Representations of War on the Western Front, 1914-18:
Some reflections on cultural ambivalence

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The war on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918 was the subject of a wide variety of representations while it was being waged. After the Armistice, there followed a virtual riot of representations, in prose, in poetry, in film, in painting and sculpture, in photography, in commemorative sites and rituals, in political discourse. This is hardly surprising, given the wartime presence there of over 10 million men, and the belief – which I share – that it was on the Western Front that the war was won and lost.

But there is another level of symbolic notation I would like to address today. With reference primarily to British evidence, I want to trace pre-war and wartime representations of war, and show how these symbolic systems accommodated configuring a kind of war no one had ever seen before. But I also want to show how the enormity of the casualties suffered on the Western Front, and the nature of the war fought there, helped configure this part of the conflict as iconic. The Western Front became iconic in the inter-war years and after in part because it stood for industrial warfare as a whole; but in part, its iconic status was related not to a precise meaning it conveyed, but to its power to evoke the notion that the war had no meaning at all. The Western Front is the site where mass death converted war from a conventional contest to a puzzling, unprecedented catastrophe. In this sense, it was there, in the 400 kilometres or so that separated the Belgian coast from the Swiss border in Alsace, that the Apocalypse arrived. As I have argued elsewhere, it was an Apocalypse truncated, an Apocalypse without hope,[1] inscribed

in the language of what we now called traumatic memory. This shifted landscape of representations of war on the Western Front is the subject of my remarks today.

1. Social representations of war: before 1914

Imagining war as the Apocalypse or as a kind of medieval tournament in modern dress was in 1914 an exercise in displacement. Through such symbolic language, contemporaries tried to offer reassurance by eliding this war with notions of chivalry or ancient codes of behaviour which were as remote as could be from the realities of combat among industrialized nations. In 1914, such images informed a campaign to present the war as a kind of *Kulturkampf*, a war of civilizations, in which absolute evil and absolute good were facing each other in France and Flanders. Such language conveyed the notion of divine intervention on the field of battle -- witness the appearance of the Angel of Mons in British writing in the first month of the war -- and also framed Allied claims that the German army was engaged in a war against the innocent. German atrocities became reflections of Germanness rather than reflections of what happens when an army of a million men move through some of the most densely populated terrain in Europe.

How did the British press and public configure their own way of war? In Britain, the repertoire of available images of war was both varied and limited. Popular notions of combat drew on a formidable naval tradition but nothing remotely resembling what on the continent is called 'militarism'. Militarism is the elevation and celebration of military virtues and values as admirable principles of national life. Generals on horseback had virtually no place in British political culture in 1914, nor in the discursive field that surrounded it.

Militarism, though, was very much alive in British culture, though not primarily in Britain. The scarcely veiled iron fist of British power was evident in India, in Egypt,

and, though battered by a relatively small force of Boer farmers, in South Africa. British power was a force of repression closer to home, too. In Dublin, the second city of the British Empire, the British army was a force resented by a small but stubborn Republican movement. When Home Rule for Ireland became a real possibility, Protestants in the British army made their displeasure known, but as usual, what applied to Ireland had little bearing on popular attitudes in mainland Britain. Ireland was always a world apart. And no one in Britain clamored for the army to clean up the stables of domestic politics as in Germany; no one in Britain juxtaposed the honor of the army to the right of an individual to justice, as in the France of the Dreyfus affair.

Militarism, if it existed at all in pre-1914 Britain, was isolated in small pockets of conservative thinking, voiced in London clubs or Oxford common rooms, filled with pessimists gloomy about cities, about the working class, about everything that had happened since the industrial revolution. Such reactionaries wanted nothing of the twentieth century, and a reverie for Wellington and the armies that defeated Napoleon took the place of systematic political thinking.

