Rudyard Kipling’s ‘The Gardener’.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 35.2 (1998): 169-78.

¹⁵⁴ The boss’s visitor in “The Fly”, Old Woodfield, reminds the boss of his son’s death because his daughters have just been to France to visit their brother’s grave, where they have come across the grave of the boss’s son. Woodfield is clearly pleased with the arrangements for burial and seems to derive pleasure from describing the neatness and beautiful layout of the cemeteries (see “Fly” 69-70).

this instance is transparent but none the less effective. Helen's progress to the cemetery and through its maze, her confusion and denial when, even the day before visiting the cemetery, she fails to reveal her true identity as Michael's mother, symbolise her mourning process and its slow movement from denial to acceptance, culminating in the moment of recognition. This acceptance is not necessarily the end of Helen's grief, and we are not given any explicit reason to believe she leaves the cemetery comforted. Instead, the story ends on a supremely neutral note, with no hint as to Helen's feelings: "When Helen left the Cemetery she turned for a last look. In the distance she saw the man bending over his young plants; and she went away, supposing him to be the gardener" ("Gardener" 414). It is the reader, not Helen, who is comforted by the 'twist in the tail' of Kipling's story, by the recognition of what Helen has been hiding, and by recognising in the gardener a symbol of Christ the Redeemer, inconspicuously present and compassionate towards those who grieve, whether or not they realise his presence.

As "Mary Postgate" shows, not all stories offer comfortable solutions to the problem of loss and mourning. For those readers and writers who felt they could not let go of their grief and painful memories, it may nevertheless have been therapeutic to read about continuing pain, if only to show them that they were not alone in a world that strove to move on beyond the experience of the war. Kearsley in particular stresses the social dimension of grief and the importance of sharing loss and bereavement. He argues that society strives to put life-changing events (such as experiencing death) from purely personal, isolated experiences into shared experiences that are "socially meaningful and personally less frightening" because they have a name and shared symptoms and are embedded in a safe, communal context (Kearsley 28). His main argument is that grief is easier to bear for the individual if it is "collectively shouldered", if only because sharing of grief offers a greater sense of continuity and security (Kearsley 85). An early example of a story that shows a different reaction to loss is C.W. Grundy's "Lost and Found", published in Partridge's *A Martial Medley: Fact and Fiction* (1931). The main protagonist of "Lost and Found" is a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps worker, Goodison, who has joined the corps to feel closer to her fiancé Bill, a soldier. She resents her work and perseveres mostly out of hope to

be reunited with Bill; their relationship is described in highly idealised terms as “perfect comradeship, such complete understanding”.¹⁵⁵ When Bill is killed at the front, her initial reaction resembles that of Mrs Bradley in “Hepaticas”:

Anyway, Bill wouldn't have to go on day after day being cold and miserable and hungry and frightened. He wouldn't be frightened any more. She seemed to hug his head to her breast again as she had done the night he had told her what a coward he was. How fiercely she had loved him at that minute! Thank God, that misery was over for him. No more sticking it for days on end (“Lost and Found” 17).

The knowledge of Bill's redemption, however, does not provide her lasting comfort, and unlike the young female protagonists of “The Lie” and “The Enduring Image”, Goodison's reaction is not to honour the dead man's memory by spurning another man's advances. On the contrary, her first action after the initial shock of the news is to finally allow the attentions of a young staff officer she has hitherto despised for his effeminacy. Without any overt psychological analysis provided by the narrator, it is still obvious to the reader that Goodison's behaviour is just another way of coping with loss. Faced with the futility of her grief and the absolute nature of her loss, Goodison chooses to make more bearable her hateful existence as a war worker by accepting Captain Fellowes as her lover. This is not an act of disloyalty towards Bill; rather, she finds it in herself to be with Fellowes because of attributes in him – such as a hint of cowardice – that remind her of her dead lover. Goodison's reaction to her loss also exemplifies the findings of psychological research into the ‘phases’ of mourning. In his study *Death, Grief and Mourning* (1985), John S. Stephenson presents the grieving process in the light of three phases: reaction, disorganisation and reorganisation, and finally reorientation and recovery. He describes the reaction phase in terms of absolute shock:

Numbness sets in. One doesn't feel, one just ‘does.’[...] People in the early part of this stage have been known to do what needs to be done; making funeral arrangements, notifying others, and handling these tasks in matter-of-fact tones. They are continuing to function on an intellectual level, but often with strongly repressed feeling.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ C.W. Grundy, “Lost and Found.” *A Martial Medley: Fact and Fiction*. Ed. Eric Partridge (London: Scholartis, 1931) 11-19.

¹⁵⁶ John S. Stephenson, *Death, Grief, and Mourning: Individual and Social Realities* (New York: Free Press, 1985) 131-132.

It is striking in this context that, while for most of the story Goodison herself is the narrative focus of this third-person narrative, the focus is shifted away from her to first Captain Fellowes and then a more neutral, outside vantage point, from the moment of her impulsive decision to allow the other man's advances. This may be read as an attempt to imitate the stunning quality of the blow suffered by Goodison, and the emotional numbness that accompanies it.¹⁵⁷

Mourning stories such as these stand in contrast to some disillusioned renditions of the experience of loss, such as Richard Aldington's "Of Unsound Mind". The story was collected in Aldington's collection of war stories *Roads to Glory* (1930) and contributes considerably to the war-critical, disillusioned stance of that volume. A young woman, Evelyn, is the main protagonist of "Of Unsound Mind". She has left her unpleasant and tyrannical older husband – master at a boys' public school – to live with her young artist lover. The story relates her life before her flight and her reasons for entering the unhappy and childless marriage, interspersed with biting satirical comments on rural high society, and a perceptive analysis of Evelyn's psyche and the disintegration of her relationship to her husband, as well as her falling in love with young Ronald Cranton, a temporary arts teacher at her husband's school. The two lovers elope to London and Evelyn is disowned by her parents. The outbreak of the war in their case breaks up a complete idyll of idealistic and contented love:

Then came the deluge. It had seemed to them that they had foreseen everything, that no human power could destroy their happiness, since they were happy as long as they were together. They had forgotten the great collective hatreds of and stupidities and crimes of the world. [...] Evelyn and Ronald were among the many who paid the debt for which they were not responsible; for such is the justice of gods and men.¹⁵⁸

The young, illicit couple are presented as innocent victims of a greater evil that is visited upon them, helpless in the face of adverse circumstances. Ronald reluctantly joins the army when social pressure becomes unbearable for him as an artist, and the lovers part painfully. Both are miserable, Ronald in the army

¹⁵⁷ On a different level, "Lost and Found" also reflects wartime perception of women serving in military auxiliary units and allegations of "their alleged immorality in their relationship with the troops", as described in Krisztina Robert, "All That Is Best Of The Modern Woman? Representations of Female Military Auxiliaries in British Popular Culture, 1914-1919." *British Popular Culture and the First World War*. Ed. Jessica Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 114-115.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Aldington, "Of Unsound Mind." *Roads to Glory* (1930. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) 123.

and Evelyn starving herself at home to be able to send him parcels. As the tragic undertone of the story makes us expect, Ronald is killed in the Battle of the Somme and the devastated Evelyn drowns herself in the Thames. The coroner's verdict, "'Suicide', with the humane rider, 'while of unsound mind'" ("Of Unsound Mind" 127) echoes the verdict of her husband's colleagues after her flight. Aldington's story presents the loss of a loved one in the war as an insurmountable obstacle, a calamity not to be overcome. Although this interpretation of loss resembles to some extent the outlook taken in stories such as "The Enduring Image", Aldington's protagonist reacts differently to the blow. Rather than live on to preserve the dead man's memory, she appears incapable of continuing her life without him, and suicide is her only option. Once Evelyn has received the news, she is stunned and utterly hopeless:

She walked for hours through the noise and dust of the London streets in the stifling July air, not knowing where she was going. Her face was dull white, her eyes lifeless. She did not cry, but from time to time mechanically wiped the perspiration from her forehead with her fingers. Her whole body ached and trembled with fatigue and grief ("Of Unsound Mind" 127).

There is no comfort in this ending, and none seems to be intended. While other writers offer models for dealing with loss and grief and strive to provide comfort for their readers, Aldington's intention differs. In the vein of the inter-war 'disillusioned' school of war writing, his aim is to expose the futility of war death, to write off in story form his own bitterness and trauma, not to help others come to terms with the consequences of the conflict.

3.3 Affirming life: romance in a wartime setting

Ken Gelder names the romance genre as an example of a particularly conservative popular fictional form (Gelder 43), while at the same time noting its high diversity of subgenres. He points out that although the overall structure is formulaic, the ways and means by which the prescribed happy ending is achieved, and by what characters, may vary considerably (Gelder 45). I will be using the term romance, particularly 'popular' romance, not in the original sense of a knightly quest for love and adventure, but in the sense of romance writing as a popular literary genre. Its mixture of conservative features that provide readers with a comfortable sense of reliability, and of adaptability to seemingly endless new settings and set-ups, renders romance one of the ideal forms for wartime fiction. Romance fiction with its secure framework of conventions and its popular appeal is also ideally suited to reconcile readers with change.¹⁵⁹ As we will see below with reference to romance short stories dealing with soldiers' injuries and the subject of espionage, romance – particularly of the magazine variety – was easily adapted to a wartime setting, and found the young soldier as useful and popular a protagonist as any pre-war civilian gentleman. So well suited were romance stories to wartime reading tastes that Keble Howard felt prompted to begin his post-war love story "Needs Must When Love Drives" with the words "In case you are afraid that Romance withdrew to the cupboard on the day the Armistice was signed, I will ask you to read the following story".¹⁶⁰ His romantic hero is duly an invalided young captain of the British Army, newly returned from the war.

Harold Orel, in scrutinising British reading tastes of 1914-18, finds that "romance, in one or another of its countless disguises, constituted then (as it has for most of this century) the major fraction of reading matter that the public wanted, paid for either in the bookshop or at the lending library and enjoyed" (Orel 19), and stresses in particular its escapist qualities of taking readers away from the subject of war. However, many romance stories offered a different kind of escapism and relief – the relief of fleeing into the war, of making it both more

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas Daly reads romance fiction within a British context as a "form of narrative theory of social change", particularly for a middle-class audience (Daly 5). His claim is that romance helped a late-Victorian middle-class readership to "successfully accommodate certain historical changes, notably modernizing processes" (Daly 24).

¹⁶⁰ Keble Howard, "Needs Must when Love Drives." *Strand Magazine* 57 (April 1919): 312.

bearable and easier to grasp within the framework of well-known generic formulas by fictionalising it. More than any other 'popular' genre, romance is founded on the security of formula. Cawelti compares the wish for repetitive, formulaic elements in the readers of popular fiction to the craving of a child for hearing the same story repeated over and over again, indicating that repetition and formulaic structure offer relaxation and security, without necessarily impeding the literary quality of the narrative (Cawelti 1-2). In times of stress the security and reassurance offered by familiar patterns takes on particular importance, combined with the need for a guaranteed positive outcome inherent to romance (and in fact many 'popular' genres).¹⁶¹ Wartime romance seems to meet this exact need particularly well. In any crisis situation, wish-fulfilment and the comfort of a happy ending are the more appealing, and romance offers the chance to rework war-related scenarios and issues into a safe, reassuring format.

The 'soldier's sweetheart' was a recurring figure in magazine fiction, and constituted a concept appealing to men and women alike. For a young woman during the war, even though confronted with death and loss, "the dominant discourses available to her as anxious and then bereaved 'sweetheart', the cultural context within which she grieved [...] offered multiple narratives designed to console her by glamorising her role as bereaved sweetheart" (Acton, "Best Boys" 18). Acton notes for the story "For Women Must Weep!", published in *The Girl's Friend* on 29 August 1914, and for comparable stories and articles, that female waiting and mourning was "glamorised and given an elevated status as her emotions are set against the image of combat" (Acton, "Best Boys" 18). While the notion of a faithful and devoted girlfriend or fiancée at home was reassuring to soldiers absent for long periods of time, the idea of having a soldier-lover appealed to women on the home front because it offered them a chance of indirect participation in the war. Carol Acton observes this attitude in her survey of two popular magazines for working- and lower-middle-class girls and young women, *The Girl's Friend* and *Our Girls*:

¹⁶¹ "Much of the artistry of formulaic literature involves the creator's ability to plunge us into a believable kind of excitement while, at the same time, confirming our confidence that in the formulaic world things always work out as we want them to" (Cawelti 16).

Wartime love offers women a role in the 'drama' that is the war: 'At every front there is the drama of fighting; here in Britain there is everywhere proceeding another drama – the drama which is being played out in the hearts and at the lonesome hearthsides of the women who must stay behind.' Women's emotional attachments to men at the front are thus the means by which they are included in the drama even while they are officially excluded from the front.¹⁶²

Women were unable to fight at the front, and since not every girl was allowed, able or wanted to take up munitions work, a relationship with a soldier was the closest many women could get to the war.

From as early as December 1914, the *Strand Magazine* published a greater number of romance stories with a wartime setting, such as Richard Bird's "Little Candles" (April 1916). Governess Dorothy Champion meets Private Charles Tracy on a crowded train, and gives up her seat for him to sleep in to show her gratitude for his service at the front. He is intrigued by the pretty governess, and since she refuses to give him her address he advertises for her in a national paper. Due to an accident that kills her employer's husband, Dorothy does not see his advertisement, and his subsequent personal search for her in Newcastle also remains fruitless. However, when he returns to the area as a subaltern, newly promoted after a few months back at the front and sent home to train recruits, the two meet again owing to a happy coincidence when Tracy knocks on Dorothy's door to remind the family of blackout regulations. "Little Candles", told by an empathetic third-person narrator in the slightly flowery style of the typical *Strand Magazine* story, contains all the staple elements of romance fiction. Hero and heroine meet in an interesting or even peculiar situation, fall in love but are parted by adverse circumstances, and finally manage to overcome the obstacles to their union assisted by the helping hand of fate.

The same formula, altered and somewhat stretching the boundaries of the credible, is repeated in another *Strand Magazine* wartime romance story, "Scandalous!" by Richard Marsh (August 1916). Young spinster Ethel Hubert receives a letter from the front, left in an abandoned overcoat and posted on to her by another soldier who found it in the coat. The letter was written by a young soldier she met just before the war and with whom she had spent some hours walking at the seaside, without ever finding out his name. He has found out hers

¹⁶² The quote refers to "War-Time Weddings." *The Girl's Friend* (9 January 1915) 611; quoted in Acton, "Best Boys" 181.

by inquiry, however, and is writing his letter lying wounded in a trench. The young soldier – now a major – is called David Carpenter, and confesses his undying love for her. Shortly afterwards she receives a communication from Carpenter’s lawyers, informing her that he has died and left her £30,000. She is shaken at this discovery and mourns for a man she hardly knew, but presently Carpenter himself turns up at her house to rectify the mistake, and – as might be expected – they are married within a short time. The somewhat exuberant plot of Marsh’s short story is a typical feature of that author’s work, but the story gains credibility from its consistent focus on the young female protagonist and close rendering of her thoughts and feelings, which allow the reader to empathise with her and her instinctive attachment to the young officer.

One of the most down-to-earth *Strand Magazine* romance stories is W.B. Maxwell’s post-war short story “Joan of Arc” (January 1919), which also constitutes a semi-conscious commentary on the impact of propaganda and particularly the new medium of film on the British public. The story is set in 1917, at a time when the war is in full swing and the military situation of the Allies seems doubtful. Timid housemaid Adelaide is greatly startled when, musing over the poster for the new American recruitment film “Joan of Arc” outside the local cinema, she is suddenly invited in by handsome young soldier Dick Budd. Adelaide gains in confidence when she notices his shyness, and enjoys the novel entertainment immensely. Encouraged by the stirring film, Adelaide is subsequently determined to do war work and prove herself worthy of Dick. Once she has left her domestic position accompanied by the ridicule of her former workmates, however, she is unable to find war-related work, as too many women have already volunteered. She is forced to work as a domestic servant again and at her new employer’s house gradually assumes the position of housemaid, parlour maid and cook, in all of which roles she excels. When Dick finally returns on leave, he consoles her by telling her that, when the war is over and they get married and move to the colonies to make their fortune, her household skills will be invaluable, and they finally become engaged. Maxwell’s story has visible traces of the ‘Cinderella’ fairy-tale motif (the stepsisters replaced by Adelaide’s fellow housemaids), but places it in a contemporary context that readers could relate to. In a similar manner, the fictitious film “Joan of Arc” in the story is a modernised

version of the legend, adapted to wartime sentiments. The dialogues in the story are deliberately colloquial, imitating actual conversation in its slightly ungrammatical flow:

And then the young soldier spoke to her.
'Going inside?'
'Beg pardon?' said Adelaide, almost fainting from the suddenness of the surprise attack.
'I passed the remark, whether you were going in to see the show.'
'I wasn't intending,' Adelaide gasped.
'No more was I,' said the soldier; 'that is, not alone. But I don't mind if you don't. Shall us?'¹⁶³

Maxwell's narrator attempts to make the rather speedy agreement between the two more plausible by providing an emotional explanation, presenting it in the light of "a swiftly evoked mysterious sympathy that made companionship joy, that destroyed bashfulness" ("Joan of Arc" 60). While most critical readers are likely to consider a marriage founded on one spontaneous outing to the cinema somewhat risky, the habitual reader of romance fiction rests assured in the knowledge that what appears as a casual and coincidental meeting is nothing less than fate; according to the formulas of the romance genre, the protagonists are usually capable of spotting their ideal soul mate at first sight. The fact that in this story the fateful meeting of the two lovers takes place under wartime conditions adds extra flavour and tension, as the possibility of Dick's death in action hovers over the story. Compared to similar stories, such as the magazine serial "Emma Brown", published in *The Girls' Reader* in October 1914 and discussed in depth by Jane Potter in *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, "Joan of Arc" is a downright realistic narrative with no undue flights of fancy: while Adelaide meekly searches for war work to be worthy of her soldier-fiancé, the eponymous heroine of "Emma Brown" brashly makes her way to Belgium and attacks the Germans in open warfare with a band of boys and old men, accompanied by her aptly named bulldog 'John Bull' (Potter, *Boys in Khaki* 77-81). In this rather more unlikely tale, the heroine is likewise compared to Joan of Arc, proving the paradoxical appeal

¹⁶³ W.B. Maxwell, "Joan of Arc." *Strand Magazine* 57 (January 1919): 59.

of the warrior-maiden to young Englishwomen during the war, despite the fact that Joan of Arc had, of course, fought against the English and not with them.¹⁶⁴

An example of popular romance centring on soldier protagonists that affords a look beyond the magazine market is John Hartman Morgan's "The Allies" (1918), published in the author's abovementioned story collection *Gentlemen at Arms*. While on active service in France, the protagonist of this story, Sergeant John Lawrence, falls in love with a young Frenchwoman. He initially displeases her by being too forward and seizing her hand, for which offence she determinedly snubs him for a few days. The two are reconciled, however, and to be able to talk with the young woman more freely, Lawrence contrives to take French language lessons with her. In due course the two lovers get married. The story, set in 1915, is told by a narrator whose vantage-point can be identified as roughly early 1918, and who reveals himself to be a friend of Sergeant Lawrence's. The narrator claims to have recently heard that Lawrence received "a bar to his D.C.M.",¹⁶⁵ and had remembered the Anglo-French couple when coming across a precedent in a Dorsetshire churchyard: on an old headstone, he had discovered the names of one Sergeant William Lawrence and his French wife Clotilde, whom the earlier Lawrence must have met during the Napoleonic wars a hundred years previously. Contrasting the two rather similar cases, the contemporary love-story is placed in the context of a long mutual (if not actually amicable) history of England and France. Morgan's story is told by an obviously well-educated narrator in a sympathetic yet finely ironic tone that renders the romantic subject palatable to a well-educated audience, as is visible, for instance, in the wry description of the virtuously offended young Frenchwoman after the 'insult' of having her hand seized by the English sergeant:

Four days succeeded one another and each day Marie Claire rehearsed a frigid reception for Sergeant Lawrence. She rehearsed it in a newly-ironed blouse, and

¹⁶⁴ It is interesting to note in this context that Joan of Arc had been adopted as the 'patron saint' of the women's suffrage movement before the war, and was thus a familiar role model to evoke. However, like the majority of suffrage campaigners, she seems to have taken on a more patriotic and less subversive role during the war. Angela K. Smith notes, for example, that militant suffragette Emily Wilding Davison, who died after having stepped in front of the king's horse at the 1913 Derby, was later compared to Joan of Arc, "the 'patron saint' of the WSPU"; Angela K. Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain during the First World War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 3.

¹⁶⁵ John Hartman Morgan ['Centurion'], "The Allies." *Gentlemen At Arms* (London: Heinemann, 1918) 244. A D.C.M. is a Distinguished Conduct Medal, a decoration for non-commissioned officers. An extra bar means that Sergeant Lawrence received the award twice.

after carefully washing her hair. Each morning as she rose from *petit déjeuner* she prepared herself to resent his appearance, each evening as she sat down to *dîner* she felt unaccountably annoyed that he had not appeared ("The Allies" 235).

One notes in particular the syntactic sophistication of Morgan's style, and his deliberate use of (correctly spelled, as is well worth noting) French terms and phrases throughout the story. "The Allies" is a carefully thought-out narrative with a subtle, propagandist twist. By connecting the present Sergeant Lawrence's romance with the love marriage of a Napoleonic predecessor, Morgan construes a friendly connection between England and France. He circumvents the fact that this connection does not have a foundation in actual historical events on a national scale by moving it to a personal level and presenting one Anglo-French love marriage as a precedent for another. Morgan thus attempts to strengthen bonds between two countries that had been enemies for centuries and suddenly found themselves allies against a new opponent in 1914.¹⁶⁶ Yet his story also follows the reassuring patterns of romance fiction. The protagonists fall in love at first sight and despite unfavourable circumstances (such as the language barrier and the fact that Lawrence may be killed in action), and overcome a number of comic obstacles only to finally be united in marriage.

Of popular genres such as romance, Cawelti suggests that their patterns "are embodiments of archetypal story forms in terms of specific cultural materials", meaning that "formulas are ways in which specific cultural themes and stereotypes become embodied in more universal story archetypes" (Cawelti 6). Cawelti sees a particular reason for the success of formulaic narratives in popular literature's ability to "particularly fulfill man's need for enjoyment and escape" while pointing out the necessity of any such story archetype to be "embodied in figures, settings, and situations that have appropriate meanings for the culture which produces them" (Cawelti 6). Similarly, Jean Radford describes the generic conventions of romance as a kind of social or cultural contract between their writer and their readers, in the fulfilment of which the writer

¹⁶⁶ As Gerard De Groot points out, the Entente Cordiale that France and Britain entered into in 1904 was primarily a strategic decision meant to clarify relations between the countries regarding contested African territories, but not thought to affect relations within Europe: "It was not motivated by warm feelings toward France; there was very little that was 'cordiale' about it." Gerard J. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996) 4-5.

creates a text meeting basic needs and wishes on the part of the readership.¹⁶⁷ Great War romance stories fulfil these criteria by combining typical romance patterns with a wartime setting and, as we will see below, even confidently tackled deeply unsettling issues such as shell-shock or mutilation by embedding them into established patterns.

3.4 'Shell-shock', disability and reintegration: soldiers' anxieties

While it is generally assumed that it was the great death toll of the First World War that turned it into the traumatic event of the century, the psychological impact of these deaths and the particular demographic character of those who had died may have been of greater impact than the actual number of deaths.¹⁶⁸ It was amongst the group of males aged twenty to forty that the most casualties occurred. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the 'Lost Generation' did not consist of the dead only, but also of those who physically survived but came out of the conflict mentally and/or physically impaired. A problem that concerned society in general and soldiers in particular (and their families and friends) much more than death was what long-term effects active service could have for those who served and survived. Of the casualties on the Western Front alone, the majority were injuries, not deaths.¹⁶⁹ Soldiers themselves seemed to prefer a 'clean' death to the lingering evil of disability: David Cannadine quotes Anthony Eden as considering death the "lesser of two evils" compared to mutilation (Cannadine 210). In his revisionist study of the war, *Mud, Blood and*

¹⁶⁷ See Jean Radford, *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 8-10. Backing the idea that romance offered not simply fantastical escapism but realistic scenarios that yet allow reprieve from the mundane, Radford also argues that romance frequently constitutes a mixture of both the real and the ideal (Radford 12).

¹⁶⁸ Gordon Phillips points out that the First World War "caused directly the deaths of about 723,000 British servicemen, or 15 per cent of males aged between 15 and 29 in 1911." Gordon Phillips, "The Social Impact." *The First World War in British History*. Eds. Stephen Constantine, Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (London: Arnold, 1995) 107-108. David Cannadine, amongst others, seeks to put the 'Lost Generation' myth in perspective by stressing that "even among the elite, the majority of men who served *did actually come back*" (Cannadine 200).

¹⁶⁹ Gail Braybon points out the much higher proportion of wounds and disabilities over deaths: "While over 700,000 British men were killed during the war (about 500,000 of them were under 30), a further 1.7 million were wounded. By 1919, 190,000 widows' pensions had been granted, 1.2 million men were entitled to disability pensions (40,000 of these were classed as severely disabled), and around 35,000 children lost their fathers to the war. Nor were physical scars the only ones men had to bear. Even ten years later, there were still forty-eight mental hospitals devoted to the care of 65,000 men classified as shell-shocked". Gail Braybon, "Women and the War." *The First World War in British History*. Eds. Stephen Constantine, Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (London: Arnold, 1995) 165.

Poppycock (2003), Gordon Corrigan provides statistics relating to those injuries that resulted in permanent disabilities meriting a military pension:¹⁷⁰

Cause of disablement	Number of awards made	Percentage of the total number awarded
Wounds not involving amputation	278,535	38
Mental illness (ranging from nervous disorder to madness)	67,840	9
Heart problems	48,368	7
Malaria	43,572	6
Tuberculosis	34,884	5
Amputation	33,718	5
Rheumatism	28,992	4
Injury by gas	8,371	1
Blindness	923	0.12

The total number of awards, just under 300,000 cases, shows that disabilities of varying severity did affect a fairly large group of ex-servicemen after the war, and their overall significance was heightened by the psychological impact of their appearance in society. It must be borne in mind as well that all war-related disabilities, particularly mental impairments, were not necessarily accepted by the military and civil authorities, and that many veterans who suffered long-term consequences of the war do not appear in these statistics. Deborah Cohen has described in great detail the failure of the British state to recompense and reintegrate veterans, leaving private charitable initiatives to fill the gap.¹⁷¹ Injured, frequently disabled and often disfigured former soldiers had to be reintegrated into a society intent on outliving the trauma of war, and the difficulty of this task is unsurprisingly reflected in literature. Rebecca West's novel *The Return of the Soldier* revolves around the return of a shell-shocked captain, who has forgotten his wife but remembers his sweetheart of twenty

¹⁷⁰ Table taken from: Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* (London: Cassell, 2003) 62.

¹⁷¹ See Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001).

years previously. Numerous poems, such as Margaret Postgate Cole's "The Veteran" and Wilfred Owen's "Mental Cases" and "Disabled", depict the despair and hopelessness of the maimed veteran. Short stories of the war form no exception in this regard, and similarly address problems connected with the return of injured and disabled soldiers. Anxieties were twofold. On the one hand, disabled soldiers themselves were anxious about their reintegration, and their chances of living their lives as they had hoped and planned. This prominently included fears of having lost all chances to marry and have a family. On the other hand, families and friends were confronted with the strain of having to welcome back men who were no longer those who set out to fight, of having to bear cheerfully the care of a life-long invalid. From a feminist historical perspective, Gail Braybon vividly evokes the strain on women and children faced with this task:

Many women had to live with men who had been altered profoundly by their experiences, and who, by and large, found it impossible to talk about them – as some surviving men still do, seventy-five years later. If fathers and husbands had fits of despair and anger, or were woken by nightmares, women had to go on coping, making allowances for moods, and managing with a reduced family income in the case of disability. Novelists and playwrights tried to describe what happened when the soldier returned home, but literary interpretations give us very little idea of what it was like for ordinary families who had sometimes seen little of their menfolk for years, and had now to watch them adjust again to 'normal' life (Braybon 165).

Deborah Cohen likewise points out the hardships awaiting women married to disabled soldiers, who not only had to care for their husband and often children, but who also frequently had to go out to work in order to supplement the family income (Cohen, *War Come Home* 107). Popular opinion during the war applauded the notion of women taking responsibility for their soldier-husbands and sweethearts. Rather than seeing potential disability as an impediment to committing oneself to a soldier, many women regarded it as their welcome duty to care for a man injured in the service for his country. At least from a theoretical perspective, a wounded soldier as husband was the most desirable way for a woman to participate in the war effort and do her bit. Carol Acton quotes such sentiments from a serialised romance for working girls, "Bridegroom at the War":

'It's better to get married to your sweetheart even if you have a bit to bear and help carry one another's burdens. I think the lasses are right who are marrying their sweethearts before they let them go off to the war. Maybe they'll never come back, and maybe they'll come back sadly wounded; then it's the wife that's the one to tend and comfort them' (Acton, "Best Boys" 187).¹⁷²

It goes without saying that women whose husbands returned from the war physically or mentally impaired found their position rather less glamorous and heart-warming than suggested in magazine fiction. Even educated young women such as Vera Brittain, however, could see the attraction of binding oneself to an injured veteran as a means of patriotic sacrifice. In a letter to Roland Leighton of 10 September 1915, Brittain comments approvingly on a personal advert in *The Times* in which a lady whose fiancé has been killed in the war offers to marry any disabled officer (class distinctions quite obviously very much intact). Brittain, initially startled at the idea, seems nevertheless convinced of its feasibility:

The man, she thinks, being blind or maimed for life, will not have much opportunity of falling in love with anyone and even if he does will not be able to say so. But he will need a perpetual nurse, and she if married to him can do more for him than an ordinary nurse and will perhaps find some relief for her sorrow in devoting her life to him. [...] It is purely a business arrangement, with an element of self-sacrifice which redeems it from utter sordidness. Quite an idea, isn't it?¹⁷³

Brittain herself had contemplated marriage to a friend blinded in the war, but had been prevented from carrying out this plan by the young man's death. As a contrast to popular romance stories, Mary Borden's "The Beach" addresses the lasting and incalculable effect that injuries sustained in war could have on the psyche of the maimed and disabled soldier, and on marital relationships. The subconscious reflections of Borden's disabled young veteran do not bode well for his future relationship to his wife:

He loved her. He hated her. He was afraid of her. He did not want her to be kind to him. He could never touch her again and he was tied to her. He was rotting and he was tied to her perfection. He had no power over her but the power of infecting her with his corruption. He could never make her happy. He could only make her suffer. His one luxury now was jealousy of her perfection, and his one

¹⁷² The quote refers to "Bridegroom at the War." *The Girl's Friend* (8 January 1916): 563; quoted in Acton, "Best Boys" 187.

