**Studies in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature**

*Special Issue “Writing 1914-1918. National Responses to the Great War”*

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With the outbreak of the First World War and the uncovering of modern, dehumanized violence, many direct witnesses faced a double crisis when they tried to share their personal experience. The discovery of physical violence led above all to a crisis of representation, due to the inability of the traditional depictions of war to convey the nature of modern warfare. But there was also a crisis of language, caused by the perverted use of the standardized language to justify the war through political and journalistic lies and heroic descriptions of the events. Despite all this, much material was produced, representing most of the countries that were involved, directly or not, in the war. Letters, diaries, novels, poems, war reportages were written and published in abundance, from the beginning of the war until the end of the 1930s, and some of them achieved immediate and considerable success.

While a substantial number of studies focus fairly narrowly on these works in order to explore how and why they managed to cope with both crises, there have been comparatively few attempts to take a more global approach. Some literary productions from that time are well known, but this is often due to the particular experience of an author rather than to the broader national climate of the country concerned. One of the main goals of this STTCL special issue will be to offer a global perspective in order to locate a number of works from the period within the specific framework of their national production. Because of the way the mother tongue of the authors naturally influenced their way of thinking and because of the rise of nationalisms at the beginning of the century, each author was faced with either embracing or rejecting a national climate. Our work will use this reflection on national responses to the Great War to shed light on some forgotten texts of the period which bring an original response to the challenges of the war, in relation to the canon. Widening the approach to include all the relevant languages will allow a comparison between some of the essential themes present in the texts.

Our contributors will explore three main lines of investigation. The first will focus on the goals of the war texts. Were there national differences in the rate of decline of jingoistic literature, which was very common at the beginning of the conflict? To what extent were national contexts (censorship, politics…), and not merely dates of publication, important in the development of pacifist writing? We will try to understand how testimonies attempted to give sense to the war or to underline its non-sense. Thus, it could for instance be interesting to compare the image of engagement given by some nationalist authors from European countries (Jünger, Barrès) and by South-American volunteers in the French army, whose testimonies are nowadays almost forgotten (Juan Homet, Hernan de Bengoechea, José Garcia Calderon). How was it possible for war-related writings with opposite political goals to flourish in the same country? A key concern will of course be testimony. The desire to be faithful to lived experience often made fictionalization of that experience problematic. That is why the choice of genre was so crucial in many cases, with different countries adopting significantly different approaches: while the Anglophone and the German world focused mainly on poetry, most of the major French authors of the war (Genevoix, Barbusse, Céline, Giono, etc.) chose more or less fictionalized forms of prose (diaries, novels, journals…) to write their war. Studying the ethical implications of this choice of genre, in the wake of the Franco-American author Jean Norton Cru in his book *Témoins* (1928), will be an interesting way to compare some national responses to the issue of telling the truth about the war.

The second line of investigation will involve trying to understand in practical and technical terms the means the authors used to answer the question of *how* to write the Great War, through an analysis of the styles, characters, tones, rhythms, themes and registers they employed. Why was humor so important for the expression of suffering by a Frenchman (Dorgelès, Cendrars), a Czech (Hašek), or for the depiction of a senseless Europe lost in the war by Erique Dominguez Rodiño, a Spanish journalist stuck in Germany? What is the significance of the disappearance of the hero in many novels but its permanence in others, whether conventionally patriotic or not? To what extent can we see the war as responsible for an influx of ordinary lower-class characters and their language into European literature? While some novels incorporate slang as never before (Barbusse in France, De Roberto in Italy, Manning in Australia, Karl Kraus in Germany), it is completely absent in many others, which promote a neutral, diary-style (but also quite original) language, to give a faithful and careful account of war experience and the emotions it aroused. What was the impact of the war on European literary movements, inherited (Realism, Naturalism) and new (Italian Futurism, French “Esprit nouveau”, British Vorticism), as the authors searched for new ways to write the war? And how did the war contribute to erasing the boundaries between literature and press (French trench newspapers, Spanish literary reportages and chronicles by Ramon de Valle Inclán, Gaziel or Chaves Nogales), or between prose and poetry (Cendrars, Giraudoux…)?

The final line of investigation will be the reception of Great War writing. To what extent did the press, the public and particularly the soldiers influence the production of novels, diaries and poetry during the war? Why are some works or some genres forgotten in one country (French poetry, French pro-war prose) while they are celebrated in others (English poetry, German patriotic diaries)? We will also examine the modern reception of these texts, studying for instance significant disparities in the perceived importance of the literary memory of the war. While many major war poems belong to the canon in Great Britain, and while some novels of the period are still well-known in France, only three or four witnesses of the war are still represented in German bookshops. We will also analyze the limited place of colonial writing in our perception of the literature of the Great War.

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Articles must be written in **English** and should not exceed **7,500 words in length**. We will particularly appreciate articles including examples of French, German and Spanish texts, which are the main interest of the review. Authors must provide a **500-word** abstract along with a brief **CV**, complete contact details, and academic affiliation. The deadline for the submission of your proposal is set on May 15, 2016.

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