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Adrian Paterson, Christine Reynier

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Introduction: "We Are Also Hospital"¹. Modernist Non-fictional Narratives of War and Peace (1914-1950)

Adrian PATERSON and Christine REYNIER

- 1 The present issue "Modernist Non-fictional Narratives of War and Peace (1914-1950)" continues the probe into modernist prose begun in a previous issue of *E-rea* "Modernist non-fictional narratives" (Paterson and Reynier). The focus has narrowed to examining British and Irish modernist writers' non-fictional writings about war and peace. All kinds of essays, reviews, pamphlets, diaries, autofiction, reportage, letters, and so on, produced between the beginning of the First World War to the aftermath of the Second World War, are examined here. These texts, featuring more or less fugitive writings, have sometimes seemed peripheral to the poetry and fiction that made these writers famous. However, there are good reasons to examine them. In considering what constitutes an author and an oeuvre, Foucault concludes "the author is a particular source of expression who, in more or less finished forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in a text, in letters, fragments, drafts, and so forth" (127). Moreover, there persists an intuition that in this period, non-fictional prose can be particularly illuminating. Something about the pressures of the times created an impulse towards – and effect upon – non-fictional prose. Broadly speaking, our contributors conclude, it is possible to divine two trends, not entirely contradictory: the first towards sober practical purposeful prose that does something in the world; the second toward prose that is disrupted, elliptical, generically fluid, or otherwise multilayered or difficult. Our contributors find these texts provide new insight in the way they represent and appraise their subjects, especially when it comes to narratives of war and peace.

- 2 Why war and peace? A wider justification for this issue is that which surely colours all critical perspectives. It records a twofold response: to what was happening then, and to what is happening now.

Never has our future been more unpredictable, never have we depended so much on political forces that cannot be trusted to follow the rules of common sense and self-interest – forces that look like sheer insanity, if judged by the standards of other centuries. (ix)

- 3 So writes Hannah Arendt in the "Preface" (1950) to the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), the date of 1950 conveniently marking the end of our survey. If anything here should sound familiar, it might be remembered that a belief in the cyclical nature of history was resurgent precisely in the period under discussion. Even Samuel Beckett chose to frame discussion of modern understanding not only through 'the new thing that has happened' but 'the old thing that has happened again' (*Disjecta* 70.) From our perspective, then, examining non-fictional narratives of the period 1914-1950 seems peculiarly cogent. Their prescience should not be overemphasized: historical parallels have a tendency to be overwrought, in both senses. We remember Arendt herself was trying to understand the present by looking back at the past. The particular past she reflects upon in the first half of the twentieth century appeared uniquely ravaging and violent.

Two world wars in one generation, separated by an uninterrupted chain of local wars and revolutions, followed by no peace treaty for the vanquished and no respite for the victor, have ended in the anticipation of a third World War between the two remaining world powers. (ix)

- 4 This period under discussion, containing the First World War, many subsequent revolutions and civil wars, the march towards the Second World War and its aftermath, is both varied and unparalleled. Following Eric Hobsbawm's demarcation of what he calls 'the age of catastrophes', we argue, therefore, that it makes sense to consider the period, as Arendt does here, as a time which changed civilization and in consequence changed non-fictional prose.
- 5 No doubt this period reemerges now with particular urgency because of the number and significance of recent commemorations and cultural events that have sought to remember, recover, re-evaluate, reinterpret, and reimagine this past, both officially and unofficially. In Ireland, for instance, the ongoing government-sponsored Decade of Centenaries (1912-1923, covering the period from the Ulster Covenant to the end of the Civil War) has contributed enormously to new understandings of the complexities of the conflicts of that period: notably, bringing new focus on the place of women in rebellion and social change, unearthing details of forgotten atrocities, and drawing attention to the fate of the enormous number of Irish participants (both nationalist and unionist) in the First World War. In Britain and France (and beyond) centenaries surrounding the First World War have been marked in a number of ways, through official commemorations and cultural responses. There have been new exhibitions in the Imperial War Museum, and public installations, such as *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* at the Tower of London.² In the cinema, Peter Jackson's lovingly colourized documentary *They Shall Not Grow Old* (2018) and Sam Mendes's dramatic *1917* (2020), have in different ways highlighted individual and colonial participation in the war, joining new productions of old classics such as R.C. Sheriff's *Journey's End* (1928). Multiple publications by historians and cultural scholars have brought new meanings and complexity to a wider period still very much close to mind.³ The First World War

has never been far away from the popular imagination, not least because of the continuing effects of the prose (and poetry) of this period. And in Britain, at least, the Second World War has retained a central place in popular culture (in Ireland that period of neutrality during what was dubbed euphemistically "the emergency" still requires attention).⁴ Anniversaries, recreations, histories and films have, if anything, gathered a new impetus, perhaps because survivors of this war are every year getting fewer.