¹⁷³ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925*. Ed. Mark Bostridge (1933. London: Virago, 2004) 312.

delight would be to give in to the temptation to make her suffer. He could only reach her that way. It would be his revenge on the war.¹⁷⁴

The young soldier feels himself irreversibly divided from his wife, cut off from her by his war experience and the visible traces it has left on his body. The power relationship in their marriage has been overthrown for good, and he feels keenly, if subconsciously, that he is no longer able to fulfil the traditionally active male role. His wife in turn suffers not because she feels incapable to adjust to his physical shortcomings, but because of his emotional withdrawal and changed character: "I must love him, now more than ever, but where is he?" She looked around as if to find the man he once had been" ("Beach" 49). Ariela Freedman points out that the intimate and yet impersonal nature of the story renders it more universal: "The man and woman are unnamed, outlined only abstractly, and could stand in for any wartime couple" in a similar predicament.¹⁷⁵ The dynamics of marital relations in the aftermath of war and injury are also the central subject matter of D.H. Lawrence's "The Blind Man". Lawrence's protagonist Maurice Pervin is blinded and disfigured in the war. As in Borden's story, we are given no detail as to Maurice's experiences during the war or as to how he sustained his injury: all we are told is that he "had been blinded in Flanders" and, besides being blind, now has "a disfiguring mark on his brow".¹⁷⁶ The husband's blindness has not only resulted in the retirement of Maurice and his wife Isabel to the Pervins's country home in the South of England, it has also intensified the intimacy and closeness of their marriage, and despite fits of depression on Maurice's and a certain weariness on Isabel's part, they have enjoyed their intense companionship: "their dark, great year of blindness and solitude and unspeakable nearness", compared to which "other people seemed to them both shallow, prattling, rather impertinent" ("Blind Man" 77). How blindness has affected the Pervins's marital relationship, now freshly challenged by Isabel's pregnancy and her anticipation of maternal duties and pleasures, is the main subject of the short story, potential psychoanalytical readings aside.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Mary Borden, "The Beach." *The Forbidden Zone* (London: Heinemann, 1929) 48.

¹⁷⁵ Ariela Freedman, "Mary Borden's *Forbidden Zone*: Women's Writing from No-Man's-Land." *Modernism/Modernity* 9.1 (2002): 118.

¹⁷⁶ D.H. Lawrence, "The Blind Man." *England, My England* (1922. Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1928) 75.

¹⁷⁷ Judith Breen for instance proposes a new reading of both "The Blind Man" and "Tickets, Please" which reverses what she calls the "customary reading" of the two stories as dramatising

Unlike Borden, whose outlook for the couple in “The Beach” seems bleak, Lawrence sees potential in his protagonist’s injury to bring him closer to those around him. When compared to other stories dealing with war injury and shell-shock, “The Blind Man” is much less about the actual injury and the reintegration into society that a permanent disability requires, and rather centres on altered power relations and perceptions of manhood prompted by changed circumstances.

Modernist stories such as Borden and Lawrence’s aside, romance generally appears to be one of the most important subgenres to tackle issues of injury and anxieties about reintegration. As Jane Potter notes, the presence of the war wounded made it a necessity to refashion “attitudes attached to physical disability and disfigurement” for men who had suffered these in the service of their country (Potter, *Boys in Khaki* 91), and romance fiction is at the forefront of adjusting these attitudes. Love and marriage are shown, if somewhat simplistically, as antidotes to the negative effects of war.¹⁷⁸ Annie Edith Jameson’s “Pie” (1917) features a maimed soldier protagonist who finds a faithful companion in the girl he loves. Billeted in a Yorkshire village, shy and unremarkable Private Jim Ashton falls in love with a pretty farmer’s daughter. She bakes him fruit pies and walks out with him good-naturedly, showing him no more attention than she shows to other young soldiers, and evidently avoids a private interview with him on the last night of his leave – presumably to forestall any attempts on Ashton’s part to propose to her. When Ashton returns a few months later with his right hand amputated and a keen sense that his disability

“conflict between this new phallic man and the surviving pre-war civilization”. Judith Puchner Breen, “D.H. Lawrence, World War I, and the Battle between the Sexes: A Reading of ‘The Blind Man’ and ‘Tickets, Please.’” *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13.1-2 (1986): 63-64. Rather than seeing the stories in this light, Breen suggests that both stories treat the hidden power as well as the hidden impotence of their central female protagonists, with Isabel in “The Blind Man” figuring as an “omnipotent, indifferent nature goddess” (Breen 64), who disposes of her blind husband in favour of her unborn child, and Annie of “Tickets, Please” as the ultimately powerless victim of male sexuality, who fails to wreak lasting revenge on John Thomas because she is not a man, and cannot inflict the ultimate humiliation of rape, and of making the choice of a spouse (Breen 71-2).

¹⁷⁸ Sharon Ouditt and Deborah Cohen both note the importance of romantic love as a life-affirming and ordering force for lives affected by the war, and the anxiety of disabled veterans to find a partner. Peter Leese also lists marriage and family support as a vital factor in facilitating reintegration particularly of shell-shocked ex-servicemen. See Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1994) 89; Cohen, *War Come Home* 106; Peter Leese, “Problems Returning Home: The British Psychological Casualties of the Great War.” *The Historical Journal* 40.4 (Dec. 1997): 1060.

has put an end to any romantic aspirations he might have harboured, however, the girl's friendly but non-committal attitude changes to loving interest. Rather than waiting for a proposal from the downcast young veteran, she proposes herself. Ashton is initially reluctant to believe in the sincerity of her feelings, as he fears that she may be acting out of pity rather than genuine romantic interest:

He drew away from her, though he was all a-quiver with her sweetness and nearness; and because he was still weak from his wound, his own voice shook a little.

'It's very good of you!' he said. 'But I don't want – sisting.'
She pressed nearer to him, between laughing and crying.
'And I don't want to be a sister. Can't you see that?'¹⁷⁹

Ashton is reassured when the young woman explains her feelings, claiming that she feels that if they are to be thought of as one body and soul, she can feel she herself has also given a hand for England. It is his injury that sets him apart from the other young men who have shown an interest in her: "Every time I look at you I shall think that you and I are one, Jim; and that *I* gave my right hand for England" ("Pie" 51). His sacrifice, however unwillingly made, appears to win Ashton the marital bliss he might otherwise not have obtained. Like all stories in Jameson's collection, "Pie" reflects its rural Yorkshire setting in its simple and at times quaint language and largely neutral yet sympathetic third-person narrator. The somewhat surprising change of heart on the part of Jim Ashton's new fiancée is no stand-alone fictional incident; in Berta Ruck's story "Infant in Arms", from the best-selling collection *Khaki and Kisses* (1915), a formerly spurned lover finds himself proposed to by a previously disdainful young lady, who explains her altered views by saying: "Oh, can't you understand that this has made everything different? You're just twice as much of a man, now that you'll have to get on with one leg, as you were when you were dancing and fooling about on two".¹⁸⁰ "Pie" and similar stories capture an optimistic and largely propagandistic mood of reassurance visible not only in the romantic fiction surveyed by Carol Acton and Jane Potter, but also in the poem "The Beau Ideal" by propagandist writer Jessie Pope, notorious as the covert addressee of Wilfred Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum

¹⁷⁹ Annie Edith Jameson ['J.E. Buckrose'], "Pie." *War-Time in Our Street: The Story of Some Companies Behind the Firing Line* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917) 50.

¹⁸⁰ Berta Ruck, "Infant in Arms." *Khaki and Kisses* (London: Hutchinson, 1915) 15. Quoted in Potter, *Boys in Khaki* 102.

Est".¹⁸¹ "The Beau Ideal" describes in short, racy lines the transformation of a young girl's taste in men. Where she preferred classical symmetry of feature before the war, her wartime taste is marked by admiration for bodily sacrifice:

The lad who troth with Rose would plight,
Nor apprehend rejection,
Must be in shabby khaki dight
To compass her affection.
Who buys her an engagement ring
And finds her kind and kissing,
Must have one member in a sling
Or, preferably, missing.¹⁸²

Quaintness of language and pathos of style also characterise the narrative style of Morley Roberts's love story "The Man Who Lost His Likeness", a *Strand Magazine* romance published in the Christmas number for 1916. As in "Pie", an injured soldier finds healing and solace in the love of a good woman, but the injury here is shown to be greater: British officer Harry Singleton has had his face badly scarred through injuries sustained on active service. Formerly a handsome young officer, Singleton loses his fiancée Rose because she cannot bear to become the wife of a disfigured man. Figuratively speaking Singleton has also (at least temporarily) lost his identity, as old acquaintances and even his former lover no longer recognise him, and he has to rebuild his identity around his new appearance. Shattered by Rose's renunciation as much as by his war experiences, Singleton is invited to his doctor's country house to recuperate, and there meets beautiful young Joan Chester. Joan is blind and immediately taken with Singleton's voice and charisma. The blind girl and the disfigured veteran fall in love, complementing their physical shortcomings, and in the end Singleton even feels capable of forgiving his former bride, who comes to him repentant just as he has confessed his love to Joan. The archaic and somewhat stilted language used by the story's protagonists is both a common feature of early twentieth-century 'popular' romance fiction, and expressive of its author's attempt to do a grave

¹⁸¹ Christopher Martin lists Pope as one of two "typical voices" among patriotic poets of the war, calling her "the crude recruiting versifier of the *Daily Mail*, who was so detested by Wilfred Owen". Christopher Martin, "British Prose Writing of the First World War." *Critical Survey* 2.2 (1990): 138.

¹⁸² Jessie Pope, "The Beau Ideal." *More War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915) 43.

subject justice. Patriotism and reverence inform the narrative style of the story, as in the following excerpts:

So wisdom and love worked about Harry Singleton, and Henshaw told him he was busy getting well, and thereby working for his country, though he never so much as heard again any disastrous sound of war. The younger man was glad to think this might be true. For the woman he had loved became gradually as much a dream as the battles in enduring, faithful France. [...]

'So you've come, Joan!'

And she answered with less boldness than her wont: –

'Yes, dear sir, for the night is beautiful, and the dew in the open brings a sweet scent out of the grass, and your stars are shining'.¹⁸³

Singleton's condition is not merely physical. The experiences that gave him his physical scars have also left him mentally and emotionally scarred. His affliction is described in some detail; he finds it hard to face strangers and familiar people alike, afraid that they might be disgusted at his disfigured face; he is scared of open spaces, has problems concentrating and at the same time suffers from insomnia and nightmares, all classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms are soothed by the peace and quiet of the doctor's country house, and the healing influence of Joan's presence:

He was renewing himself faster than he thought. His nights were no longer a recurring drama of hideous inability to meet and avert disaster – dreams in which actual horror, once faced with courage, became a fantastic mixture of reality and sick imagination that froze his blood and woke him sweating ice. These hours returned less often; they moderated their intensity, and he no longer looked forward with apprehension to the hours of sleep. He began to set himself tasks and found it possible to read and keep his attention on his book ("Man Who Lost His Likeness" 687).

Joan manages to reassure Singleton about his altered appearance with a statement similar to that uttered by Private Ashton's lover in "Pie", if more dramatically phrased: When Joan asks for permission to touch Singleton's face and thus 'see' him, she sweeps aside his worries that she might find him hideous by indignantly exclaiming "A soldier's scars are badges of honour [...] and better than medals. Oh, I shall not mind, but like you all the better for them" ("Man Who Lost His Likeness" 691). Unlike Rose, Joan rises to the challenge of recognising that true beauty lies within – admittedly made easier for her by the fact that she cannot see – and, in accordance with the conventions of romance fiction, shows

¹⁸³ Morley Roberts, "The Man Who Lost His Likeness." *Strand Magazine* 52 (December 1916): 692.

herself to be a worthy partner for Singleton. “The Man Who Lost His Likeness”, like “Pie”, taps in on very real concerns. Deborah Cohen observes in her study of disabled ex-servicemen that “[n]urses in military hospitals reported that many wounded soldiers dreaded the once-longed-for reunions with sweethearts. They did not know how their loved ones would respond to their injuries. To ‘take on’ a severely disabled man, a woman had to be ‘brave’” (Cohen, *War Come Home* 106). As feared by the fictional veteran Singleton, his pre-war lover is not prepared to ‘take him on’ – despite the fact that he is merely disfigured and shell-shocked, not severely disabled – but he is fortunate to find a ‘brave’ woman prepared to deal with his injuries.

Female loyalty also passes the test in a later story, set on the eve of the Second World War. In Arthur Calder-Marshall’s “Before the War” (1941), the young English narrator is training to be a soldier in about 1938, and has just become engaged to his girlfriend Esther. He takes her to see his invalid father, Mr Burrows, in a nursing home for First World War veterans. Mr Burrows lost both his legs in the Great War and suffered terrible, disfiguring injuries to his face, which are described in some detail:

Every time you saw him it was a fresh shock. When you go away, you kid yourself it can’t be as bad as you saw it was. Luckily he was asleep. When his eyes are closed, I don’t have to think he’s human, with thoughts in his brain and emotions like me. What I fear are his eyes, like caged ferrets in his ravaged head, the life shooting from the setting of graft skin. You see his face isn’t a human colour. It’s white here and red there and the wrinkles aren’t the lines that come from laughing or worry. They’ve got as much expression as the skin of a stale mushroom.

Mum said Dad in his day was jolly and strong. But I could never believe it from what the war left of him.¹⁸⁴

Fictional Mr Burrows has been confined to the nursing home ever since his return from the war – not an unusual case in real life, as nursing homes such as the Star and Garter Home for Disabled Sailors and Soldiers were still caring for veterans in the 1930s and 1940s and beyond, having nursed almost 2,000 severely disabled veterans by 1936 (Cohen, *War Come Home* 34). Mr Burrows’s son, who had so far never been very attached to a parent he scarcely knew, begins to feel more compassion and love for his father as he himself is about to

¹⁸⁴ Arthur Calder-Marshall, “Before the War.” *English Story*. Eds. Woodrow and Susan Wyatt (London: Collins, 1941) 122.

fight in the next war, and he is greatly concerned about his fiancée's disdainful attitude towards all kinds of unpleasantness and physical suffering. Esther agrees to accompany him to the nursing home primarily because it is hosting a fundraising rally for the Voluntary Aid Detachment service in the presence of the royal princess, and the young couple nearly have a row when, for financial reasons, Esther refuses to get married straight away. When the young narrator goes to see his father by himself, father and son talk freely about the young man's anxiety about the coming war, his fear of death or injury, and the father's motivation for fighting in the last war. Mr Burrows senses his son's fears and tries to convince him that, in order to live the life he craves for, he will have to fight:

'You came out of it worse than most,' I said, 'what do *you* think? [...] [T]he war – what you were fighting for – was it worth it?'

'What I was fighting for?' [sic] That was worth it,' Dad said. 'But we never got it. To do away with the old gang, with greed and corruption and profiteering and each chap pitted against another. We said we'd chuck out the old gang when we got home. But I was out of it and the others found when they got back, everything had been settled years before in these secret treaties. When they tried to change things, the old gang beat them. That's why you've got to fight again, son.'

'But I don't want to fight, Dad,' I said, for the first time in my life seeing him as the man of his eyes instead of the mutilation of his flesh. 'I want to live in peace and marry Esther and do a job and enjoy myself evenings.'

'I know, son,' he said, taking my hand, 'but to do it, whoever Esther may be, you'll have to fight [...]' ("Before the War" 124-125).

Before the war is also after the war, and father and son achieve a moment of closeness only when the younger man is forced into a situation that makes him understand his father's thoughts and motivations. Such a sudden closeness and mutual understanding achieved only when the son finally finds himself in a position to understand the father's war experiences by facing a war of his own are a recurrent element in inter-war and post-war fiction.¹⁸⁵ The moment of understanding between father and son is quickly broken up: Esther unexpectedly joins her fiancé and sees Mr Burrows for the first time. Unprepared for the sight, she runs away in shock. However, the young soldier finds that, far from breaking off their engagement as he feared she would, Esther is suddenly prepared to get

¹⁸⁵ See Victoria Stewart, "The Last War: The Legacy of the First World War in 1940s British Fiction." *British Popular Culture and the First World War*. Ed. Jessica Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 263-267.

married immediately because she has realised how much is at stake. Her change of heart is described by the narrator as an almost epiphanic moment: "I thought I knew her face and its expressions, but this was new, was what her face was meant to be, if you understand. She leaned over and spoke into my ear. 'When's the soonest we can get married?' she asked" ("Before the War" 126). Although the narrator, who comments freely and in a self-aware manner on his own thoughts and feelings, does not explicitly mention it, the fear of his being similarly mutilated permeates the story, and it is this fear of what the near future may hold in store that both brings closer father and son, and convinces Esther to consent to a hasty marriage. The story espouses a similar depiction of the disabled veterans of the Great War as much inter-war reportage in magazines and papers. Deborah Cohen notes that "[by] the 1920s, the smiling bed-case had replaced the 'human wreckage' in representations of the disabled. It was in a large measure wishful thinking, a reassuring portrait for the generous British public" (Cohen, *War Come Home* 131). In Calder-Marshall's story, the reassurance is twofold. Not only is the general public assured of the veterans' continued gratefulness and good humour in the face of adversity, the story also seeks to alleviate the fears of those who may be called upon to repeat a similar sacrifice.

As is visible in the chart above, physical disabilities and disfiguring injuries are but the more visible, tangible effects war could have on the lives of former soldiers and their families. The effect of war on veterans' mental health was in many ways a more disturbing and novel problem than physical injuries. Cases of 'shell-shock', or post-traumatic stress disorder, made up the second largest group amongst those ex-servicemen awarded a pension, constituting nine per cent of the total number.¹⁸⁶ Although the number of texts dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder generally falls far behind those referring to bodily injuries, there are a number of short stories that tackle the mental consequences of the war in various ways, both seriously and humorously.

Comic treatment of shell-shock is not at all unusual in First World War short stories. In some cases, shell-shock merely forms part of the backdrop or

¹⁸⁶ Peter Leese describes at length the situation of shell-shocked veterans in post-First World War Britain, with particular regard to their difficulties of having their symptoms recognised as war injuries (Leese 1058). For shell-shock as a threat to social ideals of masculinity, see George L. Mosse, "Shell-Shock as a Social Disease." *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1, Special Issue: Shell-Shock (Jan. 2000): 101-108.

plot of a story, such as in Blanche Wills Chandler's "Zepp Proof" (1917). The cockney narrator of this story and his friend Jim are both working-class soldiers in the 'New Army', invalided home with 'nerves'. According to the narrator's estimation, they are more or less recovered already when they are invited to stay and rest at a kindly elderly gentleman's house. Their host, Mr Hickinbotham, announces his suspicions that his neighbourhood is targeted by German zeppelins, but claims to be entirely unconcerned about this. The two soldiers are not worried by zeppelins, but it quickly transpires that their host in fact is terrified of air raids to such an extent that he disturbs every night's sleep with false alarms, forcing them to sleep in the cellar and dig a shelter in his garden, all the while pretending it is their nerves only he is worried about. Chandler here makes light of the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder in an evident attempt to reassure her readers. The fact that a civilian can groundlessly suffer from more 'nerves' than two soldiers who have been exposed to shell fire and mortal danger at the front suggests that shell-shock cannot be all that severe an ailment. The comic, colloquial narrative style of Chandler's working-class narrator adds to the impression of harmlessness. A secondary, less humane reason may have been a desire to misrepresent shell-shock cases with a view to controlling pension costs. From the beginning, the government had an interest in keeping expenses on pensions as low as possible, particularly in the light of unprecedented numbers of injured and disabled veterans, and the astronomical costs of war that led the country into enormous debt. While it was hard to argue with cases of tangible physical injuries, the tendency in cases of mental impairment was towards attributing these either to unseen physical injury, to a pre-existing condition, or to cowardice or malingering.¹⁸⁷ This suspicious attitude towards cases of shell-shock may have influenced public perception of shell-shocked veterans, and resulted in an attitude that rated physical over mental disabilities.

Other stories tackle shell-shock at greater length while also taking a hopeful attitude regarding the recovery of shell-shocked veterans. Stacy Aumonier's "The Kidnapped 'General'" (1923) is a tale within a tale, and its embedded tale is told by a formerly successful writer who had returned from the

¹⁸⁷ Peter Leese supplies a detailed account of government policy regarding pensions, including the appointment to the Ministry of Pensions of Sir John Collie, well known for his expertise on malingering and insurance fraud (Leese 1062-63).

war suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The revelation of his condition constitutes the surprise twist at the end of the story. The framework narrator and his friend, who meet the shell-shocked writer on a walking trip through the countryside, subsequently learn from a local innkeeper that the story they have just heard is pure fabrication, the work of an ingenious and amiable madman. The shell-shocked writer lives in a woodland clearing in a converted 'General' London motorbus. The curiosity of the two friends on their walking tour is aroused by the unusual habitation, and they are only too willing to listen to the man's story about how the bus came to be his house. His story turns out to be a tall tale about a disappointed First World War veteran working as a bus driver, who, when he is about to be made redundant and realises the shallow materiality of his life, kidnaps a bus full of stockbrokers and financiers to travel to his fiancée and elope with her. As they later find out, the owner of the converted motorbus had served in a motorbus unit on the Western Front during the war, and returned shell-shocked and confused:

D'you remember during the first weeks of the war they sent a whole lot of London motor buses out to help transport the troops? Well, Mr Ormeroyd was a skilful shuvver, and he volunteered, and got the billet to drive one of these buses. I don't rightly know the details. He was only out there six weeks. There was some awful incident – I believe he was the only one of a company saved – he on his old battered bus. There was a score of them buses, men and drivers, and all blown to pieces. It was somewhere in Belgium. He got away back to the lines. But – well, it's a kind of – what do you call it? – you know, got on his nerves, never thinks of anything else.¹⁸⁸

As in Chandler's story, a case of post-traumatic stress disorder is reduced to 'nerves', yet the consequences of Ormeroyd's illness are described as fairly severe. He has fled to the seclusion of the countryside to live in a bus resembling the one he was nearly killed in, and is unable to write anything or invent any stories that are not in some way related to this reminder of his traumatic experience at the front ("Kidnapped 'General'" 205). The innkeeper and local population appear to think that Ormeroyd is on the mend, and rely on the healing powers of a quiet, rural lifestyle: "They say it is better for him to live like he does

¹⁸⁸ Stacy Aumonier, "The Kidnapped 'General'." *Adventure Stories from the 'Strand'*. Ed. Geraldine Beare (London: Folio Society, 1995) 205. First published in the *Strand Magazine* issue for August 1923 and subsequently republished in various collections such as *Short Stories by Modern Writers*. Ed. R. W. Jepson (London: Longmans, 1936).

– a kind of rest-cure. He’s getting better. They say he’ll get all right in time. He’s got money and his health is otherwise middlin’ good” (“Kidnapped ‘General’” 205). Although this possibility is never explicitly spelled out in the story, Ormeroyd’s compulsion to tell stories that centre around his bus may also be seen as self-therapy; therapeutic re-writing of his own story (he usually assigns himself the role of one of the protagonists) that helps him come to terms with his real experiences and put them into perspective.¹⁸⁹ The innkeeper’s main indicator for Ormeroyd’s improving mental health is in fact the quality of Ormeroyd’s stories: “His stories get better, you know. I’ve noticed it” (“Kidnapped ‘General’” 205). At the same time, Aumonier’s story serves to domesticate and render less threatening the phenomenon of the shell-shocked soldier, whose ailment is so hard for his surroundings to understand. Ormeroyd’s condition may be equally hard to comprehend – the innkeeper is struggling to describe it in the quote given above – but he is “a very nice fellow” and shown to be entirely harmless, and perfectly integrated into the rural community of the small Buckinghamshire village where he has “plenty of friends” (“Kidnapped ‘General’” 205).

Stories that treat shell-shock at a greater distance from the war are usually more reflexive and tend to take a negative rather than a light-hearted stance. The two best examples are Winifred Holtby’s “Such a Wonderful Evening!” (1934) and Richard Aldington’s frequently anthologised “The Case of Lieutenant Hall” (1930). Holtby’s “Such a Wonderful Evening!” provides a perspective on shell-shock that is both female- and civilian-oriented. Here, a young woman encounters a shell-shocked veteran during a visit to York Tattoo and returns home with the fervent wish that her fiancé will never have to become a soldier. Joanna Bourke notes how, even years after the end of the war, familiar sights such as a butcher’s shop could trigger a recurrence of nightmares

¹⁸⁹ Annette Becker suggests that the surrealist concept of automatic writing – that is, writing with as little conscious effort as possible, designed to allow the subconscious to speak – may have served as written psychotherapy at least in surrealist circles during the war. Annette Becker, “The Avant-Garde, Madness and the Great War.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1, Special Issue: Shell-Shock (Jan. 2000): 78. Of Robert Graves, Linda M. Shires suggests that his poems “activate the horrors of recent war experiences and resort to creativity as a form of therapy”. Linda M. Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985) 31.

or attacks in the victims of shell-shock.¹⁹⁰ The depiction of the veteran's breakdown when faced with a mock-execution that is part of a military display is given in some detail; he screams and falls into a fit that renders those around him intensely uncomfortable:

The little man in the shabby raincoat, sitting just in front of Jessie, sprang to his feet, shrieking. It was not a loud shriek – a sickening, choking anguish. Jessie screamed too, then clung to Herbert. 'It's all right.' 'Take him away.' 'It's a fit.' 'What is it?' From all the neighbouring seats came an uneasy stir of questioning.¹⁹¹

The man's escort, a complacent middle-aged woman, merely explains that he has been shell-shocked in the war, and leaves the onlookers to draw their own conclusions. The glamour and reward of soldierly life are here put into question, and long-term consequences of warfare shown without any glossing of heroism. Holtby contrasts painfully the colourful and stirring display of the military parade with the unglamorous, pathetic figure of the shell-shocked veteran, the "gallant and splendid tumult, filling the air with courage rendered audible" juxtaposed with the "little man in the shabby raincoat" ("Such a Wonderful Evening!" 270) who eventually collapses in terror. Holtby's story is not without sympathy for the situation of the shell-shocked man's escort, either, relating her unwillingness to tend to her agitated charge to the fact that she "had so few treats in her drab anxious life" and noting flatly that the war, even after years of peace, "still had power to frustrate [her pleasure]" ("Such a Wonderful Evening!" 271).

Aldington's story, on the other hand, adopts the perspective of the archetypal 'disillusioned' ex-serviceman and has no room for sympathy with civilian war victims. "The Case of Lieutenant Hall" consists of fictional diary entries of Henry William Hall between November 1918 and March 1919 and is rounded off by a coroner's report published after Hall has committed suicide.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Joanna Bourke, "Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: the Sufferings of 'Shell-Shocked' Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39." *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1, Special Issue: Shell-Shock (Jan. 2000): 62. The man's symptoms place him in Peter Leese's category of 'normal' shell-shock cases, with common symptoms such as "violent outbursts and unpredictable or bizarre behaviour" (Leese 1061).

¹⁹¹ Winifred Holtby, "Such a Wonderful Evening!" *Truth is Not Sober* (London: Collins, 1934) 270. Written in 1933.

¹⁹² The date of Hall's last diary entry and suicide, and his severe discontent with the job situation and the lack of official support which he encounters upon his return to England, match exactly the

The diary entries document Hall's progressive emotional and mental decline, from the Armistice through his time as a member of the occupational army in Belgium, to his 'demobbed' life in London. While Aldington clearly intended the story as scathing social criticism of the treatment veterans received on their return – the report on Hall's suicide contains a cynical warning to other veterans not to expect special treatment and to realise their duty to cope with civilian life after demobilisation – Hall evidently also suffers from a severe form of shell-shock. Almost from the beginning, he is tortured by nightmares, lack of sleep, and visions of dead German soldiers until he feels he can bear life no longer. His nightmares are caused mostly by guilt and horror of himself, remembering an incident on the Somme in 1916 when, clearing out a trench, he had shot three unarmed Germans and bayoneted a fourth from behind. Like Captain Singleton in "The Man Who Lost His Likeness", he suffers from insomnia and a lack of concentration ("I find it very difficult to think consecutively these days"),¹⁹³ and his nightmares gradually develop into hallucinations:

Of course, I tell myself it's all nerves, but that German is certainly a curious phenomenon. [...] It may be a delusion, but it's real enough to me. I don't see how I can go on living with the constant haunting of that spectral face. If I walk up to it, the damn thing disappears; I turn around, and there it is on the other side of the room. When I read or write I can *feel* it behind me. I keep the electric light on all night now, even when I fall asleep – it's awful to wake up in the dark ("Case of Lieutenant Hall" 287-288).

In an embittered and cynical yet curiously detached and analytical tone, Hall documents his own mental decline. Therapeutic writing in this case fails to have a healing effect, and the decline culminates in Hall's suicide when the pressure of guilt, memories and frustration with his overall situation reach an insurmountable pitch. The fictional character Hall, albeit exaggerated, is founded on fact. Joanna Bourke describes ex-servicemen suffering from acute guilt trauma after the war, mostly connected with the killing of unarmed enemy soldiers. Like fictional Lieutenant Hall, real-life soldier Arthur Hubbard was tormented by his killing of three unarmed Germans, and relived the deed in nightmares and daydreams (Bourke, "'Shell-Shocked' Men" 57). As Bourke notes elsewhere, "the

overall culmination of disappointment in the government regarding pensions and support on the part of ex-servicemen in Britain, noted and described in Leese 1056.

¹⁹³ Richard Aldington, "The Case of Lieutenant Hall." *Roads to Glory* (1930. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) 286.

men who fought in twentieth-century conflicts were civilians first, and servicemen only by historical mishap. These men were passionately engaged in elaborating ways of justifying killing in wartime, and most were eager to assume moral responsibility for their bloody deeds. As sentient humans, they insisted upon bearing a share of responsibility for their own actions".¹⁹⁴ This responsibility could result in a mental breakdown as described by Aldington. Aldington's fictional account of a shell-shock victim's case is also in keeping with Bourke's observation that neurasthenic symptoms of shell-shock were generally worsened by unfavourable circumstances, such as a lack of family support and the bad economic climate of the 1920s that did not allow ex-servicemen to easily return to work (Bourke, "Shell-Shocked' Men" 65).

