MATTERS OF CONFLICT
Material Culture, Memory and the First World War

Edited by Nicholas J. Saunders

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Matters of Conflict looks at the definitive invention of the twentieth century – industrialised war – and its vast and varied material legacy. From trench art and postcards through avant-garde art, museum collections and prosthetic limbs to battlefield landscapes, the book examines the First World War and its significance through the things it left behind.

The contributions come from a multidisciplinary perspective, uniting previously compartmentalised disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, cultural history, museology and art history in their focus on material culture. This innovative, hybrid approach investigates the 'social life' of objects in order to understand them as they move through time and space and intersect the lives of all who come in contact with them.

The resulting survey sets a new agenda for study of the First World War, and ultimately of all twentieth-century conflict.

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INTRODUCTION

These chapters represent a radical departure in the study of the First World War. They emanate mainly from a conference held at the Imperial War Museum on 8 September 2001 – itself a date that preceded an event which seems to have created a new experience of globalised conflict. In the view of many, the post-'9/11' world is a changed place, and attitudes which were held before it now seem almost as naive and distant as those which were held in 1914 must have done to those of 1939. There is, it seems, nothing like shocking and bloody violence to change our view of the material world, whether in the trenches of the Western Front, among the ruins of Hiroshima, or the vacant space of Ground Zero. In such places there is a terrible presence of absence – not the dead bodies of pre-twentieth-century conflicts, but human beings vaporised into nothingness by technology, a community of 'the missing' in our midst.

Significantly, for a volume focused on investigating the material culture of the Great War of 1914–18, none of the contributors except the editor is an anthropologist. The eclectic nature of that part of anthropology known as 'material culture studies' (Editorial 1996) would seem perfectly matched to seeking knowledge and understanding of a war that itself is highly fragmented, divided up between a multiplicity of academic disciplines. Military history, cultural history, art history, tourism studies, cultural geography and, most recently, heritage studies and archaeology are just a few of the specialisms that have made a claim to some part of the Great War's legacy. If the range of chapters in this volume is any indication, this complexity demands more than a generalised interdisciplinary response – it requires a coherent, integrated and sensitised approach that would seem to be the natural ground of anthropology. A powerful case can be made that these disciplines, and others, overlap in a shared common terrain – that of the materiality of war and its aftermath.

One justification for the anthropological study of material culture, as Miller (2002: 237) notes, is its ability and willingness to move into niches of academic inquiry that have been neglected by other disciplines. In the case of twentieth-century war, and of the First World War in particular, this would seem less a

niche than a whole new field of endeavour. This may sound surprising inas-
much as at first glance it appears that every aspect of the world's first global
industrialised war has been endlessly published (and republished), leaving little
room for anything new to be said. Nothing could be further from the truth.
While the burgeoning list of publications on the First World War appears
comprehensive, closer inspection reveals it to be a net full of holes.

The majority of publications to date have understandably been written
from the perspective of military history. These have documented in detail the
main events of the war, pored over tactics and strategy, and contextualised
the global nature of the conflict (see Brown 1993; Gilbert 1994; and Keegan
1998 for recent examples; and also Ferguson 1998). These overviews, and
others, have made impressive and acute contributions to our understanding
of the conduct and consequences of the war. Nevertheless, within this
approach, there has been a tendency to rehearse many of the same themes
and topics, such as the battles of the Somme, Passchendaele, and Gallipoli,
and to prolong the exhausted debate about 'incompetent' generals and the
waste of war.

This particular focus of military history, fuelled in part by the dominance
of British and Commonwealth forces at such locations, has often been at the
expense of a more balanced geographical coverage. The campaigns in Italy,
Austria–Hungary, the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East (except Gallipoli
and a dalliance with the exploits of T. E. Lawrence), have received far less
attention – in general, and particularly in English. Even on the Western
Front, the epic struggle for Verdun, the battles in the Argonne, and at the
Chemin des Dames, have been under published in English at least.

In a situation where the military history of the war is itself incomplete, it is
not surprising that other non-military aspects of the war have, by compari-
son, been even less well served. Partial exceptions include the role of women
(e.g. Cooper 1989; Ouditt 1994), the personal experiences of soldiers (e.g.
Macdonald 1993a, 1993b) and war memorials (e.g. Boorman 1988; King
1998). Nevertheless, many topics of concern to a wider, more broadly con-
ceived anthropological investigation of the war have, with a few notable
exceptions, either not attracted sustained scholarly attention, or, and impor-
tantly, not in anthropological or interdisciplinary terms.

A random selection of such topics include the role of indigenous groups
within the multi-ethnic and multi-faith Allied army; the experiences of Amer-
ican soldiers; the experiences of battle-zone civilians (during and after the
war, notably internees and returning refugees); the experiences of the mili-
tary and civilians alike during the post-war occupation of the Rhineland; the
role of heritage issues in dealing with the conservation and public presenta-
tion of battlefield landscapes, and the challenges facing the beginnings of a
modern scientific archaeology of the war.

In other words, from the point of view of anthropology and archaeology,
as the two disciplines united by their focus on material culture, the First

World War is hardly known at all. Only in the last few years have professional anthropologists and achaeologists begun to concern themselves with the conflict. The path of anthropologists has been eased considerably by the work of a small number of cultural historians, whose depth and breadth of knowledge and perceptive insights have transcended the boundaries of their own discipline, and become of central interest and value to other investigators (e.g. Audoin-Rouzeau 1992; Becker 1998; Bourke 1996; Eksteins 1989; Fussell 1977; Leeds 1979; Lloyd 1998; Mosse 1990; Winter 1995; see also Clout 1996). For archaeology, there has been no such equivalent, though indications of the rich potential have appeared in a handful of publications that have called attention to individual issues (e.g. Adam 1991; 'L'Archéologie et la Grande Guerre' 1999; Bostyn 1999; Desfossés and Jacques 2000; Doyle 1998; Saunders 2002; see also BAR 2003).

What emerges from this brief and polemical overview, is that a broad anthropological approach to the materialities of the Great War, from 1914 to the present, has extraordinary potential to bring together the diverse interests and expertise of a host of other disciplines to create a new engagement with conflict. Diversity is strength, and the hybridity of this approach does not privilege one or other kinds of knowledge, but rather draws on each as appropriate. Above all, the aim is to foster an intellectually coherent interdisciplinary approach to the study of the First World War and, by extension, ultimately, to twentieth-century conflict. It is as an early contribution to this ambitious project that the September 2001 conference and the chapters in this volume will hopefully be located, and serve to stimulate further investigations.

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MATERIAL CULTURE AND CONFLICT

The Great War, 1914–2003

Nicholas J. Saunders

Twentieth-century war is a unique cultural phenomenon. While all conflicts in history have produced dramatic shifts in human behaviour, the industrialised nature of modern war possesses a material and psychological intensity that embodies the extremes of our behaviours. Fundamentally, war is the transformation of matter through the agency of destruction; the character of modern technological warfare is such that it simultaneously creates and destroys more than any previous kind of conflict.

Since the 1970s there have been significant advances in our ability to conceptualise and understand the past. At the forefront of these developments has been the reappraisal of materiality – the ways in which we view and think about the things we make, and their complex and elusive meanings. The transformative quality of modern war's material culture, and its ability to move across disciplinary boundaries, demands an anthropologically informed interdisciplinary response. Focused on material culture, such an approach offers to revitalise investigations into the physical and symbolic worlds that war has created, and that define us as subjects through memory, imagination, and technology.

For the First and Second World Wars, we occupy a unique moment in time – the furthest edge of living memory, the cusp upon which history becomes archaeology. Hitherto, the study of twentieth-century conflict has focused on military history and, variably, its political, economic and social consequences. But, as first-hand memory disappears, our views are inevitably shaped by the physical remains themselves, and by the interpretations of those who had no part in their design, production or original purpose. We are now in the realm of the object and its materiality, a world of multi-dimensional and multi-vocal meanings – fertile ground for anthropology. After all, modern conflicts are defined by their technologies – all are wars of *matériel*.

Arguably, no event is more significant for conceptualising and problematising these issues than the Great War of 1914–18, the world's first global

industrialised conflict. The material culture of the First World War was small (a bullet or machine-gun), intermediate (a tank or aeroplane), and large (a battleship or battlefield landscape). All share one defining feature – they are artefacts, the product of human activity rather than natural processes. In this sense, the Western Front is as much a cultural artefact as a Second World War V2 rocket as are photographs, films, war memorials, war souvenirs and museums. Similarly artefactual, though not always understood as such, are the war maimed (sometimes fitted with prostheses), specialist associations, and the post-war 'presence of absence' on the streets of large numbers of missing men. All are war-related materialities that create and perpetuate different engagements with conflict and its aftermath.

Conceiving materiality this way enables us to construct a biography of the object (Kopytoff 1986) – to explore its 'social life' through changing values and attitudes attached to it over time (Appadurai 1986). Many objects survive as expressions of 'war beyond conflict', revitalising meanings and creating new engagements between people and things. Not only is the variability of objects seen as social in origin but also objects themselves constitute the physical world by structuring the perceptions of those who live within it (Miller 1985: 204–5). Changing attitudes towards Armistice Day and its two minutes' silence from 1919 to the present illustrate the overlap between physical, spiritual and sensory domains (see Richardson 1998). Symbolic empty tombs (cenotaphs) are a material focus for changing relationships between the living and the dead in a cross-generational interplay of past and present.

Consciously and subconsciously, we all interact with the objects that surround us. Our incessant and intimate interaction with endlessly varied artefacts is perhaps the most distinctive and significant feature of human life (Schiffer 1999: 2, 4). Perhaps as never before, we perceive during war an unfamiliar but underlying truth – that objects make people as much as people make objects (Pels 1998). The extreme behaviours provoked by war illustrate how an individual's social being is determined by their relationship to the objects that represent them – how objects become metaphors for the self, a way of knowing oneself through things both present and absent (see Hoskins 1998: 195).

The passage of time and generations creates different interpretations of, and responses to, the materialities of war as they journey through social, geographical and symbolic space. A museum's collection comes alive through interpretive contextualisation that identifies object and individual (or a succession of individuals) who come into contact with each other – each adding a layer to the accretion of meanings. The different (sometimes extraordinary) engagements between the British public and Great War objects displayed by the Imperial War Museum in its different locations in London before 1936 highlight these issues (Cornish, this volume).

To illustrate the potential of an anthropological approach to the materialities of the First World War, I will explore several distinct but inevitably linked

topics: the nature of battlefield landscapes, the meanings of memorabilia, and the nascent archaeology of the war. Each offers a unique perspective on the same intricate web of objects, people, places and values whose interactive significance has so far been unacknowledged and little investigated.

Materiality and Great War landscapes

The Great War breached the boundary between materiality and spirituality, and between emotion and object, more than any previous conflict (see Becker 1998). One consequence of this was that, after 1918, something new was happening along the old Western and Eastern Fronts. Conflict locations were not simply left as decaying battlefields, but were actively becoming something else – a complex palimpsest of overlapping, multi-vocal landscapes. Often unbearably poignant, areas of the Isonzo in northeast Italy, the Ypres Salient in Belgium, and the Somme and Verdun in France, became prime examples of the social construction of landscape, of landscape as an ongoing process, which have implicated the lives of a succession of people since 1914 (see Hirsch 1995: 22–3).

Today, such places are contested by different groups who engage with their materiality in different ways (see Layton and Ucko 1999: 1) and whose experience of 'being in' *their* landscape produces a sense of place and belonging (Tilley 1994: 15). No longer are battlefields the inert empty backgrounds to military action, nor solely terrains of commemorative monumentality. Rather, like Stonehenge, the Gaza Strip, and the Soviet gulags, Great War battlefields are 'something political, dynamic, and contested, something constantly open to renegotiation' (Bender 1993: 276).

Two recent events emphasise this dynamic view of war-related landscapes. In March 2003, the Cross of Sacrifice monument at the First World War cemetery at Étaples near Boulogne in northern France was defaced with red graffiti. These included a swastika, and the message 'Rosbeefs go home' (Bremner and Hamilton 2003). More insidious was another message that stated that the 11,436 soldiers buried there were soiling French land (*ibid.*). In Iraq, in April, Lieutenant Rob Williams discovered the headstone of his great-grandfather in a desecrated war cemetery near Basra; he had died in 1916 of dysentery (Anon. 2003). Both events drew powerful and complex connections between the First World War and the latest 21st-century conflict, highlighting the contested nature of such locations, the dead within them, and differing national perceptions of a modern conflict whose roots lay in the political shaping of the Middle East in the aftermath of the Great War itself.

These events demonstrate the need to alter our theoretical engagement with such landscapes. Great War battlefields, and the Western Front especially, are neither single historical entities, nor fossilisations of four years of war. They are, at the very least,

composed, variously, of industrialized slaughter houses, vast tombs for 'the missing', places for returning refugees and contested reconstruction, popular tourist destinations, locations of memorials and pilgrimage, sites for archaeological research and cultural heritage development, and as still deadly places full of unexploded shells and bombs.

<div align="right">(Saunders 2001a: 37)</div>

All of these landscapes occupy the same physical space. Perhaps only at such locations can so many different attitudes be held, and emotions engaged, by a group of people all standing in one place at the same time. Differing but simultaneous perceptions of place are a feature of cultural landscapes, but perhaps find their most extreme expression on battlefields, particularly those that have drawn in international, multi-ethnic and multi-faith armies.

On the Western Front, the Great War brought cataclysmic disorder to large areas of northern France and Belgium. Yet, this destruction of land and life created new landscapes infused with new meanings – a reordering of existence whose memories and associations came into conflict with other realities after 1918, and continue to do so, at an accelerating pace today. Associated in time, but not in space, were facsimile landscapes (i.e. training grounds), ambiguous 'spaces', where men practised 'safe killing' under the illusion that Salisbury Plain was in fact the Somme (see Schofield, this volume).

How war creates

Great War battlefields were, and remain, metaphysically unstable places. Originally rural, almost medieval in aspect, they had been industrialised by force – 'drenched with hot metal'. Ground was ripped open, buildings shattered, forests blasted, rivers poisoned. The land was abused – cut by endless trenches, tied down by barbed wire, impregnated with fumes, poisoned by gas, and transformed into a cratered lunar landscape. Even worse, these otherworldly places were a bizarre mixture of human putrefaction and ammunition, where the dead rubbed shoulders with the living as both held up trench walls from the Belgian coast to the Carpathians and beyond.

These were new landscapes, created by war, and the death and suffering of men. The destruction was selective but stunning; in France alone, the worst affected areas had more than 1,000 shells per square metre, some 330,000,000 square metres of trenches, and 375,000,000 square metres of barbed wire (Clout 1996: 46). Personal accounts of the process are vivid; 'Showers of lead flying about and big big shells its an unearthy [*sic*] sight to see them drop in among human beings. The cries are terrible' (Dorothy Scoles, quoted in Bourke 1996: 76).

After battle, the land was strewn with spent shells, shrapnel, smashed

artillery, lingering gas, unexploded ordnance, and the fragments of men – the definitive artefacts of industrialised war. Everything was broken and in pieces, the differences between war *matériel* and human beings elided perhaps for the first time in human history. This is seen clearly in memoirs, newspaper reports and official accounts of the time, where the language used to describe such events included words such as 'skeleton', 'gaunt' and 'broken', in such a way that imagery phases in and out between landscape, village and human corpse. The result, as Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau perceptively observed, was 'a close connection, an osmosis between the death of men, of objects, of places' (Audoin-Rouzeau 1992: 81).

The intensities of these experiences produced a different view of the world for many soldiers who survived (see Keegan 1996: 204–84). Men were physically and symbolically folded into landscape and emerged remade. By smothering soldiers with debris, or sucking them down into glutinous mud, it seemed as if the earth itself was alive. In this landscape of trenches, dug-outs, deafening artillery bombardments and blind advances across smoke-filled No Man's Land, the visual sense was often denied. It was replaced by other elements of sensory experience such as smell, sound and touch (Eksteins 1990: 146, 150–1; Howes 1991: 3–5). This was a new world of experience, for, as one soldier explains, one had quickly to acquire

> an expert knowledge of all the strange sounds and smells of warfare, ignorance of which may mean death . . . My hearing was attuned to every kind of explosion . . . My nostrils were quick to detect a whiff of gas or to diagnose the menace of a corpse disinterred at an interval of months.
>
> (Paterson 1997: 239)

And, as Winter (1979: 116) observed, *vis-à-vis* the many different sounds made by different kinds of shells – 'The strain of listening for all these sounds did something to the brain. A man could never be rid of them'.

The human body is our way of relating to and perceiving the world (see Stewart 1993: 125; Tilley 1994: 10–12); in the processes of destruction/creation on Great War battlefields, fragmentation of the earth, artefacts and human beings joined together to fragment reality and necessitated new ways of communicating this to others. These new landscapes of the senses are captured in memoirs and war poetry (e.g. Blunden [1928] 1982; Sassoon [1930] 1997; see also Fussell 1977: 155–90), though their anthropological significance in this respect is usually passed over in favour of more easily made literary critique. While the war poets and authors undeniably represented the educated elite, their education served to capture and articulate a sense of landscape that others were less equipped to express.

In a world dominated by industrialised death, it is not surprising that the sense of place – the mix of geographical and meteorological features,

sounds, smells and prior knowledge – has taken on a heavy burden of sensibilities for soldiers, pilgrims and modern visitors, that is possibly unique in human history. Equally important, it is no surprise that almost any kind of physical matter associated with such locations – from a piece of earth, stone or wood, to 'found objects' of battle, and commercially made souvenirs, possess a 'sense of the sacred' which is underscored by an ambiguous tension between their associations with death and their continued life as memory-evoking objects for the living.