- 6 Literary scholars, likewise, have been extraordinarily productive in reinvestigating the period.⁵ Paul Fussell's seminal appraisal of WW1 through the literature that surrounds it, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), has been reissued in a new edition, and a new light has been shed on war and post-war British poetry and fiction. While war poetry had long been associated with the names of male war poets, Tim Kendall's anthology *Poetry of the First World War* has attracted new attention to a wider understanding of what constitutes a war poem, including those written by women.⁶ Short stories of war have been retrieved from oblivion by Ann-Marie Einhaus's *The Short Story and the First World War* and her edition of *The Prisoner's Defence*, followed by *Night in the Front Line*, a selection of short stories from both world wars. With citizens more than ever involved in the fate of nations, recent scholarship has rightly tended to narrow the traditional distinction drawn between combatant and non-combatant writers, especially as it is a distinction that tended to exclude women. War writing has to be able to include the point of view of nurses, drivers, journalists, observers, whether Winifred Letts or Kate O'Brien, as well as that of writer-combatants like Ford Madox Ford, Siegfried Sassoon, Keith Douglas and George Orwell, all represented here. Spreading the net even wider makes for a rich texture of comparison. So, under the impulse of Bonikowski, famous modernist novels such as *Mrs Dalloway* have been reread as bearing witness to the traumatic experience of the war just as Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* does. Trudi Tate has confronted the fiction of some major modernist writers (Ford Madox Ford, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and so on) with memoirs written by soldiers and nurses. The inclusion here of a number of women writers, and texts Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, and W.B. Yeats, shows fitting consideration to these wider conceptions of war writing.
- 7 Less attention has perhaps traditionally been paid to modernist non-fiction during and between the wars. If some non-fiction is well-known, such as the central essays of D.H. Lawrence, George Orwell, or Elizabeth Bowen, or Virginia Woolf's diaries and letters, criticism has not yet exhausted this abundant material, and some ground-breaking studies have been published only recently.⁷ Indeed, modernist non-fiction is a still growing body of work: the *Collected Prose of T.S. Eliot* is still spawning new scholarship, wartime and postwar prose by H.D. and David Jones has been recently unearthed and examined,⁸ and many writers' letters are still being discovered, compiled and edited, as is the case with Dorothy Richardson's correspondence (examined here by Ivana Trajanoska), the ongoing edition of the *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats* (Kelly), and the recent release (2 January 2020) at Princeton of a cache of T.S. Eliot's letters to Emily Hale. Magazines containing the first publication of many modernist pieces of non-fiction are still being digitized, making new material available for study and opening up new relations. This issue follows landmark studies, like that by Keith Williams and Steven Matthews, which seek to draw together high, low, and middlebrow in the period, and stress the overlaps and connections between modernism and "thirties" writing. Current efforts to map modernist non-fiction more thoroughly will

undoubtedly open the way to new research, and the present issue seeks to be selective rather than comprehensive.

- 8 Our purpose here is to contribute to this ongoing scholarly discourse by addressing the theme of war and peace conjointly. As our contributors make clear, any distinction between the two in this period is by no means clear cut. Collectively they intuit that for the writers they examine war and peace are intertwined: even to talk about peacetime is to admit the proximity of war. From the perspective of a writer already deeply troubled by the conditions of the "peace", George Orwell, writing during the "phony war" of early 1940, would cynically suggest that "war is only peace intensified", and it could seem quite reasonable to argue (as it would for Arendt ten years later) that "after all, the war of 1914-1918 was only a heightened moment in an almost continuous crisis" (1:575-6). The character of the peace, in other words, was bloody.
- 9 As the world knows, the Great War, "the war to end all wars", was no such thing. In his recent book *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*, Robert Gerwarth takes a systematic view of early twentieth century violence. His thesis is simple: that the Great War gave birth to a series of continuing conflicts, most noticeable across eastern and central Europe. These are the more visible if three kinds of conflict throughout the region are included: conflict between nations, civil war, and revolution. These three categories overlap, and (for instance) Ireland, not insulated from European turmoil, partook of all three. With the destruction of the Central Powers and Ottoman empire, Europe saw the violent birth of nations including Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic States, and a series of massacres perpetrated on Armenians and Greeks rocked public sentiment (that inflicted by the Turks at Smyrna was witnessed and turned into fiction by Ernest Hemingway, correspondent for the *Toronto Star*). The Spanish military coup and convulsions in Italy and its colonies which led to Rome's adoption of Fascist government in 1922 stored up difficulties for later. To extend Gerwarth's thesis, unrest linked to the First World War (and anticipating the next) endured in the British General Strike of 1926, the Great Crash of 1929, the rise of Hitler's National Socialists in 1933, the Spanish Civil War from 1936, and continued violent collisions in central Europe, leading inexorably to final outbreak of Second World War in September 1939. This is only a partial picture: but with the Japanese invasion of China and Nanjing massacre of 1937, and the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour it can hardly be called a peaceable time.
- 10 History's need for a neat demarcation of dates has sometimes occluded the sense of contingency and continuity present in the writings of contemporary observers. The economist John Maynard Keynes was not alone in arguing the continuation of conflict was due not only to the war, but to the kind of peace that was brokered afterwards. In *The Economic Consequence of the Peace* (1919) he predicts that the reparations demanded by the Treaty of Versailles agreement would "sow the decay of the whole civilized life of Europe" and lead to inevitable conflict: any subsequent peace would therefore be only relative (2:67). Economic historians have since demurred, but writing near the time, the Russian polymath Piotr Struve posits a continuation.