Beyond the guilt trauma and shell-shock induced by random acts of killing, it was apparently enforced inactivity that took the greatest toll. Bourke observes that "Medical Officers at the front were forced to recognize that more men broke down in war because they were not allowed to kill than collapsed under the strain of killing" (Bourke, "Shell-Shocked' Men" 58). An inter-war story by I.A.R. Wylie, "All Dressed Up", shows the potentially fatal psychological effects of enforced inactivity in a somewhat unusual take. During the last months of the war, a battalion that consists of the last batch of men called up under conscription is subjected to military training. All men in this battalion suffer from physical defects that led to their repeated rejection for active service; consequently, they find it almost impossible to transform into soldiers. One of the men, Cobham, succumbs to despair: he has had to give up his job, fears he may have lost his girlfriend, and his only desire is to be able to make sense of the months of suffering in training camp by doing some actual fighting before his death. The battalion is hurried to the front in November 1918, and Cobham is convinced that he will be killed. Instead, the Armistice is signed just as they are about to go into action for the first time. Frustrated and horrified that his ordeal has been pointless, Cobham loses his head and assaults one of his fellow soldiers, an attack resulting in the tragic and meaningless death of the two men.¹⁹⁵ His

¹⁹⁴ Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Granta, 1999) 8.

¹⁹⁵ Wylie's story is reminiscent of a key scene in the 2005 film adaptation of Anthony Swofford's gulf war memoir *Jarhead* (2003), in which the main protagonist, a highly trained marine marksman, falls into a fit of frustrated rage when he finds that the war has passed without his

desperate anticipation of fulfilling the role he has been trained to fulfil against his nature is visible in the following passage:

Cobham tried to remember all he had ever learnt about machine-guns. No frontal attack. You wormed round them. On all sides. And then – bayonet work. Or, better still, a couple of well-planted grenades that would knock the crew clean out.

No more throwing into emptiness. Next time he took his aim it would be at men. His bayonet would go home into live flesh. He would know at last how it really felt...¹⁹⁶

Wylie's protagonist has been forcibly transformed into a soldier, and is then denied the fulfilment of that role, leading to his brief but fatal mental breakdown. Cobham and the other men in his company, hit by the news of the Armistice and frustrated in their fearful yearning for a soldier's death, attack each other like wild beasts released from a cage:

It happened. It exploded. The pent-up force was released – at last. Cobham, with his free hand on Cuffy's throat, felt it break in him like an abscess. It broke over him in a crushing wave of men's bodies – of beating, bruising hands and feet. He went down under it. [...] He couldn't let go. He didn't want to. He'd got to choke the life out of someone – someone who'd done him out of something. [...]

Something went out of him. He collapsed – emptied ("All Dressed Up" 326-327).

In this case, a story disturbingly portrays a transformation that has gone wrong because it has passed the mark. As we will see below, the transformation of civilians into soldiers was generally considered to be a beneficial process, and Wylie clearly breaks with a taboo in showing its downside.

having fired a single shot. In the memoirs, Swofford also comments on the need to kill to validate the arduous military training received. See Anthony Swofford, *Jarhead: A Soldier's Story of Modern War* (London: Scribner, 2004) 247.

¹⁹⁶ Ida Alexa Ross Wylie, "All Dressed Up." *Some Other Beauty and Other Stories* (London: Cassell, 1930) 321. Subsequently published in March 1938 in *Harper's Bazaar*. Wylie (1885-1959) was a feminist writer of novels and short stories, the sometime lover of suffragette Rachel Barrett and a close friend of Radclyffe Hall. See Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 2001) 36.

3.5 Moral quandaries: ethical (re-)assessments of warfare

As a war that confronted the British public to an unprecedented extent with soldiers' deaths and injuries, and had a more immediate effect on civilian life, through rationing and the presence of Belgian refugees amongst others, than any war Britain had waged previously, it was also a war with a pronounced moral dimension. Similar to the South African war of 1899-1902, which had prompted some harsh criticism of British behaviour towards the Boers,¹⁹⁷ the First World War encompassed both military and political actions of doubtful or at least debatable morality on all sides. These ethical dilemmas required more than straightforward assertion that Britain was fighting a just war, and that God was on the side of the British. A number of short stories tackle these difficult issues, and in addition stress the positive effect of the war on British manhood and the British nation. While stories such as Isabel Wylie's "All Dressed Up" show the psychological damage done by war and military training, some of these other stories investigate the beneficial effects of war. Other short story writers, with a less propagandist but by no means necessarily subversive agenda, use the genre to highlight the difficult moral choices faced by individuals in the wake of the war, brought about by an extreme situation in which ordinary, civilian values seem suspended or subdued.

In her war poems, the prolific Jessie Pope draws attention to a prevalent theme of Great War fiction, that is, the promotion of physical and moral reformation. One of Pope's racy, patriotic poems describes how parents find their volunteer son startlingly but pleasantly altered:

Bigger and burlier, but –
Quick eyes the khaki boy scan –
What has become of the nut?
This is a *man*!¹⁹⁸

The idea of reforming men and turning them into soldiers, shown in a critical light in Wylie's "All Dressed Up", is interesting not only regarding its mental and emotional consequences for the soldiers in question, but also in the light of

¹⁹⁷ Amongst the casualties of the South African War are generally counted around 20,000 Boer women and children who died in British concentration camps due to diseases resulting from poor hygiene. See for example Eversley Belfield, *The Boer War* (London: Cooper, 1993) xxiv.

¹⁹⁸ Excerpt from Jessie Pope, "Short Leave." *More War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915) 26.

propaganda and justification of the war. Joanna Bourke draws on various historical sources, such as John T. MacCurdy's textbook *War Neuroses* (1918), to show that

[d]espite the unique frightfulness associated with modern, technology-driven warfare, it was widely accepted that the 'abnormal' men were those who were repelled by wartime violence. These men had to be cured: that is, they had to rediscover their 'natural', masculine bellicosity (Bourke, "'Shell-Shocked' Men" 59).

By inference, a 'real' man is aggressive and tough, capable of witnessing and inflicting death (Bourke, "'Shell-Shocked' Men" 59), whereas anyone to whom these criteria did not apply simply had to be cured of being 'too nice'. This view echoes anxieties about the feminisation of Britain's manhood that informed pre-war invasion literature. War was seen, as George L. Mosse points out, as "the supreme test of manliness"; only through the "unselfish service in the name of a higher ideal" (Mosse 104) could one hope for reform. The hope for a revitalisation of British manhood is duly reflected in the short fiction of the Great War. Reformed masculinity is presented, if not exactly as a reason for Britain to join the war, then as a major positive side effect. Its treatment, however, is mainly humorous, notwithstanding a more serious subtext.

A representative example of a short story portraying a young man transformed by his service for his country is Eden Phillpotts's "A Touch of 'Fearfulness'" (1917). In this tale, set in the rural community of St. Tid in Cornwall, young Amos Barton¹⁹⁹ enlists for the New Army at the start of the war despite his peaceful temper: "There was plenty of laughter when we heard gentle Amos was going to the war – a chap, mind you, that even shirked sport".²⁰⁰ He enlists against the wish of his fiancée Lucy, who fears he will disgrace himself (and, by proxy, her) at the front, and that she may lose him. In Amos's absence, the dastardly gamekeeper Jacob persuades Lucy to break off her engagement. When Amos returns on leave with the rank of a sergeant and about to receive a Distinguished Conduct Medal, he takes the news calmly. His friends find him very

¹⁹⁹ Phillpotts borrowed the name of his protagonist from George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858). Phillpotts's Amos and Eliot's Reverend Barton, however, do not seem to have too much in common apart from their name and a generally peaceful disposition; while the former is a young farmer, the latter is a middle-aged clergyman with a wife and children.

²⁰⁰ Eden Phillpotts, "A Touch of 'Fearfulness'". *The Chronicles of St. Tid* (London: Skeffington, 1917) 273.

much changed for the better – still friendly and just, but also hardier and manlier both in his appearance and in his outlook on life. Amos confronts Jacob in the public house, humiliates him by marching him to Lucy’s house and berates him for his slacking and duplicity. Lucy realises her mistake and marries Amos before his leave is up, and Jacob slinks away apologetically. The soldier Amos is what a man ought to be: firm yet gentle, powerful yet in control, assertive and just, and the narrator of the story, one of the villagers, closes his narrative with a positive outlook on a future shaped by men like Amos:

And if he’s spared to the finish and takes up his Uncle Matthew’s farm when the time comes, Amos Barton will be a power of good among us; for though the war’s brought out his manhood, it haven’t altered his nature, and he’ll always be gentle to the weak and kind to the humble, and thoughtful for his fellow man and woman. Because he’s built so (“Touch of ‘Fearfulness” 283).

The passage quoted reflects Jessica Meyer’s observations on male identities during World War I. In her study *Men of War*, Meyer investigates self-description and self-definition of British servicemen through their war experience in letters, diaries and memoirs, and distinguishes between two core identities adopted by these veterans: the heroic identity of the virile soldier, and the domestic one of “good sons, husbands and fathers, as both protector and provider”.²⁰¹ The narrator’s evaluation of Amos Barton focuses on both his new and old qualities, the heroic and the domestic, and not only assures readers that the war has had a beneficial effect on the young protagonist, but simultaneously tries to convey to the reader a reassurance that men like Amos will not be harmed by their war experiences. As seen above, by 1917 there was certainly a general awareness of the damage war could inflict on soldiers’ psyche as well as their physical integrity, and the narrator’s parting words in “A Touch of ‘Fearfulness” seem designed to alleviate fears that promising young men would return altered beyond recognition. The earthy, rural narrative voice that puts its stamp on the story, similar to Annie Edith Jameson’s Yorkshire tales, helps to imbue the story with a reassuring, down-to-earth quality.

In a similar vein, the *Strand Magazine* story “Albert’s Return” (1919), by Edgar Jepson, portrays a demure young man who is rendered more assertive and

²⁰¹ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 2.

manly by his war experiences. Albert Appleton is initially described as “a weedy youth”²⁰² with no discernible physical or intellectual merits and a poor constitution. As such, he is an embarrassment to his socially aspiring family, particularly compared to his successful elder brother Frederick. Albert’s conscription consequently leaves his family comparatively unmoved, with the exception of his mother. He is sent to Mesopotamia and holds out despite wounds and severe illness, comforting his mother by sending cheerful, detailed letters, and slowly but steadily rises to the rank of sergeant. When he returns, his improvement is initially noted only by his mother and by his brother’s fiancée Annie, a simple working-class girl patronised profusely by the rest of the family. Albert and Annie inevitably fall in love, and begin to resist the social pretensions of the family. In the end, Albert finds work as bailiff for an army friend, the Honourable Alexander Sarratt, who had served with Albert as a private, and Annie renounces Frederick to marry Albert. This short story stresses both positive changes wrought by the war on the class system – Albert’s close friendship to a peer due to their mutual experiences is a clear breaching of class boundaries – and the beneficial effect of war on the returned soldier: Albert looks “smarter, so much more alive” than his civilian brother, and Annie finds him very different to her mental image, “taller and smarter, and his eyes were very blue in his tanned face” (“Albert’s Return” 386). Most of all, however, Albert has become assertive and capable of standing up to his older brother, who wants him to begin work straight away rather than take a much-needed rest in the family home: “‘Well, I’m going to take all the rest I want,’ said Albert, slowly and firmly. ‘As for hanging about home, there wouldn’t be any home to hang about, if I and the chaps like me hadn’t fought for it’” (“Albert’s Return” 387). Consequently, Albert has benefited from the war’s ability to “cure British society of the physical degeneracy of the middle classes” (Meyer, *Men of War* 3) that was heralded by Edwardian commentators as the saviour of the British nation.

Short stories exploring the morally and physically beneficial effects of the war, however, are but one side of the picture. An even greater number of stories explore not the benefits of war, but its ethical traps and dilemmas. As Ricoeur observes of the ethical dimension of narrative (Ricoeur 115), Great War short

²⁰² Edgar Jepson, “Albert’s Return.” *Strand Magazine* 58 (October 1919): 384.

stories here function as a laboratory in which authors experiment with meaning and justification, and question or affirm the war and the British part in it by concentrating on individual acts and sentiments. Both during and after the war short story writers engaged in exploring the moral ambiguities inherent in armed conflict. Wylie's fictional study of the effects of military training on the human psyche is but one example of a critical voice which attempted to show the downsides of the 'war to end all wars' next to its widely propagated humane aims. One of the earliest stories to seize upon moral quandaries inherent in the waging of a 'just' war is Joseph Conrad's "The Tale", written and published in 1917, which has already been discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to its various publishing contexts.

Celia Kingsbury looks at the moral element in "The Tale" as a description of war-induced insanity caused by rumor, hatred and anxiety.²⁰³ With respect to a crossing of moral boundaries, and sanity threatened or suspended by exceptional circumstances, she compares Conrad's only war story with other works of the author such as his short story "The Return" and the novella *Heart of Darkness*. "The Tale" conveys an idealised conception of war and warfare, both indirectly through the naval officer's disgust at sabotage (he is described as being "in revolt against the murderous stealth of methods and the atrocious callousness of complicities that seemed to taint the very source of men's deep emotions and noblest activities"),²⁰⁴ and directly through the officer's statements on war, which he compares to love: "Everything should be open in love and war. Open as the day, since both are the call of an ideal which is so easy, so terribly easy, to degrade in the name of Victory" ("Tale" 653). Conrad thus presents us with ideals of how war should be waged, only to show that in war even a man of high ideals and best intentions may find himself in a situation where his ideals become questionable and he is exposed to the risk of erring fatally. The intuition that prompts the naval officer to send the suspicious ship to its doom is imbued with a strong sense of righteousness: "At that moment he had the certitude. The air of the chart-room [on the suspicious ship] was thick with guilt and falsehood

²⁰³ Celia M. Kingsbury, "'Infinities of Absolution': Reason, Rumor, and Duty in Joseph Conrad's 'The Tale'." *MFS* 44.3 (1998): 715-729.

²⁰⁴ Joseph Conrad, "The Tale." *Best Short Stories of the War: An Anthology*. Ed. and introduced H.M. Tomlinson (New York: Harper, 1931) 653.

braving the discovery, defying simple right, common decency, all humanity of feeling, every scruple of conduct" ("Tale" 661-662). According to his instincts, the naval officer is in the right to act as he does, following as he is his own humanity of spirit – and yet he finds himself tormented by doubt:

I believe – no, I don't believe. I don't know. At the time I was certain. They all went down; and I don't know whether I have done stern retribution – or murder; whether I have added to the corpses that litter the bed of the unreadable sea, the bodies of men completely innocent or basely guilty. I don't know. I shall never know ("Tale" 664).

In a tone that frequently borders on the elegiac, Conrad combines appealing magazine fare – the mystery of a nebulous love affair and thrill of a crime story in which the naval officer is the investigator – with the discussion of serious moral anxiety.

Moral dilemmas are discussed with more humour, but not lacking in essential seriousness, in 'Sapper's' wartime oeuvre of short stories. Always told by a good-humoured, amiably sarcastic narrator who is himself an officer in the regular army, 'Sapper's' stories repeatedly entertain through their treatment of seemingly impossible quandaries and coincidences that put into question basic human values. In "The Motor Gun" (1916), the soldier-narrator claims to be telling a tale on behalf of his friend O'Rourke. O'Rourke, a professional soldier on leave in London, finds out to his great disappointment that the girl he meant to marry is secretly engaged to a German whom she had met before the war. Recalled to the front after the first German gas attack, O'Rourke encounters none other than Moyra's German fiancé, who is operating a hidden motor-gun behind British lines. O'Rourke fights and kills the man in a rare case of single combat without knowing who he is, only to find a picture of Moyra on him afterwards, and is in the awkward situation of having to explain to her how he came to kill her future husband. The narrator's protestations that the incident is merely an unfortunate coincidence are devalued by O'Rourke's realisation that his case is no black-and-white affair, and that the war has effectively put him in a situation from which, one suspects, there is no morally right way out: "But," I cried, "good heavens! Man – it was you or he." "I know that," he answered, wearily. "What

then? He evidently loved her”.²⁰⁵ The final verdict, the narrator feels, rests with the woman whose fiancé has been killed, and must be based on emotional rather than rational criteria:

Look you, my lady, it was a fair fight – it was war – it was an Englishman against a German; and the best man won. And surely to Heaven you can't blame poor old Dick? He didn't know, how could he have known, how... but what's the use? If your heart doesn't bring it right – neither my pen nor my logic is likely to (“Motor Gun” 126).

An even more dramatic dilemma informs another of ‘Sapper’s’ war stories, “The Fatal Second” (1916). Here, a young officer promises his fiancée Patricia to protect her younger brother Jack at the front. Instead of being able to save him, however, the officer has to shoot Jack himself because he falters and threatens to fall behind during an attack. Unable either to be truthful to Patricia regarding her brother’s cowardice, or to marry her without telling her that he is the killer of her brother, the principled young officer returns to the front and deliberately sacrifices his life in saving a wounded man. His situation is more tragic than that of O’Rourke in “The Motor Gun”, as the killing of his friend and future brother-in-law is a strategic decision made for the good of the regiment, and could arguably have been avoided. In a perverse coincidence, the scenario had previously been discussed by Patricia and her fiancée in a purely hypothetical sense. The young woman argues in favour of personal responsibility and humanity, opposing her fiancé’s conception of soldierly duty:

‘But the awful thing, Jerry,’ said Pat quietly, ‘is that you would never know whether it had been necessary or not. It might not have spread; he might have answered to your voice – oh! a thousand things might have happened.’

‘It’s not worth the risk, dear. One man’s life is not worth the risk. It’s a risk you just dare not take. It may mean everything – it may mean failure – it may mean disgrace’.²⁰⁶

In this case, personal duty stands pitted against duty towards one’s country, and whichever path the young officer chooses, he will necessarily fail either his

²⁰⁵ Herman Cyril MacNeile [‘Sapper’], “The Motor Gun.” *Sapper’s War Stories: Collected in One Volume* (1930. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) 125. First published in the *Strand Magazine* in June 1916, subsequently collected in *Men, Women and Guns* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).

²⁰⁶ Herman Cyril MacNeile [‘Sapper’], “The Fatal Second.” *Sapper’s War Stories: Collected in One Volume* (1930. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) 466. First collected in *Men, Women and Guns* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).

fiancée or his country. His only solution to this ethical conundrum is sacrificial suicide.

Not only personal choices came to be scrutinised in First World War stories, but also large-scale policies and their impact on the individual. The issue of conscientious objection, perhaps surprisingly, hardly features in popular Great War short stories even after the signing of the Armistice, and if it does, is treated in a negative light. Although John Galsworthy was a liberal-minded man whose compassion for interned Germans in Britain during the war will be discussed below, his sympathies were not with pacifists and conscientious objectors. In his story "The Peace Meeting", written in 1917 and collected alongside other war stories in his volume *Tatterdemalion* (1920), those opposed to the war are given short shrift. The story focuses on two pacifists, very different in character, who attend a peace meeting in a church. One of them, Colin Wilderstock, is a feeble elderly gentleman who begins to support the peace-movement only when he feels that the death toll of the war is rising too high, but he still abhors the Germans and is shown to half-consciously resent his own weakness. The other, John Rudstock, is a vigorous man who opposes the war simply because he always opposes any cause approved of by a majority. A crowd of outraged soldiers soon breaks up the peace meeting. Although the soldiers behave violently, Galsworthy portrays them as rough but upstanding patriots who spare the ladies, and have the sympathies of both the police and Wilderstock on their side. While Wilderstock and the rowdy soldiers are portrayed ambiguously as well-meaning but misguided, Rudstock is shown unsympathetically as a hypocrite and troublemaker. Having just fought the disruptive soldiers by hurling chairs at them and dealing out punches, Rudstock claims hypocritically, "I came, as you know, because I don't believe in opposing force by force. At the next peace meeting we hold I shall make that plainer".²⁰⁷

This reluctance on the part of popular short story writers even after the end of the war to vindicate conscientious objection may in part derive from a sense of continuing respect for soldierly sacrifice, which served to taint those as cowards who had chosen to spend the war in prison, despite the hardships connected with that choice. In his popular history of conscientious objection

²⁰⁷ John Galsworthy, "Peace Meeting." *Tatterdemalion* (London: Heinemann, 1920) 142.

during World War I, the journalist Will Ellsworth-Jones reports how even as late as 2002 public opinion on conscientious objection is by no means unanimously positive. When English Heritage established a memorial garden for sixteen conscientious objectors imprisoned in Richmond Castle during the war, local residents opposed the idea: “‘Why should we have a living memorial to sixteen people who refused to fight for their country?’ asked one town councillor, while a retired major who lived in the town said the commemoration of these ‘cowards’ showed a ‘twisted sense of values’”.²⁰⁸ Outside of the sympathetic circles of the No-Conscription Fellowship and some Christian and socialist organisations, conscientious objectors were and continued to be represented in negative terms ranging from effeminate coward over degenerate criminal to national danger.²⁰⁹

The most notorious issue to be discussed after the war was that of the justification for court-martial executions. While desertion in general continued to be regarded, uneasily, as a cowardly act meriting stern punishment, it was also increasingly felt that the particular circumstances of individual cases ought to be taken into consideration. In the mounting anti-war climate, the death sentence for desertion became a political issue between liberals and pacifists on the one hand and military and conservative forces on the other. A debate in the House of Commons, reported in *The Times* on 30 March 1927, reflects these altered post-war views on desertion. A Mr. R. Morrison, Labour M.P. for Tottenham North, was reported to have “moved a new clause to abolish the death penalty in the class of cases which involve cowardice and desertion on active service”, arguing that in “the conditions of modern warfare it was just a chance whether a man came out of an engagement to be decorated for bravery or shot for cowardice”.²¹⁰ The question of whether or not the death penalty was appropriate was not, claimed Morrison, “a military question to be decided by Army opinion, but a humane one to be decided by a knowledge of human nature” – thus arguing from the same individualised, inter-personal standpoint as the young woman in ‘Sapper’s’ “The Fatal Second”. Morrison’s suggestion was seconded by a fellow Labour M.P., who further claimed that “there was general agreement that cowardice on the

²⁰⁸ Will Ellsworth-Jones, *We Will Not Fight: The Untold Story of the First World War’s Conscientious Objectors* (London: Aurum, 2008) 5.

²⁰⁹ Lois S. Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conscientious Objectors to Military Service during the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009) 15-16.

²¹⁰ “House of Commons. Army (Annual) Bill.” *The Times* 30 March 1927: 8.

battlefield was due to nervous failure”, which would render any harsh penalties an injustice towards a sick man. This argument once again draws attention to altered attitudes towards bravery and manliness after the war, and the centrality of shell-shock as a new psychological phenomenon. Shell-shock as a mitigating circumstance for breaches of military law was a particularly difficult subject, as psychological symptoms were hard to determine objectively, and shell-shock must have been a tempting excuse for unacceptable behaviour even to those who were not suffering from any genuine mental impairments.²¹¹ As might be expected, Morrison’s proposal was opposed by a military man, Lieutenant-Colonel A.L. Ward, who felt that discipline had to be maintained. His objections echo in the words of military historian Corrigan, who argues against the myth of unjust court-martial executions during the Great War by stressing the necessity and use of military law in upholding discipline and ensuring the functioning of the army:

The whole purpose of military law is to maintain the discipline of the army, and acts and omissions that in civil law may be mere breaches of contract (such as desertion or disobedience to orders) must, by the very nature of what the army is for, be made offences that attract penalties; and these penalties must be more severe in wartime, when the effects of transgression are more serious (Corrigan 216).

Corrigan also points out that every soldier should have been familiar with military law and the consequences of offences such as desertion, as sections were regularly read out to recruits and soldiers on parade (Corrigan 221). Moreover, while the death penalty was a possible penalty for desertion, it was dealt out sparingly and carried out even less frequently – the majority of men sentenced to death were subsequently pardoned. The table below gives official figures of soldiers who were executed during the First World War, and shows that the scenario of being ‘shot at dawn’ after a court-martial applied to only 346 out of several million British soldiers:²¹²

²¹¹ As Gordon Corrigan points out, men “suffering from psychological stress are not always responsible for their actions. The British army in the First War [sic] recognised this, and accepted that battle casualties included what they termed ‘neurasthenic’ cases. The difficulty, as with gas injuries, was that ‘shell shock’ was easier to fake than a physical wound, and was a defence often seized upon by offenders with no other excuse for their behaviour” (Corrigan 234).

²¹² Table showing what offences had been committed by those men who were actually executed, as opposed to those sentenced to death and then pardoned (Corrigan 230).

Mutiny	3
Cowardice	18
Desertion	266
Murder	37
Striking or using violence to a superior	6
Disobedience to a lawful command	5
Sleeping at post	2
Quitting a post without authority	7
Casting away arms	2

Those short stories that deal with the issue of desertion, however, tend to work on the assumption that a death sentence once made will be carried out regardless of the circumstances. Even Alfred Noyes, who had supported the British war effort by publishing a range of rabidly anti-German spy stories with seemingly little sympathy for cowardice of any description, penned a dramatic renunciation of the death penalty for deserters in his post-war short story “Court-Martial” (1924). His protagonist is 35-year-old office clerk George Mason, married with a small son, who enlists in autumn 1914, and initially makes a good recruit despite his thoroughly civilian background. Mason realises the inhumanity of the war and of the military machine when, going up to the frontline to attack, his company is ordered to let a soldier stuck in a mud-hole drown so as not to be delayed, and when he is subsequently splattered in the blood of a comrade killed right next to him. Mason suffers a nervous breakdown, falls behind and decides suddenly and without considering the consequences to go back and try to save the man in the mud-hole. Unsuccessful in this endeavour (the man has already drowned), Mason still feels he has to escape from the war machine and manages to hide for four weeks before being caught. He is sentenced to be shot for desertion, but feels comforted in his last hours by an encounter with the A.P.M.²¹³ of his battalion – by sheer accident the kindly man who recruited him back home – who understands that Mason is neither a coward nor a scoundrel, but simply an

²¹³ A.P.M. is short for Assistant Provost Marshal, the officer in charge of military police for a specific army unit.

ordinary civilian whose nerves have given way for once and who is now 'unjustly' punished for it. Noyes begins his story, which is told by a sympathetic yet largely invisible narrator using primarily dialogue and scenic presentation, by informing the reader of Mason's nervous disposition, stemming back to early childhood. Mason is also described as physically inferior:

Mr. Mason's undernourished physique hardly suggested a warlike disposition. He stood about five feet four inches in his socks. He had the round shoulders and narrow chest of a confirmed desk-worker; and he had to be very careful about catching cold.²¹⁴

Despite these shortcomings, the recruiting sergeant who convinces Mason to join up encourages him to take up a military life for the benefit of his health, and Mason, out of conscientiousness and a readiness to oblige, enlists. His time in the army seems unreal to the homesick Mason, and it appears as if he stumbles into desertion by pure chance: "He hardly realised this phantasmagoric quality of his life until he found himself – one might almost say awoke and found himself a prisoner, not of the enemy, but of his own countrymen" ("Court-Martial" 225). He is tried and sentenced for an offence that, as the narrator puts it (anticipating somewhat Corrigan's description of the difference between civil and martial law), "had no legal existence in civil life; but, in the Army, was a serious crime and punishable with death" ("Court-Martial" 225). Mason remains a civilian in thoughts and habits despite his readiness to "do everything in his power to help his country" and thus his perception of his deed and its evaluation in the light of martial law clash irreconcilably:

All through the trial, he was conscious that everyone was doing his best to be fair and to give him every chance of acquittal, if he could only somehow prove that he had lived up to a standard that had never been his own. He could not even express this idea, of course, in his defence. He merely became eloquent in describing his motives, and the description was quite enough to condemn him in the eyes of those alien judges. [...]

The difficulty was that Private Mason was not really a soldier, but a civilian in khaki, and that he and his judges moved in absolutely different worlds ("Court-Martial" 241).

Mason's predicament is to some extent related to what Eric Leed explains in his study of combat and identity in the First World War by drawing on the so-called

²¹⁴ Alfred Noyes, "Court-Martial." *Hidden Player* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924) 221.

'cultural-patterning model', namely that "restraints upon aggression learned in the process of socialization are not purely external rules and inhibitions that can be left behind with civilian clothes. If restraints upon aggression are truly learned, they become constituent elements in the personality of the citizen-soldier."²¹⁵

Despite a good deal of pathos, "Court-Martial" is by no means an inferior piece of work, and it is far more complex both in structure and outlook than it seems at first sight. Noyes's narrator is sympathetic to Mason, whose 'failure' he presents not simply as cowardice, but as the clash of two irreconcilable mindsets. The Army is likewise not presented as simply evil, but rather as an efficient system with its own rules and regulations, which are too inflexible to accommodate the particulars of Mason's case, and cannot afford to spare him lest a host of Masons act as he did and abandon their post. Mason's A.P.M. and former recruiting officer is used as the only mouthpiece – down-to-earth and Cockney-accented – of direct criticism when he deplures at length the shooting of "one 'o the pluckiest little volunteers" he has known ("Court-Martial" 245-246). In the officer's opinion, Mason's is a case of nervous breakdown and should have been treated as such. The narrator certainly reinforces this diagnosis. In describing Mason's desertion, the story links a traumatic childhood experience with his moment of doubt and indecision at the front that leads to his desertion ("he felt as helpless as the child in the dark garden when the ghost clutched him by the hair" ["Court-Martial" 230]). He is also described as "shaking uncontrollably from head to foot" ("Court-Martial" 230) after he has been sprayed with the blood of his comrade and subsequently stumbled into a destroyed trench full of body parts. Noyes's story offers those readers – although, as we have seen, a minority – who had to live with the shame of their dead husband or son's cowardice, a means of acknowledging that their own experience of loss differed from the officially sanctioned and commemorated loss of heroes killed in action. The particular circumstances of Mason's desertion serve to justify his offence in the eyes of a civilian readership, not simply for the reasons outlined above, but also because of the immediate cause of his breakdown. By the mid-twenties, the

²¹⁵ Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 9.

figure of the soldier drowning in mud had become a notorious and haunting image that recurs time and again in descriptions of the front, particularly in connection with the battle of Passchendaele.²¹⁶ Mason's desertion is thus turned into an event readers could relate to by aligning themselves with the protagonist's humanity in the face of the inhumanity of the war. While stories such as "Court-Martial" were for the most part consigned to the cultural archive of the war rather than incorporated in its functional memory, recent attempts to include formerly marginalised actors of the war such as deserters or conscientious objectors in the popular consciousness of the Great War may result in these accounts resurfacing in due course.