The voice of Empire, though, was not at all unknown in pre-war Britain. It was there in virtually every household that had a volume of Kipling on the shelves. Here was the source of many pre-1914 representations of warfare. In this quintessentially Victorian rhetoric, combat had distinctly positive and gendered attributes: it was individual, heroic, and intensely masculine. This mixture is what gives Kipling's poem 'Gunga Din' its force as a distillate of military values. Riddled with bullets while warning through his trumpet of a sneak attack on a British garrison in India, Gunga Din died gloriously, thereby earning the respect, indeed, the love of

his British superiors: 'Though I've belted you and flayed you/ By the living God that made you/ You're a better man than I am Gunga Din'.

Such notions about heroism and war were at the core of many pre-war images of masculinity.[2] This linkage was evident in one extraordinary public display of mourning for fallen heroes before 1914. It followed the failure of Commander Scott's expedition to the South Pole and the death of Scott's team in 1913.[3] They had waged war on the Antarctic, and the elements had won. Through their effort, the imperial assignment was sanctified. The Royal Geographical Society sponsored the voyage. Their chairman, Lord Curzon, formerly Viceroy of India, affirmed that exploration was an imperial duty. It was a task British men had to do.

The fact that Scott's mission was a failure did not diminish its glory. The story was one of masculinity confirmed. You may recall that the team saw that they were not the first to arrive at the Pole. On the way back, they were trapped in a snow storm, with no chance of escape and little hope of rescue. One of the team, Captain Oates, a good Cambridge man, was ill. He decided one morning to take a walk in the snow. He never returned. And then there was Scott himself – writing painfully with frozen fingers in his last letter, begging that something be done to provide for the families of the men who were dying. Here were the quintessential warriors before the war. They embodied what being a man entailed: stoicism, individual initiative, the acceptance of hardship – even death – without complaint. I've often wondered about the uncanny flowering of these notions of heroism and sacrifice just months before the Great War broke out and gave them an entirely new meaning.

In sum, pre-war representations of war were colonial in character. They described the way one of the Great Powers exported organized violence to its imperial holdings, and then imported 'boys' own' images of what it took to control

them. As Kipling himself was to learn bitterly, these images occluded what war had become in the twentieth century.

2. Wartime imaginings of war

That occlusion was initially not a matter of choice. Wartime images of war, in particular in poster art, froze these older representations in time and space. And necessarily so, since they provided the only mental furniture available to conjure up what war would be like. The revolutionary character of industrialized warfare was unanticipated. The precedent of the United States Civil War was ignored, like most features of American developments, as no guide whatsoever to European affairs.

In Britain pre-war representations of war were no more unreal than elsewhere, but they had a different utility. Between August 1914 and January 1915, one million men volunteered for the army. Two million more joined up in 1915. All the other major combatants had conscript armies; men came forward by law or by convention, but in Britain a mass army was raised by consent. The representations of warfare used in this mobilization campaign were profoundly out of date, but none the less powerful for that.

3. Front and home front

Stylized or un-documentary representations of war had another function peculiar to Britain. Through them ties between home front and battle front were expressed and maintained. Representations informed images that were intended to serve as visual codes of solidarity. Posters and other symbolic representations of war were small 'snapshots' of these affiliations; preserved elements of a pre-war world soldiers had gone off to defend.

They had counterparts on the stage and in song. To some soldiers music hall, popular songs, and theatrical displays were like ambulant posters. They did

tend to trivialize the war and the hardships they faced at the front. But millions of other soldiers knew why they fought in part because their instinctive loyalties were touched by the sentimentalities of these voices and images. The message they took from them was clear. They could (and did) put up with the awfulness of trench warfare in part because of their commitment to the world they had left behind, a world conjured up in vivid terms by popular entertainments, and in shorthand by poster art.