The Butte de Warlencourt

The transformational nature of such landscapes is illustrated by the Butte de Warlencourt on the Somme. The butte was an ancient prominence some 20 metres high and is said to have been the burial mound of a Gallic chieftain during Roman times (Charles Carrington quoted in Davidson 1990: 26). It is reported to have played a prominent role during the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 and, by 1916, was already riddled with tunnels before the Germans reinforced it (Coombs 1994: 101). As the battle of the Somme unfolded, the butte came to dominate this sector of the battlefield, becoming a principal, if not obsessive, objective of British attacks. It saw bitter fighting and terrible and ultimately futile losses by the attackers as it was never taken and held until the German retreat of 1917.

From a phenomenological perspective, the effect of the Butte de Warlencourt on the minds of its attackers reveals deeply ambiguous, other-worldly sensations that seemed to fuse physical object and imagination. Charles Carrington remembered 'That ghastly hill, never free from the smoke of bursting shells, became fabulous. It shone white in the night and seemed to leer at you like an ogre in a fairy tale . . . it haunted your dreams' (quoted in Davidson 1990: 27).

The butte was subsequently memorialised, first by the British, then by the Germans during their March 1918 offensive. The German cross disappeared after August 1918 when the butte was taken for the last time by the British. As the focus of pilgrimages during the inter-war years, it was also memorialised by Allied soldiers and the bereaved. In 1944, a German cross was once again placed on its summit by Hitler's Wehrmacht soldiers (Coombs 1994: 101). Today, all these cruciforms have disappeared. An integral part of the prehistoric and historic patrimony of the Somme (and France), the butte was nevertheless sold in 1990 to the 'The Western Front Association' of the United Kingdom, and now bears their official memorial (Davidson 1990: 18).

The Butte de Warlencourt highlights the multi-layered and multi-vocal nature of Great War battlefield landscapes. Prehistoric features were transformed and overlain by layers of industrialised war, ironically serving as a symbol of many more dead than the original prehistoric mound was designed to hold. It was then symbolically acquired, lost, then regained through mem-

orialisation and rememorialisation up to the last decade of the twentieth century, when all these pasts were repackaged and sold as a 'job lot' to an organisation whose raison d'être is to perpetuate only one of the butte's many pasts.

Representation and intentionality

The power of such landscapes to evoke and perpetuate different engagements with their own materiality from 1914 to the present is epitomised by their visual representation. All landscapes are cultural images as well as physical places (Daniels and Cosgrove 1992: 1) and their socially constructed nature indicates that individual views of landscape are in fact often competing conceptions of the world (Layton and Ucko 1999: 1).

Photographs, drawings and paintings of the battlefields are revealed as an especially complex kind of material culture (Saunders 2001a: 40–2). During the war, as Beurier (this volume) has shown, not only did image-led monthly magazines vary in what they showed according to their French, British or German nationality, but also according to whether they were produced earlier or later in the war. Archetypal black and white images of the Somme and Verdun battlefields – their different scales, geographical features and evocations of war – conjured complex metaphorical images in the minds of the reader.

Photographs are particularly significant in this respect as they are influenced directly by their own materiality, i.e. camera technology itself, its affordability, the use of panoramas, the attitude-shaping dominance of black and white photographs over colour ones, the development of aerial photography, and their ever-present susceptibility to a variety of ways in which they could be forged. Faking could involve simply passing off photographs of pre-war or non-battlefield scenes as genuine images of war, or the more sophisticated cutting and pasting of different photographs which then are merged as a single image (Decoodt 2002). At the Front, taking photographs was prohibited by military authorities who sought to conceal the scenes of carnage (Eksteins 1990: 233). Official photographers, who had only arrived in 1916, had to adhere to the policy that images of British dead were unacceptable (*ibid.*). In this way, photographs were in a sense 'officially forged', producing sanitised civilian images of battlefield landscapes as places of appalling destruction yet somehow littered only with enemy dead.

Drawings and paintings also could be misleading. As Levitch (this volume) shows with the huge French wartime painting – the *Pantheón de la Guerre* – the post-war biography of this remarkable object saw over-painting, repainting and cutting used to include and exclude individuals and groups in order to emphasise post-war political realities in the United States. All these examples, including the latest image-led technology of the Internet (Fabiansson, this volume), represent, in one way or another, an edited past whose images have

the power to create and perpetuate attitudes and expectations not only at the time but also today. The unusual example of *Nagelfiguren* (Brandt, this volume) illustrates how objects mobilise diametrically opposed public reactions. During the war, the German public paid to hammer nails into wooden blocks and sculptures, the money going ostensibly to the war effort and to care for the wounded. Today, this multi-dimensional participatory aspect is forgotten and *Nagelfiguren* are regarded as glorifying war.

At 11 am on 11 November 1918, battlefield landscapes changed their nature. Now, after four years, there was no intent to kill or maim by soldiers, but the technologies of war no longer needed their human agents. This pro-active lethal quality of Great War battlefields marks them off from previous battle-zones but ties them irrevocably to most subsequent twentieth and twenty-first century landscapes of conflict. In First World War battlefields, the 'intention to kill' has outlived contemporary human agency and, owing to the recivilianisation of the battle-zone, has becomes indiscriminate in its choice of victim.

This relationship between material culture and landscape also manifested itself in other kinds of war-related materialities that became the focus of contested ownership and the shape of the future. Notable in this respect was the disagreement between official French assessments of land so drenched in munitions that it could never be reoccupied, and farmers who disputed these calculations and whose petitions succeeded in achieving ever downward revisions of such *zones rouges* in the decade after the Armistice (Clout 1996: 28–9). In France and Belgium, the unofficial clearance of bombs, shells, grenades, bullets, miscellaneous scrap and sometimes human remains by returning refugee farmers and others served to redefine relationships between people and objects.

For adults and children who cleared the debris of war, the objects provided an income in straitened economic circumstances (Figure 1.1). *Matériel* could be sold for scrap or become the raw material from which 'trench art' souvenirs could be fashioned to sell to battlefield pilgrims and visitors (Lloyd 1998; Saunders 2003a: 43–4). The fact that civilians of all ages who had avoided the war were being killed and maimed in their efforts to make ends meet during peacetime highlights the undiminished intentionality embodied in war technology. This tragic and ironic 'cost' of scrap and souvenirs is usually ignored in favour of stressing the wartime associations of such objects and their value as memory objects to the bereaved.

Similar issues characterised the rebuilding of towns and villages. At the Belgian town of Ypres (now Ieper), there were those who believed the town should be left in ruins as a memorial to all the soldiers who had died (Vermeulen 1999; Willson 1920). Nevertheless, it was rebuilt as an ersatz replica of its medieval self. Here, the war had set in motion a chain of events that produced a faux medieval past while simultaneously eliding the conflict which had created it. In every mimetic soulless detail, the contested material-

Figure 1.1 French families collecting unfired artillery shells from the battlefield (author's photograph).

ity of Ypres both drew attention to, and sought to deny, the destruction and death that lay beneath its revamped streets.

The contentious memorial aspect of Ypres had a parallel in Britain where commemorative monuments also were not the product of monolithic attitudes but rather of a startling and sometimes contested diversity (Black, this volume; see also Richardson 1998: 347–56). In France, as Kidd (this volume) observes, there existed an even more complex set of issues to be considered when monuments were to be commissioned, designed, maintained, renewed or replaced (see also Sherman 1999). Of all the First World War's material culture, memorials have received probably the most attention (e.g. Boorman 1988; Borg 1991; King 1998) and so will not be dwelt on here; it is nevertheless appropriate to comment that, apart from Black and Kidd (both in this volume), few of these studies have incorporated a sustained anthropological approach.

Materiality and memorabilia

If the ambiguities of multi-vocal battle-zones are complex in themselves, so to, as we have briefly seen, are their relationships with objects that emanate from them. While soldiers and civilians had visceral (and well documented) connections with war *matériel*, so too did those whose liberty had been curtailed. As Becker (this volume) shows, there exists a richly informative, if

deeply ambiguous, relationship between material culture and soldiers incarcerated as prisoners of war. Equally insightful were the related yet different experiences of civilian internees to objects they made, as Cresswell (1994) has shown particularly with carved-bone items from the Isle of Man.

After the war, relationships between objects, people and place, were mediated by battlefield tourism's trade in war souvenirs and the activities of those who looted soldiers' bodies for military equipment and personal effects. These issues are centrally located within the anthropological study of souvenirs and memory objects (e.g. Kwint *et al.* 1999; Stewart 1993; Teague and Hitchcock 2001; see also Belk 2001).

By 1920, the manufacture and trade in war souvenirs by soldiers, and for soldiers, had ceased along the old Western Front. At this time also, French and Belgian civilians began returning to their homes in the devastated battle-zones. Their economic hardships led to a burgeoning if reoriented trade in war souvenirs to battlefield tourists. An important theoretical point is that many items now sold to pilgrims were made from the same materials and in the same ways as they had been during the war. While post-1918 objects were often indistinguishable from pre-1918 items, their meanings and significance were very different. Before November 1918, they had been sold to male soldiers in life and death situations whereas from 1919 onward, they were sold mainly to women civilians who wished somehow to connect to the experiences of their lost loved ones. Materiality and technology remained the same, but the temporal shift from war to peace had opened a new chapter in the cultural biographies of these objects.

It was to be the locus of the home, as the final destination of most of these items that embedded them firmly within anthropology's (and archaeology's) renewed interest in the meanings of domestic space (e.g. Allison 1999; Cieraard 1999). Many of these souvenirs, especially decorated shell-case vases, became household ornaments, placed in the windows of Belgian and French homes – perhaps signifying an informal communal identity. Others became poignant memory objects, purchased by British and Commonwealth widows during battlefield pilgrimages. These moved around the world to homes bereaved by war, ornamenting domestic space, greeting visitors in hallways, or perching next to a fading photograph on a mantelpiece. In the distancing process between rememberer and remembered, the memory of the missing body was replaced by that of the present object (Stewart 1998: 133). As objectifications of grief, such objects served to 'authenticate' the experiences of the widowed purchasers (*ibid.*: 134), and allowed them to 'carry home a tangible link with the memory, or even the spirit, of the dead' (Lloyd 1994: 185). These objects fabricated the past through their reordering of the material world (Radley 1994: 53) and perhaps signified an informal community of the bereaved through shared displays of materiality. And not only for the war generation.

In *Auntie Mabel's War* (Wenzel and Cornish 1980), a decorated French shell-

case vase 'released' the memory of Auntie Mabel, a wartime nurse, in the mind of her niece, Mrs Turner, some 60 years after the end of the Great War. When Marian Wenzel enquired after the shell vase she was told, 'Yes, that thing by the fireplace with the flowers on it is really a shell case . . . She brought that back from France . . . I often look at it and wonder how many men its shell killed' (*ibid.*: 8).

Many of these objects were made of brass military scrap that tarnished quickly and required frequent cleaning. It is probable that in many homes such items gave rise to a domestic routine of cleaning and polishing, and that, for some, this probably had therapeutic effects. In some instances, decades of often obsessive polishing erased the original decoration and inscription completely, a further transformation of their materiality that literally and figuratively embodied the passing years and heartfelt connections between a wife and a long-dead husband. Perhaps reinforced by the sensory dimension of the smell of brass polish, cleaning these objects may have been transformed from a banal chore to a sacred act, bridging the gap between the living and the dead.

For those men who survived, displays of such objects in the home may have been a focus for memories shared among themselves, though rarely, it seems, with their wives and children. Less speculative, though equally insightful, was the role of other kinds of materiality, such as medals (Richardson n.d.; see also Joy 2002). The wearing of little metal discs and coloured ribbons meant kudos in the community, pride of place on Remembrance Day, and entry into social circles for some men, though others were dismissive of such tokens and refused to wear them. As Richardson (n.d.) notes, these peculiar kinds of materiality had an uneven biography – transforming into post-war rubbish for some, and, since the 1970s, into expensive collectors items. The changing valuations of war souvenirs and medals, and the new arenas for their purchase and display, brings them into at least three distinct fields of anthropological inquiry that focus on material culture – Rubbish Theory (Thompson 1979; Küchler n.d.), Consumption Studies (Gregson and Crewe 2003; Miller 1997) and identity through clothing and personal adornment.

The post-war biographies of these kinds of material culture, and their effects on those who lived during the inter-war years has been conceptualised as the 'Memory bridge' (Saunders 2001b: 477–83). Composed of materiality, emotion, memory and imagination, as well as official and personal histories of the war, this bridge spanned the physical and symbolic space of a postwar world, shaping people's everyday lives, their perceptions of the past and their hopes for the future. Equally parts of this bridge were two other kinds of war-related artefacts – commercially made domestic ornaments and utensils, and the men who returned home broken by war (Saunders 2002a: 28–31).

Interspersed with souvenir-ornaments were objects commonly referred to as Heraldic China (Southall 1982: 7–8, 44–51), postcards (Tomczyszyn, this

volume; Huss 2000), and miscellaneous ephemera (Rickards and Moody 1975). In Austria, there was an industry in china cups, mugs, and even shell-shaped vases painted with patriotic images of royalty and heroic battle scenes (Fabi 1998: 89–90). In Britain, it seemed as if everything was available in china, from miniature painted tanks, aeroplanes and trench mortars, to war memorials and incendiary shells. Some objects appear particularly naive or tasteless and were clearly designed for romanticised civilian notions of the war, not those of returning soldiers, such as shell-shaped salt sellars which, in imitation of shrapnel bombs, were designed to shatter into a thousand pieces if dropped (Southall 1982: 44–5).

Occasionally, these ambiguous cruets sat alongside trench-art cutlery sets made out of bullets or, in Germany, chromed-steel knives and forks whose handles imitated shards of shrapnel (PTA 2002: 221) (Figure 1.2). There was also an ambiguous auditory dimension in dinner gongs made from real artillery shells suspended in a wooden frame. These cheerfully announced mealtimes to old soldiers who last remembered hearing them struck in the trenches warning of gas attack.

More subtle perhaps was the role of 'background noise' in constituting the memory bridge, i.e. books, magazines, films, and perhaps, for some, 'psychic photographs' purporting to show the presence of dead soldiers hovering over the living at Armistice ceremonies (Winter 1995: 54, 74–6). Books such as Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), together with films such as *Dawn Patrol* (1930), *Westfront 1918* (1930), and the cinematic version of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), were all war-related materialities that carried attitudes and interpretations of the war beyond conflict. Even in church, it was sometimes impossible to escape such objects.

> Gathered for worship on a Sunday morning, old soldiers, as well as civilians, would be surrounded by the absence of presence of those who had not returned from the war. Sometimes this absence was embodied by trench art, as at the Parish church at Burgate in Suffolk, where there was a shrine of vessels and ornaments made by wounded soldiers at the tented encampment of Casualty Clearing Station 11 at Godewaarsvelde [Belgium] . . . during the winter of 1917.
>
> (Saunders 2003a: 155–6).

During the inter-war years, the constant presence of souvenirs and memorabilia represented an ornamenting of private and public space with the shapes and materials of industrialised war. It is possible that this exposure produced a habituation to such shapes that in turn predisposed a wider public to what are considered 'modern styles' in art, architecture, and utilitarian items, such as Art Deco. The most immediate associations however were with Cubism

Figure 1.2 A post-war chromed-steel cutlery set with handles imitating the original shrapnel handles of First World War letter-openers. (© and courtesy Ludwig-Uhland-Institut für Empirische Kulturwissenschaft der Universität Tübingen).

and Dadaism, avant-garde art movements that contrasted vividly with the romantic tradition of art nouveau that so characterised the artistic imagery of memorabilia made during the war itself (see Gygi 2003; Saunders in press). Artists such as Max Ernst and Fernand Léger as well as the Berlin Dadaists were united by their use of bricolage to capture the fragmentation of materi- alities produced by the war (Gygi, this volume) – a process that goes to the heart of the debate on modernity and the postmodern (Latour 1993) as well as art (Virilio 2003).

The most ambiguous and tragic of post-war objects however were men who returned from the war physically maimed or psychologically scarred. They were as much the artefacts of war as battlefields, souvenirs and memo- rabilia. Out on the streets, it was impossible to miss these broken men, these most powerful visual referents to the war:

> there was a Mr Jordan who'd lost his right arm, my old man who'd been gassed, and the man at the top of the street who was so badly shell-shocked he couldn't walk without help. And there were lots of one-armed and one-legged old sweats begging in the streets.
>
> (Jim Wolveridge quoted in Bourke 1996: 35)

Injuries were sometimes so severe as to require the making and fitting of mechanical artificial limbs and body parts known as prostheses. While these were advertised as making men whole again and able to reclaim their place in society, the reality was different (Reznick, this volume; see also Bourke 1996; Koven 1994). Reconstructive surgery and artificial limbs represented a distinctive kind of war-related materiality that blurred the boundary between human being and machine. Men and *matériel* became interchangeable, the former remade by the latter, and appearing, at least in part, as robots, recalling Kandinsky's (1977: 18) ideas on abstraction where the human being is an object like any other.

Here was the ultimate materiality made by war, and one that associated living people with more traditional notions of what constitutes material culture. Even for the less seriously wounded, marked only perhaps by a limp caused by a bullet, the individual's body and identity had nevertheless been remade by the war in painful, and painfully public, disability (Saunders 2003b: 14–15).

Materiality and the archaeology of lethal behaviour

A concern with the entwined materialities of landscape and objects is not the sole preserve of anthropology. In recent years, archaeology has widened its remit considerably and become increasingly anthropologised in the process. Although just beginning, the archaeology of twentieth-century conflict (and the First World War in particular) has great potential to realign our perceptions of war and violence in a modern technological world (Meskell 1998; Saunders 2002b; Schofield *et al.* 2002).