Another such post-war short story drawing attention to the human aspects of desertion and its punishment is John Galsworthy's "Told by the Schoolmaster", written in 1925. A village schoolmaster relates the story of his pupil Jim Beckett, who is court-martialled and shot for desertion despite the fact that he is underage, and left the front only to be with his very young wife and newborn child. In this case, the young deserter has no claims to shell-shock or mental breakdown, but has committed the offence purely out of youthful ignorance and concern for his wife and child. Just as Noyes's narrator stresses his protagonist's status as a volunteer, so does Galsworthy's story centre on the fact that young Jim is not only a volunteer, but was also underage when he enlisted. Nevertheless, the tragedy in Galsworthy's story lies in the fact that, once accepted for service, Jim is subject to the laws and rules of the military just as any other man. His age and particular mitigating circumstances cannot outweigh the severity of his offence: he has deserted from the front line, in face of the enemy, and is duly executed. Like Noyes's Mason, Jim Beckett holds the sympathies and regret of all, including military personnel, yet the army is not blamed for his death; rather, it is the cruel irony of life itself that the narrator of this story holds accountable. He finishes his tale by stating blandly that "there's no moral to a

²¹⁶ On the impact of the mud, or 'slimescapes', of the Western Front on soldiers and civilians alike, see Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) chapter 1.

true tale like this – unless it be that the rhythm of life and death cares not a jot for any of us!”.²¹⁷

While men who became deserters because they broke down under the strain of war could expect some degree of public sympathy after the end of the war, the same did not apply to those who deserted to the enemy and supplied information. The Belgian Chamber voted in favour of a bill granting amnesty to wartime deserters in June 1937, excepting those who had surrendered to the enemy and supplied information, with a majority of 139 over nineteen and only seven abstentions.²¹⁸ Men’s nerves could give way, but their loyalty and patriotic conscience was expected to hold fast, in Britain as much as in Belgium. This attitude of leniency towards those who failed the test of military pressure only if they were ‘innocent’ – underage, mentally unstable or frail – was visible as recently as 2001, when the Shot at Dawn Memorial designed by Andy de Comyn was unveiled in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. The memorial is modelled on an underage deserter and suggests that desertion was always a matter of conscience or breakdown rather than an act of cowardice or self-interest.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ John Galsworthy, “Told by the Schoolmaster.” *Forsytes, Pencyces and Others* (1933. London: Heinemann, 1936) 162. Previously published in *Argosy* in May 1927; more recently anthologised in Trudi Tate, ed., *Women, Men and the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995).

²¹⁸ “Amnesty for Belgian War Deserters.” *The Times* 5 June 1937: 13.

²¹⁹ On the implications of the Shot at Dawn Memorial, see Jonathan Black, “Thanks for the Memory: War Memorials, Spectatorship, and the Trajectories of Commemoration, 1919-2001.” *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory, and the First World War*. Ed. Nicholas J. Saunders (London: Routledge, 2004) 134-148.

3.6 Espionage, the enemy and home-front anxieties

British First World War short stories addressing specifically the subject of Germans and Germany fall into two categories. While one presents Germans as a threat and describes German atrocities as a justification for Britain's involvement in the war, the other, smaller group empathises with naturalised Germans living in Britain who were adversely affected by the war between their country of origin and their adopted country. In accordance with the different approaches to the enemy, the two groups of stories adopt different popular forms as the most conducive to their message. While the spy thriller seems to have been the medium of choice for stories condemning Germans, sympathetic tales tended to adopt the melodramatic mode.

The Great War was rationalised by and for the British public as a righteous struggle for the values of civilisation and humanity against a foe portrayed as either dangerous or outright inhuman, a line of argumentation centring in particular on the cause of invaded Belgium, but also on the potential threat of invasion that permeated pre-war invasion fiction. This was not simply the result of brainwashing propaganda. Brian Bond stresses that most British citizens in 1914 would have considered Germany's invasion of France as a serious threat to European civilisation that needed to be countered by a "liberal crusade against uncivilised behaviour" (Bond 7). German political and military decisions, such as unlimited submarine warfare and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the introduction of poison gas, the destruction of historic buildings and cultural artefacts in Belgium and France, or the execution of Nurse Cavell, facilitated the exploitation of these convictions in British propaganda. The Bryce report (or Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages), was an inquiry into German war crimes in Belgium and France commissioned by the British government in early 1915, and published shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Despite post-war criticism of the report's embellishments, German war crimes were most certainly perpetrated, and the effect of the Bryce Report on British and international public opinion was profound. It lent official confirmation to any rumours of rape, murder and mutilation committed by the German army in the occupied territories, and helped to convince the public of the justness of Britain's participation in the war. Apart from such official sources of

atrocities propaganda, whose impact has frequently been exaggerated, mechanisms of word-of-mouth propaganda contributed to a negative image of the enemy and justification of the war effort in terms of German 'frightfulness'.²²⁰

Amongst those short story writers foremost in highlighting German 'frightfulness' and justifying the British war effort was Frederick Britten Austin. Britten Austin's stories almost unfailingly portray the German enemy as inhuman and cruel. A particularly sensational choice of subject is visible in Britten Austin's "A Problem in Reprisals" (1919), one of several similarly themed stories written for and published in the *Strand Magazine* shortly after the end of the war. The story is set in a German village occupied by a French battalion just after the end of the war, much to the dismay of its inhabitants:

The scared faces of slatternly women, obsequiously gesturing the mud-stained French soldiers into occupation of their cottages, turned to look anxiously at them as they passed, in evident apprehension of the order which should let loose a vengeful destruction only too probable to their uneasy consciences.²²¹

The rhetoric is as obvious as it is inflammatory: German women are 'slatternly', and their consciences must be fraught, in complete disregard of the fact that the majority of the German population felt Germany had been justified in declaring war. In contrast to his unflattering description of the defeated enemy, Britten Austin depicts the French soldiers as behaving decently towards the defeated Germans. The battalion-commander, his captain and medical officer are billeted with a pretty young war widow, in whose house the doctor finds a porcelain clock that he had been given by his wife, lost in German-occupied Cambrai during the war. He realises that he is in the house of the man who in all likelihood killed his wife. His method of verifying his suspicion is deeply implausible and builds on parapsychological assumptions. To gain certainty, the French doctor calls in his landlady and places her under deep hypnosis, then uses the porcelain clock as a channelling device that allows the hypnotised woman to witness and describe the terrible events in the doctor's house. The young widow suffers terribly under

²²⁰ In his recent cultural history of Britain at war, Adrian Gregory demonstrates through meticulous analysis of wartime newspapers that phenomena such as the urban myth and everyday gossip did far more to spread and exaggerate stories of German atrocities than any news reports or official statements. Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) chapter 2.

²²¹ Frederick Britten Austin, "A Problem in Reprisals." *Strand Magazine* 57 (March 1919): 165.

what she is made to witness: her husband's attempt to rape the doctor's wife, and the wife's suicide. Ultimately, however, the French officer decides to make her forget what she saw despite his thirst for retribution. The question of revenge and reparation is clearly the prominent issue addressed by this story. A corresponding strategy is visible in E. Temple Thurston's "The Nature of the Beast" (1918). This story, like Britten Austin's, was published in the *Strand Magazine* shortly after the end of the war. In this short story, a former business partner of her father's, now a captain in the German army, rapes Anna, a young Belgian woman. Anna and her family manage to escape to England, where she marries an English flying corps captain. Anna's new husband knows nothing of the rape until Captain Kleinenberg reappears in 1922, under his new identity of Belgian businessman M. Barradell. Blackmailed by Kleinenberg, Anna finally summons up the courage to tell her husband everything and despite her fear that the knowledge will estrange them, her husband puts the blame solely on Kleinenberg, thrashes him and returns to his wife as loving as ever. The story stresses in a rather sensational tone the unforgivable nature of German atrocities. In a conversation between Anna and her husband, the latter tries to convince her that stories of German atrocities were exaggerated, claiming that "many of the stories we heard at that time were given us just to inflame our passions of revenge, to stimulate the spirit for war. We painted the Germans as bad as we could – that is war. That's the way of it".²²² In the context of the story's reality, Anna of course knows this to be false, and the readers share in her knowledge because they, too, 'know' about her rape. The husband's statement anticipates post-war political trends of the late 1920s, when British sympathies for the former enemy rose in the light of the harsh reparation demands inflicted on Germany under the Versailles Peace Treaty. Thurston's story appears to both foresee and seek to forestall any sentiments that might prompt the British public to relent towards the German enemy.

Spy stories were both a subgenre that was particularly popular during the war and a reaction to a major concern for many contemporary readers. The spy craze that swept through Britain following the outbreak of the war and that led, among other things, to the retirement of Lord Louis of Battenberg (later

²²² E. Temple Thurston, "The Nature of the Beast." *Strand Magazine* 56 (December 1918): 394.

Mountbatten) as First Sea Lord on 27 October 1914, and the eventual renaming of the royal family from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor on 17 July 1917, has been amply documented.²²³ They stand in close relation to a climate of general hysteria and suspicion towards France and Germany rampant in the latter decades of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, made visible most tellingly in a particular category of pre-1914 war fiction, the so-called 'invasion literature'. Cecil Eby goes as far as diagnosing British society with a "grave national psychosis" concerning the threat of a potential invasion; a fear so deeply rooted that it not only inspired writers of all descriptions, but was also impervious to "appeals to logic, common sense, or statistics relating to naval tonnage" (Eby 11). The term 'invasion literature' broadly refers to prose fiction, both novels and short stories, addressing the state of the nation and alleged threats of a foreign invasion of the British Isles, rendered likely by decay in British moral and physical stamina. Examples of this kind of invasion fiction are George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), William Butler's *The Invasion of England* (1882), William le Queux's *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894), as well as the probably best-known example, Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903). Bergonzi stresses that these novels are part of a surprisingly long-lived trend, originating in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 (Bergonzi 23-24). Adult and juvenile readers alike were encouraged to believe firmly in the omnipresence of German spies:

Spy novels were widely read during the war years, reflecting and reinforcing the belief that the country was beset by agents of the Kaiser. Many stories were especially written for younger readers, while some authors like William Le Queux and John Buchan were read by both adults and adolescents (Paris, *Over the Top* 131).

Between the last decade of the nineteenth century and August 1914, invasion stories, sometimes in serial form, also appeared in the pages of boys' magazines, in which the young heroes thwart plans for foreign invasion at the last minute.²²⁴

²²³ For comprehensive studies on anti-German propaganda in British literature and culture during the Great War, see among others Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977); M.L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Gary S. Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992).

²²⁴ For an overview of adolescent invasion fiction pre- and post-1914, see Cadogan and Craig 26-28.

These texts conveyed values such as patriotism, sacrifice and courage by showing such virtues to be threatened and British masculinity to be in danger of feminisation – with the heroes’ valiant efforts as the redeeming exception. Their depiction of daring action and traditional male virtues echoes in many stories and novels written during and even after the First World War, such as Ernest Raymond’s novel *Tell England: A Study in a Generation* (1922) or the war stories of ‘Sapper’ H.C. MacNeile. Fired by idealism (in Raymond’s case), or grit and determination (in ‘Sapper’s’ case), the fictional heroes of these texts face up to hardships and even death with a fitting degree of courage and stoicism, putting their country and the moral value of their actions first.

Given both literary precedents and the general political climate of the decade before the war, it is not surprising that fears of espionage and German sabotage were reflected in a great number of popular stories during the war. By mid-1915, 19,000 male Germans had already been interned, and many more were to be repatriated with their families, while London’s East End witnessed anti-German riots and lootings, and newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* warned of Austrian and German waiters pretending to be Swiss. The wartime spy story seems to prove a case in point supporting Cawelti’s observation that:

the spy story as a formula that depends on the archetype of heroic adventure requires a basic antagonism between hero and villain. The specific symbols or ideological themes used to dramatize this antagonism reflect the network of assumptions of a particular culture at a particular time. The creation of a truly intense antagonism may well involve pushing some of these assumptions to extremes that would not be accepted by most people in areas of life other than fantasy (Cawelti 33).

Under conditions of war, heroes and villains are particularly easy to come by, and a number of Great War spy stories do require a good deal of good faith from their readers. ‘Popular’ spy stories reflect complex anxieties on the part of the primarily civilian readers: obvious worries about national security and infiltration, a sense of being shut out from the main action of the war and the wish to actively help the war effort when one could not join the army, and concerns about British capability to win the war against an opponent seen as both ruthless and efficient. At the same time, other short stories betray a humorous awareness of the absurdity of some anti-espionage measures, or

address the predicament of German-born fellow citizens in an 'enemy' country during the war. A prominent example of the persecution suffered by Germans living in Britain at the time is D.H. Lawrence, who experienced severe sanctions and drastic curtailments of his personal freedom due to the fact that he was married to German Frieda von Richthofen, a distant cousin of German flying ace Manfred von Richthofen.²²⁵

The vast majority of wartime spy stories repeat formulaic patterns. The basic plot is simple, but allows for a great deal of variation: a German spy, or agent in German pay, attempts to sabotage the British war effort. Thanks to the patriotic alertness of a British citizen, frequently aided by a certain clumsiness of the spy's disguise, the enemy is discovered and arrested, and catastrophe averted. Not infrequently, the same author would produce several stories written to the same successful formula, as is the case, for instance, with one of the *Strand's* best-selling storywriters, Harold Steevens. In the *Strand Magazine* alone, Steevens published two spy stories during the war that are almost identical in set-up: "The Sentry Post at Cowman's Curl" (1915) and "Schmitt's Pigeons" (1916). Both stories feature a female heroine who saves her country from grave danger, and both cater to an audience thrilled by the prospect of active participation in the war. The plots of both stories appear hair-raisingly contrived to the modern reader, but Steevens takes great care to supply sufficient detail to make his stories appear at least within the realm of the possible. In "Schmitt's Pigeons", the courageous wife of a naval officer, Mrs. Gondula Egerton, exposes as a spy naturalised German-British subject Hans Kultur Schmitt, who lives in England under the name of Andrew Graham Malcomson. Travelling to a Northern port to meet her husband, Mrs. Egerton shares a railway carriage with Schmitt, and her suspicions are aroused by the unusually large amount of sandwiches Schmitt eats. While Schmitt visits the restroom, she checks his picnic basket and discovers two messenger pigeons. Mrs. Egerton alerts the guards on the train, the spy is arrested and, we are told, subsequently commits suicide in prison. It turns out that he had been signalling to the German air force in preparation of an air

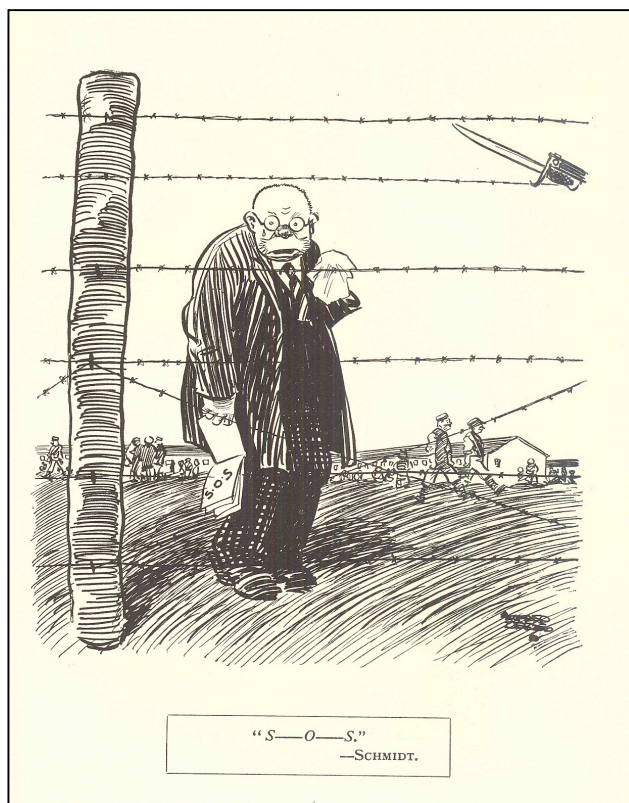
²²⁵ The Lawrences' persecution at the hands of civil and military authorities is described in greater detail in Paul Delany, *D.H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and his Circle in the Years of the Great War* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1979) 315-320, and is addressed in Lawrence's post-war novel *Kangaroo* (1923).

raid, which fails because the investigating Mrs. Egerton had accidentally exchanged the birds and the wrong message had been sent. Steevens's style in "Schmitt's Pigeons" is sparse and matter-of-fact, resembling the language of news reports, attempting to invest the story with an element of reality.

Steevens's "The Sentry Post at Cowman's Curl", on the other hand, borrows some elements of conventional romance and combines them with its spy plot, and its language is more sensational. Young New Army soldier Roland saves beautiful Claudine Dorrington from being run over by a train while he is on sentry duty along the rail track. They fall in love, and Claudine begins to visit him at his level-crossing with flasks of coffee, where before long she in turn is able to save his life: one professor Blinkhorn, a lodger in Claudine's house, turns out to be German spy and saboteur Blinckhörnstein. Blinckhörnstein attempts to kill Roland and explode the rail tracks, but is prevented from doing so by Claudine, who pours hot coffee in his face and enables Roland to overpower the man. In the light of the general spy hysteria of 1914-18, one can only suppose that the notion of a German spy with the middle name 'Culture' signalling from a train using homing pigeons, or of a pretty girl thwarting a saboteur with a flask of coffee, would have seemed, if not entirely plausible, then at least possible. Given that pre-war literature such as Jerome K. Jerome's fictional account of a cycling tour through the Black Forest, *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900) or Katherine Mansfield's first collection of short stories, *In a German Pension* (1911), described Germans as either obsessively consuming or talking about food, it is perhaps not surprising that the spy in "Schmitt's Pigeons" is discovered because he eats too many sandwiches.²²⁶ Despite the claims of exasperated reviewers such as Harold Hannyngton Child, who observes in his review of Marie Belloc Lowndes's spy novel *Good Old Anna* (1915) that "most authors of spy-stories load their tales up with wild doings in which no one can believe, and which would have the effect (if they had any effect) of persuading one that there are no German spies in

²²⁶ Although Mansfield's *In a German Pension* temporarily disappeared from view when its original publisher Stephen Swift & Co. went bankrupt, it had quickly run into three editions upon its first publication, and Mansfield was approached by "one or two publishers" at the outbreak of the First World War who felt that its ridicule of Germans would guarantee good sales in the current climate (John Middleton Murry in his "Introductory Note" to the Constable edition of 1929).

England”,²²⁷ the public was evidently entertained by the vast array of somewhat improbable spy stories. In adult and juvenile fiction alike, German spies are usually, as Krista Cowman observes, portrayed as simultaneously dangerous and pathetic, exposing themselves to detection by uttering incautious exclamations in German or expressing patriotic sentiments that fit ill with their assumed disguise.²²⁸ These fictional portrayals are mirrored in popular artwork such as the “Schmidt the Spy” cartoons by Alfred Leete (1882-1933), first published in the weekly *London Opinion* and later collected in Leete’s book *Schmidt the Spy and his Messages to Berlin* (1916). Schmidt, who is despatched to Britain in a crate of Dutch cheese and proceeds to bumble and blunder in the best fashion of magazine spies, assumes a range of wildly comic disguises that never quite hide his ‘typically German’ walrus moustache, misinterprets everything he sees, and finally ends up in a British prison camp (see illustration). The use of messenger pigeons as a means of betrayal and sabotage is likewise a typical element of spy



tales reflected in newspaper articles and memoirs. Gerard De Groot has observed drily that the First World War and its attendant spy hysteria made it “a bad time to be a pigeon in Britain” (De Groot 158), quoting a news report from *The Scotsman* of 16 September 1914 which told of the plight of pigeon owners and reminded the populace that the wilful shooting of homing pigeons was illegal.

Arthur Conan Doyle’s treatment of the espionage

²²⁷ Harold Hannington Child, Rev. of *Good Old Anna* by Marie Belloc Lowndes. *Times Literary Supplement* 11 November 1915: 404. I am indebted to Jane Potter’s *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print* for alerting me to the review. The originally anonymous reviewer Hannington Child is revealed in the *TLS Centenary Archive*.

²²⁸ Krista Cowman, “‘There Are Kind Germans as Well as Brutal Ones’: The Foreigner in Children’s Literature of the First World War.” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31.2 (Apr. 2007): 106.

subject is both more serious and more politicised. Doyle, being too old for active service, put his writing at the disposal of the War Propaganda Bureau, alongside a wide and disparate range of writers including other well-known authors such as Sir James M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, Hall Caine, G.K. Chesterton, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, W.J. Locke, John Masefield, A.E.W. Mason, Sir Henry Newbolt, H.G. Wells, Israel Zangwill, Rudyard Kipling and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.²²⁹ Other writers, such as Ford Madox Ford, produced anti-German writing independent of a government commission. Conan Doyle did not even stop short of resuscitating once more his most enduringly popular literary character, Sherlock Holmes, in moral support of the war effort:

On a tour of the French sector during the Verdun campaign, after a French general had asked him what Holmes had done in the war, Doyle replied that he was 'trop vieux pour service.' Later, presumably as a contribution to the war effort, he determined to bring Holmes back and to show his invaluable service to the government. The result was published in *Strand Magazine* (September 1917) as 'His Last Bow: An Epilogue of Sherlock Holmes,' a spy story in the worn groove of William Le Queux (Eby 196-197).

Eby aptly terms "His Last Bow" a "Sherlock Holmes, especially packaged for wartime consumption", and Cawelti and Rosenberg find that the story demonstrates "how the theme of espionage could be synthesized with the structures of mystery and detection".²³⁰

Unlike almost all other Sherlock Holmes tales, "His Last Bow" is not narrated by Watson as a first-person narrator, but by a largely neutral third-person narrator, who increases the mystery and suspense of the story by leaving its readers in the dark as to the real identity of Sherlock Holmes until the very last. The plot is simple yet effective and takes place exclusively in and around the country house of German agent Ambassador Von Bork, head of a network of German spies operating in Britain prior to the outbreak of the war. On 2 August 1914, when Von Bork is about to leave the country, he finds himself fooled and arrested by Sherlock Holmes. In order to convict von Bork for his illegal

²²⁹ Doyle's and other writers' work for the Propaganda Bureau and their enthusiastic support of the war effort are treated amongst others in Buitenhuis 13-18; Keith Grieves, "Depicting the War on the Western Front: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Publication of The British Campaign in France and Flanders." *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History*. Eds. Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 215-232.

²³⁰ John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Spy Story* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 40.

activities, Holmes had cooperated with the ambassador's elderly English servant, Martha, and assumed the disguise of 'Altamont', an Irish-American patriot recruited by Von Bork as an agent for Germany. The German spy may have been tricked and trapped by the mastermind of the famous detective, but unlike Steevens's Schmitt, Von Bork is no bumbling idiot and certainly not an object of derision. He is intelligent, methodical, and has successfully deceived the British political establishment by adopting the character of a keen sportsman and socialite. His crucial mistake, however, lies in underestimating the determination and resourcefulness of his British enemies, and their capacity to act once war breaks out, visible in his derisive description of English national character to the secretary of the German legation:

Von Bork laughed.

'They are not very hard to deceive,' he remarked. 'A more docile, simple folk could not be imagined.'

'I don't know about that,' said the other thoughtfully. 'They have strange limits and one must learn to observe them. It is that surface simplicity of theirs which makes a trap for the stranger. One's first impression is that they are entirely soft. Then one comes suddenly upon something very hard, and you know that you have reached the limit [...]. They have, for example, their insular conventions which *must* be observed.'

'Meaning, "good form" and that sort of thing?' Von Bork sighed, as one who had suffered much.²³¹

Doyle has Holmes himself describe the English mentality in a similar, if more positive vein: "The Englishman is a patient creature, but at present his temper is a little inflamed and it would be as well not to try him too far" ("His Last Bow" 1443). Conan Doyle uses his villain and hero alike as mouthpieces for his own political convictions, as when Von Bork talks about the British lack of preparation for war in 1914, claiming that "as far as the essentials go – the storage of munitions, the preparation for submarine attack, the arrangements for making high explosives – nothing is prepared" ("His Last Bow" 1428). From the

²³¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, "His Last Bow." *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Vol. 2. Ed. Leslie S. Klinger (New York: Norton, 2005) 1426. A similar description of the English as hard under a soft shell is provided by Alfred Noyes's spy Krauss in "Uncle Hyacinth", who finds himself unable to quite make out the character of the young naval officer who arrests him: "The young officer smiled and saluted the ladies again. He was a very ladylike young man, Mr. Neilsen had thought, and an obvious example of the degeneracy of England. But Mr. Neilsen's plump arm was still bruised by the steely grip with which that lean young hand had helped him aboard, so his conclusions were mixed". Alfred Noyes, "Uncle Hyacinth." *Walking Shadows* (London: Cassell, 1918) 53.

retrospective of 1917, Doyle can criticise previous British unpreparedness, while at the same time showing through Sherlock Holmes's triumph over the arrogant Von Bork that British pluck and ingenuity may yet triumph. While Doyle's narrative technique and more sophisticated ways of building up suspense by playing on the shared ignorance of reader and characters alike distinguish "His Last Bow" from the spy stories discussed above, its basic plot – evil spy tricked and overpowered by resourceful patriot – matches those of less elaborate 'popular' spy tales.

In an earlier story, also published in the *Strand Magazine*, Conan Doyle similarly presents a conventional plot in a novel manner. In "The Prisoner's Defence" (1916), it is a young British officer who has successfully exposed a spy and prevented a potentially fatal exposure of Allied plans of attack on the Western front. Unconventionally, the spy here is a young woman, living in England under the assumed personality of young French governess Ena Garnier. The 'Prisoner' of the story's title is Captain John Fowler, formerly engaged to and subsequently found guilty of shooting Ena. Fowler had met the beautiful young woman while billeted with her employers, and fallen in love with her. Since Ena claimed to be French and seemed to hate Germany with great passion, he had incautiously given away the date of an Allied attack to her, only to discover her true identity by accident. Trying to prevent her passing on the date, he had shot her dead when she attempted to escape on a motorcycle. The story is set up as a tale within a tale, beginning with a short preamble outlining Captain Fowler's situation as standing accused of the crime, followed by Fowler's statement in court relating all the particulars. The ending is open, and ostentatiously leaves the moral decision up to the reader as Fowler closes his statement with a courageous appeal to the jury:

These are the facts, gentlemen. I leave my future in your hands. If you should absolve me I may say that I have hopes of serving my country in a fashion which will atone for this one great indiscretion, and will also, as I hope, end for ever those terrible recollections which weigh me down. If you condemn me, I am ready to face whatever you may think fit to inflict.²³²

²³² Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Prisoner's Defence." *Strand Magazine* 51 (February 1916): 122.

Like Sherlock Holmes in "His Last Bow", Fowler seems to be a literary refutation of pre-war anxieties about the decline of British masculinity. He is active and virile, yet capable of moderation and constraint, and not the least of his qualities is his firm conviction of his moral superiority.

As stated above, however, some stories offer a more reflexive, critical stance on the First World War 'spy craze' and its darker aspects, most importantly the internment of British citizens who were naturalised Germans. While the idea of ordinary citizens on the look-out for spies on their way to work may appear comical, the general climate of hysteria and mistrust had a palpably negative effect on Germans living in Britain, even those who had acquired British citizenship or were married to British subjects. Although popular novelist John Galsworthy donated all his literary income to the war effort and various relief funds, and worked for the War Propaganda Bureau, he also wrote a number of stories about the plight of Germans in Britain during the war. This was most likely due to personal circumstances: Galsworthy's sister Lilian was married to the Bavarian painter Georg Sauter, who – much to the writer's indignation – was interned during the War. Galsworthy is a particularly interesting writer since he can be placed on the threshold between 'popular' and 'literary' authors; a writer who wrote quality fiction geared towards a well-educated audience yet worked firmly within the boundaries of popular genre conventions, and with no contempt for successful sales. Galsworthy's "The Bright Side", written in 1919, is a scathing denunciation of security measures and internment. It is the story of a German craftsman who has lived and worked in London for twenty-five years and has been married to an Englishwoman for twenty. Max Gerhardt, father of three children, finds himself helplessly enveloped by the anti-German sentiment that spreads in England after the outbreak of the war and that affects him and his family. Mostly from the perspective of his wife, Dora, the reader is shown how Mr Gerhardt's internment and the many little cruelties and humiliations the family are subjected to even by neighbours and friends bear them down, so that even Mr Gerhardt's eventual return home after the end of the war cannot set their lives to rights any more. Gerhardt is a broken man, borne down by the weight of the injustice done to him, and the family's happiness is ruined for good. This is a particularly sentimental story, dwelling at length on the moral superiority of its

protagonists to highlight the injustice done to them. The simplicity of its narrative style, deeply sympathetic with the Gerhardt's plight, places in sharp relief their goodness and their victimisation by a hostile environment permeated by spy-hysteria and vindictiveness. Mr. Gerhardt is described as a "harmless, busy little man", ²³³ a kind father and loving husband, always ready to help others, as is his gentle Cockney wife Dora. In "The Bright Side", Galsworthy voices criticism of the hatemongering in the British press, describing the dismay of the story's Anglo-German protagonists at finding themselves reviled in the newspapers:

Reading their papers – a daily and a weekly, in which they had as much implicit faith as a million other readers – they were soon duly horrified by the reports therein of 'Hun' atrocities; so horrified that they would express their condemnation of the Kaiser and his militarism as freely as if they had been British subjects. It was, therefore, with an uneasy surprise that they began to find these papers talking of 'the Huns at large in our midst,' of 'spies,' and the national danger of 'nourishing such vipers.' They were deeply conscious of not being 'vipers,' and such sayings began to awaken in both their breasts a humble sense of injustice, as it were ("Bright Side" 77).

Gerard De Groot and others, who note that it was perfectly possible for a German travelling five miles without permission to be sentenced severely for the offence, describe the reality underlying the fictional suffering.²³⁴ Despite its popular sentimentality and simple, conventional narrative style, "The Bright Side" is expressive of real moral outrage. It predates the relenting of public opinion towards Germany and Germans that characterised the second half of the 1920s. The year 1920 still saw the publication of anti-German stories such as Frederick Britten Austin's "From the Depth" (published in the February issue of the *Strand Magazine*), a story that continues to address German atrocities during the war and certainly shows no signs of relenting. Britten Austin was only one of the many authors who, once the conflict had ended, "found it remarkably difficult to forget the hymn of hatred they had espoused during the war" (Paris, *Over the Top* 18).

²³³ John Galsworthy, "The Bright Side." *Tatterdemalion* (London: Heinemann, 1920) 74.

²³⁴ See De Groot 157. In their oral history of the war, Richard van Emden and Steve Humphries document various experiences of Anglo-German families resembling closely those of the fictional Gerhardts; see Richard Van Emden and Steve Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* (London: Headline, 2003) chapter 3.

