
Introduction

The third volume of *New Readings* is devoted to the theme of 'Writers and War', with contributors focusing on responses to conflict in literature from the Second World War onwards. Research into the representation of war in the twentieth century has received considerable impetus from the series of commemorations which marked the fiftieth anniversary of events from the Second World War in Europe. The controversial indictments and trials of former collaborators in France and elsewhere for crimes against humanity in the 1980s and 1990s have also fuelled re-examinations of the presence of the past in contemporary society. While it is mainly historians who have been at the cutting edge of new developments in the treatment and analysis of war, literary critics and theorists have contributed in important ways to debates concerning memory, history and representation as they reinterpret literary and filmic images of war.

The French, German and Italian papers in this volume all attest to the presence, and importance, of situations of conflict in twentieth-century cultural production: from the crafted work of Italo Calvino to the cheap, serialised 'Hefte' stories sold in kiosks in the 1950s in the GDR. Approaches to war writing differ between contributors as some, for example Joanna Drugan and Terry Bradford, set out the political, cultural and historical background against which texts are written, whilst others, such as Rainer Emig, concentrate clearly on the uses made of paradigms of war and the effects these have on the construction of the self. What marks all the contributors, however, is their concern to investigate the inscription of the traumatic and often destructive effects of war and conflict in literature. Although textual strategies may differ considerably from writer to writer, the need to bear witness to the past both defines and frames these writers' literary project.

The first paper by Helen Jones concentrates on the representation of conflict in the literature of the GDR. The paper looks in particular at the works of fiction which appeared from 1949 onwards in short, cheap editions sold in kiosks rather than bookshops and known as 'Hefte'. The

time period which concerns Jones is that which runs from 1952 to 1956, when the GDR was struggling to assert its legitimacy as a nation state and when the Cold War was growing more intense. Her analysis centres on the part works of serialised fiction played in the often didactic agenda of the state and how such texts, intended for mass consumption, represented both the global situation of the time and Germany's recent past. The literary strategies employed in two short stories by Ruth Reimann are examined in detail in order to formulate tentative answers to these questions. As well as looking at the formal and semantic properties of various stories, Jones looks at their critical reception and explores their similarities with other writings of the day. She provides a number of suggestions as to how the 'Hefte' may have been received by their original readership.

Joanna Stephens begins her paper on Calvino by discussing his experiences as a partisan in Northern Italy during the Second World War. She reveals the extent of his commitment to writing about his generation's part in the conflict. The paper then examines the ways in which Calvino represented war in his first neorealist fictions. In particular, Stephens emphasizes the way in which his early post-war stories mediate the experience of battle through the use of the naïve narrator and through shifting sensory perceptions. The paper then follows the trajectory of Calvino's work, pointing to his experiments with different literary genres and his continuing anxiety to find a form that would allow him to bear testimony to his wartime experiences. His use of ironic distance and the fantastic in his famous trilogy, *I nostri antenati*, are read as strategies that allow the writer to explore the problems of representing conflict. After having followed the development of Calvino's fiction over several decades, Stephens concludes her paper by looking at one of his final autobiographical writings about his time as a partisan. The piece, 'Ricordo di una battaglia', reveals the oblique process by which his memory works and provides some powerful insights into the reasons behind the changing literary strategies which he developed during his long career as a writer.

Helmut Schmitz begins his paper by considering the extent to which the past continues to haunt the present in the writings of contemporary German authors. He examines Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's claim that the Germans showed an inability to confront the atrocities committed under National Socialism and he looks in particular at the genre

of writings known as ‘father-novels’, where younger writers face the issues of guilt and responsibility. The main body of the paper concerns the novels of Hanns-Josef Ortheil. Schmitz traces the writer’s biographical history, pointing to the trauma suffered by his mother and the enormous pressures which were placed on Ortheil in his early years. He then goes on to examine the ways in which Ortheil’s writings deal over time with the question of memory and the legacy of the Second World War. He explores the implications of the artistry of Ortheil’s style; the bleak solutions which are posited in his first novel, *Fermer*; the attempt to discover the course of history that occurs in his second novel, *Hecke*. Schmitz then considers Ortheil’s reflections on the importance of ‘father-novels’ and discusses the highly complex father-son relationship that is represented in the work *Abshied von den Kriegsteilnehmern*. The latter part of the paper discusses the theme of mourning and its potential resolution.