The world war formally ended with the conclusion of the armistice. In fact, however, everything from that point onward that we have experienced, and continue to experience, is a continuation and transformation of the world war. (Holquist 2)

- 11 For writers, this became talismanic. Paul Valéry, in "The Crisis of the mind", an essay littered with skulls and ashes, diagnoses a crisis of the spirit, of the intellect: "the facts", he says, "are clear and pitiless":

thousands of young writers and artists have died; the illusion of a European culture has been lost, and knowledge has been proved impotent to save anything whatsoever. (23)

- 12 More savagely, W.B. Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming", now appears prescient in its understanding that something had changed – "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold | Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world", its "blood-dimmed tide" staging a strange premonition of a century's apocalyptic birth (294). The poem has been taken by figures as diverse as Chinua Achebe, Slavoj Žižek and George W. Bush as identifying a characteristic twentieth-century condition, though it was written in a supposed time of peace, not in reaction to the First World War, but to continuing Russian convulsions and the Irish War of Independence (and his wife's pregnancy). Evelyn Waugh's novel *Vile Bodies* (1930) reflects in a period of "peace" considerable pessimism about the times' trajectory:

We long for peace, and fill our newspapers with conferences about disarmament and arbitration, but there is a radical instability in our whole world-order, and soon, we shall all be walking into the jaws of destruction again, protesting our pacific intentions. (112)

- 13 Auden's "low dishonest decade" is a familiar description of the 1930s: the painfully abbreviated end of poem XX from "Sonnets from China" (originally "In Time of War") is even bleaker:

And maps can really point to places
Where life is evil now
Nanking, Dachau. (257)

- 14 Place-names spell out a horror that leaves the last line unable to complete its metrical expectation: only silence fills out the form. When George Orwell writes in his 1940 essay that "war is only peace intensified" (576) the semantic pressure on the terms "war" and "peace" is also intensified, enough to prefigure the fictional Ministry of Peace and its slogans "WAR IS PEACE | FREEDOM IS SLAVERY | IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 6). If the terms "war" and "peace" were already interchangeable, non-fiction in the form of Orwell's essay, has anticipated fiction's understanding of the times.

- 15 By these writers' account, then, the use and meaning of language itself is put under pressure by the disjunctions of war. Whether by force of rhetoric or of irony, in formal, semantic or psychological breakdown, through recognizing what Beckett calls "the breakdown of the object", or "breakdown of the subject", or (in language recalling the trenches) "rupture of the lines of communication" (*Disjecta*, 70), a disconnect between word and thing related to perceptions of war produced a cultural charge at least as influential as the theoretical *dicta* of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (assembled and posthumously published as a wartime text in 1916). And if such pressure on the word was evident, so it is on narrative. Walter Benjamin's 'The Storyteller' (1936) finds that in an inter-war world, experiential storytelling is all but impossible:

For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a

countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosion, was the fragile human body. (84)

- 16 Benjamin's concerns about technology have a wartime ring, even when more familiarly expressed in his essay of the same year "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". It is as if the forward march of narrative itself had become hampered by the fragility of the marchers, the body's expendability impaled by the incommensurate destructiveness of wartime technology.
- 17 These are just some of the reasons why examining reactions to war and peace by writers of the time can be so revealing. Such effects on language, narrative, and psychology are manifest in poetry, drama, and fiction, as illustrated above, but perhaps can be felt especially forcefully (and can be self-consciously elucidated) when writers turn to the plethora of forms that non-fiction provides.