Even for those who have no claim to conventional moral superiority Galsworthy could find empathy and compassion. In his story "Defeat", published as the previous two in his collection *Tatterdemalion* (1920) but written as early as 1916, Galsworthy addresses the situation of a genuine outcast: a young German woman living in England who is forced to disguise as a Russian and earn her keep through prostitution. Outside a concert hall during the war, a young New Army officer on sick leave meets the young prostitute and is moved by her tears of homesickness. They talk about the war, the girl's proclaimed cynicism and lack of belief in any human values, but just as they strike up a moment of mutual understanding, newspaper boys proclaim a British victory over the German army. The young woman, enraged by the young officer's thoughtless cheering, refuses the money he has offered her out of pity and defensively intones the patriotic German song 'Die Wacht am Rhein'. The conversation between the two characters serves to illustrate the situation of Germans in Britain at the time, and the strength of anti-German feeling. While the young soldier himself bears no real grudge towards enemy soldiers, he is forced to realise that civilian opinion is considerably harsher:

'Well, suppose I am still a good girl, as I was once, you know, and you took me to some of your good people, and said: "Here is a little German girl that has no work, and no money, and no friends." Your good people they will say: "Oh! How sad! A German girl!" and they will go and wash their hands.'

Silence fell on him. He saw his mother, his sisters, others – good people, he would swear! And yet – ! He heard their voices, frank and clear; and they seemed to be talking of the Germans. If only she were not German as well!²³⁵

The story, composed of alternating dialogue and the young soldier's thoughts rendered as narrated monologue, has its protagonists speak for themselves in a simple yet touching manner. The German girl expresses her disillusionment with the value and morality of Germans and Allies alike, in what is clearly a rendition of a German accent, but a subtle, perceptive rendition of slight mispronunciations and grammatical quirks that is not comparable to the crude mockery of German idiom in stories such as Stevens's or Kipling's:

'I don't even hate the English – I despise them. I despise my people too – perhaps more, because they began this war. Oh, yes! I know that. I despise all the peoples.

²³⁵ John Galsworthy, "Defeat." *Tatterdemalion* (London: Heinemann, 1920) 38-39.

Why haf they made the world so miserable – why haf they killed all our lives – hundreds and thousands and millions of lives – all for not'ing? [...] Now I believe no'ting at all' ("Defeat" 40-41).

The young prostitute's speech is thus rendered in a manner that, although it highlights her foreignness, allows readers to sympathise with her rather than prompting ridicule. The young officer is shaken by his encounter with the German prostitute because it shows him an ambiguity inherent in the war that he had not been aware of before; a dark side to a conflict that had seemed to him straightforward and "heroic" ("Defeat" 39-40). A similar note of sympathy is struck in Radclyffe Hall's "Fräulein Schwartz", written and published almost a decade after the war.²³⁶ Hall's story portrays an elderly German spinster, stranded in a London lodging-house on the outbreak of the war. She has no relatives left in Germany, and her only friend is her cat Karl-Heinrich. With anti-German sentiments rising steadily, she is more and more isolated amongst her fellow lodgers. When the housemaid's lover is killed at the front, she poisons Miss Schwartz's cat. Devastated by the hatred behind the act and the loss of her only friend, Miss Schwartz drowns herself in the Thames.

Criticism of the general spy hysteria could also sometimes take on humorous form, such as in Blanche Wills Chandler's "Our Catch" (1917). The narrator of this story, fifteen-year-old Patricia, and her twelve-year-old brother Bimfield, are trying to aid the war effort in their own way. Unfortunately, they fail at everything they attempt: they spoil the food for the soldiers at the local Soldiers' Institute, cause a traffic accident while carrying messages for the Red Cross, and hit their rich uncle with a sandbag thrown out of window to test its quality. Depressed by these numerous failures, they are determined to catch a spy described in the local newspaper. When they find a man who seems to fit the description, they follow him around trying to trick him into betraying himself, and finally pounce on him in an attempted arrest, only to find that he is a British general on vacation. Mortified and severely disappointed, the two children apologise, but the general is amused rather than angry and, sensing their disappointment, explains to them that at least they have afforded his troops at

²³⁶ Radclyffe Hall, "Fräulein Schwartz." *Women's Writing on the First World War*. Ed. Agnès Cardinal (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 13-31. First published in *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* (London: Heinemann, 1934).

the front something to laugh about with their escapades. The children's efforts at exposing the 'spy' are comical indeed, and seize upon many clichés about how a German spy might inadvertently give away his identity: young Bimfield tries to provoke a reaction by playing "God Save The King" over and over on his mouth-organ (unsurprisingly, the 'spy' reacts with signs of exasperation, which the children take as a sign of his abhorrence for the British national anthem rather than disgust at the boy's deficient musical talents), and the narrator takes the General's whistling of a piece by Wagner as the ultimate proof of his identity:

In the meantime he was sloping off behind a bunker humming a tune as he went. The air was familiar to me. I'd had to practise one beastly bar five hundred times over, the term before the war. I grabbed Bim by the arm.
'Lohengrin!' I whispered.
'How much?' said Bim.
'A rotten piece of music chock-full of sharps and flats written by a pig of a German.'
Bim's eyes blazed. 'Come on,' he said, and we sprinted over the green.²³⁷

Their exploits, while primarily aimed at winning "a smile from one man in the trenches or lighten for one moment a heavy heart at home" (Chandler i), as stated in the preface to *Tommies Two*, can yet be seen as humorous social criticism and a warning against overly enthusiastic attempts to see danger where there is none.

As we have seen, established modes and generic conventions were used to write the enemy in First World War stories set at the home front. The spy story allowed not only for an open voicing of anxieties with a safety buffer of fictionality, it also simultaneously served to alleviate these fears by portraying the ultimate futility of German attempts at sabotage and infiltration. Not least of all, it gave readers a sense of participation in the war effort. By constant vigilance, these stories suggest, every man (and woman) may indeed do their duty, even without leaving British soil or taking up munitions-making. More humanitarian concerns about naturalised Germans in Britain, on the other hand, voiced by Galsworthy and others, seem to employ a melodramatic mode as a matter of course. It is the familiar sentimentality of melodrama that would have guaranteed their stories a greater appeal, and elicited sympathy from readers

²³⁷ Blanche Wills Chandler, "Our Catch." *Tommies Two* (London: Sampson Low, 1917) 155.

still under the influence of wartime propagandist representations of German 'frightfulness'.

Inter-war stories continued the popularity of espionage themes, but show a decidedly different approach to the subject in keeping with the sympathetic tone of Galsworthy's stories about interned and persecuted Germans. Once wartime spy-hysteria subsides, inter-war stories of the later 1920s take an altogether different stance on espionage. Empathy and belated understanding for the former enemy characterise John Buchan's tale "The Loathly Opposite", published in Buchan's 'dinner story' collection *The Runagates Club* (1928).²³⁸ The narrator of this story – a code-breaker during the war from 1917 onwards, and before that an intelligence officer stationed in India – had encountered a particularly pernicious code during the last months of the war. Although he eventually succeeded in cracking it, he had not been able to stop wondering about the true identity of their opponent, answering to the code-name Reinmar. After the war, the narrator falls ill with severe digestive problems, and is eventually referred to a German doctor running a little 'Kurhaus' in Saxony, one Dr Christoph. The doctor manages to cure him, and it is only on the last evening of his stay that the narrator discovers the truth about the doctor: during the war, Christoph had also been engaged in intelligence work, and turns out to be the mysterious Reinmar – his code name being the name of his dead son. In response to an altered political climate, the story shows the enemy as humanised: "[Dr Christoph] sat staring beyond me, so small and lonely, that I could have howled. I put my hand on his shoulder and stammered some platitude about being sorry".²³⁹

A particularly successful example of inter-war spy stories are the stories collected in W.S. Maugham's *Ashenden, Or, The British Agent*. First published in 1928, this volume was reprinted twice in 1928, another two times in 1929, once each in 1931, 1934, 1938, twice again in 1948 and 1951, once in 1950 and finally

²³⁸ Buchan's own involvement in the war as a well-meaning writer of propaganda, both in his position as advisor and publisher to the Edinburgh publishers Nelson and Sons and in the employment of the Press Bureau, is outlined in Kate MacDonald, "Translating Propaganda: John Buchan's Writing During the First World War." *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History*. Eds. Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 181-202.

²³⁹ John Buchan, "The Loathly Opposite." *Runagates Club* (1928. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930) 190.

in 1956, and with its anti-heroic stance was praised as the first example of realistic spy fiction (Cawelti and Rosenberg 44-45). All stories are loosely based on Maugham's own experiences working abroad for the secret service during the war. Their popularity may partly be explained by their claim to authenticity, as well as the popular appeal of their author. In "The Traitor", British agent Ashenden has been ordered to Lucerne to track down the traitor Grantley Caypor, an Englishman married to a German woman. The couple live in neutral Switzerland, and Caypor has been discovered to receive wages from the German Intelligence Department, for whom he had apparently been working since before the war. Caypor now has to be taken out of business, as he has recently caused an Allied spy to be executed on a mission to Germany, and it is Ashenden's task to try and win the man over to the British side by offering him better wages. Getting to know the couple, Ashenden tries to get to the bottom of Caypor's treachery and to understand both the man and his stern and patriotic but loving German wife. After he has coaxed Caypor back into England, where he is arrested, tried and shot, Ashenden feels sympathy for the traitor's wife, who evidently suffers. Counter-espionage and the thwarting of enemy plans is here no longer presented as a straightforward patriotic act; rather, they are an ambiguous business resulting in conflicts of sympathy and humanity with duty and loyalty.

3.7 Soldiers returned: spiritualist and ghost stories of the Great War

In his study *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Jay Winter devotes some space to the connection between the experience of the First World War and a rising interest in spiritualism. Winter notes the growth of belief in spiritualism during and in the aftermath of the conflict, claiming that spiritualist practices were "one of the most disturbing and powerful means by which the living 'saw' the dead of the Great War, and used their 'return' to help survivors cope with their loss and their trauma" (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 54). Winter shows spiritualism to be a late Victorian movement that gained new followers in the wake of the First World War, and points out the importance of prominent supporters such as Arthur Conan Doyle (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 54-59). In one of his short plays dealing with the Great War, published in 1918, J.M. Barrie shows a dead son returning to his father after a séance to reassure him about his death in action and his

continued existence on a higher plane.²⁴⁰ Confronted with death and dying in many new and disturbing ways, particularly in the new context of largely stationary trench warfare, combatants also had to find new ways of coping. In many cases, these new ways were but a reinterpretation of old superstitions. Jay Winter has noted that a belief in spectres and the uncanny proliferated among frontline soldiers due to the “appalling stress of combat” (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 64-65). Paul Fussell likewise observes that an abundance of spiritual myths and ghostly rumours circulated amongst soldiers on the Western Front, such as the notion that no man’s land was inhabited by hordes of “half-crazed deserters from all the armies” (Fussell 123), in some cases believed to be plundering, killing and feeding on corpses at night. Kipling in particular responds to soldierly superstitions and a general readiness to believe in the supernatural in his war stories, in which the ghosts of murdered Belgian children haunt a complacent German matron and a soldier commits suicide in the arms of his dead lover’s ghost.²⁴¹ But Kipling was not the only writer to react to spiritualist and supernatural tendencies. Other writers, many of them with at least some first-hand experience of life at the front, also treat soldiers’ belief in the supernatural.

Winter scrutinises the proliferation of myths and legends at the front, beginning with the Agincourt bowmen at Mons first introduced by Arthur Machen,²⁴² and points out that these legends serve a clear purpose in that they “quieten and reorder the world” after the shock, clamour and disorientation of battle (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 67). He describes further the very pertinent impression that the frontline was ‘hell on earth’, an “otherworldly landscape, the bizarre mixture of putrefaction and ammunition, the presence of the dead among the living, literally holding up trench walls from Ypres to Verdun, suggested that the demonic and satanic realms were indeed here on earth” (Winter, *Sites of*

²⁴⁰ See James Matthew Barrie, “A Well-Remembered Voice.” *Echoes of the War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918) 127-168.

²⁴¹ See Rudyard Kipling, “Swept and Garnished.” *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917. London: Macmillan, 1952) 407-418, and “A Madonna of the Trenches.” *Debts and Credits* (1926. London: Macmillan, 1949) 239-261. Winter observes that Kipling’s stories, like the works of other writers, “drew on wartime legends and tell, in a highly ambiguous manner, of the spiritualist way of remembering the dead after the war. [...] This literature recreated the uncanny world of the soldiers and brought home, as Kipling had done, their mixed language of irony, humour, and superstition” (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 73).

²⁴² See Arthur Machen, “The Bowmen.” *The Collected Arthur Machen* (London: Duckworth, 1988) 300-302. First published in the *Evening News* in September 1914.

Memory 68-69). This idea of the front as hell is reflected, amongst others, in some of R.H. Mottram's war stories, particularly "The Devil's Own". In Mottram's short story, capable and steady-nerved officer Skene is shaken in his rationality by several encounters with a ghostly ambulance that appears to be deliberately killing men – either by burning them, exploding with them, or running them over. He initially disbelieves in its supernatural origin, but begins to think that it must be a malevolent spectre when he witnesses it killing and then disappearing into thin air, and hears that similar incidents have taken place repeatedly without anyone ever being able to trace the origins of the mysterious ambulance to a depot or organisation. The uncanny nature of the demonic ambulance clashes almost comically with thoroughly methodical British army administration when a Royal Army Service Corps officer visits the frontline to look into the mysterious ambulance explosions and to collect evidence for a Court of Inquiry. Skene and the R.A.S.C. officer witness the ghostly ambulance together:

There was certainly a devilish clatter on the road. [...] They both gasped with surprise, when one, and one ambulance only, bore in sight, in the star-shell flicker. It came quite alone, slowly, sonorously as an ironmonger's shop adrift, strangely visible and audible. They were more astonished at its steady pace. Suddenly Skene shoved his companion violently, and leapt aside. The thing, with a sudden grinding spurt, had rushed right at them.²⁴³

Mottram's ghostly ambulance is a spectre updated for the twentieth century, a malevolent supernatural force in modern guise. A less malevolent but nevertheless eerie view of the 'otherworldly' experience of the frontline is given in C.E. Montague's "A Trade Report Only". Montague, an essayist and journalist in civilian life, briefly served on the Western Front before being transferred to army intelligence due to his age, as he was already forty-seven when the war broke out, well beyond the age for both voluntary enlisting and conscription. Montague's story was published as part of a collection of war stories, *Fiery Particles* (1923), and describes humorously yet sensitively the eerie atmosphere that could envelop soldiers in the trenches. The officer-narrator gives an account of an episode he witnessed while stationed in a part of the front called The Garden, a stretch of trench located in an old apple orchard. There, an Irish private

²⁴³ Ralph Hale Mottram, "The Devil's Own." *Ten Years Ago: Armistice and Other Memories Forming a Pendant to 'The Spanish Farm Trilogy'* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928) 110-11. Also published in *Great Short Stories of the War*. Ed. H.C. Minchin (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1930).

saves his company the risk of a raid on enemy lines when he identifies the enemy battalion by means of a clever ruse: he captures a dog belonging to one of the German soldiers, makes his own way towards the enemy trenches, and somehow manages to negotiate a trade-in of the dog for the desired information. The Garden's peculiar, otherworldly feel is described with some relish at the outset of the story:

If you never were in the line there before the smash came and made it like everywhere else, you could not know how it would work on the nerves when it was still its own elfish self. And if you were there and did know, then you knew also that it was no good to try to tell people. They only said, "Oh, so you all had the wind up?" We had. But who could say why? How is a horse to say what it is that be-devils one empty place more than another?²⁴⁴

Like so many aspects of frontline experience, *The Garden*²⁴⁵ is labelled as incommunicable to outsiders, an experience that cannot be shared. Part of its eeriness is due to the closeness yet invisibility of the enemy, but the narrator feels that this circumstance alone cannot explain the effect the place has on the men's nerves. It is the inexplicable silence which soldiers on both sides find impossible to break that contributes to the 'elfish' atmosphere, and that produces an otherworldliness which makes it appear as if everything in *The Garden* was "on queer terms with reality", and all its attributes "only symbols of things that were real elsewhere" ("Trade Report Only" 214).

Winter further describes how, to soldiers surrounded by death and unburied corpses, a return of those who have died must have seemed a plausible idea. This sense of being in close touch with those who have passed, he states, allowed ideas of a 'return' of the dead to thrive both at the front and in popular consciousness at home, leading to its expression in literature: "Both during and after the war, tales of the return of the fallen were common, and produced a form of popular literature linking front and home front in a kind of spiritualist embrace" (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 69). David Williams agrees with Winter that "In prose fiction, too, as well as in memoirs and war poetry, 'the return of the dead from the field of battle' [...] reveals a widespread longing of Britons and

²⁴⁴ Charles Edward Montague, "A Trade Report Only." *Fiery Particles* (1923. London: Chatto & Windus, 1936) 211.

²⁴⁵ The name 'The Garden' may justifiably be read as an ironic allusion to the Garden of Eden, particularly in the light of its 'fall', that is, its transformation into just another small stretch of frontline, in the 'smash' of large-scale attack.

Germans, as well as French, to make sense of unimaginable losses".²⁴⁶ This return, however, was not necessarily a happy or comforting one as in Barrie's short play mentioned above, but could equally be an expression of fears and anxiety over the dead. In Charles Neville Brand's short story "The Returned" (1932), for instance, written and published over ten years after the end of the war but set in its midst, returning soldiers pose an eerie threat to the living. The fallen here do not return on a mission of consolation, but to admonish the living with their presence. In Brand's tale, a suspicious stranger carrying a hazel twig like a divining rod is seen walking about close to the trenches. Soon after he has first been sighted, men previously killed in action begin to reappear and rejoin their units in an uncanny, silent, half-asleep state. They seem dazed, but are otherwise entirely healthy. Their advent spreads fear among the men who knew them before they died, and causes endless administrative problems: wives have remarried and are now faced with charges for bigamy; pensions have already been awarded and casualty lists become useless. The returned men are eventually transferred to a concentration camp so as to give the authorities time to decide on a course of action. Morale among the men in line sinks, since they are all more afraid of being resurrected to a strange half-life than they were before of being killed:

Better to die and have done with it, was the attitude. War was war, and if a man were killed – well, he had finished! There was something hideous in the prospect of being called back to walk among your comrades, feared, untouched – among them, but no longer of them.²⁴⁷

The resurrections are connected with the suspicious stranger when an infantry captain spots the man using his divining rod to recall dead soldiers to life. Since the returned men themselves seem unable to give information about their resurrection, the stranger is arrested and taken charge of by a general, who wants him to recall to life his only son, recently killed. The stranger seems ready to comply, but when he hears that the general intends to send the young man back into the line, he refuses. When the army subsequently decides to send all

²⁴⁶ David Williams, *Media, Memory, and the First World War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2009) 4.

²⁴⁷ Charles Neville Brand, "The Returned." *Best Short Stories of 1932*. Ed. Edward J. O'Brien (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932) 65. Previously published in *This Quarter* in March 1932.

returned soldiers back into active service, the resurrected men drag the general in charge with them and are accidentally killed by British guns. Besides being a thrilling, suspense-laden supernatural tale, Brand's story may be read as a strong pacifist message stressing the finality of the damage caused by the war, and perhaps as a scathing commentary on spiritualist attempts to communicate with those who had been killed. "The Returned" has no main protagonist as such, and is presented from multiple perspectives of a range of British officers and soldiers. Brand's tone is sparse and journalistic, his narrator unobtrusive, so that readers are left to interpret events for themselves. The overall message is clear, however, and voiced by one of the story's numerous protagonists: "It's horrible – it's all wrong" ("Returned" 63). Equally wrong are the feelings of the general who wants to see his son resurrected, not to see him alive again, but to send him back to the war:

[I]n the father's heart there was a sudden leap of joy. If – if the thing were true, he could have a legion of unconquerable men whom nothing would ever destroy. In his fancy he saw them, a band of soldiers such as the world had never seen, impervious to death, destined to fall only to be brought back again to the fullness of life and energy. And his son would be one of them! ("Returned" 67-68).

This desire, which horrifies the stranger, must seem equally unnatural to the reader. While the stranger's aim is to give back to the dead man "happiness – the wind and the rain and the sunlight and the years that were due to him", the General wants to "give him back his career – his work that is not finished" ("Returned" 68). The stranger duly refuses to resurrect any more men, declaring the magic he has been using to be broken by the General's attempt to abuse it. Resurrection, the story suggests, even if it were possible, would not happen on the terms of the bereaved, and could not restore what is lost in the same form. Brand's story is a covert admonition to allow the dead to be dead, to let go and accept their absence.

3.8 Expressing war and violence in modernist war stories

As we have seen with reference to stories addressing shell-shock and war-related injury, a range of short stories written for a variety of audiences explore the violence of war, such as a great proportion of 'Sapper's' war fiction, or Isabel Wylie's intriguing analysis of pent-up soldierly aggression in "All Dressed Up". In the majority of stories, however, violence as brutality or sadism – as opposed to manly violence in keeping with 'fair play' – is with few exceptions ascribed only to the enemy, most poignantly so in Britten Austin's tales depicting Germans as both ruthless and cruel. If employed by British protagonists, on the other hand, violence tends to be violence of retribution. The writers scrutinised below write violence differently. They explore the effect of violence not only on the body, but also on the mind, and look beyond violent action at the motivations, fears and consciousness behind it. Violence is seen not as something the enemy employs and one's own side is forced to respond to, it is part of human nature and yet remains inexplicable and damaging. The violence of war is no longer ascribed to the agency of the enemy: rather, the condition of war itself engenders brutality and harm, even in those who are ostensibly fighting for a just cause. Mary Borden's prose sketches and stories in particular share similarities with the canonised (anti-) war poems by the 'trench poets' in their outlook on war and the figure of the soldier as victim, not perpetrator, in blatant disregard of the fact that, as Joanna Bourke has pointed out, "[t]he characteristic act of men at war is not dying, it is killing" (Bourke, *Intimate History* 1). Herbert Read's story by contrast is more reminiscent of his own poem "The Happy Warrior" in its depiction of the soldier who is both agent and object. The stories of both writers are, however, characterised by sometimes visibly strained attempts at finding new means to express perceptions of violence and its effects, employing modernist and futurist techniques with varying degrees of success, reflected in Cyril Falls's criticism of Borden's sketches as "sincere and sometimes powerful, but often over-mannered" (Falls 267). For writers like Borden and Read, writing and fictionalising their war experiences is clearly also a form of self-therapy, a laying bare of troublesome memories in the hope that exposure will effect cure. Richard Aldington similarly considered the writing of his war novel *Death of a*

Hero and subsequent war stories a strategy of writing to purge the war out of one's system.²⁴⁸

Although an American citizen by birth, Mary Borden is included in this study owing to the fact that she spent most of her adult life in Britain.²⁴⁹ Living in England at the outbreak of the war, Borden used her own funds to set up a mobile field hospital for French soldiers and served as a nurse there throughout the war.²⁵⁰ Her collection *The Forbidden Zone* (1929) was published alongside a wide array of male memoirs and war novels in the so-called 'war books boom' of the late 1920s and early 1930s and contains prose sketches, stories and poetry, most of them strikingly experimental for the time. All pieces in *The Forbidden Zone* – named after the French term for the frontline area out-of-bounds for civilians, *la zone interdite*, as Borden points out in her preface – have strong autobiographical roots. Indeed, Borden insists in her preface on the grounding of her poems, sketches and stories in reality: Ariela Freedman stresses Borden's claim to veracity, pointing out that Borden "relegates 'Artifice' to falsehood and her own account to reality, fact, and truth. But despite her attempts, this is a compromised truth, what she calls [in her preface] 'a dim reality reflected through these pictures' – not the thing itself" (Freedman 114).

The Forbidden Zone maps the Western Front from the perspective of a non-combatant in close contact with combatants, an amateur nurse thrown into the disturbing and demanding environment of a busy field hospital. As such, the narrator of Borden's sketches, who is a volunteer nurse like the author herself, is placed in a position from which she can observe at first hand the impact of war's violence on the human body and psyche, but also on the landscapes and towns of Belgium and the Somme. In contrast to most of her other work, Borden employs experimental, disjunctive techniques to convey the sense of dislocation caused by her war experience. Borden describes the pieces in her collection as "fragments

²⁴⁸ See Michael Copp, *An Imagist at War: The Complete War Poems of Richard Aldington* (London: Associated UP, 2002) 18.

²⁴⁹ Borden in fact describes herself as "an English nurse" in one of her stories: Mary Borden, "The Two Gunners." *The Forbidden Zone* (London: Heinemann, 1929) 170. All subsequent references to stories from *The Forbidden Zone* refer to this edition.

²⁵⁰ Marcia Phillips McGowan provides useful biographical information about Borden and her voluntary work at the front in her article "'A Nearer Approach to the Truth': Mary Borden's *Journey Down a Blind Alley*." *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 16.1-2 (2004): 198-210. See also Khan 117-23; 126; 182.

of a great confusion”, yet claims that she has involuntarily toned down her descriptions, “blurred the bare horror of facts and softened the reality in spite of myself” because she felt “incapable of a nearer approach to the truth”²⁵¹ – the dilemma of incommunicability so frequently encountered in soldiers’ writings about the Great War. In an effort to convey her experience to readers who had experienced the war on the home front, Borden experiments with a variety of techniques to depict yet veil the gruesomeness of field hospital reality and the devastation of war. Freedman describes *The Forbidden Zone* as a montage, a collection of differing fragments that frequently resort to “strategies of dislocation that destabilise the reader” (Freedman 110), such as adopting the viewpoint of war machinery or representing humans as things, and things as sentient beings. The ravaged landscape of Belgium in her initial sketch “Bombardment”, for instance, is described in anthropomorphic terms, suffering as if it were human. Relating the experience of an air raid on a small town, Borden personifies the buildings, while the inhabitants are described as ants milling about in confusion: “Suddenly a scream burst from the throat of the church tower. For an instant the sky seemed to shiver with the stab of that wail of terror rising from the great stone throat.”²⁵² The wail refers to an air-raid siren installed in the church tower, but the reader has to infer this; within Borden’s text the anthropomorphism is retained consistently throughout. Alternatively, the war as a cause for devastation and barrenness is relegated to natural causes in the narrator’s imagination. The sound of the guns is frequently compared to the sound of waves breaking heavily on a shore, and the wasted landscape in one instance attributed to a dried-out, salty ocean: “A bare sea bottom, strewn with bits of iron, coils of wire, stones. No sign of life, no fish fossils, or rotting seaweed, no plant of any kind, not a blade of green; a dead sea must have lain here.”²⁵³ Borden’s struggle to find expression for her experiences does not, however, necessarily result in a successful piece of modernist writing. Her imagery in these prose sketches often appears strained and artificial, but this

²⁵¹ Mary Borden, Preface. *Forbidden Zone* vi. Substantial parts of *The Forbidden Zone* were reprinted in a collection edited by Margaret Higonnet, *Nurses at the Front: Writing the Wounds of the Great War* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 2001). Its prose contents were recently republished in Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone*. Ed. Hazel Hutchison (London: Hesperus, 2008).

²⁵² Mary Borden, “Bombardment.” *Forbidden Zone* 6.

²⁵³ Mary Borden, “The City in the Desert.” *Forbidden Zone* 110.

strain and artificiality in itself does successfully reflect the difficulty of representing war to readers who have not been directly exposed to frontline realities themselves.

By means of an interesting reversal of Borden's strategy for personifying landscape and architectural structures, she has a tendency to refer to the pain and injuries of the wounded soldiers she nurses in terms of landscape imagery. Describing one of her patients, Borden compares him to a rock quarry, and his pain to a heavy sledge hammer working away at the stone: "His sightless face reminded one of the face of a rock in a sandstone quarry, chiselled with a pick-axe, deeply gashed. His closed eyes were caves under bushy cliffs, his battered mouth a dark shaft leading down into a cavern where a hammer was beating."²⁵⁴ Witnessing the pain of others and reporting it appears to be easier if the suffering human being is transformed, in the narrator's imagination, into an inanimate object, a doll or puppet. An injured patient is described as "something that was not very like a man. The limbs seemed to be held together only by the strong stuff of the uniform. The head was unrecognisable. It was a monstrous thing, and a dreadful rattling sound came from it."²⁵⁵ Dead soldiers similarly are described as scarcely recognisable as human beings:

But how queer they are! How strangely they lie there. They are not the usual shape. They only remind one of men. Some, to be sure, are wearing coats, and some have on iron hats, but all of them seem to be broken and tied together with white rags. And how dirty they are! ("City in the Desert" 115).

Alternatively, the wounded soldiers can be reduced merely to their injured body parts, as in this instance of a nurse speaking to a surgeon in the field hospital: "There's a knee for you, doctor, and three elbows. In five minutes I'll send in the lung".²⁵⁶ Borden's narrator herself recognises the need to disassociate patients from her existing mental conception of men, and takes the logical next step of dehumanising herself for the purpose of survival:

There are no men here, so why should I be a woman? There are heads and knees and mangled testicles. There are chests with holes as big as your fist, and pulpy thighs, shapeless; and stumps where legs once were fastened. There are eyes – eyes of sick dogs, sick cats, blind eyes, eyes of delirium; and mouths that cannot

²⁵⁴ Mary Borden, "Rosa." *Forbidden Zone* 95.

²⁵⁵ Mary Borden, "Blind." *Forbidden Zone* 139.

²⁵⁶ Mary Borden, "In the Operating Room." *Forbidden Zone* 129.

articulate; and parts of faces – the nose gone, or the jaw. There are these things, but no men; so how could I be a woman here and not die of it?²⁵⁷

Borden and her narrator are keenly aware of the precariousness of her position in terms of medical ethos. Her task is to help injured men recover and nurse them back to health, only to see them posted back to the front, where they may be wounded again, or killed. This cycle of violence, of injury and healing in the service of war, is again depicted in terms of inanimate objects, the soldiers being compared to broken tools or torn shirts:

It is all carefully arranged. Everything is arranged. It is arranged that men should be broken and that they should be mended. Just as you send your clothes to the laundry and mend them when they come back, so we send our men to the trenches and mend them when they come back again. You send your socks and your shirts again and again to the laundry, and you sew up all the tears and clip the ravelled edges again and again just as many times as they will stand it. And then you throw them away. And we send our men to the war again and again, just as long as they will stand it; just until they are dead, and then we throw them into the ground.²⁵⁸

Borden's sense of overwhelming destruction can be found in a range of literary and artistic works depicting the war in general and the battlefields of the Western Front in particular. The experience of war's destructive power and its effect on landscapes and human bodies is one of the most pervasive themes in First World War art and an integral part of the war's material culture:

After battle, the land was strewn with spent shells, shrapnel, smashed artillery, lingering gas, unexploded ordnance, and the fragments of men – the definitive artefacts of industrialised war. Everything was broken and in pieces, the differences between war *matériel* and human beings elided perhaps for the first time in human history. This is seen clearly in memoirs, newspaper reports and official accounts of the time, where the language used to describe such events included words such as 'skeleton', 'gaunt' and 'broken', in such a way that imagery phases in and out between landscape, village and human corpse.²⁵⁹

Making frequent and heavy-handed use of repetition in an effort to mirror the numbing effects of hospital routine and to convey her sense of futility, Borden describes the effect of war in a before-and-after picture. Strong, healthy men

²⁵⁷ Mary Borden, "Moonlight." *Forbidden Zone* 60.