Here is the key to the history of popular culture in wartime Britain and among that part of the nation in action on the Continent. A civilian army brought its civilian entertainments with it.[4] Music hall celebrated a code of ordinary life which reminded soldiers that they were in uniform only 'in parentheses', as it were.[5] In song and stylized stage buffoonery, millions of soldiers saw the 'before' and dreamed of the 'after'. Posters did the same; they were advertisements of continuity. The vast majority of soldiers believed that this period in uniform was a hiatus in their lives, a period with a clear end: victory and demobilization. Defeat hardly entered their minds.[6] After the war, they would return and resume the course of their lives. These men in effect never left home; they brought it with them in their imagination as cultural baggage which saw most of them through the worst of what they had to face.

From this perspective, pre-war images of war were not discredited by the conflict as long as the war went on. Those pre-war notions about combat and combatants were allusive rather than accurate. They were about a <u>stylized</u> world, an <u>idealized</u> world, one remote from the trenches; one soldiers believed they were fighting to preserve.

4. Images of war in cinema

It is critical to note that such unrealistic representations of war were part of the soldiers' own vocabulary. Sooner or later, though, ambivalence would come to be the dominant motif within representations of war configured both by soldiers and by their families.

We can see this process beginning to unfold during the war itself. Cinema was the premier form of popular entertainment in wartime. It also had the capacity to appear to capture the 'reality' of the momentous events occurring just across the English Channel.

This apparent power of verisimilitude lay behind the creation of one of the first film documentaries ever put together. In London, in September 1916, the filmic 'Battle of the Somme' premiered actually while the real Battle of the Somme was still underway. Filmed at times under great personal risk by two cameramen, G.H. Malins and J.B. McDowell, 'The Battle of the Somme' gave home audiences an unprecedented chance to see their troops in action. Intended as a morale booster, this pioneering film was a mixture of real and recreated events. Perhaps the most famous image of the war, that showing soldiers going over the top and then disappearing into the fog of war, can be found in this film. It was staged.

Not that film goers knew -- or cared -- at the time. Audiences turned out by the hundreds of thousands, riveted by the images on the screen that would be considered quite tame today. 'I really thought that some of the dead scenes would offend the British public', confessed Malins. Exhibitors questioned whether women should be submitted to the 'actual horrors of warfare'. One theatre refused to show the film altogether, declaring that 'This is a place of amusement, not a chamber of horrors'. While the film avoided the gruesome realities of the war, for people with little direct knowledge of the violence and vast scale of modern war, it was as close a

glimpse as they would ever get, and the film brought them out in droves, playing to thirty film theatres in London alone. 'It was not a cheerful sight', another film goer wrote, 'but it does give a wonderful idea of the fighting'. In one London cinema the orchestra stopped playing when the subtitle announced 'The Attack'. One woman in the audience could not help screaming out, 'Oh God, they're dead!' In the fall of 1916 the film ended its run, having been seen by an estimated twenty million people.[7] It was the most successful British film of all time. Perhaps half the population saw it in six weeks. Nothing before or since has matched it.   What they saw was a glimpse of the Apocalypse.

This film and its reception suggest the beginnings of a critical change in the cultural history of the war. Until the Battle of the Somme, the British volunteer armies had formed and trained, against the backdrop of conventional notions of the nature of war. After 1916, those representations of war began to fragment. This is one among a number of reasons why it is fair to say that Britain has never recovered from that battle. It is not only the lives thrown away, but also the sense that something else was lost; something located in the symbolic universe those soldiers brought with them, and which was blown apart and scattered in the wet soil of Picardy. Here is where discontinuities emerged in a way which could not be occluded; older images of war didn't hold after the Battle of the Somme. Something had gone wrong, something about war had changed. Older notions persisted, but their semiotics began to come apart.

This loss of bearings about what war was did not occur at once, and not without counter-movements shoring up earlier attitudes. Here the commercial film industry managed to undo some of the damage to pre-1914 representations of war that documentary film had unintentionally caused. Multiple and incompatible

messages about the nature of war became commonplace, perhaps because of rather than despite their contradictory character.