1. Non-fictional fusion and generic instability

- 18 Coming to war and peace through the non-fiction of the first half of the twentieth century thus becomes a vital way of revealing the multi-faceted nature of non-fiction. This umbrella term covers a wide array of literary genres, ranging from letters and essays to memoirs and auto/biographies, genres that belong to both the private and the public sphere. Non-fiction can encompass documents that were never meant to be published, such as intimate letters, as well as commissioned works, such as review articles or pieces of open propaganda. Non-fiction and fiction can also overlap, as in the case of biographies, autobiographies and memoirs. Analysing modernist non-fiction is a way of exposing its generic hybridity, its complexity and creativity, as the first section in this issue sets out to do.
- 19 The pressure of war in the period these essays examine thus appears to have had lasting effects on non-fiction. A desire somehow to tell the truth about war has often led writers to adopt the sober guise of non-fictional genres. At the same time, the difficulty of relating or representing war has driven them to develop within their non-fiction various narrative or linguistic strategies more typical of fiction. In the generic instability thus created, fruitful generic interactions can develop. Such fluidity raises important ethical as well as aesthetic questions, not shirked by writers of the time. Might this mean, for instance, that war itself could be over-aestheticized? In "The Imprint of the War in Ford Madox Ford's Critical Writings", Isabelle Brasme looks at "War and the Mind" and "A Day of Battle", two essays Ford wrote when on the Salient of Ypres and revises the conventional opinion, held by Ford himself, that war should radically change a writer's way of writing. Despite its horror, war is here shown to lead a writer rather to *perfect* his technique: Ford's pre-existing impressionist style, developed in his pre-war fiction, is revealed as finding its way into that his war essays, in some way blurring the lines between fiction and non-fiction while enabling the writer to better fulfil his ethical duty and bear witness to the barbarism of war.
- 20 Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz's "Non-Fictional Interwar Narratives by English Writers" deals with a group of combatant writings pivotal to developing postwar modernist ironies and the breakdown of expression. The appearance of a group of non-fictional war texts about ten years after the First World War suggests memories long buried in the mind is reemerging. But grouping together the wintry ironies of Robert Graves's

bitter autobiography, *Goodbye to All That* (1929), the visceral shocks of Siegfried Sassoon's pseudonymous *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, with George Orwell's sober book-essay, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) (published following Spanish Civil War), draws attention to their shared concern with language and truth, and probes the issue of their fictionality (as narratives of memories) or non-fictionality (as based on memories).

- 21 Challenging Fussell's thesis, she shows Graves's autobiography is neither quite fiction nor satire but emerges instead as a particular kind of narrative questioning the Great War's myths (something which got the book a "troubled" reception) through its borrowing of texts, and layering of paratexts, developing a privileged genre for narrating traumatic events. The distancing strategy of Sassoon's memoirs illustrates the power of fictionalised non-fiction to convey the reality of war. And the reality of peace too. Both narratives concern more than the war years which figure centrally, and it is notable that the publisher's catalogue for the earlier *Memoirs of A Foxhunting Man* reinforces a before and after the war distinction: "it reminds us how easy it is to forget the immeasurable changes that have taken place in England during the last twenty years: there has been a social revolution, yet we forget it!" (qtd Faber, 54). Although (or precisely because) it is shaped by imagination and the texts that have gone before it, Orwell's testimonial report on the war also proves particularly probing, anticipating the disconnects of his novels; it is here he refers to peace as dangerous.
- 22 Orwell noted drily that "the Spanish Civil War has probably produced a richer crop of lies than any event since the Great War of 1914-1918", suggesting a continuation if only in propaganda terms. What he meant in part was that the Spanish Civil War was a writer's war, sowing a crop of writer observers or combatant accounts. By the time the Second World War broke out, then, prose writers as well as poets had a considerable number of existing templates and examples of non-fictional or semi-fictional accounts of war to adopt and adapt. So, In "Life-Writing, Subjectivity, Art: Keith Douglas in Egypt during WWII", Andrea Rummel shows how the experience of war and its intense emotions are transformed by Keith Douglas into art, an art that owes much to the writings of romantics and modernists (mainly Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot) as well as to visual culture. Exploring Douglas's "extrospective" abstracting strategies in his use of images and his manipulation of the reader in *Alamein to Zem Zem*, Rummel traces the transformation of Douglas's autobiographical narrative into poetry or short story. She both debates the ethics of such a technique and helps us to think about the connections, rather than the distinctions, between fiction and non-fiction, and how, under pressure of war, poetry might be, in Pound's phrase, "as well-written as prose". The interactions between non-fiction and other forms of fiction or poetry are also at the centre of Christine Reynier's article on Vita Sackville-West's *The Women's Land Army* (1944) and of Adrian Paterson's on W.B. Yeats's 1939 essay, *On The Boiler*, which addresses the unstable generic qualities of Yeats's disjointed text. However, what the first three articles emphasise is the connection between the writer's choice of fiction or non-fiction and their perceived duty in the face of war, a preoccupation which throughout Hobsbawm's "age of catastrophe" becomes particularly pressing.