²⁵⁸ Mary Borden, "Conspiracy." *Forbidden Zone* 117.

²⁵⁹ Nicholas J. Saunders, "Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War, 1914-2003." *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory, and the First World War*. Ed. Nicholas J. Saunders (London: Routledge, 2004) 8-9.

marching towards the front with bright eyes and “strong voices” are opposed to the broken soldiers returning: “We pull off a blanket. We observe that this is a man. He makes feeble whining sounds like an animal. He lies still; he smells bad; he smells like a corpse; he can only move his tongue; he tries to moisten his lips with his tongue” (“Conspiracy” 118-119). As a further means of self-protection, the reality of war has to be accepted as the only reality. It is in comparison with the ‘real’ world that the field hospital appears unbearable and gruesome. Taken on its own terms, on the other hand, as the only reality it becomes bearable to the narrator. It is a recurring statement throughout Borden’s war stories that the narrator is “too busy, too absorbed” (“Blind” 144) by what she is doing to notice her surroundings. Only occasionally is she roused from her trance by a human gesture that forces its way through her protective trance, such as the call of a blinded soldier. The blind man calls out to her across a crowded room, believing himself abandoned.

I seemed to awake then. I looked round me and I began to tremble, as one would tremble if one awoke with one’s head over the edge of a precipice. I saw the wounded packed round us, hemming us in. [...] The light poured down on the rows of faces. They gleamed faintly. Four hundred faces were staring up at the roof, side by side. The blind man didn’t know. He thought he was alone, out in the dark. That was the precipice, that reality” (“Blind” 158).

Borden’s narrator at this moment becomes aware of the reality of her surroundings, and the awareness of the suffering all around her is more than she can bear. She reports, again with noticeable repetitiveness:

I was awake now, and I seemed to be breaking to pieces. [...] I looked down again at the visible half of his face and saw that his lips were smiling.

At that I fled from him. I ran down the long, dreadful hut and hid behind my screen and cowered, sobbing, in a corner, hiding my face (“Blind” 159).

Faced with her temporary breakdown, her helpless assistants can only offer her coffee as there is nothing else they can do for her.

While Borden’s narrator is in a position to relate the after-effects of battle on human bodies and to a certain extent on human minds, male combatant writers usually endeavour to capture the violence of battle itself, and its effect on the soldiers’ physical and mental state. While both Borden and many of the canonised trench poets focus on the soldier as the victim of violence, Read is an

example of a writer who depicts the soldier as both victim and perpetrator. Read's soldier protagonist in "Killed in Action", British officer Danvers (whose first name or rank we never learn), is a victim of the circumstances and of his own mental breakdown in battle conditions. The title is eminently ironic in Fussell's sense of contrasting expectation with reality, in that it quotes one of the standard euphemistic phrases of Great War parlance that could encompass such a wide range of deaths as to be comfortingly vague.²⁶⁰ In this case, Danvers actually kills himself in a moment of intense fatigue and world-weariness in the aftermath of battle. At the outset of the story, we encounter Danvers in the squalid conditions of a frontline dugout, cold, uncomfortable, dirty and tired, barely able to take control of his own body: "His teeth chattered and he couldn't stop them. Involuntary shivers passed down his body."²⁶¹ Danvers and his battalion are caught in a German counter-attack and ordered to retaliate. They are routed by German forces and almost all of the men are killed. Danvers himself survives and lives to witness the destruction of his men and fellow officers only to break down and shoot himself in the face when the battle is over.

Read clearly strives to de-glorify the figure of the British soldier, yet without vilifying him. Danvers is no story-book hero: he summons his courage with a sip of rum ("Killed in Action" 178), experiences intense fear under bombardment ("Killed in Action" 178-180), and in the heat of fighting he unconsciously urinates into his breeches ("Killed in Action" 183-184). Yet he is no coward or weakling either; he carries on regardless and performs satisfactorily what he is instructed to do. Danvers is shown as largely reduced to physical reaction to the war. It is his body that dictates his actions, not his mind, into which we gain insight through passages of free indirect discourse interspersed with description:

There was an infernal babbling of machine-guns on the right. The Boche must be in sight there. If so, the barrage would be lifting. Our barrage was damned poor. Eugh! Dudd! A great heavy ball of blood shot to his gullet as he drew his body taut to receive the expected detonation. The thing furrowed the ground not two

²⁶⁰ See Fussell's chapter "A Satire on Circumstance" on irony and ironic contrast in Great War writing (Fussell 3-35).

²⁶¹ Herbert Read, "Killed in Action." *Short Stories of the First World War*. Ed. George L. Bruce (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971) 177. Previously published in *Ambush* (London: Faber, 1930) as part of the *Criterion Miscellany* series.

yards from his feet. Harmless enough. But God! What a fright. Did he duck? Well, it was only natural ("Killed in Action" 179).

His fear mounts to a point where the tension becomes so unbearable that it seems impossible, paradoxically, not to die, and Danvers forms an almost involuntary resolution to seek out death if death fails to seek out him: "He jumped up suddenly, facing the enemy. A wild energy blazed in every gesture. 'Fire, damn you, fire! Kill me, you bloody swine.' No answer. A man coughed somewhere" ("Killed in Action" 183). Failing to get the enemy to kill him, Danvers kills himself. The act of his suicide is described as a violent and painful struggle rather than a merciful release, and Danvers is as much a victim of the violence of war as if a German had pulled the trigger:

A sudden snap and nothing else. A misfire. His eyes opened wide with the agony of a sudden unleashed tension of will. His strained hands trembled. His parched throat emitted a scream.

He stared and screamed at the six neat black holes before his face. Unconsciously he was again squeezing the trigger. The hammer moved back, gaping with its one black tooth. [...] The night, hitherto secretly stealing towards him, made a sudden leap to devour his life with blackness and annihilation ("Killed in Action" 184).

Like Borden, Read also struggles to describe the landscape of war, violence and pain. In his attempts to render Danvers's surroundings, he employs frequent personification, a variety of domestic similes, and even invokes the somewhat strained help of Roman mythology when describing the initial bombardment as "a dull incessant tremor, like the piston-pounding of some infernal engine in the black bowels of Earth. Hammers of Vulcan. Piston-throbs of the revolving world" ("Killed in Action" 177). Read's metaphors are often mixed under the pressure of describing the violence of the scene, such as in the passage above, where Earth is both personified and likened to a hydraulic engine or piece of machinery. A bombed and ruined wood is compared to "an old broken comb against the skyline" ("Killed in Action" 181), the forlornness and scattering of a battalion of charging soldiers likened to the equally mundane image of "flies crawling across a side of bacon in a grocer's shop" ("Killed in Action" 182). The landscape, to Danvers's violent disgust, is "riven and violated; a wide glabrous desolation; a black diseased scab, erupted and pustulous" ("Killed in Action" 181), a pestilential vista in which war is the disease that has ravaged the 'body' of the land. The battlefield immediately after the end of a barrage is again described in

anthropomorphic terms: “A strange but blessed stillness came over the scene, as though the guns had vomited themselves to death” (“Killed in Action” 181) – the guns, instruments of death, have become animated beings, set to kill and now perished themselves from the violence of their efforts. The dead, on the other hand, are de-humanised, such as Danvers’s fellow-officer and friend Flint, who is killed next to Danvers in the British counter-attack. At the very moment Flint is making what would appear to be a heroic gesture – brandishing his revolver and spurring his men to follow him – he is shot in the face: “A bullet hit him in the snout. He fell down, sniggering blood, dying. Danvers glanced at him. Poor devil. Must go on” (“Killed in Action” 183). In but a moment soldier-hero Flint is turned into an animal, as the reference to ‘snout’ suggests, and his death is robbed of all tragic grandeur through the nature of his wound, which makes it seem as if he is dying with an immature snigger on his face. As in a linguistic equivalent to shell shock, Read’s language appears disjointed, strained and fragmented. His short sentences, often incomplete, are clearly meant to mirror the hasty thought and speech of his protagonist, whose own perceptions alternate with outside descriptions: “Wedge. Conic wedge. Red conic wedge of pain – it entered between his contracted eyebrows, and there was slowly, decisively driven in by the hovering power of despair” (“Killed in Action” 183). Passages such as this appear somewhat laboured, but illustrate the writer’s struggle for adequate artistic expression.

Despite their often strained use of modernist technique, stories such as Borden and Read’s have received the greatest share of critical attention in comparison to other First World War short stories. Despite its shortcomings Borden’s *The Forbidden Zone* in particular is celebrated as “one of the most powerful and one of the most experimental pieces of writing to have emerged from the war” (Freedman 110); one suspects in part because it combines a female, non-combatant and thus marginal viewpoint with criticism of the war and stylistic experimentation. Stories such as “Rosa” or “Killed in Action” are essentially a fictional rehearsal of real-life experiences and offer their view of the war as alternative readings of their own experiences to their audiences. These stories also helped their writers to come to terms with their own respective war experiences. The main difference between these stories and the majority of

magazine fiction discussed above, apart from formal features, is that unlike most magazine short stories Borden's war fiction has in recent years achieved a degree of canonisation, and although Herbert Read is better known for his war poetry, he is at least part of the war's functional memory in his capacity as one of the lesser-known trench poets.

Read and Borden, as this chapter has shown, are exceptional in the sense that they attempt to use new forms of expression in their short stories about the war. Compared to the majority of stories here discussed, most of which are popular magazine fiction, these two authors and a small number of avant-garde and/or modernist writers such as Wyndham Lewis experiment with new narrative techniques. The majority of short-story writers, however, chose to address the war within a framework of established genre conventions. As suggested above, this use of established patterns benefited readers and writers alike who look to fictional war stories for the means of comparing and evaluating their own experiences of the war in its many theatres and facets. The final chapter of this thesis will scrutinise with a view to both subject matter and form how post-war writers continued to address the war from 1945 up to the present.

4. British Great War Stories after 1945

4.1 'We will remember them': a case study of post-war mourning stories

While the inter-war years in Britain witnessed the publication of many now canonical texts about the Great War, the publication of First World War-related short stories understandably dropped significantly after 1945. Nevertheless, references to the earlier war were still being made. In poetry the 'trench poets' of the Great War remained an important reference point, as will be discussed below in section 4.2. Similarly, the experience of the earlier war was used in many prose texts as a foil or precedent for narratives of the later conflict, and although this did not happen with the same frequency as during the inter-war period, especially writers with first-hand experiences of the Great War still continued to address these in their fiction. As we have seen, stories dealing with the subject of loss and mourning continued to be published and were socially important in wartime and inter-war Britain. This subgenre also turns out to be of enduring popularity in post-World War II Britain, and serves as an ideal illustration of how both nature and purpose of First World War-related fiction changed with the Second World War, and again with the pacifist movement triggered by the Vietnam War and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament from the 1960s onwards. Indeed, Carol Acton notes a distinct connection in particular between mourning discourses of the First and Second World Wars, claiming that, in 1939, "British emotional response necessarily merges with a still raw memory of the First World War, the legacy of that war informing the way the Second World War is received and responded to at the emotional level", and that "bereavement discourses in the Second World War were necessarily informed by private experiences of the first" (Acton, *Grief in Wartime* 48).

As the discussion of Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" in Chapter 3 has suggested, mourning and loss did not cease to be important topics after the end of the war. The inter-war period in particular was marked by both personal and institutional attempts to come to terms with the war dead, and establish patterns of remembrance. The building of the war cemeteries in France, Belgium and other theatres of war overseas; the erection of the cenotaph in Whitehall, and a plethora of war memorials in towns and villages across Britain; the institutionalisation of the two-minute silence, Armistice Day and then

Remembrance Sunday, have been the subject of numerous studies in the war's cultural history. Hence it is not surprising that inter-war short stories should also tackle this sensitive subject. Some of these stories, however, move in rather unexpected directions when exploring grief and mourning, and point towards problems in coming to terms with the legacy of the war beyond the (comparatively speaking) straightforward grieving for lost relatives and friends.

Winifred Holtby's story "The Casualty List" offers an inter-war treatment of grief with a self-conscious emphasis on the complexity of emotions connected with loss and death. The short story is an interesting character study written in 1932 and first collected in Holtby's *Truth is Not Sober* (1934). On Armistice Day 1928, after a visit to the theatre to see R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*, an elderly married woman remembers her anxiety during the war over not having a son to send to the front, which made her feel excluded from the 'real' war experience. Her feelings echo wartime propaganda and reflect the public, omnipresent nature of grief and commemoration in Britain:

[S]he had always hated to feel out of anything – of the best set in town, or the Hospital Ball, or the craze for roller-skating – or even the war. [...] Those Wonderful Mothers who Gave their Sons held an immense moral advantage over the ordinary women who only coped with a sugar shortage and the servant problem, and the regulations about darkening windows. When Nellie Goodson's only son was killed, she had felt almost envious, of the boy for his Glorious End, of the mother for her honourable grief. Her sin had always been to covet honour.²⁶²

She finds consolation, however, in the lines of Binyon's "For the Fallen", which allow her to think of herself as fighting her own war against time and death, left behind by those whose privilege it was to die in the Great War: "We who are left grow old, thought Mrs. Lancing. The years condemn us. We fall in a war with Time which knows no armistice" ("Casualty List" 247). The story is particularly interesting as it differs from other stories by the same author in the depth of its psychological portrayal, and formally in its use of free indirect discourse rather than a straightforward first-person narrator. Mrs. Lancing's pompous self-awareness and egocentricity are rendered subtly yet strikingly. The sentiments voiced by fictional Mrs Lancing are by no means unusual and reflect a feeling many 'survivors' of the war experienced as keenly. In her study of British poetry

²⁶² Winifred Holtby, "The Casualty List." *Truth is Not Sober* (London: Collins, 1934) 243.

of the Second World War, Linda M. Shires quotes Roy Fuller's post-WWII poem "Epitaph for Soldiers", which addresses the poet's "terror for survival in peacetime":

Incredibly I lasted out a war,
Survived the unnatural, enormous danger
Of each enormous day. And so befell
A peril more enormous and still stranger:
The death by nature, chanceless, credible
(Quoted in Shires 147-148).

Fuller's surviving soldier, like Holtby's elderly housewife, realises that surviving a war does not make one immortal; that natural death, as opposed to death in battle, is in fact impossible to evade. Mourning for the war dead takes on an element of envy because, in a certain sense, the dead of the war are immortalised where the civilian dead merely fade into nothingness. While dead soldiers are given memorials and, for the first time ever in the First World War, perpetuity in sepulchre, Mrs Lancing will have to be content with a private burial and a headstone that will in due course have to make way for new graves.²⁶³

Richard Aldington wrote extensively of his combat and frontline experience, both in his novel *Death of a Hero* (1929) and his subsequent collection of short stories, *Roads to Glory* (1930). The novel was begun just after the war but abandoned for almost a decade until Aldington decided to finish the project whilst settled in France (Copp 18).²⁶⁴ The short story collection forms in many ways an afterthought to the novel, addressing various issues that presumably continued to niggle and that Aldington could not accommodate in the longer work; they were written and prepared for publication in the summer of 1929.²⁶⁵ Although he waited to be called up and conscripted under the Military Service Act in 1916, Aldington came to identify strongly with his brother officers and soldiers, and was profoundly affected by his time at the front. In a letter to Amy Lowell on 23 August 1916, D.H. Lawrence 'diagnosed' Aldington even before his war service had actually begun, saying that "I can tell that the glamour is

²⁶³ On the novel decision to grant permanency to soldiers' graves in the wake of World War I, see Summers 17.

²⁶⁴ Copp also points out that Aldington was quite aware of the financial rewards of writing a war novel at that point in time, and was anxious to have it published as soon as possible after completion (Copp 17).

²⁶⁵ See Norman T. Gates, ed., *Richard Aldington: An Autobiography in Letters* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992) 100.

getting hold of him: the ‘now we’re all men together’ business, the kind of love that was between Achilles and Patroclus” (Zytaruk and Boulton 644). Cy Fox describes Aldington as an “infantryman who emerged in a state of shock and moral outrage”²⁶⁶ and most of the writer’s war fiction is devoted to descriptions of the devastating effects of war on the soldiers’ psyche, on its blighting impact on their personal lives and careers (Aldington himself separated from his first wife, H.D., in the wake of but not necessarily because of his war service) and its great bloodshed. While most of Aldington’s disillusioned short stories about the war, such as “The Case of Lieutenant Hall”, adopt a straightforward narrative style and are primarily concerned with placing blame for the soldiers’ (and some civilians’) sufferings on politicians and dignitaries, two stories stand out both by dint of their more experimental style and their slightly different focus. In “Farewell to Memories” and “Meditation on a German Grave”, mourning, in particular conscious processes of mourning and remembrance, are at the centre of attention.

“Farewell to Memories” relates the Great War experience of Private Brandon, a sensitive man thrown in with stereotypically (and distortedly) portrayed brutalised characters in the army. Reports of actual events are interspersed with the protagonist’s retrospective reflections on the war. Brandon undergoes the rather stereotypical hardships of a middle-class, white-collar civilian such as Aldington himself, suddenly faced with what he considers as inhuman discipline, lack of comfort, and danger in the frontline trenches. That this depiction is not the universally valid representation of the war experience of civilians turned soldiers has been demonstrated by Janet Watson, who shows that while artistic middle- and upper-class volunteers such as Aldington or Sassoon viewed their time in the military as ‘service’ to their country and responded with much greater disillusionment to the conditions of war, working-class volunteers in particular frequently took a more practical approach to their war service and regarded it as another job of work to be done (Watson 3-5). After the war, too, the majority of veterans may have been enraged at the insufficiency of state measures for compensation, but they were not as bitter and negatively disposed towards the public as Aldington and other ‘disenchanted’ writers

²⁶⁶ Cy Fox, “Aldington and Wyndham Lewis – Allies Against the Fool-Farm.” *Richard Aldington: Papers from the Reading Symposium*. Ed. Lionel Kelly (Reading: University of Reading, 1987) 86.

suggest. As Deborah Cohen points out, the “figure of the disgruntled ex-serviceman aptly conveyed literary modernism’s alienation from the post-war world, but it tells us much less about veterans’ perceptions more generally” (Cohen, *War Come Home* 47). The intellectual Brandon suffers most from his feeling of being degraded to a war tool, and from the loss of faith in what he had previously believed to be the meaning of life his war service induces in him:

The crash of shells, the tearing whine of bullets seemed to beat into him misery and despair and grief. The very thought of hope became intolerable, and he despised himself for ever having been deluded by the vain shows of life, sneered at himself because he had once cared for intelligence and beauty.²⁶⁷

From Brandon’s point of view, the reader learns about the loss of his friends in the unit, one of whom dies, while the others are transferred elsewhere. We are given descriptions of his experience of a gas attack, and of the Armistice which, when it finally comes, finds Brandon a mere machine: “Brandon stared out the window [of the train taking him back to England], still wearing his full equipment, with his rifle mechanically clutched between his knees” (“Farewell to Memories” 315). His overwhelming feeling is of regret and mourning for the dead. He sits, unable to stop crying, and sees before his inner eye “only the lines upon lines upon lines of crosses” (“Farewell to Memories” 316). The first person voice of the ‘later’ Brandon concludes the story questioning whether the survivors really are the luckier ones, in an ironic twist of the gladiators’ salute, *morituri te salutamus*: “Lost, terrible, silent comrades, we, who might have died, salute you” (“Farewell to Memories” 317). Both in the third-person wartime narrative and the retrospective first-person voice of Brandon speaking from a post-war perspective, one notices an awareness of the contrast between those at home and their perception of the war and the soldiers’ view of it; of the basic inability to communicate the frontline experience: “They took over a section of the front line. How much that phrase means to those who know, how little it can mean to those who do not know” (“Farewell to Memories” 302). “Farewell to Memories” is not simply a disillusioned attack on the internal enemy, the general staff and politicians that came to be regarded as the main culprits of the war. It is also a lucid study of human reactions to the strain of war. The structure of

²⁶⁷ Richard Aldington, “Farewell to Memories.” *Roads to Glory* (1930. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) 304.

Aldington's story ensures that we are always given both the immediate impression, with a third-person, outside narrator's interpretation of Brandon's state of mind, thoughts and feelings, and Brandon's own later reflections, refining and adding to the initial impressions. The tendency of the retrospective voice is to lyricise the experience, to re-phrase it in more elegiac tones, reflecting the transformation of spontaneous grief into a more formalised sense of mourning, as in Aldington's variation on the gladiators' salute in the final lines of the story.

While "Farewell to Memories" is told only partially from a post-war perspective, "Meditation on a German Grave" is set entirely in the inter-war world, excepting a brief flashback experienced by the main protagonist. The story describes the return to England and post-war career of infantry Captain Ronald Cumberland, who returns to his pre-war life in London, only to find he cannot afford life in the capital any longer. Rents and the cost of living in general have gone up rapidly with the returning masses of soldiers, and his attempts to find a job as a journalist remain fruitless, since there is a decided imbalance between vacancies in the field and the number of returning applicants. On his own initiative, Cumberland writes "some short war sketches, rather vivid little vignettes of real happenings, trying to give the true 'feel' of the war, the genuine sensations and feelings of soldiers",²⁶⁸ which are, however, rejected by all the papers on the grounds that they are too gloomy. Only when he turns to light-hearted, humorous, anti-German sketches he is published and finally earns some money. The accusation implicit in this aspect of the story – namely that realistic accounts of the war are unpublishable while light-hearted lies find an audience – is particularly intriguing given the great emphasis put on veracity of war writing in the prefaces of so many wartime and post-war anthologies, and also in the light of Aldington's own considerable profits from his disillusioned war fiction. Eventually, Cumberland starts a small publishing house with a partner, and by 1928 has become a successful and reasonably wealthy man. At the same time he is chronically ill and overworked. As his concerned business partner Isaacson observes, his illness is the result of "overwork and anxiety – three and a half years in the army, and nine years constant slogging. You've got to take a rest" ("Meditation on a German Grave" 17). Arranged by good-natured Isaacson,

²⁶⁸ Richard Aldington, "Meditation on a German Grave." *Roads to Glory* (1930. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) 12.

Cumberland takes paid leave and embarks on a holiday, which constitutes his first chance to think about his experiences during the war.

Cumberland enjoys the journey and his stay at a friend's villa on the French Mediterranean coast, but he also muses on the injustice of rich and poor, and the futility of his own struggles. One evening, watching the sunset, he experiences a vivid flashback of a specific occasion in October 1918. On a divisional rest near Bapaume, Cumberland had stayed in a camp near three German cemeteries, and – after an aggravating debate with a pro-war imperialist – had come across an unmarked German grave. Cumberland remembers, exactly ten years after the event, how he had addressed the man buried there with a speech about the senselessness of the killing and their enforced enmity. His short speech also touches (naturally with hindsight) on the subject of post-war propaganda and a hypocritical hero-worship condoning the war in retrospect. He furthermore recalls promising the dead German soldier to make the best of his own survival and try his utmost to prevent another war. Aldington effectively endows the soldier during the war with a critical attitude that is clearly discernible as post-war disillusionment. The grief and bewilderment Aldington ascribes to fictional Cumberland in the last stages of the war are visibly the result of post-war reflection and the rhetoric of the war-critical, pacifist, disillusioned school of inter-war writing:

Brother, what have we done to each other? Why are you lying there dead so young, and I so young as good as dead crouched on the grave above you? Dear murdered boy, your enemy mourns for you. My throat hurts with grief for you. You, and the hundreds, the thousands, the tenth of thousands, the millions of us, who lie like you, soiled earth under a soiled world (“Meditation on a German Grave” 34).

In Cumberland's speech, “‘they,’ the real enemies”, the dignitaries who supported the war and are attempting to present it as heroic, feature as the source of blame – a key feature of the post-war myth of the conflict. Aldington thus again re-writes grief and mourning, and retrospectively imbues his fictional soldier with an insightfulness that appears the product of a decade of post-war reflection.

The detailed description of the hardships of war in Aldington's stories and their strong reference to popular war myths – the sense of disillusionment and betrayal, the mechanised horror and stagnation of trench warfare, the hardships of the soldiers' life in the trenches and focus on the Western Front – locate them

safely and unmistakably in a First World War context, and make them compatible with the mythology of the war that shapes and informs the canon of Great War literature. At the same time, their clear, pacifist agenda aims at a universally pacifist message transcending this particular war. Both Brandon and Cumberland want their war, and their own horrific war experiences, to ensure that the Great War really does end war for good; their declared aim is to make sure their sufferings are not repeated with new protagonists. As such, Aldington's war stories support post-war pacifism, conform to the war myth, and qualify fully for an inclusion in the Great War canon. Indeed, many anthologies of First World War prose, as we will see below, will include a piece by Aldington, although this piece is often an excerpt from his better-known novel *Death of a Hero* rather than one of his subsequently published short stories. The main interest that Aldington's war fiction holds for editors and publishers after 1945 is its reinforcement of the disillusioned Great War myth, as well as its author's status as a veteran able to supply readers with an authentic depiction of the war. While his short stories served Aldington himself as a means of venting a veteran's anger and frustration during the inter-war years and arguably offered other veterans a chance of identifying themselves and their own experiences in his semi-autobiographical fiction, these stories subsequently take on a different function by serving as an illustration of the master narrative of the war as wasteful, futile and damaging to the individual participant.

Stories written about mourning the dead of the First World War that were published during and after the Second World War take yet another stance on the issue. Old losses may be addressed by writers after 1945 because the trauma of loss has been rekindled by the war just witnessed, or has been threatened with smothering or superseding. However, the temporal distance between the post-war world and loss experienced during the First World War could also lead to a certain extent of repression and willed forgetfulness, particularly in cases where the author of a story had first-hand experience of the Great War. These may make a renewal of grief all the more acute. Frances Bellerby also chooses mourning as her subject, both mourning for the dead and mourning for a way of life irrevocably lost. In her short story "The Green Cupboard" (1952), childhood grief has turned into adult grief, long suppressed and seemingly forgotten. Nathalie Blondel has characterised Bellerby as a writer whose works are 'haunted' by the

Great War long after the end of its successor. Bellerby's fiction, Blondel argues, is so compelling because it shows

[how the] fragile interwoven cloth of respectable English life sometimes veils but often cannot protect the bereaved [...] whose lives have been broken by their sense of loss. People live double lives: they interact with the living whilst dwelling in memories of the dead.²⁶⁹

Frances Bellerby, who was born in 1899 and lived through both world wars, lost her only brother in the First World War. Blondel reports how, as late as 1970,

[Bellerby] wrote that, far from diminishing, the experience of [her brother's] death 'goes on happening', and her writing reflects the way in which the past does not disappear but remains in the minds of those who remember, who cannot help but remember (Blondel 153).

Next to well-known figures such as Rudyard Kipling and Siegfried Sassoon, Bellerby is perhaps the most strident example of a writer who could not let go of the First World War as a subject, even beyond the next war. Most of Frances Bellerby's fiction was published during and after the Second World War, but in its majority it is informed by the First World War and her own experience of loss. World War II is to a great extent ignored; it pales into insignificance because it cannot inflict the same wounds. "The Green Cupboard" is narrated by a middle-aged woman from a post-war perspective. The eponymous cupboard of this story is a curiously mundane symbol of loss and mourning and the repression of grief. Originally the cupboard had been a cheerful apple green, but it was repainted black after the father abandoned the family, the first in a series of traumatic events in the narrator's childhood forty years previously. This series culminated in the death at the Western Front of a favourite uncle and replacement father figure. It is a casual remark made by a visiting child that prompts the narrator to acknowledge the altered appearance of the cupboard, and her own repressed feelings of grief. She realises that she had continued to think of the black cupboard as green

[b]ecause of the passionate intensity of my desire to move life back to the time when the cupboard was still green. [...] I saw clearly that the repainting of that cupboard symbolised for me the change which I had never, in spite of all pretence, ceased to blame and deplore. I had been at-

²⁶⁹ Nathalie Blondel, "'It goes on happening': Frances Bellerby and the Great War." *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Eds. Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 151.

home [sic] in life before the re-painting of the green cupboard. But ever since then I had been a homesick stranger.²⁷⁰

The black coat of paint thus symbolises to the narrator the most traumatic events of her life, which intermittent time and a second war have enabled her to push out of her consciousness: the abandoning by her father, her mother's gradual slide into insanity, the death of a close family friend and finally the death of her mother's brother in the First World War. Even at a distance of almost forty years, the narrator perceives this death as an irreparable loss. Having previously been abandoned by her father, her uncle's death had been devastating and can only be repressed and lived with, not forgotten or lived down, as the narrator observes: "Oh, but we were broken. Each in our different way. Each unmendable. Time never mends. I am thankful, really, to have learnt at least that one lesson so early in life" ("Green Cupboard" 26). Early disillusionment is naturally at best a cold comfort, and loss and death have had a permanent, blighting effect on the narrator's life. She has attempted to keep the damage in check by suppressing her grief across several decades, spanning a second war that could no longer take any loved ones away from her. Repression has been her protection. Only now has it been stripped away from her and she finds herself confronted once more with the consequences of a war that seemed at a safe distance. Speaking in terms of mourning processes, the protagonist of "The Green Cupboard" has failed to progress through the different stages of mourning and has attempted to ignore all emotions connected with her loss altogether – as it turns out, in vain.

Another of Frances Bellerby's short stories, "Winter Afternoon" (1952), turns the impact of war and grief around. It is a chance encounter that offers an old woman the opportunity to reconcile herself with the loss of her son in the First World War. "Winter Afternoon" is set in the 1920s, but is included in this section because it was written after World War II and because its setting is vague enough to allow us to read it as a post-war, not an inter-war story. Three evacuee girls have stayed on in an Evacuee's Hostel in the countryside because they have nowhere left to go.²⁷¹ Sent out on an errand to the post office, the girls are invited

²⁷⁰ Frances Bellerby, "The Green Cupboard." *A Breathless Child and Other Stories* (London: Collins, 1952) 12.

²⁷¹ Concerning the somewhat misleading temporal setting of the story, Nathalie Blondel explains: "Whilst this opening [with the Evacuee's hostel] might appear to be referring to Second World

in for tea by old Annie Jasper. Talking while sipping their tea, the girls and the old woman begin to chat. It transpires that Mrs Jasper's oldest son Gerald was "killed in 1917, in the war which was to his mother the whole of War".²⁷² Mrs Jasper tells the girls about her son as he was before the war, and experiences a strange sense of peace and reconciliation with her loss whilst doing so:

'Tell us some more,' urged June.