Since 1919, and arguably during the war itself, the material culture of conflict has been variously collected, reburied, recycled, sold and interpreted by museums, battlefield scavengers, amateur enthusiasts and tour companies, but only most recently investigated by professional archaeologists (Saunders 2002b) (Figure 1.3). This brief outline will deal only with issues that impinge directly on issues of materiality and will not be concerned with a much-needed methodology of archaeological excavation in the world's first globalised industrial battlefields.

The speed of reconstruction during the inter-war years left whole battle-zone landscapes intact. Trenches, dug-outs, craters, *matériel*, personal effects and human remains still lie just beneath the modern land surface. This recent archaeological layer intrudes into earlier levels, embedding itself in previous cultural materialities, and forming a new and complex stratigraphy. This new archaeological landscape is, as we have seen, dangerously proactive to all who investigate it (see Webster 1998: 11–80). Around the Belgian town of Ypres, for example, some 250,000 kg of such materials can be recovered in a year (Lieutenant Colonel L. Deprez-Wouts, personal communication 1998), and in France, in 1991, 36 French farmers were killed when their machinery hit

Figure 1.3 The first professional archaeological excavation of a First World War site in Belgium, July 2003, conducted by the *Instituut voor het Archeologisch Patrimonium* (IAP). The photograph shows an in situ duckboard in a trench outside Ypres (Ieper) and its relationship to the modern farming landscape. These are rescue excavations in the path of the A19 motorway extension. (© author).

unexploded shells (Webster 1998: 29). Even in the home, every year sees collectors killed or injured when bombs and grenades explode unexpectedly.

In Great War battle-zones, the remains of all periods (from Palaeolithic to Roman, medieval to the present) are caught up in what is essentially an archaeology of lethal behaviour. This complexity demands a joint archaeological-anthropological approach to the material culture of distant and recent periods, what Buchli and Lucas (2001) have called the 'archaeologies of the contemporary past'. What is evident, even at this early stage of Great War archaeology, is the inextricability of similar or identical material culture emanating from archaeological sites, museums and private collections. Here, such objects reveal their richly textured and transformational nature – a capacity to move effortlessly across disciplinary boundaries. The archaeology of the First World War is a truly anthropological endeavour that involves not only excavation, but also the investigation of the home, museums, heritage issues and, as Price (this volume) has illustrated, the developing relationship between tourism, remembrance, and the rejuvenation of local economies. An acknowledgement of the complexity and urgency attending these issues is the recent creation of a Department of First World War Archaeology in Belgium (Dewilde *et al.* in press).

One issue with which archaeology has recently concerned itself, and which the First World War exemplifies, is the treatment of the remains of the dead from indigenous societies. For the Great War, this issue includes the cultural, religious, and ethical dimensions surrounding the recovery, reburial and commemoration of the multi-ethnic and multi-faith dead, from Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, China and the Americas who fought in the Allied armies. The diversity of worldviews, religious practices and attitudes to the treatment (and commemoration) of the dead present in this multi-national array of men has received little sustained attention from military historians and virtually none from archaeologists and anthropologists. Senegalese tribesmen, Native Americans, African-Americans, Chinese, Maoris, Aborigines, Sikhs and Hindus combine to make Great War archaeology manifest a unique and potentially combustible mix of issues. For many of these groups, the extinction of their post-war memory went hand in hand with physical extinction on the battlefield (Figure 1.4).

Archaeology and anthropology increasingly overlap also on the topic of museums in their roles as repositories of material culture, and as purveyors of different pasts through exhibitions. For the Great War, this is a multi-layered issue, as many inter-war museums were, in part at least, commemorative foundations (Kavanagh 1994: 155–6; Cornish, this volume). They contributed to the transformation of public space after the war, alongside memorial hospitals, public halls and libraries. Equally important, though almost completely ignored to date, are the many regimental museums created after 1918 that remain full of uninvestigated materialities of war.

In Europe, along the old Western Front, and excepting the two major museums of the area (L'Historial de la Grande Guerre on the Somme, and In Flanders Fields Museum at Ypres), it was the establishment of many small

Figure 1.4 A commemorative monument to the Indian Army covered in flowers at the Menin Gate memorial to the missing at Ypres just after its unveiling on Sunday 10 November 2002 (© author).

private museums and café-museums that offered on-site experiences of the war. These museums originated during the 1920s when they catered to battlefield pilgrims who were drawn to the ambiguous displays of guns, shells, and miscellaneous *matériel* that perhaps embodied some of the experiences of the missing.

Café-museums especially were (and remain) ambivalent locations – offering refreshments, encounters with killing equipment, proximity to 'genuine' or facsimile battlefield features (usually trenches), the opportunity to buy souvenirs, and to meet like-minded people. Today, they offer the same attractions, but to a different clientele of schoolchildren, those newly interested in the war, as well as the relations of the original visitors. Integrated within tourist itineraries, themselves commercially edited landscapes of war, they anchor the experience of modern pilgrimages, offering physical contact with objects and place, and sometimes incorporating items that come directly from amateur archaeological excavations, and which stand in marked contrast to the postmodern 'immateriality' of encounters in cyberspace (Fabiansson, this volume).

Concluding comment

The study of the material culture of conflict embraces an almost endless variety of disciplines. In the past, this has led to another layer of fragmentation

imposed on to the subject matter by the differing concerns and prejudices of different academic traditions. Until recently, anthropology largely avoided twentieth-century industrialised war, as did archaeology; art history ignored the phenomenon of trench art; museums (even those dedicated to war) often appeared to marginalise everything except weaponry and uniforms, and military history concerned itself almost exclusively with grand strategies and tactical battles. In the interstices between this array of compartmentalised approaches exists a virtually unexplored and infinite number of overlapping worlds, where human experience is embodied in the relationships between people and objects. Times are changing, and rapidly. Under the aegis of a material culture anthropology, the diverse chapters in this book find a new and collective focus – a multi-disciplinary approach that indicates at least one way forward.

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2

ART, MATERIAL LIFE
AND DISASTER

Civilian and military prisoners of war

Annette Becker

There is a banal sewing kit in the collections of the Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne, in the heart of the Somme battlefield (Becker 1996: 46–7). For me, it is totally emblematic of the Great War of 1914–18, and of all the ensuing conflicts of the twentieth century, where men and women suffered and united around shared values, before discovering that wounds, prisoners' camps, internment/concentration camps,[1] or death, would be separating them, for a very long time, or forever.

By the exchanges between the world of combatants and the Home Front, the war generated a structured space. Certain categories of individuals – prisoners of war and civilian deportees – found themselves neither at the front nor at the rear, but ensconced in a space that was 'elsewhere', outside the nation-in-arms and the collective struggle for its defence. If 'ordinary' war is always a question of 'deconstruction' for families, the case of military prisoners, and civilians even more, probably bears witness to an even greater 'deconstruction'. Here, the camp is the setting – the arena in which their exclusion was played out. So effective was this process of exclusion that such individuals have virtually disappeared from the memory of the war and its historiography (Becker 1998: 404; McPhail 1999: 235).

To think about this German sewing kit and other objects created by or for prisoners is a way to understand better the different upheavals and disruptions brought by the war, and how the victims themselves fought to cope with their tragic situations. In this sense, the sewing kit as an object of material culture, can be viewed as embodying the dramatically changed experiences of individuals, and thus as a conceptual tool for exploring the ways in which objects yield information and insights into people's lives.

The sewing kit, like all the objects and associated activities of tailoring, has a primary practical function. At the Front, more than in a POW camp, new equipment was not provided, and men needed to secure a button, darn socks

or mend a shirt or jacket to keep out the cold and mud (*L'intermède* 1917). While such practical concerns are clear, deeper and more symbolic issues are also implicated. First, the uniform is the mark of national belonging. To keep it in good shape is to say that even in the hands of the enemy you remain what you are, whether German, French or British. The sewing needle here replaces the rifle. In the camp, the soldier is prevented from physical fighting, but by maintaining his uniform he fights symbolically, and remains part of his nation's wider struggle against the enemy.

The second point, more complex and fundamental, revolves around the fact that in general men don't use needles as sewing is mainly womens' work. Here, the sewing kit illustrates the power of material objects, by stating that the war has reversed traditional gender roles, and that through it men have had to assume the activities of women. In one sense, the soldier in a trench or POW camp has replaced a woman in the home – he is back at the Home Front. Illustrating this shift of place and activity are the words of a prisoner writing to his wife – 'The rest of the morning is spent replacing buttons and darning socks. You see how I miss you. You are laughing aren't you? War, and mainly captivity have made me a model man, good at everything, even sewing' (*L'Exilé* 1916: 2).

The sewing kit's practical function is probably its least interesting feature. The inscription embroidered on it is like a letter that has been written and sent, a prayer, a petition. Like so many other similar items, it is a three-dimensional narrative of an individual's experience of war. To be in touch with loved ones, and to know what is happening to them, is the most important preoccupation of contemporaries in every conflict. This is because the separation inflicted by war is characterised more than anything else by waiting: waiting for news, letters, and the certainty of love. In prison-camp life it is crucial to write, to send and receive letters and parcels – a powerful mix of action and object that may be considered the 'spiritual bread' in the first line of affectivity (*L'Exilé* 1917a: 5). Through such activities, prisoners perpetuate their sense of belonging to different circles of suffering – the family, the village and national and religious communities. Equally important, letters and photographs bring the only feminine presence into this world of men; if such objects cannot compensate for sexual frustrations, they can lead at least for some to a certain crystallisation of love (Cazeneuve 1944).

By embroidering in red, the colour of blood, the phrase *Gott mit dir* (God with you) on the sewing kit the German wife, fiancée, or sister, proclaimed that they were not fools: on his belt, the man wore *Gott mit uns* (God with us), a common practice with no shared affective connotations. The impersonal *Gott mit uns* is replaced by the very individual *Gott mit dir*, which emphasises one man who belongs to one woman – the one who has embroidered for him. This individualising certainty is offered by the needle, a metonym of the war. The woman's thoughts while embroidering this piece are even more sophisticated as these three words surround a red cross. This is the Christian

cross of a shared faith, a cross of protection. But, by manipulating the imagery, she has designed it as an Iron Cross, as if she is awarding this military decoration for bravery to her man, reminding him that she believes in his courage and his heroism, even though he is now a prisoner. Where the genuine Iron Cross is black, this one is red, perhaps conveying the idea of Christ's sacrificial blood that mingles symbolically with the soldier's blood, thereby drawing together man and Christ. Here, war is repeatedly expressed in terms of Christ's Passion.

The red cross is also the symbol of the International Red Cross Committee, which protects the wounded and prisoners by giving them back neutrality and the possibility both of communicating with loved ones and being better treated and fed. To sew, to love, to cry, to pray, to lose, and to hope – all are inscribed on this little object, revealing the apparently banal as in fact anything but. The sewing kit is, in reality, an exemplary go-between, reflecting the condition of prisoners as expressed in their material culture, craft and art.

For prisoners, moral and physical sufferings are particularly vivid because they have lost any sense of continuity with their past, the present condition of their country, and the progress of the war. Furthermore, the majority have internalised the insidious message of the authorities that stipulates that every prisoner is a coward, and in one sense almost a deserter. Feelings of shame, neglect and depression become everyday companions. Prisoners are spatially and mentally uprooted, occupying a liminal space – neither at the Front nor at home, but 'elsewhere'. Torn between a refusal to acknowledge their capture, their prison camp existence, their personal defeat as soldiers and men, and yet forced to make the best of their situation, they often feel gloomy or depressed and worry incessantly about becoming physically ill – a condition referred to as the 'barbed-wire syndrome'.

This *cafard*, or 'black mood', whose name comes from the sailors' vocabulary, is the result of the feeling of isolation and exclusion. If an escape does not take place or fails, every prisoner attempts to get in touch with his beloved through two kinds of activities, one mental, the other physical. In a humorous description of life in a civilian camp called 'scientific discussion', the editor of the camp newspaper identifies microbes and viruses that attack the inmates mentally:

> *bacillus bilus*, or cafard . . . *micrococcus novellus*, or looking for affectionate news . . . All these small elements don't have the same degree of virulence. Some could even be seen as positive, as the *spirillus memento*, or microbe of remembrance, which incites many normally harmless individuals to unfortunate attacks on different kinds of material. The result of their crises is seen in assorted objects to which, in their abused imagination, they give the name of rings, frames, carpets, etc. . . . By one of these secret natural tricks, it hap-

pens that some of these objects are little miracles of ingenuity and taste.

(*Le Z Illustré* 1916)

The humorous writer here sees artefacts as a way to fight off depression and also as a real expression of human artistry.

A POW camp population included many different specialists, most of whom endeavoured to carry on their craft during their incarceration: clock-makers, cobblers, tailors, all offered their services not just to get a little money and ameliorate their conditions, but also to keep busy and thereby keep boredom and depression at bay. Prisoners, like soldiers, sculpted, painted, and carved, in any available material – leaves or bark from trees, animal bones, blocks of earth and pieces of chalk and wood (see Audoin-Rouzeau 1995: 71–2, 78–9, 87, 92–3; Saunders 2003: 105–25). They drew sketches in letters and personal diaries. Even if their activities had been different before their imprisonment, they tried everything imaginable in order to escape their current situation – to go on fighting and hoping.

Embroideries, wood carvings, metal sculptures, letters, poems and drawings, represent above all, the theme of lost love – wives (husbands in the case of women civilian deportees), children and the home. At the same time, prisoners fought against boredom – a feeling that stretches time and stands opposed to the shortness of the war before their capture. By making objects, prisoners express the desire to return to the long period of 'normal' time before the war – the time they spent with their families. In P. Saury's *En Captivité, le camp des prisonniers de guerre de Merseburg, 1914–1918* is a drawing called 'the dream' in which the prisoner's family appears in his sleep, almost as an apparition of the Virgin Mary. Its caption reads:

My wife, my children! I'm back
Hold me tight in your arms! Happiness; what a wonderful day!
I awake, it's only a dream!
But I'll accept the long exile:
I'll wait, patient and strong, that success
Hands the awful German over his victorious French.

(Saury n.d.)

It is for such reasons that prisoners are desperate to obtain photographs, to have a sense of nearness to those they are separated from and, thus stimulated, to remember. Photographs in this sense are used as proof of the continuity of life. The writer and prisoner Jacques Rivière expressed such feelings many times in his letters to his wife and daughter – 'Write to me as often as possible, send me photos of the two of you, I need to see you, to see you on new images' (Rivière 1974: 18).

In this definitively letter-writing war, prisoners, even more than soldiers,

spent much of their time writing to loved ones and friends. Unlike soldiers, who can at least occasionally visit their families, read newspapers and magazines, and listen to gossip, prisoners' letter writing constituted their only link to the outside world. They often carried out such activities under precarious conditions – on their knees and with pencils, though sometimes, and especially for officers, with pen and ink sitting at a table. Songs, poems, prayers, personal diaries, sometimes enhanced by drawings, all formed a corpus of material, a large part of the documentary basis for hundreds of literary works created after the war (Audoin-Rouzeau *et al.* 2001).

Where soldiers carried photographs in their wallets, because they didn't have anywhere else to put them, prisoners could at least exhibit their 'poor secrets' in the barracks where they were incarcerated. So, it is not surprising that wooden or metal frames for pictures are found very often among prisoners' artefacts (see Saunders 2002: 9). The frame is made to hold the photograph of the beloved, or to bring back home after the war, as a testimony of time spent in the camp. Further locating the individual in time and space was the inscribing of the object with, for example, the name of the camp, the dates of incarceration (with a frequent emphasis on 1914 to show just how long the prisoner endured his captivity), and generic phrases, such as 'souvenir from my captivity'. A characteristic feature of such objects, whether photograph frames, embroideries, wooden boxes, bone implements or metal rings, is the desire to be precise, to show where and when an item was made. In every media, inscribed names (sometimes with photographs included) are present, and thus are material traces of the prisoners' undamaged humanity, the 'real life' that they continue to believe they are a part of. Such objects, however humble to an outsider, are proof of the authenticity of the prisoner's experience.

Needlework items are specific to prisoners; they can be made with special thread purchased from a nearby shop – a process of acquisition that entailed complicated commercial exchanges with the enemy (i.e. prison guards). Sometimes these exchanges went further than might be expected, as with real china cups imprinted inside the enamel with phrases such as 'souvenir du camp'. Alternatively, supplies of thread could be sent from home in parcels along with food, showing again that affective exchanges were regarded as important as material ones and that sustaining the mind was as important as sustaining the body. The coloured thread, as with Ariadne's ball of twine that allowed Theseus to escape the Minotaur's labyrinth, was seen as a step towards freedom, or perhaps as a symbol of the freedom enjoyed by loved ones. Perhaps for these reasons, this very feminine task, like macramé, became an almost indispensable activity in POW camps. Photographs were added to the compositions, to show the reversal of situations of those affected: the family shown in the middle of the needlework piece is now at the front, and the prisoner who is making the work is back at home where he belongs but, instead of a needle, he wields a hammer or plough.