It is evident that the unravelling of wartime representations of war had begun well before the Armistice. Discordant notes came from many sources. There was the telephone; there were letters, irregularly censored to be sure, but filled with more than just Kiplingesque bravado. There were photographs. Many of these were taken without supervision and in remote corners of the war. They show the odd juxtaposition of the mundane and the bizarre – images of what Samuel Hynes has called 'Battlefield Gothic'.[8] And if telephone and letters and photographs did not do the trick, there were the wounded, scattered throughout the country, convalescent images in their own right of the fact that war was no longer a contest between individuals; no longer an adventure, no longer a test of masculinity. Whatever it was, no one had ever seen anything like it before.

5. Post-war representations of combat and mass death

What was the fate of these representations, already blurred and complicated during the war itself, once the Armistice had been signed? To find an answer to this question, we need to elaborate a range of ambivalent representations of the nature of war. I have argued that soldiers and their families accepted a pre-war notation to describe the harsh conditions of their lives in part because they had no other choice. In wartime representations, there persisted pre-war elements which soldiers recognized perfectly well as stylized and inadequate, but which they neither purged nor transformed completely. The exceptions were the war poets, but their words and images were known by but a handful of people.

Once the war was over, and the reckoning had come, there was little reason left to justify the perpetuation of a code whose usefulness had come to an end.

That is one reason why war poetry became iconic in the inter-war period. It represented the efforts of men in uniform, serving soldiers who had earned the right to speak, and who tried to liberate language from its wartime constraints. War poetry was an incomplete and ambivalent challenge to wartime representations of war.

'Have we forgotten yet?', Siegfried Sassoon mused bitterly in one of his post-war poems. I think not, and one reason why we haven't forgotten this ambivalent and contradictory cultural moment is that war poetry is infused with older images of war while emphatically rejecting the codes from which they sprang. Wilfred Own called the Horatian tag, 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori', the 'old lie', trotted out to those in search of 'some desperate glory'. And yet had the tag read 'How fitting and sweet it is to die for one's brothers', Owen for one would have applauded.

Elsewhere I have argued that war poetry was halfway between the Psalms and the Prophets. It touches on the sacred, and in no sense rejects it.[9] The poetry is in the dialectic as much as in the pity. It is an interesting and unresolved question as to why war poetry occupies such a central role in British cultural history and not in French or German cultural history, for example. But in Britain, in part because of war poetry, our common language, our ordinary language hasn't forgotten mass death in the 1914-18 conflict; our everyday speech carries the traces of that War in a myriad of ways of which we are rarely conscious. Most of these references are profoundly ambivalent.

6. The Lost Generation and the cultural history of ambivalence

It is important to recognize that alongside such troubled or subversive imaginings of war, there were others which preserved 'the old lie' and affirmed that it was still an old truth. Here's the rub; there is no one register in which mass death on

the Western front of the Great War was configured. Ambivalence is all. Multi-vocality is the order of the day.

My central argument is that the long-term effect of the Great War on representations of combat is best conveyed not by pacifism or irony but by ambivalence. And it is this set of ambivalent representations of war which made the day the Second World War broke out entirely different from the first days of the 1914-18 war.

Ambivalence is the key to inter-war representations of the terrible carnage of the Great War. Was it worth it? Did it mean anything? The overall answer was contested and unclear. But within that general set of representations, one important element stood out, directly related to the central theme of this special section. War was now inseparable from mass death, from the death of millions, from the conscription of unimaginable armies of the dead. Here is what the distinguished historian of French veterans, Antoine Prost, has to say on the subject of representations of war in post-war France:

> In the new representation of combat, death takes pride of place. Prior representations never denied the possibility of death in combat, but one did not dwell on it. After 1918, death is at the core of representations: the objective, even the very definition of combat. To make war is not to capture prisoners, take cities, conquer territory; it is to kill and to be killed. The semantic landscape is arranged around terms such as : 'killing', 'butchery', 'carnage', 'bloody horror'. This set of representations is in war memoirs, in soldiers' stories, in war memorials and in the ceremonies on 11 November, culminating in a vast funerary cult and pilgrimages to war graves cemeteries at the front.

