

From the Editor

The distinction between core and periphery in historical and cultural research can be compared to the military distinction between direct and indirect approach in strategy, as proposed by B. H. Liddell-Hart in the 1940s. This parallelism provides for a new and, arguably, useful interpretational perspective in reading war fiction. In the context of the First World War, the Western Front, where grand battles were fought in accordance with the 'direct approach,' can be compared to the cultural 'centre' of the war, whereas on various other fronts, on the fringes of Europe or on other continents, belligerents tried to win a strategic advantage in accordance with the strategy of indirect approach: these 'peripheral' campaigns included the Eastern Front, the Italian Front, the Balkan Theatre, the Battle of the Gallipoli, Russian campaigns against Turkey, the struggle between Britain and the Ottoman Empire in the Near East, the German U-Boat Campaign, and the campaigns or intelligence operations staged in Africa, and the Asian-Pacific theatre of the First World War. The parallel is valuable for literary criticism in that the Allied success in 'indirect approach' was most likely crucial to the final outcome of the war. Even if the 'indirect' struggles were as crucial for Allied victory as the 'direct' ones, their cultural and literary presence and remembrance is less marked in war literature, and it is marked in ways different from those known in English, French, and German fiction and poetry. It is, however, a firm underlying belief expressed in various articles in this issue that the events on 'peripheral' theatres of war were not historical curiosities, not 'other histories' that could be localized and marginalized from the European point of view, but crucial, decisive moments of the Great War, moments which determined the outcome of the war and the course of global history. This is the way they are understood here.

The first article, by the present editor, elaborates and exemplifies the genre distinctions in war fiction from countries that were secondary war theatres during the First World War. Examples include novels from Georgia and Azerbaijan. Konstantinos D. Karatzas's article on Greek war fiction identifies the stylistic features of the most important war novels written in that country during the First World War and discusses the poignant historical background of the country that was literally forced to enter the war, whose course turned out to be atrocious and tragic for Greece. John Dean's article on divided loyalties in Detroit covers the situation in the melting pot of the United States,

a country whose initial neutrality, ethnic diversity, and geographical detachment from the primary theatres of war made for interesting and surprising social phenomena related to the behaviour and treatment of the Americans of German origin. The article is based on a wealth of previously unpublished and undiscussed archival material. Martyna Kliks's article on Witold Hulewicz discusses an early example of Polish modernism as a response to the war, in which Poland was a primary theatre geographically, but not socially and nationally. For the Polish nation, the First World War was a paradoxical phenomenon, since the Poles fought for at least four major belligerents (Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and France), without engaging on any side, and subsequently without considering the war as a major event in the national history. Even though the war was 'here,' for the Poles it was a distant place. Finally, Natalia Stachura's article on the tragic sinking of the Mendi, a South African troop transport that carried Black soldiers to Europe, discusses a haunting sequence of returning references to the war, first in an emergent nationalist tradition, then under racist repression, and eventually in a newly won national independence of Black South Africans.

The editor and the authors were interested in the marginal and little known corners of the First World War history, the places and traditions dismissed as secondary 'side shows,' and remembered only locally, or entirely forgotten today even by local populations, as in Poland, whose participation in the war is no longer part of the nation's collective memory. Cultural responses to the war in those 'side shows' could be markedly different from the well-known responses known in English, French, and German literatures. The diversity and intricateness of those 'secondary' war literatures transcend their local contexts, and make them surprisingly relevant for today's readers.

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