The same is true of musical and sporting activities. To participate in these is to be linked with one's 'sweet home' (see Warin 2001: 84–7). A drawing that appeared in a POW camp paper for Christmas 1916 is typical (*L'intermède* 1916). The captive is sitting near the barbed wire, he dreams about letters and parcels brought to him by his family on a sleigh. The horses are made of wood, like the toys he would have liked so much to give to his children; the objects become the mediators of his reunion with his beloved. But it is a dream. The French prisoner Alexander de Gieysz made a number of wooden toys for his two daughters – a little cupboard for their dolls, pencil boxes, a pen and other boxes to put their precious belongings in (perhaps his letters to them?). On all of these items, de Gieysz engraved in large letters the word 'captivity', and 'Madeleine' and 'Geneviève' – the names of his two daughters. In letters to his wife he does not hide the hardships of captivity:

> Some are sick with grief, some become mad. I'm thinking too much about coming back and have become drained . . . We have been separated for 13 months and anyway travel does not interest me . . . We just have to go on with the Calvary. We do not carry a cross but the weight of months keeps accumulating.
> (Collections of the Historial de la Grande Guerre n.d.)

The daughters, who were writing nice letters to their imprisoned Catholic father – 'Merry Christmas, I have been good all year' – had completely internalised the sanctity of the objects he had made for them and that he brought back at the end of the war. They were put in a sacred place in the house, and not used as the toys they were intended to be. Here is a vivid demonstration of the multi-vocality of one kind of material culture, objects whose 'social life' embodied the varied experiences and intentionalities of production in the chaos of war.

The prisoners of the Great War, like those of all wars where they are not tortured or killed through overwork, engaged in the same activities: they drew, waited, organised classes, washed and sewed clothing, waited, looked across the barbed wire, grew flowers and vegetables, played music, wrote, waited, did sports, and waited.

To give to all these tedious but necessary activities a taste of 'real life', prisoners would often transform them into competitions. If such competitions, whether in sport, making objects, or musical concerts, appeared similar to those in real life beyond the wire, prisoners also tried to link them to the war and camp to express the idea that camp life was not the end of war. National qualities were always enhanced, sometimes with humour, as when a snowball fight became something like Verdun. Competitions involving the making of artefacts were an interesting innovation in the camps. A big competition took place in Hammelburg camp at the end of 1916, and involved 153 craftsmen presenting 338 objects. A jury classified the objects and gave prizes in five

groups: (1) 'cooking implements and useful objects', (2) 'sculptures in wood, wax, metal, and bone', (3) 'cut wood, wood sculptures, marquetry, and inlaying', (4) 'carpets in cotton, wool, silk, embroideries, macramé, and tapestry', and (5) 'drawing and painting' (*L'Exilé* 1917b). The details of the list show that, on the one hand, prisoners used primarily conservative and conventional idioms rooted in pre-war conformities. But it also showed how camp life had become part of the way they perceived their world, in war and out of it, lacking food, and obsessed by the idea of leaving: the number of suitcases is as revealing as the drawings of barracks showing all the bags packed and ready to go.

In its apparent aesthetic disorder, this competition explains why these war objects have been called *kitsch* and not been taken seriously by historians until very recently (Becker 2001; see Saunders 2003). But, for prisoners even more than for soldiers, this *kitsch* is probably a way to negate capture, death and disappearance. Is it proof of a vital and free aesthetic?

The word *Kitschen* comes from southern Germany, where in 1870 it meant 'picking up mud from the streets' or 'to clean up, to remove rubbish'. Germans at war may have used the word in this sense, but between 1914 and 1918 the word had not reached either the English or French languages (it first appeared in an English dictionary in 1926 and a French one in 1960). The artistic avant-garde, especially the Dadaists and later the Surrealists, made fun of mass-produced chromos, postcards and any objects judged to be false or ugly. Paradoxically, they established their own barometer of good taste based on humour and derision in their case – as opposed to bad taste, pompous, solemn and industrial. Industrially-made art objects without ulterior motives were considered worthy of disdain, mediocre and of no value. However, if these same objects were transformed and appropriated by artists, they could be reinvigorated and given new value. In this way, the basic objects were considered to belong to mass popular culture, whereas the latter were art, part of an established elite culture. *Kitsch* was considered bad taste because it was produced unintentionally, out of alienation – in this case by prisoners – but having a taste for kitsch was a sign of refinement and privileged awareness, permissible bad taste within high culture.[2]

Marcel Proust has mocked this mixture of patriotism, bad taste and consent about war fashion in Paris particularly well:

> instead of Egyptian ornaments recalling the Egyptian campaign, they wore rings and bracelets made from fragments of shells or the drive bands from '75s' [the ubiquitous 75 mm French artillery shells], cigarette lighters created from two English coins to which a soldier in his *cagna* (dug-out) had given such a beautiful sheen that Queen Victoria's profile could have been traced by Pisanello.
>
> (Proust 1989: 302, translated Habie Schwarz)[3]

And, speaking about his friend Jacques Vaché, who died of an overdose/suicide at the end of the war, André Breton makes a similar remark:

> In 1916, there wasn't even time to recognize friends. The "home front" meant nothing any more. All that mattered was to stay alive and for someone to polish a ring or turn around in a trench, [it] seemed to us like a vice.
>
> (Breton 1988: 199, translated Habie Schwarz)

Analysing these objects, we come to another historical and aesthetic dimension, about which Walter Benjamin made particularly powerful observations. In his book *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Benjamin 1971: 171–210), he demonstrates the significance of industrial duplication which enables the massification of knowledge and artistic consumption. Benjamin knew that 'even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be . . . this "here and now" of a work of art is the prerequisite to authenticity' (*ibid.*: 169–210, 174–5), and he adds, 'this unique existence of the work of art determines the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence' (*ibid.*: 176). These objects, I believe, are, for the ones who take time to analyse them in their context, the authentic witnesses that Benjamin had in mind of the desire of living in these times of hardship and dereliction.

Notes

1 Called concentration camps, as in the Boer War, during 1914–18.
2 Tzara in Switzerland, or Duchamp in New York, play the same game, out of the war, far from the war, mobilised against mobilisation.
3 The last part of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* that Proust had partly written before the war is obviously finished after 1916.

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3

'SACRED RELICS'

Objects in the Imperial War Museum 1917–39

Paul Cornish

As Britain's foremost repository of objects relating to conflicts since 1914, the Imperial War Museum will obviously repay study by anyone investigating the material culture of twentieth-century warfare. It has been stated that 'The study of materiality sees objects as possessing important and variable social dimensions beyond (as well as including) their original design purpose' (Saunders 2001: 479). As will be seen from this chapter, such thoughts, if not so plainly expressed, or indeed consciously considered, informed the policy of the founders and early curators of the Imperial War Museum to a remarkable degree.

It is often a matter of surprise to people to discover that the Imperial War Museum was founded while the First World War was still in progress. Indeed, when the first steps were being taken towards the museum's creation, an eventual Allied victory looked far from assured. Britain's supply lines were being strangled by German U-boats (Keegan 1999: 379–80); Russia was in turmoil (*ibid.*: 358–69) and Romania was effectively knocked out of the war (*ibid.*: 330–1). On the Western Front, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was engaged in the bloody but inconclusive Battle of Arras (Nicholls 1990), while the failure of the French General Nivelle's grand offensive on the Aisne was bringing the French Army to the verge of mutiny (Keegan 1999: 348–58). These were dark days but, paradoxically, the gravity of the situation probably strengthened the hand of those who wished to create a war museum.

During the first months of 1917 a number of individuals, notably Charles Ffoulkes, Curator of the Tower Armouries, and Sir Alfred Mond, First Commissioner of Works, had begun to press for the establishment of a 'National War Museum'. Mond addressed a memorandum on the subject to the (recently installed) Prime Minister, David Lloyd-George (Kavanagh

1994: 124). It seems likely that Mond's idea struck a chord with Lloyd-George, whose energetic approach to prosecuting the war involved uniting the whole country behind the war effort. In the wake of the heavy losses sustained during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, it was seen as essential that the public were left in no doubt as to why the war was being fought. To this end a new Department of Information and a National War Aims Committee had already been established. The approval given by the cabinet, on 5 March 1917 to Mond's idea of forming a committee to oversee the creation of a National War Museum, has been seen as part of the same process (Kavanagh 1994: 122).

There were also very good practical reasons for taking steps to set up a museum while the war still raged. A committee member, Commander Walcott, listed several, pointing out that potential exhibits were already being overlooked and lost, while local museums and private persons were actively collecting in an uncontrolled fashion. Furthermore, he stated that 'While the country is organized, the difficulties of obtaining exhibits, relics etc. are more easily overcome' (Kavanagh 1994: 122). This he contrasted with the potential difficulties that might occur if collecting was postponed until the end of the war.

Thus, with a very modest Treasury grant of £3,000, the National War Museum Committee was constituted in March 1917 (the name 'Imperial War Museum' was not adopted until the end of that year). With no chance of actually building a museum while the war continued, the main priority of the committee was the acquisition of suitable exhibits. To this end, several sub-committees were created which, after some early changes, covered the following areas: Admiralty, War Office, Air Services, Munitions, Dominions, Library, and Women's Work. In addition, a Canadian officer, Major Beckles Willson, was tasked with collecting suitable exhibits in France and Belgium.

The scope of the museum's collecting policy embraced a variety of media, with books, documents, posters and notices, photographs and works of art all featuring. From the outset however, it is evident that three-dimensional exhibits were chiefly what exercised the minds of the war museum's founders. Sir Martin Conway, the Director General designate, made the following statement of intent in a circular to the armed forces:

> It is the purpose of the Museum to be a place which they (war veterans) can visit with their comrades, their friends, or their children, and there revive the past and behold again the great guns and other weapons with which they fought, the uniforms they wore, pictures and models of the ships and trenches and dug-outs in which weary hours were spent, or of positions which they carried and ground every yard of it memorable to them. They will be glad to recall also the occupations of their hours of leisure.
>
> (Kavanagh 1994: 129)

With the promise of equipment from official sources, ambitious plans were conceived. As early as April 1917, Conway urged the War Trophies Sub-Committee to 'make the Museum as comprehensive as possible, and to obtain not only every type of gun, but a type of each gun in the various stages of its development' (IWM C/F: A1/4). In the following month, Major Beckles Willson wrote to Ffoulkes (now established as Secretary to the museum) 'I gather that it is the desire of the Committee that to begin with one or two examples of every variety of enemy ordnance should be procured' (IWM C/F: A4/4).

Not surprisingly, such a 'systematic' (Pearce 1992: 84–8) approach proved to be beyond the means of the museum. However it is easy to forget that, in attempting to create a museum dealing with contemporary events, these men were undertaking something without precedent. As one historian of the early days of the museum has said, 'Its achievements in terms of contemporary collecting and its pioneer work in this respect has never been fully acknowledged by British museum curators' (Kavanagh 1986: 28). Indeed, so unique was this work that even now it is not easy to place it within the structure of modern analyses of collecting, such as those advocated by Susan Pearce and others (Pearce 1992).

It should not be thought that the museum's founders were interested merely in collecting complete 'sets' of various types of military equipment. From the outset it was established that a priority should be given to the acquisition of items with an interesting provenance. This policy has been pursued within the Imperial War Museum ever since, resulting in the preservation of many objects possessed of symbolic significance. In many cases this symbolism has changed (or has been added to) with the passage of time, as cultural and historical perceptions of the Great War have altered. Discussion of the ebb and flow of meaning and symbol with regard to such items would merit a chapter of its own. Meanwhile, a very apposite analysis of the process itself has been made by Susan Pearce, with regard to a Highland broadsword held by the National Museums of Scotland (Pearce 1992: 24–30). The example is relevant because of the applicability of the semiology rather than the mere fact that it relates to a piece of military hardware!

With pieces of ordnance, the checking of provenance was a relatively simple process, as official records were kept of their use and issue. That these details were considered important is vouched for by the fact that virtually all the artillery pieces listed in the 1922 official *Short Guide to the Imperial War Museum* (Imperial War Museum 1922) are accompanied by details of their employment in important actions. With regard to other 'trophies' of the battlefield, the museum could rely on Beckles Willson to supply the necessary details. The lists of items that he sent back to London are most revealing as to the combinations of elements that, in his mind, rendered an object suitable for preservation. They vary from the terse: 'Verey (*sic*) Pistol used at Mouquet Farm, Sept. 3. 1916', to the florid:

German Bicycle, HOOGE. – In the early hours of June 22nd, 1916, there was dimly descried approaching on Menin Road from the German trenches at Hooge a wild figure astride a bicycle endeavouring to negotiate a passage through the ruts and shell-holes. He proved to be a Boche, intent on surrender, but where he came from or how he got through remains a mystery. When fired at point-blank he threw up both hands, the machine veered and he fell into a crater. The bicycle is of German make.

(IWM C/F: A4/4)

Perhaps the most important and novel aspect of the fledgling museum was its determination to make its collections relevant to the individual, and to acquire items that were redolent of the involvement of the common man and woman in the war, whether at the Front or at home. Conway asserted as much in the circular quoted above, stating that, although important, officially deposited items would be 'a dead accumulation unless it is vitalized by contributions expressive of the action, the experience, the valour and the endurance of individuals' (Kavanagh 1994: 130). Later in 1917, in a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, he spoke of a 'divergence from the accepted museum idea', pointing out that:

Never before have the people been able to see the work of their own hands as distinct from the work of a few highly specialized exhibitors, and here the humblest war worker will be able to find examples of the work he or she did for the Empire.

(IWM C/F: A4/1)

Although examples of munitions could be acquired through official and commercial channels, it was realised at an early stage that, if it was to acquire a sufficiency of items relating to the human dimension of the war, the museum would be heavily reliant upon the generosity of the public. An appeal disseminated through the press in April 1917 put it thus:

The personal factor will be of great importance in this collection, and it is for things such as letters, photographs, drawings, souvenirs etc., found on the battlefield, recreations and the arts and crafts of trench life that the Museum Committee appeal.

(IWM C/F: A4/1)

It would appear that this request was not met with an overwhelmingly positive response, as a further strongly worded plea is to be found in the Foreword to the '*Souvenir*', published in conjunction with a temporary exhibition of Imperial War Museum material at Burlington House in January 1918. Once more it

Figure 3.1 Trophies collected for the Imperial War Museum by Major Beckles Willson, assembled at Hesdin, France, 1917 (© and courtesy Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, IWM Q11652).

was Sir Martin Conway who acted as the museum's spokesman, voicing the following sentiment:

> a great multitude of small objects of the highest interest to the public, both now and in years to come, has drifted into the hands of private individuals. The holders of such mementos should realise that they hold them in trust and that the best way to fulfil that trust will be to present them as soon as possible to the War Museum and thus to secure their safe preservation for the future. If the Museum is to fulfil its purpose well it must be with the active co-operation not merely of the fighting forces but of their friends at home, into whose hands objects of great interest have already passed. The Museum is to be a public possession. The public must help to make it.
>
> (IWM 1918)

Finally the committee was obliged to take out advertisements. One such, appealing for items relating to servicemen who had either been killed, or distinguished themselves in some way, asks for photographs, biographical details and 'all kinds of mementos, even of trifling character' (IWM C/F: A4/1).

The intention to collect items for their historical and human interest was more than just a vague plan. This is manifest not only in Beckles Willson's selection of objects, but also in the instructions laid down for acquisition procedures in January 1918:

> If any history of the Exhibit is given connecting it with any Incident, Regiment, Individual or Place, this should be certified in writing by a competent authority, *independent* of the Collector or Officer in charge of the Section.
>
> <div align="right">(IWM C/F A4/3)</div>

This scrupulous attitude to the certification and preservation of an item's provenance would sit well with modern museum practices, although it was not administered without problems. There was some argument as to whether a table donated by the owner of a French chateau really had been used by Sir Douglas Haig. When Beckles Willson moved his collecting operations to Palestine in 1918, he was enraged to receive a letter from Ffoulkes warning him against acquiring 'spurious souvenirs'. In this case Beckles Willson appears to have been unjustly accused, as he was generally very careful about provenance. However he had caused some controversy in 1917 when he suggested what virtually amounted to the *manufacture* of provenance for an exhibit. It is clear from his correspondence that Willson made a positive fetish of flags, and in September 1917 had suggested that a large and splendid Union Flag be purchased and given to British troops who were expected imminently to liberate the French town of Lens. The suggestion was rejected by the committee. Willson appears to have seen this as an unwillingness to spend money on a large flag, rather than a principled refusal to concoct a trophy artificially (IWM C/F: A4/4).

However, despite this preference for items actually used, made or captured, it was always realised that certain aspects of the war could only be represented by other means. For instance, the impossibility of incorporating real ships in any exhibition meant that they would have to be represented by models. Models were used additionally to show the topography of the battlefields and scenes from the Front, such as the heavy guns in action, or well known sections of trench. Also commissioned was an important series of plaster models depicting 'Women's work', to be made by female artists. Not everyone was pleased with this use of models. In 1924, one reviewer was to write with reference to the ship models that 'there is a ludicrous aspect of the toy about them which destroys the illusion of strength' (IWM C/F: A3/2), an interesting comment on the complex relationship between toys, souvenirs, trivialisation and miniaturisation (see Becker, this volume; Mosse 1991: 126–56; Stewart 1993: 37–69, 132–50).

It was also thought permissible to dress displays with non-original items in some cases. The temporary exhibition at Burlington House in 1918 featured

a group of figures representing British and Imperial servicemen which were furnished by Madame Tussauds. Ffoulkes had resisted the idea of a Tussaud's tableau in the entrance hall, as he thought that 'the whole exhibition would lose dignity'. For the same exhibition, some German flags were purchased to be draped over captured German guns. These were the cause of a minor incident when a member of the Royal Academy staff tore them down. Apparently he did so because his 'British ardour was so excited' on discovering that they had been purchased rather than captured (IWM C/F A2/2).