This was bound to affect the image of the soldier too. 'To boast about his courage, his initiative, is to praise death', writes Prost. 'His bravery, his tenacity, his sacrifice are not denied, but what war does, without his knowing it, is to insert inhuman instincts within these very qualities'. The soldier is a death-giver, an agent of slaughter, par excellence.[10]

It is but a short step, Prost argues, from this kind of representation of war to a kind of paralysis. War must never happen again, French veterans said, because it is inhuman; but when in the 1930s war clouds returned, the likelihood of war was both recognized and rejected. The phrase 'entre-deux-guerres' used so easily in the 1930s gives it away. War must not come, and yet war is coming. Is it at all surprising that successive French governments, and the electorate that put them in power, failed to prepare for war and failed to stand the course when it came? Representations of war had turned so negative that preparing for a war and fighting one became virtually impossible.

It is obvious that such a construction of representations of war had relatively little purchase in post-war Germany. Militarism survived the transition to democracy, and disgruntled veterans provided the core of a movement which toppled the Weimar Republic in 1933. And yet ambivalence is there in the writing of Remarque and Arnold Zweig and even in the noble language of the letters of fallen German students, published in numerous editions in the inter-war year.[11]

But what about Britain? Its political culture was remote both from that dominated by the pacifist veterans of France or the bellicose veterans of Germany. Instead of 'never again' or 'Germany arise' – representations of war with powerful political significance in France and Germany – a different set of notions about war came to dominate British cultural life.

The British culture of ambivalence imbedded in representations of war – so crucial a part of appeasement – took many forms. But one of the most salient and enduring is captured in a single term: the 'Lost Generation'. That term embodied a particularly British way of recasting nineteenth-century representations of war in a twentieth-century context. The term, and its many associations, gave a powerful and enduring cultural impulse to the unavoidable recognition that modern war and mass death were inextricably braided together.

The term 'the lost generation' has a life history, one which opened in the war years, and was then enshrined in commemorative ceremonies throughout Britain in the decade after the Armistice. Over time the term has wound up in normal language, in the notions that school children pick up from clichés, from comedy, from many sources obscure and mundane, about what being British is all about.   In other words, different generations have constructed their own 'Lost Generation' of the Great War.

In a nutshell, there are three stages in this cultural development. The first emphasised grief; the second, irony; the third, trauma. None of these usages is discrete; they overlap and borrow from each other. But their distinctive features are evident, and in them we can see how it is that reflecting on 'the Lost Generation' has turned into one of the most powerful signifying practices in twentieth-century Britain.

On the first level, the term the 'Lost Generation' describes something particular, something inescapably linked to the personal tragedies of three-quarters of a million truncated British lives. Grief was ubiquitous by the end of the war. But it is important to recall the second level I have evoked, a level on which the term operated powerfully in the two post-war decades. It was a phrase at first associated with the commemoration of the victory these men had paid for with their lives, with

the obligation the living owed to the dead, and with the need for some kind of symbolic exchange to mark that irredeemable debt. The rub was, though, that the term soon enough took on a bitter taste, linked to the disappointments of the survivors as to the kind of world they had fashioned after 1918. What was lost to this generation was its hope, its sense that history was moving forward to something better, its sense of a brighter future. The inter-war depression and the renewal of international conflict in the 1930s put paid to such aspirations. By then the question had become: for what, if anything, did the 'lost generation' die?   This second, ironic, use of the term 'the lost generation' suggests a lack of closure, an unhealed wound in the survivors, a betrayal of trust between the living and the dead, an unbuilt future for their children. We must locate this ironic cluster of meanings in the divided, at times embittered post-war history of those who survived the war.