The old woman started off again with a promptness that showed she could have gone on for hours, and that, indeed, she often had gone on thus, in her mind, for hours. No need to choose words. They'd every one of them been chosen years and years ago, and here they were.

[...]

Unaware of any discovery or re-discovery, yet she was moved by an emotion whose existence she had forgotten long ago, an emotion of such peace, gentle safety, and complete at-homeness, as she had neither experienced nor hoped to experience since that day in 1917 when War had splintered her brittle world ("Winter Afternoon" 150).

The chance encounter of the children in need of human contact and the old woman in need of a sympathetic audience, brought together by the turmoil of war, at least partially heals a grief as yet unvoiced. She has, as Blondel puts it, interacted with those around her, including her remaining children, and yet been caught up in inescapable, painful memories of her dead son; only the encounter with the evacuee girls – themselves victims of the war – helps her merge the two and bring together the two parts of her life, the visible and the hidden. Whereas suppressed feelings merely result in a renewal of trauma when finally broken into, as in Bellerby's first story, "The Green Cupboard", the venting of reminiscences bottled up for years have a beneficial effect in "Winter Afternoon". Unlike many of the novels discussed by Rosa Maria Bracco, short stories need to establish links between the two wars without lengthy panoramic views of the war and inter-war years, but they nevertheless use family and generational confrontations as well as flashbacks as similar means to establish continuity, such as the father-son-relationship suddenly altered in the wake of a new war in Calder-Marshall's "Before the War", or indeed the mental journey back into her own childhood undergone by Bellerby's narrator in "The Green Cupboard".

War evacuees, the story is set in the early 1920s and describes how three war orphans spend a few hours with a woman who gives them buns, pleased to have someone to talk to" (Blondel 161).

²⁷² Frances Bellerby, "Winter Afternoon." *A Breathless Child and Other Stories* (London: Collins, 1952) 148.

Personal memories serve as a link between two war experiences and create the opportunity to fictionally deal with both.²⁷³

Elizabeth Bowen, like Bellerby, was born in 1899 and experienced the First World War as a teenager. In her short story "The Demon Lover" (1945) she offers a study of suppressed trauma that is renewed in the midst of the Second World War.²⁷⁴ Bowen did not lose any close relatives during the war, but had been badly affected by the death of her mother from cancer in 1912. Her later husband, Alan Cameron, had been gassed in the war, but survived to be awarded the Military Cross. Like Bellerby's stories, "The Demon Lover" focuses on the trauma of the First World War continuing into the Second. First published in October 1945, the story's main protagonist is again middle-aged, in this case a married woman. Mrs Drover returns to her London house during the Second World War to collect possessions for her family, who have taken refuge from the bombs in the country. In her empty house, she is suddenly confronted with her past through a ghostly letter from her former fiancé, who was to the best of her knowledge killed twenty-five years previously in the summer of 1916. The letter reminds Mrs Drover of a meeting arranged at parting, an uncanny promise extracted from her by a possessive young soldier not to forget him, and to be prepared for his return. The sudden memory of her youthful engagement – entered into rashly and little regretted when it ended – immediately transports Mrs Drover back to a past beyond the current war, which only moments before had been such threatening reality. Now the threat of real bombs is replaced by the threat of this phantom from her past. Mrs Drover has failed to grieve for her erstwhile fiancé, and suddenly his disappearance in the earlier war catches up with her – quite literally – with a vengeance. Mrs Drover attempts to flee from the ghostly rendezvous she had agreed to unwittingly decades earlier, but she finds herself abducted by the spectre from her past, which makes off with her in a taxi. It is on the unsettling note of a screaming woman driven off into the unknown

²⁷³ Compare Victoria Stewart, "The Last War: The Legacy of the First World War in 1940s British Fiction." *British Popular Culture and the First World War*. Ed. Jessica Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 260.

²⁷⁴ For varied discussions of the levels of allegory in the story, see Robert L. Calder, "A More Sinister Troth': Elizabeth Bowen's 'The Demon Lover' as Allegory." *Studies in Short Fiction* 31 (1994): 91-97; Daniel V. Fraustino, "Elizabeth Bowen's 'The Demon Lover': Psychosis or Seduction." *Studies in Short Fiction* 17 (1980): 483-487; Douglas A. Hughes, "Cracks in the Psyche: Elizabeth Bowen's 'The Demon Lover'." *Studies in Short Fiction* 10 (1973): 411-413.

that the story ends. The previous conflict, long buried underneath years of married life and family routine, has violently caught up with the protagonist across the divide of the later war. Despite the threatening tone of this ghost story, Bowen herself did not consider it an expression of danger as much as a means of acknowledging the impact of war on the psyche: if Mrs Drover's vision of her former fiancé come back to abduct her is a hallucination, it is an example of hallucinations that are "an unconscious, instinctive, saving resort on the part of the characters: life, mechanized by the controls of wartime, and emotionally torn and impoverished by changes, had to complete itself in *some way*" (Bowen, *Mulberry Tree* 96). Though unpleasant, Mrs Drover's surreal encounter at least shakes her out of a draining routine and allows her an outlet for suppressed fears, as well as a chance to acknowledge that these current fears are linked to older fears carried over from the First World War.

Bellerby and Bowen are writers who experienced as adults both the First and Second World War. Their stories testify to the fact that both writers, like most of their contemporaries, saw the two wars as connected not merely historically, but emotionally. The later war recalls memories and emotions connected with the earlier conflict.²⁷⁵ Although these two stories constitute only a tiny selection, they allow us to trace the profound impact of the earlier war continuing through its successor. Grief, loss and trauma encountered in the First World War, buried and suppressed emotions, are shown to find ways of resurfacing during and after the Second World War. They may have been renewed, buried or assuaged by the Second World War, but they do not lose their hold on those who experienced two world wars in their lifetime, in many cases reliving as adults what they believed they had left behind in their youth, and indeed on those whose memories of the war were merely inherited. Short stories testify to the fact that, far from obliterating it, the Second World War has strengthened the impact of the Great War on British consciousness to this day. Indeed, Jay Winter has suggested that socio-political upheavals commonly attributed to the impact of the First World War were only effective in the aftermath of the second, particularly the breakdown of a traditional language of mourning and remembrance. Winter argues that because the traditional

²⁷⁵ See also Stewart, "Last War" 271-273.

expressions of the inter-war years had been designed to heal, warn and prevent a repetition of war, it was only when these aims were seen to have clearly failed in the wake of another war that the traditional languages of grief and their “message of hope” were devalued (Winter, “Persistence of Tradition” 43).

Initially, short stories that continued to address the First World War into and beyond its successor may be described as an effort “to dwell [...] in the aftermath of the Great War”,²⁷⁶ to hold on to personal memories and losses. Dan Todman observes that up to the late 1960s, the war “was still an event in family memory as well as family history”, evidence for which Todman finds in viewers’ intensely personal reactions to the 1964 BBC series *The Great War* (Todman 35). The change traceable in later stories addressing the Great War, stories written by those who had no personal experience of the conflict, pertains to their outlook on the war and the use it is put to: rather than offering narrative models for actual memories and experiences, later literary commentators on the war engage with issues of remembrance and historicity, or simply make use of the war as a defining event in British popular consciousness that can serve numerous purposes as a plot intensifier, reference point or metaphor for futility. A range of approaches to the war are conflated in Julian Barnes’s short story “Evermore”, first published in 1995. Set in the 1970s or 1980s, “Evermore” addresses the fear of losing the legitimacy for one’s mourning, but also constitutes a fictional commentary on the evolution of the war’s remembrance and the impact of the intervening Second World War on its place in popular consciousness. In this story, Barnes as an observer with no personal memories of the war shows us an elderly woman who persistently grieves for a brother killed in the Great War. Miss Moss feels that the Second World War jeopardises her mourning and her remembrance of the lost brother: “She hated Hitler’s war for diminishing the memory of the Great War, for allotting it a number, the mere first among two”.²⁷⁷ The dead of the Second World War she sees as obstructing her own dead, the brother she has chosen to mourn indefinitely. Even commemorative plates for those who died between 1939 and 1945 offend her: “They blocked the view,

²⁷⁶ Karlin ascribes this desire to Kipling, although Kipling did of course not live to see the Second World War (Karlin 332).

²⁷⁷ Julian Barnes, “Evermore.” *Cross Channel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996) 105. The story was previously published in the *New Yorker* on 13 November 1995.

these deaths and these dates; they demanded attention by their recency. She refused, she refused" ("Evermore" 105).

"Evermore" addresses the issue of mourning and remembrance in a more remote, self-conscious manner and is a sociological and psychological study of mourning rather than an attempt to interpret and alleviate grief for a readership as yet caught up in the emotions that accompany loss and bereavement.²⁷⁸ Set at the end of the twentieth century, this short story presents mourning no longer as spontaneous emotion, but as a duty and mission, a carefully cultivated set of rituals. The main protagonist of the story is Miss Moss, an elderly Anglo-Jewish lady who has retired from her work as editor's assistant. Miss Moss still travels annually to the cemeteries of the Western front in a ritualised pilgrimage for her brother Sam. She always carries with her his three last field postcards, and tours a set number of cemeteries and memorials:

[H]er routine remained almost immutable. She would drive to Dover and take a night ferry, riding the Channel in the blackout alongside burly lorry-drivers. It saved money, and meant she was always in France for daybreak. No Morning Dawns... He must have seen each daybreak and wondered if that was the date they would put on his stone... Then she would follow the N43 to St-Omer, to Aire and Lillers, where she usually took a croissant and *thé à l'anglaise* ("Evermore" 94-95).

Once more readers encounter a conscious use of the remembrance motif used in Binyon's "To the Fallen", the hour of daybreak as the moment for ritualised remembering. Barnes also comments overtly on the development of grief and mourning that is depicted more indirectly in Mansfield's "The Fly", and points out the comfort inherent in a sense of community:

At first, back then, the commonality of grief had helped: wives, mothers, comrades, an array of brass hats, and a bugler amid gassy morning mist which the feeble November sun had failed to burn away. Later, remembering Sam had changed: it became work, continuity; instead of anguish and glory, there was fierce unreasonableness, both about his death and her commemoration of it ("Evermore" 95).

As is the case with the boss in Mansfield's "The Fly", grief and mourning turn into a conscious effort. "Evermore" not only relates its protagonist's routines, but also

²⁷⁸ In her analysis of post-war texts treating the memorial culture of the Great War, Barbara Korte says of "Evermore" that it takes on an 'explicitly meta-memorial stance on the First World War' (my translation), that is, a conscious reflection of remembrance practices as well as memory itself, and discusses the problem of continuing accessibility of the conflict for later generations of Britons (Korte, Schneider and Sternberg 236).

her musings on grief, mourning, remembrance and the possibility of a collective memory of the war. These are stimulated in particular by the great monument for the missing at Thiepval. Miss Moss disapproves of its intimidating scope, and the story derives its title from her reflections on the inscription 'EVERMORE', which she finds ought to be spelled in two words to give it more symbolic weight.²⁷⁹ Her abhorrence of Thiepval as a memorial for those missing and without a known resting place, and her relief that her own dead brother has a grave of his own that she can visit, corresponds to Harrison's stress on the importance of burial rites. Harrison speaks of "an *obligation* to the corpse" (Harrison 143) in terms of burial, commemoration and mourning. This obligation leads to states of extreme distress when there are no remains to be buried and grieved over (Harrison 144-145). Miss Moss's journeys to France and Flanders are shown to have commenced immediately after the war, and we are also told how, just after the war, she decided to marry her fiancé Denis despite his suffering from the effects of shell-shock, only to deliver him back to his sisters two years later – afterwards devoting her life entirely to her mourning for her brother. Rather than attempting to forget and move on with her life, Barnes's mourning sister clings to grief as if it were a professional occupation, in defiance of the fact that life and history move on.

²⁷⁹ The full wording of this standard inscription for war cemeteries, "Their name liveth for evermore", was in fact suggested to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission by another grieving relative, Rudyard Kipling (Karlin 334).

4.2 Altered objectives: post-war short stories addressing the Great War

It is not without reason that most studies of First World War literature and poetry restrict themselves largely to texts published in and just after the war, up to the early 1930s. There is not only a decided break in publication in and around 1935, with a dramatic falling-off of publications of texts relating to the First World War, but also a shift in the nature of those texts still published. During the war itself and in the decade following it, readers of Great War short stories had a particular interest in the stories published, an interest based on their first-hand experience of the war and the necessity, as Ricoeur puts it, to use fictional accounts of the war as a laboratory for exploring their own narratives of the war, their validity and implications. We have seen that war stories, particularly those stories published in popular magazines, offered a plethora of different war narratives that successfully addressed personal concerns and anxieties owing to their topicality, their easily accessible style, and their use of familiar jargon and reassuring generic patterns. While wartime audiences and readers just after the war found it easy to relate to these stories, they did not matter in the same way to a readership with no personal memories of the war. This category includes a generation of readers who had experienced the war as children or very young adults and had consequently no share in certain key experiences. These readers were interested in the war and turned to war literature to find out more about a conflict that their parents or brothers might be reluctant to talk about, to “penetrate the silence” (Eksteins 297) of their elders, but they no longer turned to these stories for evaluation or confirmation of their own experiences. As the aspect of narrative configuration in First World War stories ceased to be of primary importance, fewer stories were written, and their agenda altered significantly, with a much stronger focus than before on their relation to the myth and memory of the war, and the factor of authenticity.

Wartime and inter-war stories are for the most part consigned to the cultural archive. They are narrative documentation of war experiences that are not included in the mainstream myth (or master narrative) of the war, and they are also less accessible in a material sense due to their publication in magazines and periodicals. Later stories about the war are similarly unrepresented in the canon of the war’s literature, but reasons here differ. For one thing, later writers and readers of short stories and other fiction addressing the Great War were

motivated by different reasons and expectations. Jay Winter speaks of a second generation of memory emerging in the 1970s and 1980s. While, he claims, “[w]ar and mourning are also at its core”, the trajectory of this second surge in remembering the war “differed sharply from that of the first memory boom. For many reasons, the balance of creation, adaptation, and circulation in producing the second wave of concern about memory was entirely different from the earlier case”.²⁸⁰ Winter notes the considerable time lag between the end of the Second World War and this second boom, which he explains by a slow and gradual shift from an interpretation of the war as heroic resistance to an interest in witnesses and victims, in survivors (Winter, *Remembering War* 26-28). In Winter’s opinion, the second memory boom is at its core essentially moral in nature, centring on the aspect of victimisation and the avoidance of war altogether (Winter, *Remembering War* 30). Like Winter, Barbara Korte and others argue that there are certain ‘cumulative phases’ in British remembrance of the war during which the cultural memory of the conflict was boosted and the event remembered and commemorated particularly intensely. As the first of these phases of intense commemoration they identify the late 1920s and early 1930s and the war books boom, represented in this thesis by the bulk of short stories published in magazines such as the *Strand* between 1914 and 1939; followed by a second such phase beginning in the 1960s and attributed to the pacifist movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (one of the few short story examples of which is Robert Graves’s story “Christmas Truce”); and finally a third phase beginning in the 1990s and accompanied by its own, second war books boom. Some short stories representative of this latest phase will be discussed in more detail below as illustrating the change in agenda and expectations that results from their greater temporal distance from the actual historical event. While both producers and audience of commemorative texts in the first phase had some degree of personal memory of the war, the second and third phase differ in that the majority of readers and writers no longer had their own experience of the war with which to compare its fictional representation. Consequently, the texts produced in the second war books boom of the late 1980s to the early twenty-first century are entirely dependent on and reflective of previous fictional

²⁸⁰ J.M. Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the 20th Century* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006) 26.

representations of the Great War, and in most cases – such as Sebastian Faulks’s novel *Birdsong*, or Anne Perry’s short story below – recycle existing tropes (Korte, Schneider and Sternberg 29-31).

The relatively few texts addressing the first World War that were published between the end of the Second World War and the ‘revival’ of writing about the First World War in the 1970s and 1980s (marked by Susan Hill’s novel *Strange Meeting* [1971]), such as Bellerby’s short stories discussed above, are documents of continued trauma and part of the cultural archive of the war only; these stories focus on personal experience carried over from the Great War and do not engage with official practices of remembrance or the myth of the war. By contrast, more recently published stories dealing with the First World War frequently make a more conscious bid to enter the functional memory by openly engaging with the myth of the Great War, in a manner similar to Pat Barker’s *Regeneration* trilogy. Examples of such more recent short stories about the First World War are Anne Perry’s “Heroes” (2000), Robert Grossmith’s ghost story “Company” (1989), or Julian Barnes’s short story on grief and remembrance, “Evermore” (1995). Of these three stories, “Company” has the most impressive (and unusual) publication history, as it first appeared in the *Spectator* on 23/30 December 1989 and was subsequently included in two anthologies of short stories, *Best English Short Stories 2* (1990) and the *Minerva Book of Short Stories 3* (1991). Anne Perry’s “Heroes”, on the other hand, appeared in a specialised anthology of crime fiction, *Murder & Obsession* (2000), edited by crime-fiction expert Otto Penzler, and clearly aimed at Perry’s usual audience of readers with a specialised interest in murder mysteries and detective fiction. Barnes’s “Evermore” first appeared in the *New Yorker*, but was subsequently collected and published in one of the writer’s own story collections, *Cross Channel* (1996).

Perry’s self-contained story “Heroes” chooses to recreate fictionally the world of the First World War trenches as a setting for her detective story, rather than address the war’s memory and aftermath. The short story features military chaplain Father Joseph, a character from her ongoing series of popular historical crime novels set on the Western Front. In the short story, Joseph is prompted to investigate the case of a dead soldier, Private Ashton, who allegedly panicked in No Man’s Land, was wounded and ‘rescued’ by his captain. Joseph’s suspicions are aroused by a general consensus among Private Ashton’s friends and

acquaintances that he was a courageous, level-headed man not likely to panic, and by a closer investigation of his wounds. It turns out that Captain Holt, who had claimed to have rescued Ashton, was in fact the one who panicked, and had shot his subordinate to cover up his own failure. Instead of turning Holt over to the military police, however, Joseph makes him return to No Man's Land to try and take down a German sniper as a means of making amends for his crime that will save his face and spare his family's feelings. Perry's story has all the trappings of a Great War frontline story, and is visibly concerned with creating a 'realistic' image of the frontline trenches. The Western Front in itself is a dominant setting in the war's popular memory, but Perry litters her fictional trenches with rats, mud, machine-gun bullets and stoical soldiers in a clear attempt to make her story conform to the mythology of the war, repeating and condensing stereotypical images as instantly recognisable temporal and cultural markers:

It was a little after six when [Joseph] reached the firing trench beyond whose sandbag parapet lay no-man's-land with its four or five hundred yards of mud, barbed wire, and shell holes. Half a dozen burnt tree stumps looked in the sudden flares like men. [...] More star shells went up, lighting the ground, the jagged scars of the trenches black, the men on the fire steps with rifles on their shoulders illuminated for a few, blinding moments. Sniper shots rang out.²⁸¹

As Todman observes, descriptions of battlefield gore and squalor are used as "key historical signposts. They let the audience know that they were reading a book about the First World War. Mud and horror were a requirement, allowing readers quickly to situate themselves in a shared sense of the past" (Todman 40). Perry's story is but one example of popular fiction emulating the classic, disillusioned narratives of the war and blending them with generic features of the detective or adventure genres. Simon Morden's "Brilliant Things" (2004), a supernatural tale in which a soldier on the Western Front finds a magic wish-fulfilling gem, strives to achieve the same effect. Stories such as Julian Barnes's "Evermore", on the other hand, engage with that mythology by questioning it and interrogating motivations for continued remembrance.

Where these more recent stories about the Great War do not strive to either conform to or challenge the Great War myth as described by Hynes and others, particularly those stories published at greater intervals in the decades

²⁸¹ Anne Perry, "Heroes." *Murder & Obsession*. Ed. Otto Penzler (London: Orion, 2000) 381.

following the Second World War, they tend to refer back to the Great War as an increasingly distant, if recurring, memory, and discuss the experience of its impact rather than the experience of war itself, often from the perspective of a generation with no first-hand personal recollections of the First World War, and in the majority of cases no experience of the Second World War, either. In Grossmith's "Company", the ghost of a young soldier killed by gas poisoning in the First World War still haunts the house he was born and died in, long after even his niece has died as an old woman. When a young family with a little girl, Angela, move in, he tries to befriend the girl out of loneliness, but she is scared of him and eventually (and tragically) falls to her death from a window when he approaches her to apologize and take his farewell. Memory and memories are the undercurrent that flows through the story: not satisfied with the "vaporious" world of spirits, the soldier's ghost feels that "it was the memories that held him, the memories he subsisted on, like a diet of ersatz foodstuffs, knowing he would never taste real nourishment again".²⁸² His attempt to swap memories for interaction with the world of the living that he has long since left, by befriendng the new tenants' young daughter, ends in her disastrous death, and he feels forced to finally leave the house because he fears he will otherwise be "haunted by the ghost of her memory, by the permanent presence of her absence from the family where she belonged" ("Company" 80). Although the story contains no explicit mention of the First World War other than in relation to the ghost soldier's death almost a century ago, an implicit commentary can be found in the ghost's tormenting feeling in relation to Angela's death that "[the] thought of all those un-lived years, those untested experiences, would pursue him like a life sentence, a death sentence, through eternity" ("Company" 80). Although he is thinking of the girl he has inadvertently caused to fall to her death, the words also apply to himself, since he died "not yet a man" ("Company" 70) and is now left with the only option of letting go of even his shadowy, vicarious existence in favour of complete dissolution, "heaven knows where" ("Company" 80). There is no way for him to connect with the world of the living any more; the child Angela is frightened of him and does not understand him because she cannot relate to his predicament. She fails to recognise him for what he is, a Great War veteran:

²⁸² Robert Grossmith, "Company." *The Minerva Book of Short Stories* 3. Eds. Giles Gordon and David Hughes (London: Mandarin, 1991) 70.

“Why do you wear those funny army clothes? You don’t look like a proper soldier.” (“Company” 75) Her inability to place him may be read as another implicit commentary on the war, in that it exposes the temporal distance between his former present and hers which makes a healthy, living recognition of the past impossible and leaves us with only a faint, lingering echo. The personal memory of the Great War in Grossmith’s story has paled into a ghostly memory that continues to haunt us.

Differences in subject matter and the far smaller numbers of stories written and published about the Great War also affect publication patterns. Whereas the majority of wartime and inter-war short stories first (and often exclusively) appeared in magazines and periodicals, those stories written on the subject after 1945 more often than not appear only in anthologies or collections, partly due to the flagging of the popular magazine market noted in Chapter 2. Even more so than magazines and periodicals, anthologies rely on the market value of the stories they collect, whether this value lies in their subject matter or in the prestige of the authors included. Personal experience as assistant editor of an anthology of Great War short stories (*The Penguin Book of First World War Stories*, 2007, with Barbara Korte) has shown that even for a volume that was initially designed to ‘rediscover’ lost fictional accounts of the war publishers will insist on a significant number of well-known names that can spark recognition in potential readers and prompt them to buy the book. Consequently, most of the authors included are familiar names, such as Kipling, D.H. Lawrence, Robert Graves, Arthur Conan Doyle, W.S. Maugham, Katherine Mansfield, Joseph Conrad and John Buchan, while only very few stories by lesser known writers could be added for a widening of the anthology’s scope.

As might be expected, post-war short story anthologies that do not explicitly adopt war as their theme rarely include First World War stories. Those war stories that do find their way into general fiction anthologies are invariably stories by authors well-known and critically acclaimed at the time of publication. They also tend to be of a variety of war story that touches upon ‘fashionable’ aspects of the war and its evolving mythology. Christopher Isherwood’s *Great English Short Stories* (1957) includes Kipling’s “Mary Postgate”, and Isherwood explains his choice as due to its stylistic and formal mastery, despite its ideological shortcomings:

Is it unfair to Kipling to select this terrible and repulsive story? I don't think so. If it reflects an unpleasant side of his personality, it also shows him at the height of his powers. Mary Postgate is described with the economy of a master; it is his triumph that she is both colorless and very much alive, and that we can believe in the fiendish callousness of her behaviour to the dying German airman. And how vividly Kipling evokes the awkward eager bustle, the befogged rumour-haunted anxiety of civilians at the beginning of a war! Only one defect prevents this story from being great; Kipling cannot stand outside Mary's hatred of the Germans. Indeed, he shares it.²⁸³

The only other First World War story in Isherwood's anthology is D.H. Lawrence's modernist short story "The Blind Man". Isherwood's choice of Kipling and Lawrence is characteristic of most anthologies in that Kipling is a writer particularly renowned for his vast oeuvre of short stories as well as beloved by a large audience for his children's fiction, and Lawrence is an accepted 'master' of the modernist movement.²⁸⁴ Similarly, Christopher Dolley's *The Second Penguin Book of English Short Stories* (1972) includes Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall", which can hardly be defined as a war story as such but does refer to the war and is deliberately placed in its context by the editor. It is also a modernist story by a well-known author that has been frequently reprinted in anthologies of both modernist writing and short fiction. Most general fiction anthologies, such as A.S. Byatt's *The Oxford Book of English Short Stories* (1998), include no First World War stories despite a renewed academic and popular interest in the Great War in the 1990s.

Although the Second World War did not lead to a similarly prolific production of war writing in Britain, it had a significant effect on the reception and (re-)publication of First World War writing. Adrian Barlow reviews literature about the First World War written and published after the Second World War and notes that writers and poets addressing the Second World War frequently referred to the First. From the 1960s onwards, Barlow claims, when the Great War "had become sufficiently historical to feature in school and university history syllabuses", more and more texts dealt with the memory and remembrance of the Great War (Barlow 44-45). Bernard Bergonzi observes for literature of the Second World War:

The poets of 1939-45 knew more and expected less than their predecessors of 1914-18; indeed, the work of the earlier poets was an essential part of what they

²⁸³ Christopher Isherwood, ed., *Great English Short Stories* (New York: Dell, 1957) 185.

²⁸⁴ For a qualification of Lawrence's status as a modernist, see footnote 119 in Chapter 3.

knew. The poetry produced during the Second World War by such writers as Alun Lewis, Keith Douglas and Roy Fuller was wryly ironical and understated rather than dramatic. [...] It is still the Great War, shorter, but, for Britain, far more traumatic and destructive of life, that seems to exercise the greater imaginative appeal (Bergonzi 213).

Poetry, novels and memoirs of the First World War were read with renewed interest during and after the Second World War. Poems such as Vernon Scannell's "The Great War",²⁸⁵ written after the end of World War II, stress the dominance of the memory of the First World War in popular imagination and point to the fact that the later conflict by no means eclipsed the earlier one, neither in public memory nor in literature. Particularly the poetry of the First World War was widely regarded as a standard to aspire to for poets of the Second World War. In his study *Not Without Glory: Poets of the Second World War*, Scannell notes the all-pervading influence of the Great War on the second generation of war poets, and the expectations raised by Owen and Sassoon, Graves and Blunden. He says that "[a]fter 1918 it was impossible for the British reading public to think of a war without its War Poets",²⁸⁶ and continues on the same theme when he discusses Peter Porter's poem "Somme and Flanders":

Here is a young poet, writing almost half a century after the Great War, which was finished long before he was born and about which he knows only from his reading and the anecdotes of old men, yet he finds that the mythic No-man's Land, the going 'over the top' with bayonets fixed, these are the images which embody most poignantly for him the conflict of men and nations, the wholesale slaughter of total war in our century, not the concentration camps or the battles of the Second World War, not Hiroshima or Nagasaki, events which one might have thought to be more powerfully charged with menace and terror and pity since they are so much closer to the poet's own experience (Scannell 20-21).

Scannell wishes to stress that even across the chasm of the Second World War, the First World War retains a hold on the consciousness of both poets and writers of narrative fiction. This hold is also visible in post-war short fiction that continues to address the earlier conflict and its consequences, albeit to a far lesser extent than in poetry, where references to the earlier war are more frequent. Looking at anthologies of war fiction published after 1945, one does note the influence of the Second World War and the myth of the Great War that

²⁸⁵ See Vernon Scannell, "The Great War." *Collected Poems 1950-1993* (London: Robson Books, 1993) 68-69.

²⁸⁶ Vernon Scannell, *Not Without Glory: Poets of the Second World War* (London: Woburn, 1976) 14.

gained strength and authority from the 1960s onwards, as outlined in section 1.1, under the influence of the anti-war movement that was triggered by Vietnam. Robert Graves's short story "Christmas Truce", first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* as 'Wave No Banners' on 15 December 1962, reflects this development in its frame narrative: the story is an account of the unofficial Christmas truce between German and British soldiers on the Western Front in 1914, told by a grandfather to his grandson from a post-war perspective. The grandson, whose father has died in the Second World War, wants his veteran grandfather to march in a 'Ban the Bomb' rally, which the narrator refuses to do, as he believes that only nuclear arms will prevent another war. Visible in editorial choices and prefaces alike is a focus on the horrors and futility of war, ironically in the aftermath of a war that was demonstrably fought for the good cause of removing a murderous, totalitarian regime. Anthologies of the 1990s and early twenty-first century in particular adopt an internationalist stance, and are rarely restricted to just English or British authors. They further tend to include post-WWII writing on the First World War, most likely in an effort to pay tribute to recent literary trends and make the collection in question more marketable for a contemporary audience by including well-known authors' recent work. This editorial policy is in keeping with critical trends that regard modern literature on the subject of the First World War, most notably Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-95), as an extension of and addition to the canon of Great War literature. Todman describes these books, which take great pains to supply distinct and 'realistic' descriptions of the Western Front, as almost equivalent to "a second 'war books boom'" (Todman 39). Their treatment as war books may initially seem absurd. However, many of these late-twentieth-century works either consciously engage with (like Barnes's short story "Evermore") or unconsciously document (like Perry's "Heroes") the mythology and remembrance of the war. Like some of the short stories discussed in this chapter, they either challenge or reinforce existing myths, which justifies their critical treatment alongside 'genuine' (i.e. contemporaneous) First World War fiction.