2. Non-fiction ethics and aesthetics

- 23 Given the violent history of the period it is hardly surprising that the language of violence should so deeply penetrate the discourse of the times. But, as Isabelle Brasme

wonders, did such language always require direct experience of war? Bertrand Russell even went as far as to explain fin-de-siècle philosophy's violent rhetoric (he instances Nietzsche's "worship of force") as a reaction to a prolonged time of peace, as a "barbaric substratum of human nature, unsatisfied in action, finds an outlet in imagination". Such a theory might account for the typographical explosions of Wyndham Lewis's pre-war *Blast*; the cover, at least, of its wartime number was more restrained. Lewis, though, was unconvinced. For him this just demonstrated that it was a writer's job to be prescient. His *Time and Western Man* (1927) documents Russell's own embarrassed admission that his diagnosis was itself blinded by pre-war naivety, and concludes "even today, in their unfathomable conservatism, there are still masses of people who continue to think as though the War had never occurred" (203). Founding in 1927 a magazine called *The Enemy: A Review of Art and Literature* was Lewis's challenge that this should not continue, and despite their differing politics it was a journal read and admired by Orwell. Thus, as described in Stephen Spender's *The Thirties and After* (1978) (the title itself borrowing from his book of photographs and essays *Citizens in War and After* [1945]), the sensitivity of a writer's social and political antennae came to be understood for W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, and other writers of the thirties (and after) as a primary imperative.

- 24 While all this suggests a considerable force of change discernible across the period covered here, this primary, political imperative had been perceived by an earlier generation. Again, it arguably stems from the First World War, but not necessarily or entirely from combatant accounts. Katherine Mansfield was one of the first to make it prerequisite for an artist to register what she saw as a marked change in sensibility caused by the war. Alice Borrego in "The time has come for a new word": Katherine Mansfield's Literary Ethics" explores why, tracing the specific experiences of war in France, privations, fear and censorship described in letters. Mansfield's famously lukewarm review of Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* (1919) brought her critique to a wider audience, but examining her private letters gives us full insight into the author's response to the war as an ethical rather than a political one; her ethics appear to be inextricably intertwined with the fragmented form of her writing, as her non-fiction reveals in multiple ways. Woolf, who herself reviewed Siegfried Sassoon's *Counter-Attack* for the *Times Literary Supplement*, was clearly stung by Mansfield's review. To the reproaches expressed by Mansfield and examined in Borrego's essay, Velid Beganović's analysis of Virginia Woolf's non-fiction provides an answer. Beganović traces Woolf's approach to war in her fiction and her non-fiction and suggests that Mansfield's stricture of *Night and Day* acted as a spur on a writer who nevertheless went on dealing with war strictly on her own terms in fiction and non-fiction from *Jacob's Room* and *A Room of One's Own* to *The Years*, that is, mainly by refusing what she considered the male point of view that prevailed in books about the war. According to Beganović, the major turning-point for this indirect approach occurs in non-fiction, when in *Three Guineas* she abandons it in favour of something sharper and more penetrating. Paolo Bugliani is similarly interested in the later Woolf's reaction to war. In "Reduced to a Whirlpool": War, Sigmund Freud and Virginia Woolf's (Late) Non-fiction", he shows that at the onset of WWII the writer was mostly composing non-fiction: essays, letters, numerous diary entries and the biography *Roger Fry*. At the same time, Woolf shed her initial resistance to Freud and began reading his work a few days before she met him and a few months before he died. She did so while working on *Roger Fry*, the biography of her friend who had been so open to psychoanalytic methods. Bugliani traces what Woolf

owes to her reading of Freud, how it helped her to shape her non-fictional portrait of Roger Fry and more generally, to reshape her own approach to writing in wartime. Woolf's direct wartime experience was evidently limited, but her engagement with war and peace in any number of novels and non-fictional texts is made clear. Just as it did for Mansfield, concern for the war became an artistic imperative for her, culminating according to Beganović's account in the fragmented narratives and technologies of *Between the Acts*. Mansfield's and Woolf's indirect and controversial debate about how to represent war, as it appears in their letters, journals and essays, is therefore broached anew in this second section of the issue. In original moves, Borrego and Beganović respectively illuminate Mansfield's and Woolf's overall outlook on war with Heidegger's notion of "authentic existence" and Wittgenstein's propositions from the last part of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, while Bugliani inverts the usual Freudian readings of Woolf to examine Woolf reading Freud, renewing our reading of Woolf's approach to war and non-fiction.