Paul Fussell and Samuel Hynes have captured this cultural turn in the remembrance of the 'Lost Generation'. Both have spoken not only of monuments, but of anti-monuments, of the literary and visual forms through which the war was remembered. What marks these works is a sense of anger, of the betrayal of the young by the old, who sent them off to fight and who stayed on to ruin the post-war world. Fussell has privileged the term 'irony' as the emblem of this literary moment, when millions entered the long wartime journey from anticipation to outcome, from innocence to experience, from beauty and hope to ugliness and disillusionment. In the memoirs of Graves, Sassoon, Blunden, Mottram, Ford, and in the poetry of Owen, Rosenberg, Sorley, and Gurney, this 'iconic' vision has been preserved as the property of the nation as a whole. Through them it has become much more than a British vision; it is one we all share.[12]

This ironic paradigm has been a powerful way of configuring mass death in wartime. It has entered the ordinary language of everyday British life.   But in addition, the 'Lost Generation' is a term that has also enabled people born long after the conflict to see the Great War as the moment when grand narratives broke down, when – in the words of a comic classic, '1066 and all that' – history came 'to a full stop'.

The sting in the tail of the joke should not be missed. Yes, these authors are having fun with the tendency of school textbooks to grind to a screeching halt in 1914, for purposes of convenience alone. But the authors – themselves veterans of the Great War – have disclosed something else about British cultural history. They suggest that a very special kind of gallows' humour has entered the language of everyday life in Britain, much of which refers unselfconsciously and devastatingly to the slaughter of the Great War. Everyone in Britain is familiar with a set of jokes about insane generals, and sardonic officers, and trapped infantrymen going over the top. This is a terribly familiar script, disseminated recently in memorable form in the BBC comedy series 'Blackadder'.

Why does this representation of warfare matter so much? Because it takes a tragic use of the term 'the Lost Generation', located in collective mourning earlier in the twentieth century, and turns it into an emblem of a shared catastrophe that defines what it means to be British in the later twentieth century. It is present in the emblem, in the form of paper poppies, that people wear in their lapels for a few days in November every year. This elision brings the loss of life in 1914-18 into contact with the loss of power and national independence in recent decades. The early disaster somehow stands for what was to come after.   What Samuel Hynes has

called the 'myth' of the war – its narrative character – thus has become the 'myth' of the decline of Britain in this century as a whole.

The late poet laureate, Ted Hughes, once remarked that growing up in inter-war Britain, he developed a sense that the Great War was a defeat around whose neck someone had stuck a victory medal. This captures much about the transformation of representations of war and warriors in the aftermath of the 1914-18 conflict. The war was won, but its engagement with mass death made that fact a cultural irrelevance.

7. Traumatic memory and representations of war

'The true picture of the past flits by', wrote Walter Benjamin. 'The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again'.[13] Wartime representations of war had a relatively short shelf life. Even before the Battle of the Somme reached its inconclusive end in November 1916, older images of combat were decomposing fast. After the Armistice, elements of pre-war notation mixed with wartime images to produce an alloy, half idealized and half informed by the authority of direct experience. That composite set of representations of the war on the Western front has taken many forms in subsequent years. One of the most enduring and most complex set is captured in the phrase 'the Lost Generation'. That term described a cultural trajectory that moved from family and individual grief over the slaughter, to an ironic appraisal of its meaning, to a confrontation with rupture, with discontinuity, with wounds that would not heal. In effect, to invoke the Lost Generation is to encounter a third universe of meanings; it entails entering the domain of what today we call 'traumatic memory'.