One of the most successful post-war anthologies of war writing (judging by sales and re-publication) is Ernest Hemingway's *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time* (1942), which was first published during the Second World

War but was reprinted and republished in new editions no less than seven times between 1952 and 1979.²⁸⁷ Hemingway's introduction to the volume has a strong political agenda and reflects his determination to see German aggression stamped out in his lifetime, but at the same time takes war as an essential, if deplorable, part of the experience of being human, drawing on Hemingway's own war experience:

This book will tell you [...] how all men from the earliest times we know have fought and died. So when you have read it you will know that there are no worse things to be gone through than men have been through before. [...] The editor of this anthology, who took part and was wounded in the last war to end war, hates war and hates all the politicians whose mismanagement, gullibility, cupidity, selfishness and ambition brought on this present war and made it inevitable. But once we have a war there is only one thing to do. It must be won.²⁸⁸

In accordance with this view, the pieces included range widely from fictional accounts of prehistoric battles to contemporary conflicts. The selection varies with every new edition and older pieces are partly replaced by more recent accounts, but a small amount of First World War writing is included in all of them. Most accounts are excerpts from longer works of non-fiction or novels, however, such as T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922) or Frederic Manning's *Her Privates We* (1930), and the only British Great War short story that is consistently included is Richard Aldington's vivid, condemnatory frontline story "At All Costs" (1929).

Jon E. Lewis's *The Mammoth Book of Modern War Stories* (London: Robinson, 1993) is a paperback publication containing fifty-six stories by international authors, covering wars from the American Civil War onwards in roughly chronological order. Many of the 'stories' are, as in many anthologies, not short stories, but rather excerpts from novels and memoirs. In the foreword to the volume, *Daily Telegraph* war correspondent Robert Fox states:

In this century war writing and war reporting grew up and entered an era of realism. No longer is combat the experience of a bold few, often fighting in remote corners of Europe and empires overseas. [...] Yet the experience of the man and woman caught up in fighting and its aftermath is often intimate and

²⁸⁷ While the 1952 edition was a reprint of the original edition of 1942 by another publisher, Avon, the 1958 and 1960 volumes were new editions, published by the New York publishing house Berkley. London-based Collins published a shortened edition in 1966, 1969 and 1972, and an earlier version was reprinted by Bramhall House Publishing, New York, in 1979.

²⁸⁸ Ernest Hemingway, ed., *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time* (New York: Crown, 1942) xi.

elusive – and tests the skill of the writer in fiction and journalism. Often war writing in prose and poetry can have the precision and realism of reportage. As this volume shows, the best writing about action is from those who have been through the turmoil of combat themselves.²⁸⁹

Fox here reiterates the idea that war writing is always first and foremost writing about combat, and at the same time stresses that the value of war writing lies in its presentation of intense experiences, its immediacy and veracity of description, not in its ability to make sense of war and its effects. By implication, we find once more the idea that it is authenticity and veracity one should be looking for in a war story. The editor of the volume, Jon Lewis, recognises a distinct tone in fictions of particular wars, and shows that he has internalised the idea of Great War writing as essentially disillusioned and anti-war in adding that “World War I stories – like World War I poems – are a distinct body of literature, imbued with a sense of disillusion, and contempt for the slaughter through which the troops were put”, in stark contrast to what he sees as the more affirmative stance on war as necessary and just in Second World War stories.²⁹⁰ For the selection of Great War writing in his own anthology, this is certainly true, as Lewis has chosen almost exclusively pieces by (soldier) writers of the late 1920s ‘disillusioned school’ and avoided any such stories or excerpts that might challenge established negative perceptions of the war: excerpts from Sassoon’s *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Frederic Manning’s *Her Privates We*, from Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Henri Barbusse’s *Under Fire*; Richard Aldington’s cynical short story “At All Costs” and Liam O’Flaherty’s “The Alien Skull”. Those stories or excerpts included in the anthology by writers who usually wrote on the war with an affirmative stance, such as ‘Bartimeus’, Henry Taprell Dorling or W.E. Johns, are uncharacteristically value-neutral and concentrate on rendering the particular war experiences they relate in a vivid, realistic manner. It is striking that once again more than half the texts included are not short stories but excerpts from well-known longer prose works – an editorial choice that the anthology shares with the anthology *The Vintage Book of War Stories* (1999), edited by Jörg Hensgen and popular novelist Sebastian Faulks. Faulks, whose breakthrough came with his own First World War novel

²⁸⁹ Robert Fox, Introduction. *The Mammoth Book of Modern War Stories*. Ed. Jon E. Lewis (London: Robinson, 1993) xi.

²⁹⁰ Jon E. Lewis, *The Mammoth Book of Modern War Stories* (London: Robinson, 1993) xv.

Birdsong in 1993, seems to have been considered suitable to contribute an introduction to this volume on the basis of this success. *The Vintage Book of War Stories* is another paperback publication, comprises forty stories by international authors, and again collects almost exclusively excerpts from novels. The selection of material for the anthology is justified in a historically precarious manner by Faulks, who echoes the myth of the war as futile slaughter and yet again stresses the close connection of what he regards as 'good' war writing with journalism, and by implication a 'true' account of war:

Witnessing what no human being had ever seen before [...] – the slaughter of ten million men for no apparent reason – proved an experience difficult to transmute into fiction, and there are not many outstanding novels to emerge from 1914-18. Exceptions include books by Henry Williamson, Frederic Manning, R.H. Mottram and Richard Aldington [...].²⁹¹

And further:

Many English novelists of the Great War were acting as auxiliary reporters: 'Look,' they were saying, 'no one really told you before what it was like' – and their ambitions were essentially journalistic. Those who went artistically further found what they could do constrained by the static nature of trench warfare. It is not surprising that, not only surveying an unprecedented human holocaust but watching it from the hole in the ground for months on end, these men produced such introspective books (Faulks xii-xiii).

Faulks's tone appears a little patronising, and his preface highlights the commercial interest on the part of publishers to tap into the existing mythology of the war. It also demonstrates that veracity and authenticity (embodied, as Faulks suggests, in war reporting) continue to be considered important characteristics of 'good' war fiction, even if, in Faulks's opinion, 'authentic' war fiction is not necessarily able to 'go artistically further'. Next to classic war texts such as Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, contemporary fiction on the First World War is represented by an excerpt from Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration* (1991), while not a single genuine short story of or about the First World War has been included in the anthology. The term 'story' in the title is clearly not regarded as referring to short stories, despite what it might suggest.

Trevor Royle's collection *Scottish War Stories* (1999), an expensive paperback edition, comprises twenty-four stories dealing with different wars in

²⁹¹ Sebastian Faulks, Introduction. *The Vintage Book of War Stories*. Eds. Sebastian Faulks and Jörg Hensgen (London: Vintage, 1999) xi.

different ways, from a Scottish perspective and written by Scottish authors, some fictional, some non-fictional. Despite its title it is not a genuine short story collection either; in fact, most of the 'stories' included are once again excerpts from longer works. Royle's outlook is clearly critical of war and he claims not to seek to promote the 'entertainment value' of war fiction, but rather its merits of intensity and experience:

The best of the genre are intensely evocative, providing a writer's view of ordinary men experiencing unimaginable horrors or of civilians coming to terms with death and loss. [...] Although the stories are war stories in that most of them are concerned with the business of warfare and its consequences for others, none glorifies the suffering that accompanies battle. Indeed, it is a distinctive feature of Scottish writing to make light of heroics and to underscore realism with some subtle irony.²⁹²

Although Royle's claims regarding the essential 'Scottishness' of his anthology may seem a little doubtful, his selection is interesting in several respects. For one thing, it demonstrates – as does Hensgen and Faulks's anthology – the desire to remain aligned to popular conceptions of the First World War as futile suffering; for another, this volume is a good example of war stories that have been appropriated to serve a new and different purpose, that is, to propagate the idea of an intrinsic 'Scottishness' in writing about conflict. Alongside Victorian war fiction such as Arthur Conan Doyle's Brigadier Gerard stories, the First World War receives a good share of attention: ten out of the twenty-four texts in the volume address the Great War, of which five are genuine short stories: John Buchan's comic story "The King of Ypres"; A.F. Whyte's naval story "Sunk" (first published in October 1916 in *Blackwood's Magazine*); Eona Macnicol's "Grey Boy" (1969), in which a Gaelic-speaking old Scotsman, widowed with a son away in the army, finds a young man in his cowshed and, grudgingly at first and gladly later, allows him to stay and work for his keep, choosing not to acknowledge that he is an escaped German prisoner. Royle also includes Muriel Spark's "The First Year of My Life" (1975), and Iain Crichton Smith's "Greater Love" (1984), a moving story about an elderly teacher who (ab)uses his chemistry lessons to warn his students of war and senseless sacrifice.

Contemporary war story anthologies aimed expressly at young readers take a distinctly moralistic stance on war. Their editorial choices of texts to be

²⁹² Trevor Royle, ed., *Scottish War Stories* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1999) viii-ix.

included reflect the twofold desire of entertaining young readers and at the same time educating them. A clear moral message is visible in the selection of stories and in prefaces and introductions alike; the First World War is presented alongside a wide range of other conflicts, as in Tony Bradman's paperback anthology *Gripping War Stories* (1999), which incorporates stories about war from native American warfare to the war in the Balkans and strives to emphasise that the destructive nature of war is universal. In her essay on recent children's literature addressing the First World War, Esther MacCallum-Stewart observes the same tendencies. She points out the close connection between established perceptions of the First World War in particular and war in general as negative and futile; the moral premises of education, and commercial exploitation of popular subjects. MacCallum-Stewart notes that as a consequence of British educational policy regarding the war and its intensification through the existing pacifist mythology of the First World War, children's literature addressing the conflict "suffers from a desire to say the right thing" (MacCallum-Stewart 182), a desire certainly well meant on the part of children's writers and editors, but nevertheless resulting in a distorted, narrow perception of the war. As she points out, a positive representation of the war is deemed unthinkable, and previous positive interpretations are presented as clearly wrong in a moral and ethical sense. This means nothing less than that "[c]ontemporary perceptions and perspectives are mapped onto the war in much contemporary children's literature" (MacCallum-Stewart 178), and indeed, as we can see from the selection below, anthologies of contemporary texts collated for children and young adults. Linda Newbery's "The Christmas Tree", the one First World War story included in *Gripping War Stories* – all of which were purposely written for this publication – repeats the well-known themes of leave-taking and generational conflict. The main protagonist, a young English girl, has to part from her brother, who has volunteered for active service against the express wish of their father. His joining up is presented in terms of the same heroic willingness for sacrifice that informed wartime fiction, but the stress on personal loss and tragedy is marked and seems well suited to convey the cost of war to a young audience.

A similar stance, and a similar format, are visible in Michael Morpurgo's *War: Stories about Conflict* (2005). This collection comprises fifteen stories about

various wars by contemporary authors, written especially for children and young adults. Like Bradman's anthology, it has no introduction, only a short note by each author preceding their story and explaining how their interest in war was first aroused. Most give as their motivation childhood memories of the Second World War or its aftermath, and the First World War is duly eclipsed by the Second in this publication. The only story dealing with the Great War, Eleanor Updale's "Not a Scratch", chooses an unusual subject in dealing with the fate of a First World War veteran who has contracted a permanent bowel disease from drinking polluted water at the front, and whose life – and the lives of his family – are permanently blighted by this embarrassing disability that does not fit in with the heroic idea of sacrificing life or limbs for one's country. This story also, in its own way, engages with the functional memory of the war by attempting to draw attention to a neglected aspect of the war experience that is not part of its cultural memory, namely the less glamorous yet deeply damaging sacrifices made by soldiers who survived the war but had to live with its uncomfortable legacy that could neither be alleviated nor publicly acknowledged.

A third kind of contemporary war anthology for both young and adult readers focuses entirely on the entertainment value of war fiction and forgoes any moral message or evaluation. The anthology *Heroic War Stories* (1988), first published by Octopus Books in 1983 under the title *Call to Arms*, is a comparatively expensive hardback edition comprising twenty-three contributions – some short stories, but mostly excerpts from war novels and autobiographies. Its title page shows a frontispiece with the inscription PRO PATRIA MORI superimposed over a crossed rifle and sword with barbed wire tangled around them, indicating a positive attitude to war that seems to clash with some of the editorial choices. The First World War is represented by excerpts from Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Graves's *Goodbye To All That* and Frederic Manning's *Her Privates We*, all canonical Great War texts that are (for the most part incorrectly) considered pacifist in the popular imagination, and appear to support a view of the First World War as tragic and senseless to equal degrees. These fictions of the Great War are placed alongside stories of the Napoleonic wars, American Civil War, Boer War, Second World War and other conflicts, and it is striking that, once again, no short stories were chosen to represent the First World War, but sections from canonical war novels and

memoirs. Hayden McAllister's collection of thirty-six war stories by international authors, *War Stories* (1997), repeats the pattern of this anthology and includes next to no genuine short stories in its selection of fictional texts dealing with various armed conflicts throughout history. A surprisingly large percentage of Great War short stories, on the other hand, feature in *The Best War Stories* (1985), an anthology of forty-nine stories comprising some short stories but mostly excerpts from novels and autobiographies by international authors. The hardback collection addresses various conflicts from Roman conquests to modern African wars. The anthology includes two excerpts from longer texts dealing with the Great War, the seemingly inevitable excerpt from *All Quiet on the Western Front* and H.T. Dorling's "The Night Patrol", an abridged novelette (1929). The genuine short stories chosen for the volume that address the First World War are Rudyard Kipling's "Mary Postgate", "A Friend of the Family" and "The Gardener" – three stories ranging from overt hatred of the German enemy, to humorous treatment of the war, to coping with loss and grief; W.S. Maugham's "The Traitor" (discussed in section 3.6); three naval stories (including Joseph Conrad's "The Tale"), and one 'disillusioned' short story, Richard Aldington's "At All Costs". This selection of stories, particularly without the benefit of an introduction or foreword, is in its totality rather value-neutral and allows for both affirmative and critical evaluations of war in general and the First World War in particular, thus catering both towards modern mythology of the Great War as futile slaughter, and more affirmative voices in favour of war as a political instrument.

4.3 First World War stories in post-war teaching and scholarship

Educational anthologies are to be regarded as a separate kind of collection, as they are not only aimed at a young audience, but expressly designed to be read and discussed in the classroom. The choice of stories in these anthologies consequently combines marketing concerns with educational considerations. It is admittedly somewhat difficult to define an 'educational' anthology. For the purposes of the present analysis, only such story anthologies find consideration that expressly voice their didactic goals and clearly identify a target audience of pupils. While children's writing, and particularly such writing that is designed to be read in an educational context, always works towards a moral agenda of some sort, the nature of this agenda naturally changes with time. Stories included in wartime and inter-war anthologies for young readers actively encouraged admiration for soldiers and nurses, and firmly embedded the Great War in the same historical context of the British Empire as previous and indeed later wars. Many children's magazines continued to publish First World War adventure stories right up to the Second World War, for instance the popular 'Captain Biggles' flying-ace stories.²⁹³ Children's writing and children's short stories about the Great War written since the pacifist movement of the 1960s turn these earlier tendencies upside down. As Esther MacCallum-Stewart points out, contemporary war writing for children and young adults is considered to have to be "morally instructive or to depict events considered commendable in order to counter beliefs that war is a positive action. This combines with a series of cultural ideologies that already inform common perceptions of the First World War" (MacCallum-Stewart 177). Generally speaking, short stories seem to be considered good reading material for the classroom, if only for practical purposes. In the foreword to his anthology *Moments of Truth: Modern Short Stories* (1974), Frank Whitehead observes:

Short stories have a particular value in school and college because the reading together and discussion of them can be fitted relatively easily into the confines of the traditional lesson or seminar period. Moreover a collection of short stories by different hands can be designed to cater for a wide range of different tastes and aptitudes among its readers.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ On the appeal of Captain 'Biggles' Bigglesworth, see Flothow 153.

²⁹⁴ Frank Whitehead, ed., *Moments of Truth: Modern Short Stories* (St. Albans: Hart-Davis Educational, 1974) vii.

While short stories in general are read in schools as part of the curriculum for teaching English literature and language and Great War poetry is taught in both English and history classes, First World War stories in particular do not find ready entry into educational anthologies and classroom teaching. Six general anthologies of short stories published explicitly for secondary-school teaching between 1966 and 2000 include only one First World War-related short story between them, namely Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly". Special cases are two anthologies focussing explicitly on war fiction as a subject for the classroom. Both *Twelve War Stories* (1980), edited by former secondary-school headmaster John Foster, and Jane Christopher's *War Stories: Major Writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (1999) collect short stories on war-related topics for the express use in schools. Foster's editor's note reads:

The aim of this collection is to provide student readers with a range of stories that give insights into the experience of war from the point of view of those who are involved as combatants. While most stories deal with the experiences of soldiers, two of the stories are about airmen and one is a naval story. The object is to present the student reader with stories of quality, which give a realistic picture of what it feels like to be involved as a participant in an armed conflict, and thus to counterbalance the false pictures of warfare that are often presented on the screen and in war comics.²⁹⁵

'Quality' literature is here employed to counteract images of war that the editor feels are false, meaning the texts chosen for this anthology are texts that do not glorify war but portray it as a thoroughly negative experience. In his wish to promote a socially sanctioned pacifist reaction to war in his student readers, and in a bid to ensure the realism of his collection – its veracity and authenticity – the editor relies on the didactic usefulness of soldiers' accounts in forming the young readers' attitude to war. He does not, however, consider the fact that the stories on World War I included in his anthology all stem from a particular group of veterans, and as such cannot hope to be representative of more than that group's war experience, which limits the range of their authenticity. The First World War is represented in *Twelve War Stories* by three stories: somewhat inevitably Richard Aldington's disillusioned story "At All Costs"; Robert Graves's story "Christmas Truce", and Ian Hay's "The Non-Combatant", an excerpt from his

²⁹⁵ John L. Foster, ed., *Twelve War Stories* (Harlow: Longman, 1980) iv.

episodic novel *Carrying On – After the First Hundred Thousand* (1917) which was, however, first published in serial form.

Jane Christopher's anthology likewise comprises twelve stories covering a range of armed conflicts, with an introduction by the editor and a section with biographical information on the authors, tasks and classroom activities at the end of the book, including hints for further reading such as the *Mammoth Book of Modern War Stories* and Trudi Tate's anthology *Women, Men and the Great War* (1995). The First World War is represented by three stories: Liam O'Flaherty's "The Alien Skull", Robert Westall's "The Making of Me" and Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly". Christopher stresses that war is a topic with which every one of us is confronted almost daily in the news; that it is necessary to look beyond the factual information of the news reports to the human tragedies behind the images, and that short stories help to do so by providing new and different perspectives (Christopher viii). She repeats the moral message also to be found in commercial anthologies of war stories for children and stresses the notion of the universal tragedy of war:

The short stories contained in this anthology were written about different wars or destructive conflicts. The point here is that no matter the date, the country, or the number of people involved, all wars share main aspects in common: destruction, death, grief and hope (Christopher viii).

To an even greater extent than war-story anthologies for young readers with a primarily entertainment purpose, educational anthologies are committed to conveying a strong anti-war message, and this commitment is visible in their choice of texts.

Academic anthologies of war fiction necessarily have other interests at heart than educational anthologies for a secondary-school audience. While teaching anthologies choose their texts for their moral message or their suitability for studying narrative techniques or characteristic genre features, academic collections foreground particular research interests. Accordingly, *The Penguin Book of First World War Prose* (1989), edited by Jon Glover and Jon Silkin, has the declared aim of making accessible a wide number of key texts that may not be readily available in other forms. There is a large-scale anthology of international war writing in prose, including texts as diverse as excerpts from novels, diaries, memoirs and autobiographies, literary criticism, journalistic

writing, letters, travel writing, critical essays and a small number of short stories. The writers included are all well known, and many are canonical: with Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, Frederic Manning, Vera Brittain, Edmund Blunden, Richard Aldington, Herbert Read, and Ivor Gurney, as well as the continental war writers Remarque and Barbusse, most 'classic' First World War writers are represented. Out of ninety-nine texts included, only five are short stories, and only two of these were written by British authors: Conrad's "The Tale" and Richard Aldington's "Farewell to Memories". Paradoxically, Silkin and Glover begin the introduction to their prose anthology with a reference to poetry, stressing its moral, pacifist function:

In retrospect, the writing that has emerged from the war that was supposed to have ended all wars seems distinctive. No other poetry became, ultimately, as centred in its commitment to exposing the horror and absurdity of war; no other [...] so committed to infusing compassion with a determination to expunge war.²⁹⁶

In contrast to Great War poetry, Glover and Silkin claim, Great War prose "is not [...] as unified in its attitudes, nor is the possession of excellence so clearly in the hands of those opposed to the war" (Glover and Silkin 2). It does provide some additional aspects, however, as the two editors point out: greater descriptive detail, an insight into the "physical and moral education of individuals or groups" through shared war experiences, and a degree of contradiction less visible in the poetry (Glover and Silkin 11). Given the vast number of poems written on the subject of the war, the latter statement at least seems implausible.

Following a similar approach as Silkin and Glover's anthology, but with an emphasis on the genre short story, Trudi Tate's *Women, Men and the Great War: An Anthology of Stories* collects twenty-five international, English-language Great War stories by a range of authors from a multitude of different backgrounds, including American authors such as William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway and Edith Wharton. Many of these are commonly regarded as modernist, such as Katherine Mansfield, H.D., D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Wyndham Lewis and Mary Butts, but they are published alongside writers aiming at a wider readership such as Rudyard Kipling and W.S. Maugham and in this respect reflect the diversity of the war's short fiction.

²⁹⁶ Jon Glover and Jon Silkin, eds., *The Penguin Book of First World War Prose* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989) 1.

Other anthologies of the 1990s follow a distinctly feminist or gender-centred approach and aim to make accessible women's writing on and of the First World War in particular, as a statement against the predominantly male canon of Great War literature. Agnès Cardinal's *Women's Writing on the First World War* (1999) was the first such anthology and has an impressive scope: it comprises a selection of sixty-nine texts on the war and its effects by French, German, English and American women writers, including a number of short stories alongside letters, excerpts from novels and memoirs, short plays and essays. British short story writers are fairly well represented with stories in all sections of the volume: Part I 'The War Begins' includes Radclyffe Hall's "Fräulein Schwartz", chosen most likely for its sympathetic portrayal of a harmless German spinster trapped and persecuted in wartime England; another story by Hall, "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself", can be found in the final section of the collection, 'Retrospect', alongside Virginia Woolf's "The Shooting Party". A range of narrative styles are brought together in the section with the somewhat arbitrary title 'Writing the War': Constance Holme's "Speeding Up, 1917", Katherine Mansfield's "An Indiscreet Journey" and Mary Butts's "Speed the Plough" as formally innovative stories are balanced by three more plot-centred stories; Annie Edith Jameson's "War Economy" and Blanche Wills Chandler's two short satires "A Pattern of Propriety" and "A Little Nest Egg". These latter stories are light-hearted, witty portrayals of wartime characters and the charming absurdities of wartime reality on the home front, and they are more representative of the kind of fiction published in popular magazines during the war.

Margaret R. Higonnet follows similar selective principles in the editing of her anthology *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I* (1999). It is likewise an international selection, with many stories in translation from Russian, German, French and other languages of countries that participated in the war. The declared goal of Higonnet's anthology is to lead readers away from the prevalent focus on male combat experience in the memory and remembrance of the First World War. Angela K. Smith's *Women's Writing of the First World War: An Anthology* (2000) is similar to Higonnet's volume in aim, scope and selection but collects primarily English-language texts. Again, only a fraction of the texts included are short stories, whereas the largest percentage of contributions are

journalistic pieces, excerpts from longer works or diary entries and letters, all organised topically rather than according to genre. Unlike Tate and – largely – Higgonnet, Smith also includes previously unpublished writing by unknown writers.

While wartime and inter-war anthologies of war writing naturally focus exclusively on the First World War itself and hence include only Great War writing, they do place disproportional emphasis on those accounts of the war that could claim to be eyewitness reports or memoirs. More experimental war stories are to be found only in one anthology between the wars, H.C. Minchin's *Great Short Stories of the War* (1930). Wartime and inter-war anthologies of war stories for young readers choose their stories to encourage admiration for martial courage and sacrifice, and by no means present war as an undesirable event. Stories included in anthologies for young audiences must always also appeal to the tastes of young readers and be readable within their scope of experience, either by allowing them to easily identify with one of the characters – as in stories purposely written for young audiences that feature child protagonists – or by providing the thrill of dangerous adventure. Post-war educational anthologies, on the other hand, have a very clear didactic and ideological aim: they strive to include stories that may, on the one hand, be seen as appropriate examples of 'good' (that is, aesthetically challenging) short story writing and generally of the successful composition of literary texts. On the other hand, they aim to propagate a moral message of pacifism and a critical attitude towards war, to impress students with respect for human lives and abhorrence of war. Modern academic anthologies, by contrast, have the primary interest of either making accessible obscure texts (for example by women writers hitherto not part of the canon of Great War literature), or focussing on particular literary qualities and innovations. These two interests are often combined. The high percentage of stories that would generally be described as modernist, such as the work of Katherine Mansfield or D.H. Lawrence, is a clear indicator of scholarly interest in innovative fiction rather than the traditional modes of story-telling to be found in popular fiction, and hence in most stories about the war published during and after the First World War.

Post-war short stories about the First World War generally show diversity different to that visible in wartime and inter-war stories. On the one hand, these

stories gradually move away from the function of narrative configuration to other concerns, such as a critical engagement with the war's memory. On the other, post-war stories are less indebted to particular subgenres than wartime stories. Although some of these later stories still adopt established genres such as the detective or ghost story, they follow generic patterns less rigidly, and many of these short stories are hard to sort into any genre at all. Barnes's self-reflexive "Evermore" is a case in point. From the strong indebtedness of wartime and inter-war stories to established patterns and formulas which provided reassurance and familiar frameworks of understanding, the post-war short story addressing the war has moved into less standardised narrative territory. This development, gradual but pronounced, reflects the changes in readers' and writers' requirements and expectations outlined above. Unlike readers during and just after the war, modern audiences no longer require the comfortable stability and predictability of generic conventions found in magazine stories about the war, leading to a greater diversity in form as well as content.

Conclusion

The resistance to the uniformity of the British Great War myth offered by many British short stories of the First World War makes for fascinating reading material. Particularly those short stories published in popular magazines constitute important documents of the war's experience to cultural historians, but because of their often conventional form literary scholars have hitherto largely ignored them. However, the question arises why even more ambitiously literary Great War short stories have neither become part of a literary canon, nor been given a great deal of critical attention. My thesis shows why, for various reasons to do with the essential genre characteristics of the short story, the audiences targeted by short stories of the war, and the aims pursued by short story writers addressing the war over time, Great War short stories have not been canonised, and are yet to be recognised as valuable sources for a cultural history of the war. While the ephemerality of the short story's major publishing outlet – magazines and newspapers – contributes a very tangible material reason for the extra-canonical status of First World War short stories, the topicality of most Great War stories, which were very much tied to the time of their production, contributes an ideological and psychological reason. Great War short stories helped readers in immediate touch with the war to make sense of their own experiences in a broad and diverse context of (fictional) war stories other than their own, but neither could nor aimed to fulfil this function for later generations of readers with no personal experience of the war. Their views and representations of the war are likewise a product of their time, which leads to a dating in terms of changing attitudes to war as far as contemporaneous short stories are concerned, and to a re-inventing of the war's experience that reflects contemporary evaluations of the Great War in more recent stories.

Specific questions this thesis set out to answer related to the lack of canonicity among First World War short stories, and to whether the reasons for this relegation of short stories to the war's cultural reservoir was the result of generic features and specific ways of treating the war in short fiction. The discussion in Chapter 1 has shown that short stories as a genre are indeed disadvantaged in terms of canonisation for a number of reasons. They are frequently hampered by the ephemerality of their main publishing outlet, the magazine market, and adverse commercial conditions in publishing. Moreover, as

the majority of short stories are works of popular fiction, they are not considered formally innovative enough for a canon of short fiction moulded on New Critical notions of what a short story ought to be. The short story of the First World War in particular is doubly handicapped: not only do the usual restrictions of the genre apply to them, but they are also excluded from the canon of Great War literature because they do not sufficiently fulfil the crucial criterion of authenticity and 'truth', and because they mostly do not support the current mythology of the First World War as a war of futile slaughter and an unbridgeable rift between front and home front. Evidence for this can be found, for instance, in the fact that anthologies of war fiction, particularly more recent collections, tend to omit short fiction and include excerpts from longer works of either fictional or non-fictional prose by writers of the 'disillusioned' school of war writing of the late 1920s and early 1930s, such as Richard Aldington, R.H. Mottram, Siegfried Sassoon or Erich Maria Remarque. This seems surprising in the sense that short stories are generally regarded in the light of texts that lend themselves particularly to anthologisation, upon which they depend for publication. The most likely explanation is that compilers and publishers of anthologies want their publications to sell well, and sales figures are positively affected by including texts that are already well known – which, in the case of Great War prose, tends to be the case with the war's novels and memoirs rather than short stories. The excerpts from the longer prose memoirs and autobiographical novels of the war that tend to be collected in the place of genuine short stories are considered more authentic documents of the war's experience in the trenches, and they also represent a selection of texts that lend themselves to a generalised pacifist interpretation. As such they are deemed appropriate reading about war for young readers in particular.

In formal terms this study has shown that British short stories addressing the war are in their majority stylistically and structurally conservative. Wartime and inter-war stories in particular successfully adapt existing genres and story patterns to wartime themes, such as detective, adventure, ghost or mystery stories, romance or melodrama, rather than responding to the war with the creation of new forms of expression. Such conservative tendencies are perhaps surprising in the light of assumptions that the First World War prompted and intensified new, modernist, experimental kinds of literary and cultural

expression. While such radical, innovative responses were indeed written, they were in the minority. Those stories that address the war in formally more innovative ways are stories by writers of the so-called disillusioned school that aimed to express trauma and frustration rather than to reassure readers and invest the experience of war with meaning. Established patterns and plot devices, on the other hand, offered reassurance and stability to a wide audience purchasing and reading popular magazines, newspapers and story collection.

Although these Great War stories are not in any sense canonical, they form a valuable part of the war's cultural reservoir. These stories illustrate the variety of war experiences and at the time of their first publication helped readers relate, locate and re-evaluate their own war stories in relation to fictional models. They offered narrative solutions to many real-life problems and anxieties connected with the war. Later stories addressing the conflict contribute to its cultural archive in that they document and at times openly engage with developments in British popular memory of the war. Short stories dealing with the subject of the First World War, or using the war as their backdrop, thus form a microcosm of both male and female war experiences spanning a wide variety of locations, occupations, military service branches, and attitudes.

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Appendix A: Short Story Research Corpus

The stories in this appendix have been sorted into categories by their date of composition (where known) and/or first publication. Please note, however, that in many cases bibliographical details reflect the version used for research rather than that of first publication. Full bibliographical details for story collections or anthologies are only given once, with a short title used for subsequent entries.

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