Facsimiles of some items were also deemed acceptable in certain circumstances. When the museum eventually opened, the dominant exhibit in the Naval section was a life-sized wooden replica of an 18-inch naval gun – the original item would have been far too heavy to display. An interesting case of the acquisition of a facsimile is that of the famous German sign left in the ruins of Péronne in the heart of the Somme battlefield and which announced: '*Nicht Ärgern Nur Wundern*' ('Don't be angry, just be amazed'). Beckles Willson had been unable to acquire the sign, as it had been passed to the French civil authorities after the town's liberation by British troops in 1917. However he enjoyed a good relationship with the *Hôtel des Invalides* in Paris, where the sign was eventually lodged. They undertook to make a facsimile of it for the Imperial War Museum (IWM C/F: A4/4).

Curiously, by as early as 1922 (if the museum guide is to be believed) the fact that this sign was a copy and not the original appears to have been forgotten. Ironically it is currently on loan to a French museum dedicated to the First World War – l'Historial de la Grand Guerre, also situated in Péronne. Here, issues of authenticity, mimesis and display come to the fore, and illustrate the power of material objects to embody the real and imagined worlds of wartime and post-war experience.

Various plans were floated, some quite grandiose, for the creation of a purpose-built home for the Imperial War Museum. The most ambitious proposals were founded on the concept that the museum should also function as a national war memorial. With the support of the committee, Conway made a submission to the War Cabinet, which proposed that:

> the very heart and focus of the building should be of a memorial character. This might take the form of a Hall of Honour as rich and beautiful in character as artists can devise, and adjacent to it a Gallery devoted to the separate memorials of the Navy and the Army by ships, regiments and contingents.
>
> (IWM C/F: A1/4)

He suggested that such a memorial 'in the heart of a great War Museum' would be a far more popular means of commemoration than any 'pile of sculpture' could be. Later in 1917 Conway discussed the concept in a letter to

the *Daily Telegraph*, going so far as to assert that 'The Museum idea must then sink perforce into a secondary place and the scheme becomes a memorial, living and real' (IWM C/F: A4/1). A more cynical view would be that by pushing the memorial aspect of the proposed museum, the chances of securing more lavish public funding would be increased. Indeed, Conway referred quite candidly to this aspect, suggesting that although the public might consider large expenditure on a museum an extravagance, they would 'insist' that a memorial institution 'should be costly in sacrifice, splendid in character, and central in position' (IWM C/F: A4/1). Unfortunately the War Cabinet were not enthused by the committee's proposals, not least because of the potential cost of such a project. Interestingly, they also doubted such an institution's ability to retain the interest of the public for more than a 'few years' (Kavanagh 1994: 135). However, it will be seen that the concept of memorialisation within the Imperial War Museum was to live on in different forms.

The straitened economic circumstances of the post-war era meant that not only were grand 'memorial' schemes out of the question, but also that more modest building plans for the Imperial War Museum were rejected as unaffordable. The committee, fearing that the museum might never be established at all, were forced to accept an offer of accommodation in the Crystal Palace, where the new museum was opened by the King on 9 June 1920. Formerly the pride of the Great Exhibition of 1851, this glass and iron structure lived on in the suburbs of South London, struggling to maintain itself as what would now be called a 'leisure attraction'. Unfortunately, the building proved to be highly unsuitable for museum use. Environmental conditions within the Palace fluctuated wildly, according to the weather. The temperature varied within a range of 1 to 46 degrees centigrade according to one report! The iron framework also expanded and contracted alarmingly with changes in temperature – causing panes of glass to crack or fall out, and allowing rain to gush in. The floors were not designed to support large exhibits, and had to be specially strengthened to accept the Imperial War Museum's artillery pieces (Condell 1985: 109–111). Meanwhile, the tanks had to be left outside in the open air. The design of the galleries themselves did not suit them to their new role, and the exhibits were forced to share space with potted palms and ornamental fountains (Figure 3.2).

Worst of all was the fact that the museum's 'trophies' of the Great War themselves became the target of trophy hunters – another interesting aspect of the unstable 'social life' of these objects (see Appadurai 1986). The items left outside were obviously at risk. A year after the opening of the museum Ffoulkes was to report to the *Times* that:

> the interest and inquisitiveness of the general public was so insistent
> and forcible that it was absolutely impossible to protect the tanks
> from internal damage, in spite of the use of many hundreds of

Figure 3.2 The 'Army' section of the Imperial War Museum as displayed at the
Crystal Palace (© and courtesy Trustees of the Imperial War Museum,
IWM Q31438).

yards of barbed wire which apparently presented no obstacle to the
youthful visitor.

(IWM C/F: A4/1)

One is forced to smile at the irony of attempting to protect the tanks with
the very wire that they had been designed to overcome! Within the building,
which proved hard to patrol because of its size and layout, further depreda-
tions occurred. Ffoulkes was eventually obliged to order the removal of all
the smaller items of intrinsic value (IWM C/F: A1/1). For security reasons,
rifle bolts and machine-gun locks were removed, and pistols were not dis-
played at all (Ffoulkes 1938: 133–4). When, in 1922, Earl Haig loaned the
museum a collection of items relating to his time as Commander of the
British Expeditionary Force, it was considered unsafe for the caskets and
swords of honour to be displayed at the Crystal Palace.

The unsuitable surroundings in which the museum was obliged to function
naturally had a marked effect upon the nature of its displays. Large items,
such as aircraft and artillery pieces, tended to dominate, with such smaller
items as could safely be displayed (in the limited amount of cases available)
dispersed in rooms and 'bays' leading off the central aisle. These physical
conditions accentuated what can be discerned as a move away from the

original ethos of the museum, as a place of record of the individual's contribution to the war. This may, in part, have been due to the attitude of Ffoulkes, who was responsible for the setting up of the exhibition. He was later to contrast his own philosophy with that of his staff:

> Their natural inclinations were to collect 'souvenirs' with but little perspective vision. But one had to consider that while such things might be of transitory value for the moment our business was to make history, or rather record history.
>
> (Ffoulkes 1938: 109–10)

The 16 pages of the 1922 'Official Guide' (IWM 1922) to the museum are filled largely with listings of the types of equipment on display. As previously noted, virtually all the guns listed have some kind of 'history' associated with them, i.e. they were war objects with 'social lives' (Appadurai 1986). However, in only two areas are there references to 'Trophies' or 'Relics' of the type for which so many appeals were made, and which were so assiduously collected by Beckles Willson (IWM 1922).

In 1923, the Imperial War Museum's agreement with the Crystal Palace expired, and the museum was relocated to the Imperial Institute in South Kensington. Unfortunately, although not afflicted with the same environmental problems as the Crystal Palace, the accommodation at the new location was very limited in size. This resulted in the disposal (ironically, largely as scrap) of many of the museum's exhibits, now considered, in the words of Ffoulkes, to be 'redundant or of little interest' (Ffoulkes 1938: 137). The destruction, at this time, of exceptionally rare items, such as the German A7V tank, has been a source of anguish to later generations of curators.

Within the limited confines of the Imperial Institute galleries, the larger exhibits were still more in the ascendant than had been the case at the Crystal Palace. Once again the centre of each display area was packed with large exhibits. Smaller items were dispersed around the walls. The limited space ensured that these were, overwhelmingly, items which could be displayed 'flat', such as firearms arranged in 'trophies of arms', trench signs, flags or lifebelts (Figure 3.3). However, it is evident that the original vision of the Imperial War Museum's founders lived on, albeit in attenuated form. One reviewer was moved to state that:

> The collection of trench relics is of the most comprehensive nature, and has been made with a dramatic sense of the human meaning of war. All the little things which meant so much to sailor and soldier have been included. The battered bully-beef tin even has not been forgotten.
>
> (IWM C/F: A3/2)

Figure 3.3 The 'Army' section of the Imperial War Museum, as displayed at the Imperial Institute, including the facsimile of the German sign left among the ruins of Péronne on the Somme in 1917 ('*Nicht ärgern, nur wundern*'/ 'Don't be angry, just be amazed') (© and courtesy Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, IWM Q44827A).

Moreover, in an interesting revisitation of the policy of using facsimiles, a life size replica of a Western Front dug-out was created in a recess in one of the galleries. This was largely the work of Ffoulke's assistant, L. R. Bradley, who had served at the Front and who, with the aid of other veterans among the staff, collected scrap material from nearby waste ground to create the dug-out (Ffoulkes 1938: 149–50).

Throughout the early years of the museum, there was one important respect in which objects were certainly accorded significance other than of a purely technical or historical nature. This was noticeable even before the museum had a home. The temporary exhibition at Burlington House in 1918 was dominated by photographic displays and examples of war-production. However, there were some items present whose rôle was not to record an element of the war effort, or to instruct the public, but which carried within themselves a memorial significance. A draft copy of a 'do not touch' notice survives, stating: 'The public are requested to respect these Relics which have been won by our Men, often at the cost of their lives'. Ffoulkes himself stated in a letter that he regarded the battlefield trophies as 'sacred relics'. Further correspondence of the time records a pass for the exhibition being sent to the family of the sailor killed while annotating the wireless log of the Admiralty drifter *Floandi*. The log was one of the items on display, and shows the handwriting of the dying seaman veering across the page. Another correspondent, Mrs Alec-Tweedie, wrote: 'Seeing some people leaning over a table I peeped over to see what was on it and discovered the case of my poor boy's little treasures. I cannot tell you how pleased I was' (IWM C/F: A2/2).

Despite the dashing of hopes that the museum would be the official national war memorial, and the fundamental unsuitability of its locations, the museum's founders did not lose sight of its potential memorial significance. Much later, in October 1925, Ffoulkes wrote to *The Times*, suggesting that the museum was an ideal place to visit on Armistice Day, being 'an outstanding war memorial which does not need any symbolical sculpture or architectural setting' (IWM C/F: A2/2). Ironically, Ffoulkes himself had gone further than any man in introducing 'symbolical sculpture' into the museum when, by dint of some swift thinking, he had acquired the top section of the original temporary Cenotaph when it was being dismantled to make way for the permanent structure (Ffoulkes 1938: 129).

Thus, during the museum's time at the Crystal Palace and in the first years of its sojourn at the Imperial Institute, memorialisation was both conscious and overt. For example, the area devoted to 'Women's Work' was not entirely devoted to such obvious activities as munitions production or nursing. It also contained a 'Memorial Shrine to the women who lost their lives during the war' (IWM 1922: 9). Sadly, it is now impossible to discover the composition of this shrine, although a contemporary photograph shows the entrance, adorned with the words 'They lost their lovely youth facing the rough cloud of war' (IWM photograph: Q15029, not shown).

Good records exist for Armistice Day ceremonies held at the museum. It is clear from them that some exhibits were elevated to the level of what might be termed 'icons of remembrance'. Typically, the two minutes silence would be signalled by ringing the bell of HMS *Implacable*, a bell that had been cast in 1807, for the first *Implacable* – a French ship captured at Trafalgar. The silence would then be brought to an end by a call on a bugle that had been used by the Gordon Highlanders at the Battle of Loos in 1915. The public would then be invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes on 'certain exhibits of outstanding importance'. In 1924, these comprised: a howitzer which had been fitted to HMS *Vindictive* for the Zeebrugge raid of 1918; the top of the original Cenotaph; and a 13-pounder gun associated with the winning of three Victoria Crosses by 'L' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery in 1914. The 'Naval and Military Record' reported that

> There could not have been a more appropriate shrine at which to pay a tribute to the glorious dead. All around the silent throng stood the instruments which in the hands of the valiant men had preserved the might of Britain through the menacing years.
>
> (IWM C/F: A3/2)

There could scarcely be a more striking example of the museum's role as what Saunders calls 'a national focus for the commemorative materiality of war-related objects' (Saunders 2001: 479) (Figure 3.4).

The iconic nature of the 'L' Battery gun was reinforced by its appearance at the unveiling of the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner in October 1925 – the central element being a sculptural representation of a 9.2 inch Howitzer, copied from another of the Imperial War Museum's exhibits (see Black, this volume). Also present was another 13-pounder: the gun from 'E' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, which had been the first British gun to fire a shot in anger in 1914. In an even more symbolic gesture, the 'E' Battery gun was also sent by the museum to take part in the firing of the salute at the funeral of Earl Haig in 1928.

In 1936, the museum moved to its current home, the former Bethlem Hospital in Lambeth Road. Although the gallery space was less constricted than it had been in the Imperial Institute, it is interesting to note how closely the layout of the displays mirrored those that had been seen in the previous location (IWM 1938). This may well have been due to the influence of a new Director-General, namely L. R. Bradley, who was appointed to the post in 1937. Essentially conservative in outlook, he feared for the entire future of the museum as a new war loomed. Already since 1932 and, perhaps, in keeping with the pacifist tendencies of the era, Armistice celebrations had been somewhat scaled down. Bells, bugles and public wreath-laying had been replaced by a relay of the BBC's live radio coverage of the service in Westminster Abbey. In 1939 however, the role of the museum as a place of memorial was once
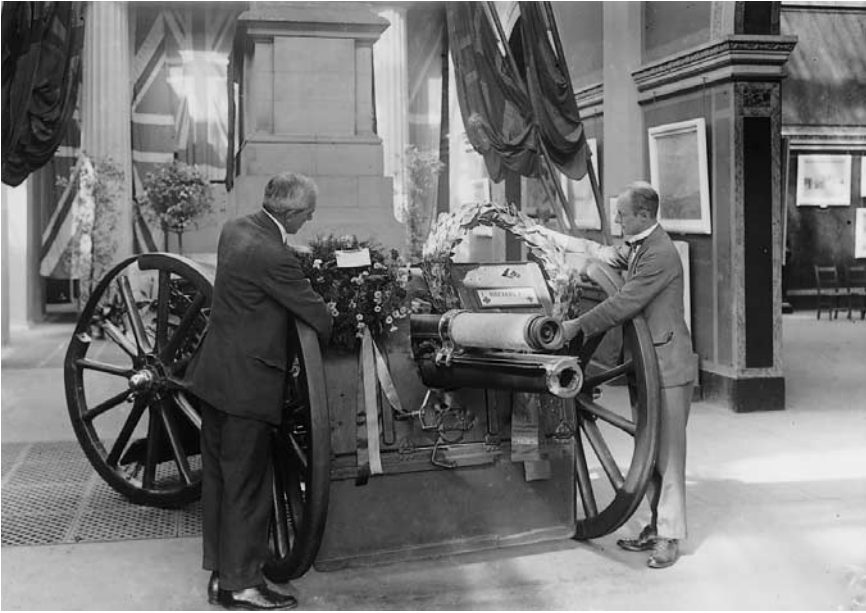
Figure 3.4 Placing wreaths on the 13-pounder gun that had been manned by three Victoria Cross winners in 1914. The man on the left is Charles Ffoulkes, the first Secretary of the Imperial War Museum (© and courtesy Trustees Imperial War Museum, IWM Q31567).

again raised, in a memorandum written by Bradley to recommend that the museum be permitted to collect items relating to the new war. He characterised the museum as 'perhaps, more of a memorial than a museum in the accepted meaning of the word'. Fearing that another World War might rob the museum of its raison d'être, and lead to its closure, he was moved to refer to the many gifts that had been received from donors

> who have regarded this institution as a war memorial rather than a museum, and to disperse them to institutions not having the same associations with memories of the Great War could be regarded as a departure from the donor's wishes.
>
> (IWM C/F: A3/2).

Once again the memorial concept was being invoked as a means of ensuring the Imperial War Museum's future. While the objects within the museum stayed the same, the concept had subtly changed (and protected) them, reorienting their status and nature, and illustrating the powerful connections between materiality, memory and display.

Fortunately Bradley's darkest fears did not come to pass. The Imperial War Museum not only survived, but had its terms of reference extended, firstly to

cover the Second World War and, later, to include all conflicts of the twenti-eth century. It is not within the compass of this chapter to discuss these developments, nor the evolution of the museum from 1939 to the present. Suffice to say that many of the issues discussed above – the importance of provenance, the use of models and replicas, and the imposition of memorial significance on certain objects, are as alive and important today as they were in the 1920s. Moreover it is interesting to note that, since the late 1960s, when a new 'theory of exhibition' (IWM 1968: 3) was promulgated, there has been a return to an ethos much closer to that espoused by the founding fathers of the museum.

Freed from the physical restrictions of inadequate galleries and funding, and guided by more forward-looking and optimistic directors, the museum has thrown off the muddled and conservative exhibitions policy that arose out of its early tribulations. Once again great value is placed on those objects that speak most eloquently of the human experience of war. Consequently, the Imperial War Museum is far from being the 'dead accumulation' of objects feared by Sir Martin Conway, but is indeed 'vitalized by contributions expressive of the action, the experience, the valour and the endurance of individuals'.

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4

PROSTHESES AND PROPAGANDA

Materiality and the human body in the Great War

Jeffrey S. Reznick

In May 1918, the 'Inter-Allied Exhibition on the After-Care of Disabled Men' opened in Westminster Central Hall, London. This event, which ran concurrent to the second annual 'Inter-Allied Conference on the After-Care of Disabled Men', aimed to publicise national rehabilitation programmes for soldiers who had lost a limb or had been maimed in some other way. To this end, the British display included a variety of prostheses alongside photographs and films of disabled men undergoing treatment and retraining in one of Britain's flagship orthopaedic institutions, Queen Mary's Convalescent Auxiliary Hospital at Roehampton, and its associated facility in Brighton, Queen Mary's Workshops. According to the catalogue of the exhibition, here were 'the best artificial substitutes known to science', technology that worked in conjunction with the hospital's workshops and employment bureau to 'afford the veteran healthy occupation while in hospital' and to help him gain a 'definite future in civilian life' (Hodge 1918: 101–2).