3. Non-fiction ambiguities, audiences, and technologies

25 By our contributors' accounts, then, even understandings of philosophy and psychology are affected by perceptions of war. Certainly there is evidence that psychoanalysis drew on such language and experiences: a dream recorded in 1926 by Carl Jung (and recounted in another hybrid autobiographic text, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*) for him demonstrated that the war "was continuing to be fought within the psyche" (261). Exploding shells falling on the front line were "interpreted psychologically, missiles coming from the other side. They were, therefore, effects emanating from the unconscious, from the shadow side of the mind" (261). Mapping a ravaged wartime landscape onto psychological terrain, the dream explores comparable technological self-disjunctions as Benjamin's "The Storyteller": both body and mind might be said to suffer from the awesome technology of war. In the aftermath of another world war, Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) would deplore the damage to aesthetics done by a "fetishism of technology" which is seen to destroy the feeling for culture and civilization as surely as the body and the stuff of the world (and promote the growth of Eisenhower's military industrial complex) (41). Yet if war encouraged a familiar modernist resistance to technology it also acknowledged its embrace: as Alex Goody and Tim Armstrong have explored, modernist writing on technology offers both critique and appropriation. The aesthetic, psychological, and ethical commitment of modernist writers should not blind us to the fact that they could also feel the benefits of war: technology and industry greatly profited from war, and women were led to play a greater role in the life of the nation, to suggest only two examples. As Rummel records, in part Keith Douglas observed battles as an "exhibition", like "a child in a factory" who "sees the brightness and efficacy of steel machines and endless belts", and there is something honest about acknowledging war's attractions, if only in its propensity to provide good copy or promising material for non-fiction writers (Douglas 5). Modernist writers' non-fiction bears witness to these historical facts while exposing both the positive and negative impact such understandings may have had on the writers' vision of war as a form of violence to be

counteracted or (sometimes) supported. These are the ambiguities the third section in this issue highlights.

- 26 It is impossible wholly to attribute the characteristic fragmentations of modernism to war, but the phenomena occurred alongside each other, with all the technological and psychological effects registered in prose finding a formal outlet. A new age of mechanical reproduction had allowed the establishment and distribution of the small presses and little magazines characteristic of modernism, encouraging experiments with form and new outlets for non-fiction. It also promoted the short discontinuous kinds of prose aimed at mass readership. No wonder that modernist prose itself should become discontinuous, fragmented, or newly aware of its printed form. This had unexpected effects: one might instance the allusive and self-consciously paratextual *Irish Times* newspaper columns of Myles na Gopaleen (Flann O'Brien) responding in the Irish and English languages to the paradoxes of a neutral country only nominally at peace. In part this reflected public appetite: what at other times might have been niche texts could find extraordinary audience reception. As with the radio, newspapers experienced a growth in audience and circulation during the Second World War. As our contributors discover, war and its prospect both squeezed and bloated the marketplace, which appeared to encourage a turn from fiction to non-fiction. While some works (such as Dorothy Richardson's introspective multivolume novel set before the First World War) might face occlusion, authors might also find ready audiences for non-fiction articles and books (especially on topics related to wartime) which, despite the scarcity of paper, in many nations registered a boom.
- 27 This created fertile ground both for occasional texts and generic mixing. So Christine Reynier in "The Women's Land Army (1944): Vita Sackville-West's Non-Fictional Wartime Writings" unearths a largely forgotten hybrid text, sometimes dismissed (even by its author) as the work of propaganda, but instead finds a practical, persuasive, feminist, documentary, essayistic, quasi-novelistic, historically valid text. In newly evaluating this widely popular, but only recently recalled publication, Reynier explores its particular context and textual identity, but also discovers significant continuities with Sackville-West's other writings, notably a concern with the body and the land, making an argument for the inclusion of such mass-produced but discursive or fugitive texts in the wider canons of modernism. It is a text in which landscape features prominently, reminding us of the upsurge in pastoral concerns in interwar British and Irish writing but also a renewed concern with practicalities of industrial and domestic agriculture during the Atlantic blockade. It was as if the uprootings of wars provoked new interest in the home and garden and the place of women in domestic life.
- 28 Domestic life and the details of wartime living is something explored by Ivana Trajanoska in "Dorothy Richardson's Correspondence during the Second World War and the Development of Feminine Consciousness in *Pilgrimage*". Considering the writing of Richardson's great novel sequence alongside countryside experiences in wartime, she finds new complexities in their interplay. And while Woolf had hoped to "free man from the machine", Richardson's ironized delight in the arrival of two new saucepans, shows something important about the reception of mass-produced items in the midst of shortages. Trajanoska demonstrates that private correspondence can help to clarify a writer's more controversial positions, and examining letters helps us better understand Richardson's creating such a specific and controversial character as Miriam in *Pilgrimage*. She demonstrates that the straightforward accusations of fascism and