In a host of ways, the notion of 'trauma' captures how many survivors of the Great War tried to imagine the unimaginable. One set of such representations was configured in the category of shell shock, which, even during the war when the term had just been coined, quickly moved from the medical to the metaphoric.[14] In many ways, and in many forms, the image of the shell-shocked soldier presented another way of understanding the 'Lost Generation'. These were men who were lost within themselves, within memories that imprisoned them. They embodied traumatic memory as the language of fragmentation; a language which offered a syntax of partial occlusion and incomplete resolution. Their stories were set in an underground river of recollection, which could resurface without warning, even in a London park, as Virginia Woolf's tale of Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway* suggests. The victims of shell shock live within a story in part out of the control of the story-teller. They suffer from text out of context.[15] Their narrative is not ironic, since irony is an intensely, sometimes wickedly, controlled narrative. Trauma resists encapsulation; it is a direct, utterly un-ironic inability to say 'Goodbye to all that'. Above all, the language of shell shock is one without redemptive meaning.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to suggest that in the term 'the Lost Generation' we confront multiple forms of British representations of mass death in the Great War. The term captures the fragmentation of many of the meanings contemporaries ascribed to the Great War. They mourned the dead; they reflected ironically on the hollowness of the term 'Never again'; they turned the Great War into the icon of the twentieth century.

In a way the language of trauma imbedded in some notions of the Lost Generation brought the story full circle back to 1914. Survivors of the Great War

didn't have to create an imaginary Apocalypse; they had seen it. It actually had

happened. And 25 years later, it happened again. Through their eyes, and in light of

later disasters, what we have come to call 'traumatic memory' may be best

understood as the grammar of the Apocalypse in the century of total war.

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[1] Jay Winter, <u>Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European cultural history</u> (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 6.

[2] George Mosse, <u>Nationalism and masculinity</u> (New York, Howard Fertig, 1992).

[3] For the full story, see Max Jones, 'The Royal Geographical Society and Scott's Expedition to the Antarctic' PhD Cambridge, 1999.

[4] John Fuller, <u>Troop Morale and Trench Journalism among British and Dominion Forces in the First World War</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Susan Grayzel, <u>Women's identities at war: Gender, motherhood, and politics in Britain and France during the First World War</u> (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[5] Fuller, <u>Troop Morale</u>, <u>passim</u>.

[6] To judge by the language of the trench newspapers analyzed by Fuller, the word or notion 'defeat' was not in the vocabulary of soldiers. Indeed, official documents show the same blithe ignorance of the possibility of defeat. The exception is among naval personnel in 1917 during the height of the U-boat campaign. They worried about food supplies being cut off, but at no other time in the war do Cabinet papers or other state documents use the word 'defeat'. In the Second World War, the word (and the reality) recurred regularly.

[7] Nicholas Hiley, 'La bataille de la Somme et les médias de Londres', in J.J. Becker <u>et al.</u> (Eds), <u>Guerre et cultures</u> (Paris, Armand Colin, 1994), p. 203.

[8] Samuel Hynes, <u>The Soldiers' Tale</u> (London, Penguin, 1997), p. 12.

[9] Winter, <u>Sites of memory</u>, ch. 8.

[10] Antoine Prost, 'Representations of war and the cultural history of France', translated by Jay Winter, for an English edition of Prost's essays he is preparing for publication.

[11] See Philipp Witkop (ed.), <u>Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten</u> (Munich, Georg Müller, 1928), and other editions. On Witkop's work, and on the subject more generally, see Wolfgang Natter, <u>Literature at war, 1914-1940: Representing the 'Time of Greatness' in Germany</u> (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999).

[12] Paul Fussell, <u>The Great War and Modern Memory</u> (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975); Samuel Hynes, <u>A War Imagined. The Great War and English Culture</u> (London, Bodley Head, 1991).

[13] Walter Benjamin, <u>Illuminations</u>, trans. By Harry Zorn (Boston, Shocken, 1990 ed.),'Theses on the philosophy of history', Thesis V.

[14] Jay Winter, 'Shell shock and the cultural history of the Great War', <u>Journal of Contemporary History</u> special issue on 'Shell shock' , xxxv, 1 (January 2000), pp. 7-12.

[15] John E. Talbott, 'Soldiers, psychiatrists and combat trauma', <u>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</u>, xxvii (1997), pp. 437-54.