Representing artificial limbs as the very *matériel* of wartime rehabilitation, this exhibition was of a piece with Britain's ad hoc propaganda effort to mask the horrors of war and maintain morale among soldiers and civilians alike. As with the model trench in Kensington Gardens, which conveyed a 'realistic' impression of life at the Front (Fussell 1975: 44–5), images of prostheses-wearing men at work combined with displays of artificial limbs served to highlight the vital role of medical-material in the reconstruction of the maimed heroes. Moreover, like official posters, photographs and films designed to promote the 'war to end all wars' for the benefit of King and Country, the British exhibit contained its own nationalistic message, presenting rehabilitation efforts for disabled soldiers across the country. Here, alongside official and popular articulations of the promise of this medical-material to reconstruct men, prostheses served not only to veil the damage wrought

by war but also to articulate the chief mission of Britain's rehabilitation scheme, i.e. to help disabled men reclaim their proper roles as able-bodied workers and breadwinners.

History, the Great War, and material culture studies

Only recently have scholars begun to focus on prostheses and the role of this technology in shaping combatant and non-combatant relationships during wartime. Much of this literature can be traced to the path-breaking work of Seth Koven (1994), which showed how prosthetics and disability could be used as analytic tools to illuminate issues of gender and sexuality, war and its memories, work, the body and the nation. Koven demonstrated that the development of military orthopaedics and prosthetic technology served to help members of the British government and the public to 'remember' disabled boys as 'brave soldiers' and disabled soldiers as young heroes deserving of praise for 'doing their bit' (*ibid.*). Of a piece with this project is Joanna Bourke's (1995) study of masculinity during and after the Great War. Focusing in part on prostheses, Bourke shows how this technology served to help magnify the experience of disability as the British public, the government, and disabled men themselves sought to reconcile the physical and mental damage wrought by the war (Bourke 1995: 19–45). Roxanne Panchasi (1995) traces a comparable phenomenon in France where, she observes, the 'disabled soldier's body could be remembered, but the traumas of a dismembering war were not easily forgotten' (Panchasi 1995: 112).

Lisa Herschbach (1997a) considers these themes in the United States during the previous century, and in the context of the American Civil War. She reveals how the Union's artificial limb industry structured discourse about reconstituting individual lives and rebuilding postbellum society. Erin O'Connor's work also concerns nineteenth-century Victorian America where the pragmatic treatment of dismembered men through prosthetics became a way of telling a more comprehensive story about the loss and recovery of manliness under industrial capitalism (O'Connor 2000). In recent years, historians of the Great War have used prostheses to construct new frameworks for understanding operations of wartime economy, conditions of the wartime body politic, and experiences of being a disabled veteran in post-war society (Cohen 2001; Reznick 2000). Scholars who take a more material culture approach to prostheses have adopted comparable frameworks (Kurzman 1997; Ott *et al.* 2002). These studies are welcome not only for their 'intimate and compelling' portraits but also for their scholarly intention, namely 'to provide a corrective to the vogue for prosthetics as found in psychoanalytic theory and contemporary cultural studies' (Ott *et al.* 2002: 2–3).

This chapter underscores the trajectory of recent literature on prosthetics while connecting it also to the cross-disciplinary approach of material culture studies that informs this volume (Buchli 2002; Editorial 1996). The range of

narratives 'contained' in surviving primary sources relating to the Great War – three-dimensional artefacts as well as documents, photographs and films – are not fully retrievable by any single discipline. Through cross-disciplinary inquiry that focuses on the 'social life' and 'cultural biography' of the object (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986) we can recover more completely the history of the Great War and the identities of those individuals who experienced and lived with a memory of the event. Studying wartime prostheses, therefore, as others have studied such varied objects as bicycles, telephones and automobiles in peacetime (Lubar and Kingery 1993; Kingery 1996), helps to decipher the past and reveal the interface through the history of the human body and the machine, and how each has defined the other in society.

Remaking men at Roehampton

Established in 1915, Roehampton was the first of 16 institutions set aside by military authorities to 'deal systematically with the question of [disabled] men's after-careers while [the men were] still undergoing treatment in hospital' (Hodge 1918: 101–2). Down to 1918 and through the immediate post-war years, this network of hospitals became a focus of intense interest among members of the medical establishment and writers for the popular press. Even as Roehampton's official motto – 'Hope welcomes all who enter here!' – underscored an intangible, hope, it did so by emphasising the potential of both prosthetic technology and curative workshops to repair the disabled soldier and address the wartime paucity of labour (*Queen Mary's Convalescent Auxiliary Hospitals (c. 1915–16)*: 7). At the centre of attention were artificial limbs – essential medical-material that enabled maimed men to take up therapeutic work that furthered not only their own rehabilitation but also that of their comrades and the nation. The official publications of Roehampton and its counterpart institutions conveyed this message with enthusiasm. In their funding appeals, Roehampton's authorities depicted disabled soldiers – many wearing prostheses – at work in hospital engineering shops constructing and repairing engines, in drilling shops creating submarine fittings, and in leather shops making bags and boots (*ibid.*, 22–3). One official photograph of the institution's 'surgical splint shop' displayed the material potential of a disabled soldier-patient fitted with a prosthetic arm. As a sign on the wall announces 'Bring your repairs', the man is hard at work preparing a boot to receive a splint attachment (Figure 4.1, overleaf).

Focusing on the central place of materiality in Britain's national rehabilitation programme, contemporary medical literature dovetailed with such propagandistic messages. One of the most comprehensive publications of the day, *Orthopaedic Surgery of Injuries*, edited by the surgeon Robert Jones, contained a photographic survey of the workshops in Roehampton's counterpart institutions around the country (Jones 1921: 639–41). In the Welsh Metropolitan Hospital, Whitchurch, disabled soldiers produced surgical splints,

Figure 4.1 Reproduction of a magic lantern slide depicting the 'Surgical splint shop' of Queen Mary Hospital, Roehampton. A sign in the background announces, 'Bring your repairs' (© Wandsworth Primary Care Trust and courtesy of Queen Mary's Hospital Archives, Roehampton).

while in the Alder Hey Special Military Surgical Hospital they assisted in the creation and repair of artificial limbs (Figure 4.2, opposite page). These and other so-called curative workshops were also prominent features of Bellahouston Hospital, Glasgow, Special Military Surgical Hospital, Bristol, Bangour War Hospital, Edinburgh, and Shepherds Bush Military Orthopaedic Hospital in London (Reznick 2000: 189–99).

   The popular press similarly hailed medical materiality and the promise that it held for disabled men, their families and the nation. Shortly after the establishment of Roehampton, *The Illustrated London News* published a detailed view of the 'many types of wonderful mechanical arms and legs now on the market' for the maimed soldier (Robinson 1915: 633) (Figure 4.3, overleaf). Here was 'science for the loss of leg or arm: artificial limbs that enable a man to walk, write, pick things up, and raise his hat' (*ibid.*). Such 'marvellous' technology, the author suggested, functions according to fundamental principles of mechanics and human physiology.

Figure 4.2 The artificial-limb-making shop, Alder Hey Special Military Surgical Hospital, Liverpool (from Jones, R. (ed.) (1921) *Orthopaedic Surgery of Injuries*, London: Oxford Medical Publications, p. 641 (© Hodder and Stoughton and courtesy of Reynolds Historical Library, The University of Alabama at Birmingham).

> Modern artificial limbs are made of light wood, preferably English willow, the parts between the joints [in the case of the Carne artificial arm] being hollowed out to contain the operating mechanism and the cords and levers connecting it with harness worn round the neck and shoulders. Any given motion of the shoulder-muscles [*sic*] causes some definite movement in the artificial arm. In the Carne arm the elbow is bent by a pull on the cord. At the wrist is a system of bevel wheels and ratches by means of which the hand can be revolved at the wrist by pulling a cord. The pulling of another cord closes the fingers.
>
> (*ibid.*)

As for lower-extremity prostheses made by the Hanger company, these have 'a thigh portion and a leg portion connected by a knee hinge. The bending of the knee is effected by a lever pivoted in the thigh portion and connected with an elastic spring inside the calf. The Hanger foot has a central ankle pivot and a rubber cushion under the heel and instep' (*ibid.*). By recreating the structure of the male body, this technology enabled men to regain control of fundamental aspects of their lives and to sustain hope for the future.

Figure 4.3 'Replacing lost limbs: marvellous artificial arms and legs', *The Illustrated London News*, 13 November 1915, p. 633 (© *The Illustrated London News* and courtesy of Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University).

Praise for artificial limbs was not unique to *The Illustrated London News*. In August 1916, a writer for the *Birmingham Post* observed that during his recent visit to Roehampton every patient was 'minus one arm, or two arms, or one leg or both legs, the skilful treatment to which they had been subjected hid, almost beyond penetration, the terrible injury which each one had suffered' (*Birmingham Post* 1916). By 'treatment,' this writer meant prostheses, and so effective were the limbs worn by Roehampton patients that 'it had . . . to be explained to the onlooker that some of these men were walking on two artificial legs [and] that others had been deprived of one or both arms' (*ibid.*). Here was a scene of hopeful optimism, the legs of disabled men 'moving as steadily and confidently and their arms swinging as naturally as though they were the real article, and not the counterfeit which, as a matter of fact, they were' (*ibid.*). Here, prosthetics, as a distinctive kind of war-related material culture, contributed not only to the perception of completeness but also, ironically, to normality.

> [T]hose whose legs had been taken off below the knee strutted about with every action of individuals in full possession of all their proper limbs. There were cases shown to me in which the whole shoulder had been blown away, and yet a new shoulder had been built up and an arm attached whose movements were nearly as easy as though the ordinary limb was there.
>
> (*Birmingham Post* 1916)

Roehampton's patients could not in fact have been more able-bodied, thanks to the technology provided. One young fellow, whose right leg had been amputated below the knee, leapt into the saddle of a bicycle, rode it round the grounds, and alighted with the ease of a well-trained athletic cyclist. Another, similarly provided with a dummy left leg from below the knee joint, sprinted across the lawns at a speed which would have left behind many a man of his age and build who had possessed all of his limbs. Displaying the perfection to which the application of these artificial limbs has been brought, a man with one full-length wooden leg walked in a manner which made it quite impossible for the spectators to determine which was the counterfeit and which the natural limb. The reporter was equally impressed with artificial limbs attached to the upper body, noting that one 'artificial hand could grasp an object and hold it almost with as much facility and firmness as though the natural extremity was employed in the task' (*ibid.*).

As with *The Illustrated London News* and *Birmingham Post*, *The Graphic* also attempted to deflect the public's attention away from the ravages of war to the promise offered by medical-material, and a hopeful and productive future for Britain's maimed heroes. In an article entitled 'Roehampton: The House of Redemption, Refitting the Legless Soldier', Margaret Chute described 'wonderful work' being achieved at Roehampton House, 'where the maimed

and broken are made whole again, the legless are taught to walk, [and] the armless are taught to work' (Chute 1916: 548–9). The source of redemption at Roehampton, Chute explained, was 'human skill' both in the area of 'artificial substitutes' and in the motivation of once 'useless, limbless creatures [to] work again and take a place in the world of workers' (*ibid.*). The all-important question at Roehampton was 'the future', and among the most vital resources of the hospital engaging this question were the 'pitiful yet wonderful . . . limb shops, with their weird litter of inanimate arms and legs – gloved or booted as the case may be' (*ibid.*). Here, Chute explained, one gained an appreciation of 'the amazing skill used and perfection attained in this work of Help for Helpless [as] men demonstrated, every minute . . . the splendid efficiency of [their] artificial limbs' (*ibid.*). Redemption awaited all men at Roehampton, Chute concluded, the journey in this direction beginning with each man learning 'that there is Hope, and ever Hope for those who have been through the furnace, and come out scarred' (*ibid.*).

The *National News*, in another example from the popular press, emphasised that the Roehampton workshops and employment bureau chiefly serve to 'assist the men during their stay in improving their industrial efficiency in many ways, and find them employment where possible or desirable' (Wardle 1917). Illustrating the irony that a focus on prosthetics as materiality can reveal is the case of some former patients of the hospital who 'are now engaged in such important work as the making of tanks and aeroplanes' (*ibid.*). Having been made incomplete by one war, men were reconstituted in its aftermath, only to engage in manufacturing weapons for a future conflict.

Materiality, propaganda and irony

To appreciate fully the relationship between prostheses and propaganda in the Great War, one must consider the fate of the medical-material that appeared in the Inter-Allied Exhibition. At the closing of the Inter-Allied Conference, Sir Arthur Griffith Boscawen, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Pensions, offered his hopes for the prostheses, photographs, and films on display in Central Hall. 'We hope to make arrangements to keep the Exhibition in this country for some further weeks' (Galsworthy 1918: 191), adding that

> we think it would be a great pity to disperse an Exhibition which has been so laboriously collected, and which is so useful and attractive, and which is such a splendid work of propaganda for arousing interest in what can be done and what ought to be done for those who have suffered in the war.
>
> (*ibid.*)

Shortly thereafter, Boscowen's hopes became reality. Within a few weeks following the simultaneous closure of the exhibition and conference in late May

1918, the 'collected treasures' (*The Hospital* 1918: 213) began a tour of the country at the Memorial Hall in London's Farringdon Street, where admission was sixpence for a member of the general public and free for all servicemen. Subsequently, the objects travelled to selected provincial cities as a way to help 'solve the problem . . . of securing for disabled men the re-education which will make them independent of charity and securing also their acceptance of the opportunities offered' (*ibid.*).

Despite its emphasis on the promise of prostheses, workshops and employment bureaux, the exhibition, like Britain's entire rehabilitation plan, produced few if any tangible material rewards for reconstructed soldiers. At the end of the day, this event – like the medical-material associated with it – functioned merely as propaganda serving every group – the British government, medical establishment, and public – except disabled men themselves.

While their bodies may have appeared whole, in reality they remained fragmented. While their minds – and their hopes for future employment – may have been soothed temporarily by the promise of hospital retraining, Britain's disabled heroes ultimately found themselves, like most women who worked during the war, swept out of the post-war labour market. But whereas women could reclaim their roles as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives in a 'land fit for heroes', these disabled men faced considerable difficulty in reclaiming their traditional roles as breadwinners and reaping material rewards. Despite their 'reconstruction' and promised new lives, made possible by medical-material, they found themselves to be among the forgotten members of Britain's generation of 1914.

Acknowledgements

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5

NAGELFIGUREN

Nailing patriotism in Germany 1914–18

Susanne Brandt

The title of this chapter is a German expression that cannot be translated literally into English. Perhaps also, the objects discussed have no equivalent in England or elsewhere. *Nagelfiguren* are wooden objects, representing for example knights, blacksmiths, eagles, crosses, submarines, and shields. These objects were covered with nails, which people hammered into the soft material. *Nagelfiguren* were very popular in Germany during the First World War, especially between 1915 and 1916. They were set up in the streets and other public places, were part of war-exhibitions, and were shown in museums and in schools. Civilians as well as soldiers bought nails – sometimes of silver or gold – which were used to cover the wood with a literal and symbolic metal surface. The money raised by the sale of the nails went to the Red Cross or other charity organisations, local authorities, and the Army, and was used to support war widows, orphans and disabled soldiers. During the First World War, no nation-wide organisation existed in Germany to co-ordinate the 'nailing' of these wooden figures. Instead, numerous communities and associations were responsible for hundreds of public acts of creating *Nagelfiguren*, thereby producing a distinctive German materiality of war (Figure 5.1).[1]

Here, I concentrate on those objects that today are almost forgotten or regarded either as kitsch or as further evidence that the German public had been thoroughly militarised during the war. I would like to suggest that *Nagelfiguren* constituted a unique category of objects that served to mobilise the German public for the war. But those figures and objects represent more than a society supporting a war that is now widely considered to be the initial catastrophe of the twentieth century. In my opinion, these 'nail objects' reflect the desire of the civilian participants of this conflict to play their part in 'steeling' Germany against its enemies and aggressors. In popular opinion at the time, Germany was waging a war of defence. The nail objects may reflect the desire to feel a part of a strong community which stands together in times of danger. It seems possible that the collective act of nailing an object demonstrated a public support which the wider German public gave
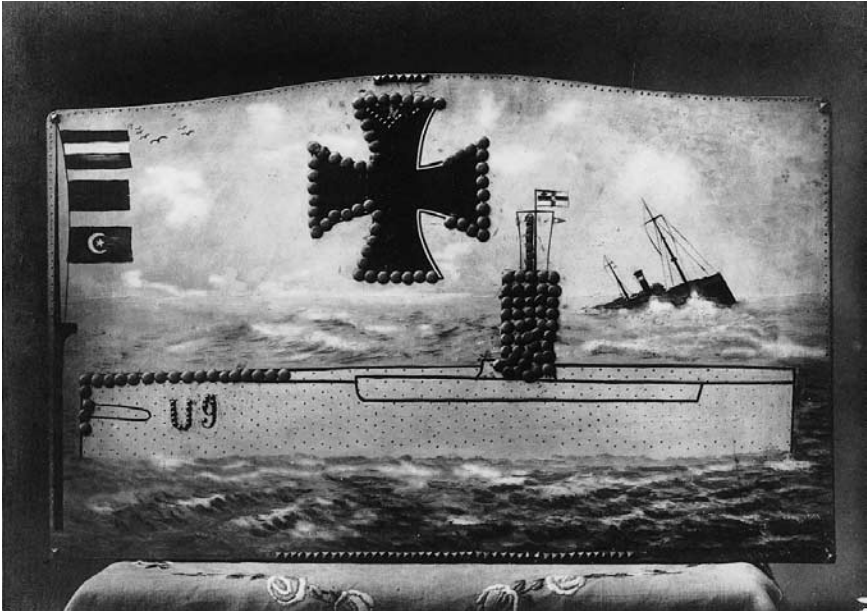
Figure 5.1 This wooden object shows a submarine and an Iron Cross. Only a few nails have been hammered into the wood. Close inspection reveals small holes prepared for the nails (© and courtesy, Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart).

to widows and orphans, and which they hoped to receive themselves in case of need. The little serious research into *Nagelfiguren* to date suggests that some organisations gave the money directly to widows and orphans of a specific community and sometimes directly to needy pupils of a school that had organised a nailing event.[2]

Nagelfiguren therefore should not be regarded only as a means of propaganda and an expression of a militaristic society. Instead they seem to have been a collective means of reassuring the individual of the unity and cohesion of society. To a certain, and not easily reconstructible extent, nailing objects might have served as a collective and public ritual against the fear of suffering and losing loved ones. *Nagelfiguren* transported and transformed emotions, and it seems to have been important that they were placed in public places so that people could share their feelings (Saunders 2001: 481).