antisemitism levelled at Richardson do not hold when read in the context of her correspondence.

- 29 In *Orality and Literacy* Walter J. Ong reminds us of the co-existence of verbal technologies, the old surviving and adapting alongside the new, and it can be fascinating to turn from a published book printed on wartime paper to the immediacy of handwritten, personal letters. The intimate connections between different non-fictional forms, present at all times, are perhaps especially evident in time of war as writers, displaced or otherwise exiled, often write without libraries and familiar spaces, reverting to older habits, making for provisional and contingent texts.⁹ Correspondence takes on new urgency, even when, as Trajanoska discovers, a displaced writer like Richardson never felt more rooted in a community, herself estimating her annual correspondence as about three novels' worth. Writing from France about the hardships and excitements of food or of bombing raids, thus demonstrating the remarkable collision of the private and public spheres in wartime, Mansfield had thirty years before discovered a similar thing; it is fitting that an issue devoted to the vast impersonal forces unleashed by war should also explore the disruption and (relative) peace documented in personal private observation.
- 30 Together, the last three articles exemplify the many functions non-fiction can perform, even when addressing sensitive topics. As Reynier and Trajanoska point out, non-fiction can play the part of a historical document and bear witness to a period, documenting the daily experience of war. Non-fiction can also offer a comment on a writer's fictions, poetry, or other writing and thus play a (self-) critical role. It can even expose a writer's challenging opinions on war and peace more vehemently than fiction (or poetry) does, as it is the case with Richardson and with W.B. Yeats. So in "Of war and war's alarms: W.B. Yeats from *On The Boiler*" Adrian Paterson explores a pre-war text having affinities with private correspondence, the public energy of radio broadcasts, and the timeliness of a periodical text. Taking into account the historical background and the European crisis, Paterson traces continuities between *On The Boiler*, a controversial prose pamphlet posthumously published just before the war in August 1939, and other contemporary discontinuous prose texts of war and peace. Examining the paratextual cues of a printed object made up of prose, poetry, and playtext, he finds that Yeats's fascist tendency is there less disturbing than his association of eugenics and aesthetics. Yet this strangely hybrid printed text, hyper-aware of its audiences, remains provisional, ephemeral, occasional: not a final word. As in Reynier's analysis of purposeful, occasional non-fiction texts, it can be their very provisionality that makes them interesting.

Conclusion

- 31 It has not been the intention in this issue, but it is perhaps plausible to construct a (somewhat fugitive) minor canon consisting of texts of war and peace. Non-fictional war narratives (if peacetime narratives are also included) in particular start to develop a distinctive if hybrid field, drawing from travel accounts, political essays, diaries and journals, aesthetic manifestos, journalism, popular and autobiographical fiction, mythopoeic verse, letters and communiques and a dizzying variety of other texts and genres. This makes it possible to examine coincident if quite different texts within a short window: among many other luminous examples, for instance, David Jones's *In*

Parenthesis (1937), Kate O'Brien's *Farewell Spain* (1937), and Auden and Isherwood's *Journey to A War* (1938) alongside Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938), Ezra Pound's *Guide to Kulchur* (1938), Yeats's *On The Boiler* (1939), and even MacNeice's discursive poem *Autumn Journal* (1938), many addressing quite different conflicts. While drawing on existing studies, creating such a fruitful dialogue between modernist and after-modernist texts could shake up some received perceptions.¹⁰ Again, making such connections opens the question of modernism's characteristic mix of genres and addressing various types of readers and listeners: journals, newspapers, and radio promoted particular kinds of abbreviated non-fiction, and new audiences, which in turn had effects on writing and publishing. As soon as the Second World War began, Bugliani notes, Woolf contracted to write for the *New Statesman*; at the same time, whether your name was George Orwell, Francis Stuart, Louis MacNeice, Samuel Beckett, or Ezra Pound (to instance writers taking different sides), broadcast technology could provide ready employment and an audience for your views, notwithstanding the severe restrictions of wartime censorship. The long-lasting effects of such wider changes, as of the war, cannot be underestimated.