Joanna Drugan’s article analyses the war record of writer Jean Giono, a high-profile pacifist before the Second World War, who was subsequently to be tried and imprisoned for collaboration during the post-war purges. Drugan aims to elucidate the reasons behind Giono’s compromised post-war reputation. She looks to both his ‘practical collaboration’, as a playwright who continued to have works performed during the Occupation, and his ‘intellectual collaboration’. This second aspect proves to be the more problematic of the two as Vichy’s ‘retour à la terre’ policy and its focus on naturism were to resonate in Giono’s work but with very different ideological implications. Finally, Giono’s sustained pacifist approach to events during the war years and his silence on key issues are examined as providing fodder for the worst accusations made against him during the purges. Drugan follows Giono’s immediate post-war itinerary and that of other prosecuted collaborators, examining the reasons for Giono’s particularly harsh treatment.

Rainer Emig’s paper looks at the work of the contemporary German writer, Heiner Müller (1929-1995) - a writer who remembered not only the Second World War, but who, as a citizen of the GDR, experienced the full force of the Cold War. Through an examination of the formal structures, first of the play *Piloktet*, and then of the longer work *Wolokolamsker Chausee*, Emig displays Müller’s preoccupation with the theme of conflict. He analyses how Müller, particularly in *Piloktet*,

shows the self to be constructed through language which is inescapably dependent on metaphors of force and violence. In *Wolokolamsker Chausee* Müller's preoccupation with war stretches over a long period of time. The first part of the play is set as German troops retreat from the Russian counter offensive of 1941. The fifth and final part of the play revolves around reactions to the suppression of the Prague Spring.

Emig examines how the play constructs war not as the antithesis of culture but as an essential constitutive element of culture. He focuses especially on Müller's notion of the symbolic order: in his work military discipline is shown to be dependent on empty, but nevertheless, inevitable symbolic structures; the creation and maintenance of identity is predicated on the same set of structuring symbols; one conflict replicates another - there being no escape from the matrix of war. The individual is powerless to free himself/herself from symbolic conditioning. Emig then asks where Müller situates himself in relation to the all encompassing paradigms of war. Finally, he discusses essential differences between a modernist and a post-modernist conception of war.

Lastly, Terry Bradford looks at representations of war and the construction of the figure of the committed intellectual in the work of Raymond Jean. Bradford's central hypothesis concerns the distinctions traditionally drawn between the intellectual, the writer and the man of action and Jean's challenge to such strict categorisations. In the light of comments by Edward W. Said, Bradford examines Jean's definition of the committed intellectual; his experiences as a resister during the Second World War and his support for Algerian independence during the late 1950s. Bradford focuses on one of Jean's most recent works of fiction, *L'Attachée* (1993), which is set during the Gulf War and is read as illustrating Jean's awareness of the committed intellectual's position as a body who intervenes in history. Bradford makes a case for Jean's continual affirmation of the need to combine the roles of intellectual, writer and man of action in order to oppose the unacceptable in contemporary life.

The fourth volume of *New Readings* will focus on the theme of 'Images of Exile' and will include papers by Sarah Colvin (University of Edinburgh) on women writing in German and English, 'exiled' within a predominantly masculinist and heterosexist social economy, Claudia Bernardi (University of Bath) on cultural exile and literary displacement in new Italian fiction of the nineties, Sarah Blowen (University of the West of England) on museum

spaces and images of exile for the Greek community of Grenoble and Frederic Barbera (University of Aberdeen) on the Spanish Civil War and the plays of R. J. Sender.

Finally, publication is also forthcoming of the proceedings of the 'Marginal Forms, Marginal Voices' conference on diaries, held at the School of European Studies, Cardiff in April 1997. The editors of *New Readings* and the members of the 'Histories, Memories and Fictions of Europe' research group at Cardiff would like to thank all those who contributed to its success.

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