The tradition of nailing objects dates back at least several hundred years. In southeast Europe, blacksmiths placed their individual and valuable iron nails in trees often located in the centre of a village. This had two meanings: first, these craftsmen were a mobile community, and hammering their nails into 'public trees' was a means of communicating with friends and colleagues, who were also on the move. The individually crafted nails expressed the sentiments: 'I was here', 'I am fine', 'I can afford a valuable iron nail', 'I

am alive!' Second, the nailing symbolised the affiliation of the individual to a community of workmen who were granted certain rights in the area where the 'nail tree' stood.

Numerous stories exist about these 'nail trees' or 'nail sticks'. The oldest and best known is the so-called 'Stock in Eisen', which was first mentioned in 1533 and is still to be seen in Vienna, at the corner of Kärntner Street (Diers 1993: 114f). In one sense, the veracity of stories about 'nailed poles' and trees is less important than that they all share in common the fact that an iron nail was a precious thing which was used as a symbol of affiliation to a group and its law. The nail that fixes things and keeps them together was a symbol of cohesion, unity and defence.

In some parts of Germany, nails were used soon after the First World War as a public reminder of prisoners of war who had not yet returned, or of soldiers still missing. The nails symbolised that they were not forgotten, a message similar to that of 'I am still alive' made by the blacksmiths in earlier times. Even if those far-reaching traditions were not fully known to the German public in general, the custom was remembered soon after the beginning of the war. The first *Nagelfigur* was erected in Darmstadt in April 1915. A general 'boom' of nailing a wooden sculpture can be seen between the summer of 1915 – often around the first anniversary of the beginning of the war – and the summer of 1916. After 1916, *Nagelfiguren* remained popular, but ceased to be the exclusive objects of an event, becoming instead part of more inclusive exhibitions of war-objects.

The biggest nailed-object seems to have been a 12 m tall figure of General Paul von Hindenburg – the famous victor of the battle of Tannenberg (29 August 1914) which forced Russian troops out of Prussia. The 'Iron Hindenburg' was erected in Berlin on 4 September 1915 (the anniversary of the battle of Sedan, regarded as the decisive battle in the German–French war of 1870–1), in close proximity to the imposing Siegessäule (Victory Column) that commemorated the German victory of 1871.

To make the wooden sculpture accessible, a two-storey platform was erected around the Hindenburg image (Figure 5.2). At night, the golden Victory Column was illuminated, and the female figure on top seemed to hold the laurel wreath over Hindenburg's head. This was surely not coincidence as a victory context seems to be a characteristic of all *Nagelfiguren*. By hammering nails into the image, the German public played their part in 'steeling' the object, and seemed to receive a sense of security in that symbolic ritual act. The power of the now literally reinforced figure returns as a promise to the individual who undertook the act of symbolically arming it. Here, in one sense, the public were acting like blacksmiths from earlier times. Simultaneously they were helping to arm the nation's armies and care for its victims.

The appearance of the *Nagelfiguren* is not easily described. The nails were of different sizes and – although not easily distinguished in a black and white photograph – the different colours of the nails possess a certain aesthetic.
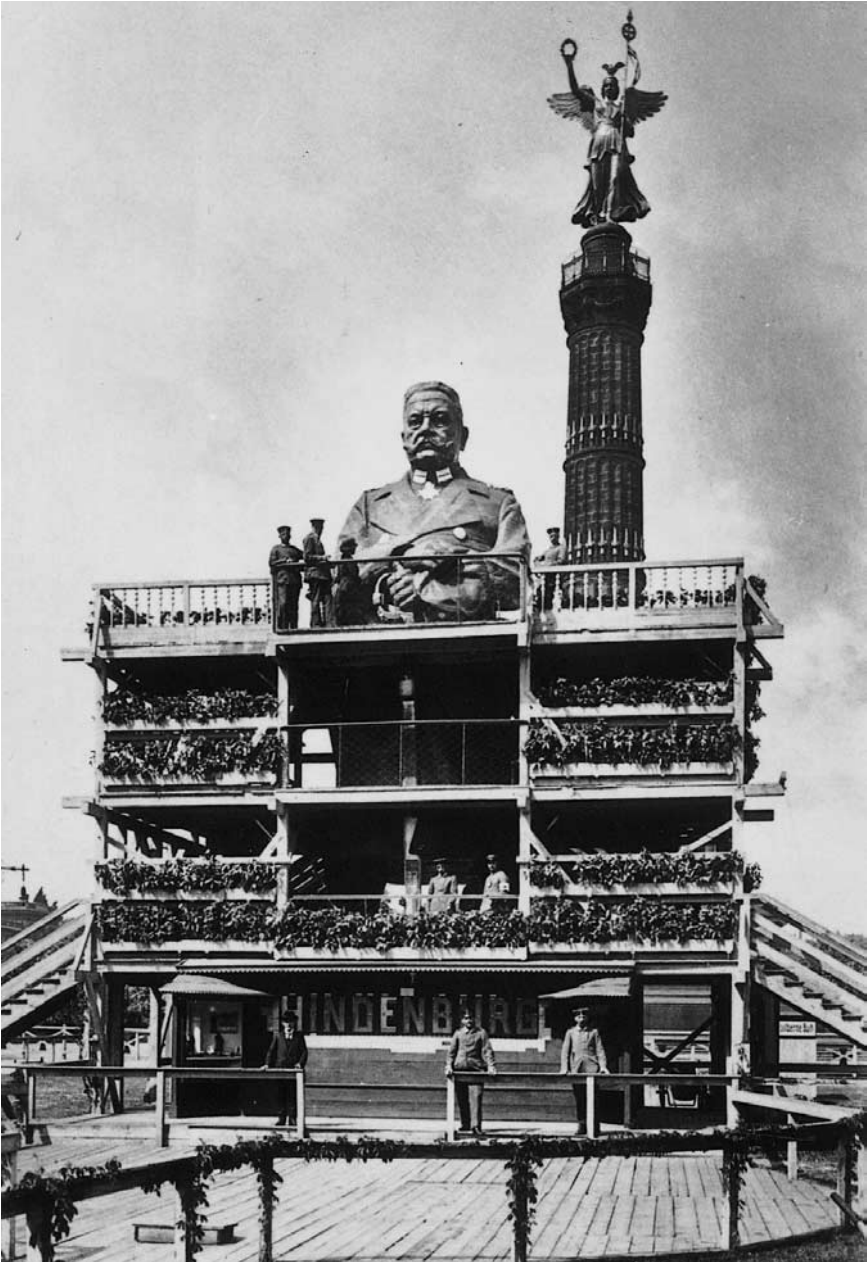
Figure 5.2 The great *Nagelfigur* of Hindenburg erected in Berlin on 4 September 1915. The access platform surrounds the sculpture and in the background rises the Siegessäule Victory Column commemorating Germany's triumph in the German–French war of 1870–1 (© and courtesy, Bibliotheck für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart).

Although nails are made of hard metal, the surface of the object reflects the soft lines of, for example, the texture of fabric, the wrinkles of a cape, or the strong lines of the muscles of a horse, such as the Saxon horse in Hannover, the ironsmith in Hagen, and the image of Heinrich der Löwe in Braunschweig. Nails of different colours and sizes made the sculptures vivid. They caught the light and shimmered, and so were not static objects covered by a uniform grey metallic skin.

Some of these sculptures were huge, if not as large as the 12 m high figure of Hindenburg in Berlin. Several measured three or four metres. However, many smaller examples are also known, especially those made in schools. Sometimes, one school had several competing sculptures, which were in most cases of a smaller size – such as a shield, a sword and a cannon – objects that could be reached by the pupils without the aid of ladders and platforms. Contemporary reports show that pupils were eager to strike their nails into places where they could later recognise them (Jung 1993: 76). Some people, often aristocrats or wealthy citizens, used nails on to which they engraved their name or coat of arms. Clearly, the nailing was not always an anonymous act of 'arming the image', as some participants at least endeavoured to be recognisable. The statue of an ironsmith set up in the city of Hagen – the centre of the forging industry – was covered with 1,500 nameplates (Figure 5.3).

These sculptures often represented swords, shields, cannon, heraldic animals such as the eagle, mythical figures, and sometimes, historic figures like General von Hindenburg or Admiral von Tirpitz. Often, objects had regional or local references, like the Saxon horse or the ironsmith in Hagen. In most cases, the *Nagelfiguren* campaigns were very successful. The city of Düsseldorf inaugurated its first *Nagelfigur* memorial on 27 January 1916, the birthday of Kaiser Wilhelm II. It represented a lion, the symbol of the Grand Duchy of Berg with its seat of power in Düsseldorf. The Düsseldorf lion was popular and became the focus of numerous concerts and ceremonies. Approximately 800,000 marks were collected by nailing the wooden lion (Brandt 2002: 246). After the war, the Lord Mayor of Düsseldorf emphasised that this nailing was not only a campaign to collect money for charity, but also intended as a reminder of the stirring times of the war (*ibid.*).

The event of nailing a sculpture was in many cases a collective act of reassuring the participants of the unity and coherence of German society. Long before 1914, it had always been a fear of politicians and military leaders that, in case of war, the historically recent political unity of the German people would either never be fully attained or would crack at the first sign of military crisis. Therefore, propaganda measures were aimed at creating and enforcing such unity, and were considered a prerequisite for waging and winning a modern war that necessarily involved the whole of society and not just its armed forces. In addition, the desire for a unified society was deeply felt by many civilians and soldiers. Their fears and sorrows perhaps were easier to

Figure 5.3 A nameplate-ticket which confirms that its owner donated one or 20 marks for charity for the 'Fieldgray-in-Iron', the emblem of the fortress of Metz in 1916 (© and courtesy, Bibliotheck für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart).

bear within a strong and caring community – however imaginary such a community may have been. The desire for unity should not only be seen as an expression of a society unable to take a critical look at its political and military actions. It should be regarded also as a reaction of individuals fighting their fears in the face of the threat of war.

The assertion that *Nagelfiguren* were regarded both as symbols of unity and of the willingness to make sacrifices is supported by the fact that most of the sculptures were kept in museums. Soon after the beginning of the war, numerous private collectors as well as museum curators, initiated war museums and included *Nagelfiguren* in their collections as material proof of a unified society (Brandt 1989). From the beginning, the *Nagelfiguren* were evidently regarded as much more than simple means of fund-raising. Less successful was the already mentioned Saxon horse in Hannover. It offered room for *c.* 50,000 nails, but at the end of 1915 'only' 16,345,75 marks had been raised (Schneider 1996: 230). It can be assumed that the power of the *Nagelfiguren* decreased to the same extent that the conviction of a German victory weakened. Likewise, the huge figure of General von Hindenburg was never completely covered with nails.

Already, after the first weeks of the war in 1914, it became evident that the German public was demanding photographs and all forms of images of the

distant Front-line. It was soon realised that established media, like captured cannon, flags, and *matériel* were not enough. These objects were brought from the theatre of war to many German cities and exhibited in public places. To exhibit the spoils of war had always been – and remained throughout the war – a symbol of the victor, and was meant to represent the superiority of those who captured them. But it was soon realised that this war – so different in nature and scale than any which had preceded it – needed more objects than those traditional symbols of victory.

From 1916 onwards, the Red Cross presented extensive exhibitions in nearly every large German city, and these proved very popular. These exhibitions covered almost every aspect of civilian and military life in wartime (Brandt 2000: 75). Their main aim was to promote and keep alive the German public's readiness for war. One example illustrates this. A prominent exhibit in these shows organised by the Red Cross was a wooden German submarine. The visitors – pupils, soldiers-on-leave, recruits and civilians – purchased nails and hammered them into the wood until the whole submarine was covered by an impenetrable metal wrapping. This object – representing a definitively German machine of war – visualises the intention more forcefully than any other exhibit, i.e. to involve every visitor directly in the process of arming the nation.

All exhibitions served numerous purposes. First, they legitimised a conflict in which Germany was represented as being encircled by her enemies and thus waging a righteous war of defence. At the same time, they were meant to demonstrate that Germany acted according to the rules of war. Second, the exhibitions were aimed at strengthening the German resolve to wage war until victory was achieved. As long as visitors to the exhibitions were confident that Germany would ultimately gain victory, they were willing to sign war-loans, give money to charity, endure all kinds of shortages, accept the maiming or death of friends and family, and even sacrifice their own lives. Third, the exhibitions were a means to draw together the battlefront and the Home Front. Civilians and soldiers needed to be familiar with, and understand the situation of the other – an important precondition for complete confidence in the abilities and authority of Germany's political and military leaders. Fourth, all the military objects on display at these exhibitions had been supplied by the German Supreme Command (OHL) or the Prussian Ministry of War. They had made available guns, cannon, aeroplanes, uniforms and medals, but only to reliable curators with approved plans. Thus, the exhibitions were of similar design and, even more importantly, they displayed a uniform message concerning the causes of war. They were intended to arouse a strong feeling of unity among the German people and at the same time to shape the recollection of the war by compiling the sources for future historical research.

The exhibitions and museums were an established medium of patriotic education, a place where objects were preserved from falling into oblivion.

They can be clearly seen as one element of a broader range of the means of propaganda. But propaganda in this case means an interplay of both official and private initiatives (Figure 5.4). It also met the desire of the German public to get to know and understand as much as possible about the continuing conflict. Apart from these large Red Cross-sponsored exhibitions, various so-called *Musterschützengräben* were constructed in some German cities. These were exhibition-trenches built by German Army corps or regiments to introduce the public to this 'new' element of warfare. In Hannover, two wooden cannon were part of such a model trench, and both made for a successful exhibition, with more than 300,000 visitors in the first three months, and more than 115,000 marks being raised (Schneider 1996: 241).

The longer the war went on, the less confident Germans were that it could be won. Consequently, the number of objects that could be regarded as guaranteeing victory decreased dramatically. In 1917, especially after the fierce demonstrations and strikes in Germany's industrial centres, war exhibitions lost their popularity. Only those which focused on aviation still had the potential to attract an audience and to convey a limited hope for victory by concentrating on that branch of the armed forces which still represented a certain German superiority. In August 1917, an aviation exhibition opened in Hannover. One of the objects was a propeller that could be nailed (*ibid.*, 244f) – a material indicator of that most fragile human quality – confidence.

Nevertheless, the power of the *Nagelfiguren* was waning. The last traces of the giant iron Hindenburg statue disappeared during the Second World War. The sculpture, never completely covered with nails (the architect calculated a weight of 30 tons for those which were used), was split into more than 20 blocks, stowed away, and later used as firewood. The remaining part – the head of Hindenburg – was too big to fit through the door of the local museum and it seems it did not survive the war (Diers 1993: 131). The lion in Düsseldorf remained in the open air, but humidity seeped into the wood, and it fractured, ironically, by the nails driven into it. In 1934, it was taken away and the mask of the lion's face was transferred to the city museum. Three years later, a new lion made of teak was erected. A sign on its pedestal read 'Sacrifice created this statue in iron times. It shall be a reminder to you, Germans, to unite!' (Brandt 2002: 247).

The idea of nailing objects never again reached the level of popular acceptance it had enjoyed during the early years of the First World War. The National Socialists attempted to reactivate the tradition but with only limited success. In the autumn and winter of 1940–1, a model of a famous German submarine was set up in Hannover, but it remained an isolated case (Schneider 1996: 215).

Today, only a few original *Nagelfiguren* are preserved in museums: the abovementioned lion is housed in Düsseldorf's city museum, the iron blacksmith is in Hagen's new museum which was opened in 1998, and in Hamburg, a surviving *Nagelfigur* is on display in the Altonaer Museum. The Historial de la

Figure 5.4 An Iron Cross surrounded by a laurel wreath, around which is tied a ribbon with the famous saying of Kaiser Wilhelm II at the outbreak of war: 'I don't know parties any longer I only know Germans'. All patterns and details are outlined with nails of different sizes, and the faint contours of the German Eagle are discernible in the centre. The size of this piece in relation to the table, and the comparatively few nails involved, suggest this might be an unusual private *Nagelfigur* object (© and courtesy, Bibliotheck für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart).

Grande Guerre in Péronne, France, possesses a *Nagelfigur* in the shape of an eagle's head (Becker 1996: 70 f). Most visitors do not understand such objects without explanation. This appears proof of the thesis that no object 'speaks' for itself. Instead, a society, or certain sections of it, keep and spread the patterns of interpretation. At present, the dominant interpretation of *Nagelfiguren* focuses on their militaristic aspect. The objects are seen as expressions of a society glorifying war. The city museum in Düsseldorf presents the mask of the face of the lion to its visitors in an ensemble with other objects in a pacifistic and very critical context. Emotions like fear or hope felt by those who hammered nails into the wood as if to make a lucky charm are not remembered here – the object has become alienated from history and lives on as an anonymous museum exhibit devoid of social meaning.