- 32 So Samuel Beckett's first post-war text "The Capital of the Ruins," a radio broadcast of 10 June 1946, takes the term "provisional" as fundamental. Observing the recovery operation in which he was involved in the ravaged French town of Saint-Lô, he is also considering wider human vulnerabilities and endurance. Surprisingly, he applies the term "provisional" to the universe, finding something paradoxically lasting in the generous gestures of help and the temporary "hospital of wooden huts" erected in a bombed-out city. The kind of "bending borrowing and bricolage" that David Bradshaw posits as characteristic of modernist texts, is especially manifest throughout these varied texts of war and peace (2). In addition, it suggests precisely the kind of makeshift assembly brought about by wartime exigencies, whether in the trenches, or in the home, or in the structures devised by helpers from around the globe to reclaim bombed cities. For Beckett such improvised but enduring provisionality gives something back: "a vision and a sense of a time-honoured concept of humanity in ruins, and perhaps even an inkling of the terms in which our condition is to be thought again" (385). Dorothy Richardson, who as Trajanoska discovers, was made oddly hopeful by the sense of family and community the war engendered ("we are also hospital", she writes [Fromm 423]), might concur.
- 33 This issue of *E-rea* means in no way to be exhaustive; it aims at broadening a topic rather than closing it. It is similarly provisional but it aspires in a small way to provide "an inkling of the terms" in which these narratives of war and peace can be thought through again. As the nine essays presented here show, the modernists' non-fictional appraisal of war and peace influences and complicates their other artistic representations of war and peace in fiction and poetry. There seems little doubt in each case that it had vital effects on their aesthetics and ethics. Spreading the net wider than combatants has allowed for richer comparisons. Notably, five out of the nine essays here concern women writers: Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West and Dorothy Richardson. We are also especially pleased that it features the work of emerging scholars alongside established ones. All this work was enriched by discussions and ongoing collaborations emerging from the 2018 ESSE seminar at Masaryk University, Brno, and the editors wish to record their thanks to all who, in whatever degree, have contributed to this issue.

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NOTES

1. The phrase comes from a letter of Dorothy Richardson from Cornwall to Peggy Kirkaldy, 22 July 1941: "We do not possess a barracks. We are barracks, we are aerodromes & merchant ships. We are also hospital" (Fromm 423).
2. The major art installation *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* at the Tower of London marked one hundred years since the first full day of Britain's involvement in the First World War. Created by artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, 888,246 ceramic poppies progressively filled the Tower's famous moat between July and November 2014. 21,688 people volunteered to install the poppies. Each poppy represented a British military fatality during the war.
<https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/tower-of-london-remembers/#gs.vcld3e>
3. See for instance, the work of Jay Winter, Tom Slevin and the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Crowley).
4. Claire Wills's excellent cultural study stresses the perhaps surprising fertility of the literary scene, but bringing to light the complexities of history, politics, and creative non-fiction requires more awareness.
5. See for instance, the special issue of *Anglo Saxonica* edited by Flora, Luísa Maria, Michaela Schwarz S.G. Henriques and Randall Stevenson, *In Remembrance of the Great War: Re-working Myths*, <http://ulices.letras.ulisboa.pt/en/2018/12/21/anglo-saxonica-s-iii-n-16-2/>.
6. In his introduction to his anthology, Kendall shows how women were doubly excluded from the memory of war: as women exposed, for example, as VADs "to extremes of suffering" (xxv) and not recognized for this, and as poets, excluded from the canon.
7. See as representative examples, Brooker and Thacker on modernist magazines, Humphries on journalism and American modernism, Hanna on the manifesto, Whittier-Ferguson on the late prose of Woolf, Stein, Lewis, and Battershill on Virginia and Leonard Woolf's lifewriting.
8. See Vetter on H.D. and the collection of unpublished prose by Jones (Berenato et al).
9. The same is true of fictional texts: the hybrid bricolage nature of James Joyce's *Ulysses* can be partly explained by wartime exigencies, leading to the twenty or so addresses Joyce lived in during chief stages of its composition between "Trieste-Zurich-Paris 1914-1921" (see Hutton).
10. See Williams and Matthews; Valentine Cunningham's *British Writers of the Thirties* sketched some terms by which these particular texts might be considered.

AUTHORS

ADRIAN PATERSON

National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
adrian.pateron@nuigalway.ie

CHRISTINE REYNIER

Univ Paul Valéry Montpellier 3, EMMA EA741, F34000, Montpellier, France
christine.reynier@univ-montp3.fr