Notes

1 In 1996 Schneider sent more than 1,300 questionnaires to communities asking about *Nagelfiguren*. More than 600 communities answered positively. Schneider has located approximately 650 figures that had been nailed during the First World War (Schneider 1996).
2 *Ibid.*, p. 253.

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SHATTERED EXPERIENCES – RECYCLED RELICS

Strategies of representation and the legacy of the Great War

Fabio Gygi

What is the difference between a medieval reliquary and a collage by Kurt Schwitters? There is no difference, you might reply, because the two things cannot even be compared to each other. The reliquary is a religious object displayed in a clerical context, a collage by Schwitters is a work of art clearly belonging to the twentieth century. What the two do have in common is not obvious at first sight. They share a strategy of representation. The reliquary uses the remains of a human body and transforms it into a holy object, the collage uses debris and makes art from it by simply placing it in another 'framed' context. To represent by using material as a self-referent signifier is the method of choice in both cases. I am convinced that this link is more than coincidence. It corresponds to the ruptures and discontinuities of the historical development from material to spatial representation. The question we have to ask is not only what is represented but more importantly *how* it is done. It is my thesis that the First World War was crucial in reintroducing the idea of representation by material into so-called high-art. 'Things' were seen in a different light after and through the war experience in the trenches. The emergence of a new aesthetics of material in the post-war art of Dadaism, the rise of the collage as *the* new artistic technique, and the experiments of Max Ernst with frottage, are intimately linked to what happened during these four years of unparalleled destruction. I would further state that the category of objects commonly known as 'trench art' (as defined by Saunders 2000, 2003) played an important role in the ascendancy of material. My attempt to explain the conditions, experiences and ruptures that lead to the rise of a principle will be the content of the following pages.

Why matter matters

Most western art – except the decorative kind – is about representation, but not all representation is about art. Representations are models we create to better understand the world we inhabit. To work, they must reduce the complex outside world into some kind of order. Coming from a tradition that admires the ability to create space on a two-dimensional plane, we usually accept the picture as a very close representation of reality, even if the content depicted amounts to nothing more than pure mythology. To admire these representations as 'art', as something to be contemplated for aesthetic reasons, is a comparatively recent development in the history of the picture (Belting 1990). We are used to accepting an illusionist image of space as a very close representation of the truth. But illusionist depiction is only one way to reduce the almost infinite variety of reality. If I wanted to represent Holy St. Francis, I could – if I were artistically inclined – draw a picture of a man among friendly-looking animals or other attributes that define him. Such a picture would unfurl its power through the realistic depiction of the saint in a credible environment. But I could also – if I possessed one – use a piece of the saint's body to do the same in a different way. A relic 'works' as a representation by the principle of *pars pro toto*, through the association of a part to the whole, which in this case *was* St Francis. According to Catholic dogma, every piece of the holy body contains the same power the whole body had. It is the authenticity, the incorporation of the thing represented, which gives the relic its representational power.

Both possibilities have their charm and their drawbacks, which was probably the reason why they often occurred in conjunction in the Middle Ages. The relics are more authentic and thus more closely associated with the power of the saint and his role as intercessor. What they clearly lack is the sensual dimension appropriate for such a wondrous thing. The picture has those visual qualities and can reach a wider audience by reproduction (by an artist or by a host of modern technologies) which relics never can, because they are naturally limited (although one has to admit that this has not stopped the spread of their cult). Scarcity is certainly one but not the only source of value that is attributed to the material remnants of holy bodies. The *virtus* of the saint was thought to be contained and active in them. It was the materiality of the relic that became the storage place of this magical power to heal the sick and purify the sinners. Paradoxically, a piece of the dead body could also remind the spectators[1] of the living saint, thus keeping him alive in the memories of the believers. The fact that material things remain, that they outlive their creators and possessors seems to prolong the life of those they actually leave behind.

Those two strategies of representation were often joined together when relics were stored in statuettes of saints, or when the paint of icons was mixed with ashes from holy remnants. But with the advent of enlightenment and the rediscovery of antique tradition, the picture, with its more symbolic

link to the thing being represented, gained ascendancy. The representation through materiality sank to the level of folklore and remained there until a thoroughly modern experience was to reactivate it and give it new lustre. As stated above, evidence points to industrialised war, and the experience of it by millions of soldiers between 1914 and 1918.

When I write 'war experience' I deliberately choose the singular form. I am, of course, conscious that the individual plurality of experience in an event of such magnitude cannot be reduced to the 'one and only' war experience. However, the specific nature of industrialised war of material allows one to speak of patterns of experience that were common to millions of soldiers. These patterns were dictated by the conditions of everyday life for them: trench warfare, constant shellfire, and shifts between Front-line positions and reserve lines.

It is in this framework of a collective experience that the role of the artist must be understood. The pre-war Cubist avant-garde (mainly Picasso and Braque) developed representations of modern fragmented vision, based on their inquiry into the perception of space. Only ten years later, their experimental visions turned into an everyday experience for the soldiers (Eksteins 1990). The artists in the trenches had the opposite task: to represent the leftovers of vision, so to speak. Thus the artists – from an anthropological perspective – must not be seen as singular individuals creating their own world, but as seismographs that are more sensitive to the ruptures and tremors of their time, of which they nevertheless remain the children.

However, that does not mean that different artists reacted in similar ways to their war experiences. The opposite is true: Fernand Léger said that he went back to figurative painting after the war, Otto Dix started using religious motives, the Berlin Dadaists invented their brand of collage and 'photomontage', George Grosz drew caricatures, Georges Braque ceased to paint at all after being wounded in the Ardennes. Nevertheless, there was one strategy to represent what they saw and felt in the trenches that most of them shared: the principle of bricolage, integrating shattered pieces into a new whole.

Art history has for many reasons[2] never responded to the challenge of reconstructing the links between war and art. Ernst's technique of frottage for example is usually traced back to Leonardo da Vinci (Kaak 1999: 268). Not being an art historian myself I have no intention of refuting these lines of tradition. But art history, by its very definition, remains blind to many non-art influences that might be much closer to the artist himself. The study of material culture allows the bringing together of that which is usually separated by the demarcations of disciplines, such as reliquaries and modern art, because both are forms of representations.

Sense and visibility

Illusionist representation represents not only the way we see things but also the way we think that things really are. The eye is the master sense of our era,

as Jay and Brennan (1996) put it. Visual epistemology is at the very core of the western project of modernity. Simply put, this means that we are not willing to believe what we can't see. The reality of something or somebody is defined by our ability to perceive it/them visually. The invisible, which in the Middle Ages held spellbound the thinking of philosophers and theologians alike, lost its credibility.

The development of a culture of vision that became the basis for modern science and art alike is attributed to different factors, most notably to the rise of literacy and the technique of print (McLuhan 1968: 172–217). Foucault follows another line of thought when he places the gaze ('le regard') in a system of surveillance which in his terms is central to the techniques of discipline to make the 'bodies obedient and useful'. For him, the military camp is the prototype of a new power of observation and order (Foucault 1975: 201). We give meaning to our experiences not only through language but also by putting them into some order, whose origin is a spatially constructed model of reality. In a certain sense, sense is a visual category. The watchtower, the panorama and the scenic spot on a hill are all monuments to the need to control by visual means.

But the scientific revolution in the wake of the 'scopic regime' (Jay 1988), that took the place of earlier auditory cultures, was about to devour its own children. As the speed of transportation increased with the invention of the railway and electricity, a new standard of simultaneity was defined, and space became destabilised (Kern 1983: 131–81). The public had to acquire new techniques of perception to meet the requirements of the art of the impressionists (Crary 2002: 71–125). The big city life, with its stimulus overload, made it difficult to create meaningful pieces of experience. Modern vision was decentralised, fragmented and simultaneous. The triumph of technological progress could still allay the unease many felt at the rapid modernisation of everyday life. But soon an event of unparalleled magnitude would destroy what was left of the already damaged categories of perception.

Invisible war

One of the most striking features of the First World War is the fact that nobody had seen it. Of course there are many personal accounts and millions of photographs from the war, but they show mainly traces of what was left, rather than the visceral processes of war itself. As the French painter Fernand Léger who fought in the battle of Verdun put it, '[It is] a life of the blind, where everything the eye could perceive and gather hid itself and disappeared. Nobody had seen the war – we lived hidden, concealed, stooped and the useless eye saw nothing' (quoted in Michaud 1994: 58).

The experience of blindness and fragmentation was caused by the very specific nature of trench warfare. The soldiers lived in a threefold system of trenches (Front line, support and reserve trenches) where vision was

constricted to the very near – that which was immediately in front – or to the distant sky.³ The act of seeing became closely associated with death. The only way to actually see 'the war' was to peer over the top of the trenches, an extremely dangerous undertaking, and often a meaningless one, as what remained of the softly undulating landscape at the Western Front could not in any way contribute to any sort of sense (Figure 6.1).

Here, the very term 'landscape' is misleading, for there is nothing to perceive, no land, no hills, no vegetation. If it were not for the two men in the crater, we would not even be able to determine the scale of the photograph. It could be a microscopic picture or a moonscape, although we must keep in mind that there were no such pictures of the moon's surface in 1916. There was simply no visual precedent to this sort of complete destruction. We now understand Eric J. Leed's description of modern battle as 'the creation of a system with no centre and no periphery in which men, both attackers and defenders, are lost' (Leed 1979: 104).

The modern hierarchy of sensory perception was thus reversed. To survive in the labyrinth of the trenches, sound, smell and touch became more important than vision. The sense of touch was essential to handle the weapons and to find one's way in the trenches at night; gas attacks could be smelt and approaching shells could be heard, but by then it was usually too late to react. The auditory sense that could also provide spatial orientation was occupied by the earth-shattering sound of gunfire and shell explosions. The ear, unlike the eye, unable to protect itself, was often described as a 'place of invasion of a shapeless reality' (Lethen 2000: 192). The noise came without warning, without structure, and resisted description. Most soldiers attributed the rising number of war neuroses to the relentless noise of the artillery (Leed 1979).

The paradox between the omnipotence of war to prescribe every detail of the soldiers' daily routine, to dispose of their life, and its invisibility, made the war mysterious and almost metaphysical. It took on a life of its own. The idea that their comrades were killed by the war, not by the enemy, was common among soldiers (Latzel 1999). Death was caused by shrapnel and bullets, which had their own agency. The enemy was secondary because it hardly ever became 'real', i.e. visible. That the battlefields, where millions of soldiers were supposed to fight each other, were places of abandon, was another paradoxical fact. The soldier/writer Ernst Jünger gave a matchless description of what space had come to mean in his 1930 book *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges* (*The Face of the World War*):

> Tipping the scales is no man's land, a small stretch of earth, often less than a hundred meters in breadth, which nevertheless becomes harder to cross. And even where the attackers in their mud-coloured uniforms succeed in crossing it, after careful preparations that mock all laws of war economy, the depth of enemy space opens

Figure 6.1 A Western Front landscape with two soldiers. (courtesy and © Swiss Federal Archive, BAR J II. 175 1986/54).

up before them, a medium of elastic tenacity that burdens every step with leaden weight.

(Jünger 1930: 233)

A world of things

The constriction of vision accompanied by a loss of meaning was a key experience for many soldiers. The overall view of the war faded away while the world at close range became distinct. It was a drab world at first sight for the eye that was used to roam, full of the inconspicuous things of everyday life – of mud and matter. But once the eye learned to see structures rather than space, a new aesthetic of material came into being. If sense and meaning could not be found in the wasteland of the battlefields, then they would probably reveal themselves in the trivial things that became the opposite of trivia. The various writings of Fernand Léger offer ample evidence on this point. In a lecture at the Collège de France in 1925 he said:

A nail, the stub of a candle, a shoestring can cost a man's life or the loss of a regiment . . . Everything counts, all the things are

competitive and the normal conventional order of values is reversed. A nervous officer is doomed. A level-headed manual labourer replaces him. The useful man, the useful object or the useful machine, pitilessly assume a natural hierarchy.

<div align="right">(quoted in De Francia 1983: 36)</div>

Léger had been an abstract painter with Cubist inclinations before the war, occupied with problems of perception and how to render them in his paintings. At the age of 35, he was drafted and sent to the Front, first in the Argonnes, and later in Verdun, where he fought at Fort Douaumont, one of the bitterest battles of the war. It was in the trenches that he had a sort of epiphany which was to change his whole idea of art:

> [A]t the same time I was suddenly stunned by the sight of the open breech of a 75 mm cannon in full sunlight, confronted with the play of light on white metal. I felt the body of metal in my hands, and allowed my eye to stroll in and around the geometry of its sections. It was in the trenches that I really seized the reality of objects. It needed nothing more for me to forget the abstract art of 1912–13. It came as a total revelation to me, both as a man and a painter . . . Once I'd bitten into that reality the essence and meaning of objects never left me.

<div align="right">(quoted in De Francia 1983: 31)</div>

Léger himself created trench art by painting his pictures on the back of ammunition box covers, and by gluing straps of paper to it (i.e. 'Cheveaux dans un village' 1915). Although he wouldn't use the technique of collage after the war – he considered it to be a breach of the integrity of the painted surface – it was his war-time collages/sketches of everyday life in the trenches that led to the big tableau *La partie des cartes* (*The Card Party*) in 1917, one of his masterpieces. It depicts a game of cards among war veterans, easily recognisable because of their medals. Their bodies seem to be cut open, the spinal columns visible in an aggressive red. The figures are dissolved into geometric shapes, each limb separated from the other. The impression of petrification is partly due to the fragmented, claustrophobic depiction of space, an effect closely associated with the collage technique.

The experience of materiality – of the 'body' and the structure rather than the idea of things – became of paramount importance, because the things could save one's life after all. But this was only one side of the power things had over soldiers. Their world of objects were intimately linked to the economy of war and its mass produced *matériel*, equipment and weaponry. One must not forget that the soldier's things were made to kill other soldiers. The weapons were neutral themselves and could kill as well as guard oneself from being killed. This ambivalence thus made them even more fascinating,

and that reflects the soldiers' own fascination with their own potentially destructive agency embodied in the weapons.

The development of giant cannon such as the German *Dicke Berta* ('Big Bertha') dwarfed the men and turned them into mere 'servants'. In order to fire its shells, a whole crew must move in perfect unison to shift, load, aim, fire, empty and reload a heavy mortar, a human ballet, slave to the rhythm of the machine (Figure 6.2, overleaf).

Every speck of space was taken up by the industrially-produced equipment, tons of barbed wire, endless heaps of metal obstacles and, of course, mountains of artillery shell cases. What object could represent this world of metal better than a single shell case, following the principle that the part has the power to evoke the whole? I shall endeavour to present some trench art objects here that illustrate the importance of materiality, not only for the soldiers who depended on it, but also for the emerging post-war art of Dadaism.

The shell without the shock

The Berlin arsenal (*Zeughaus*) began exhibiting war trophies from the first battles of the Great War in 1914. These exhibits were mostly guns, mortars and cannon taken from the enemy, but also included regimental flags and other insignia from France, Russia, England, Belgium and The Netherlands. The exhibition was especially popular among soldiers on leave from the Front. It was the place where they could explain to their kin what they did in the war, graphically illustrated by the war *matériel* at hand (Beil 2002: 88). The visitor was also confronted with a peculiar piece of iron junk (Figure 6.3, p. 82). It was a dud French shell that had been fired at the German Second Army. The Kaiser himself had ordered it to be exhibited, probably because it contained large iron keys as impromptu shrapnel. We cannot reconstruct today what it was supposed to mean in that context, whether it indicated French baseness or perhaps economic shortages. But the surprising impact of a shell filled with keys had an absurd effect that was all too familiar to the soldiers, and survives up to the present. It connects the imagination of the early nineteenth-century caricaturist J. J. Grandville of the metamorphosis of things to the works of art at the Berlin Dada Fair in its surreal and dream-like quality.

This authentic remnant was the only evidence for the traumatic suddenness of the explosion, which could not be communicated by visual or auditory means. The empty shell case, being ubiquitous, was thus the perfect souvenir. Its emptiness would always resound the loss of the real experience of war and the secrets of the Front, only decipherable by fellow veterans. The dud that did not explode stands in between the pristine shell and the shell case that littered the battlefields. It is especially fascinating because it has not exploded and did not kill anyone, yet remains dangerously volatile. Such

Figure 6.2 An Austrian mortar on the Western Front (courtesy and © Swiss Federal Archive, BAR J II. 175 1986/54).

items were often kept as talismanic reminders of close encounters with death (on talismanic bullets see Saunders 2003: 99–100).

With its ability to evoke the absurdity of war, the 'key dud' can be interpreted as a predecessor of Dadaist art. It is put on display, like an actual piece of art, and is appreciated not so much for its aesthetic quality but rather for the rich associations and the potential signification therein. It reproduces the effect the original shell should have had, to pierce through the defence, to explode and destroy. The parallel to the Dada movement becomes evident when we look at the way Walter Benjamin interpreted what Dada made of art. He wrote in his famous essay 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' of Dadaism: 'From a beckoning appearance or a persuasive sound pattern, the work of art became a projectile in the hands of the Dadaists. It befell the spectator. It gained a tactile quality' (Benjamin 1963: 38).

What better example of Dada art could there be then, than the projectile itself? The metaphor of the projectile becomes much more than a figure of speech. It expresses the lethal quality of the object, not by trying to capture movement and trajectory as the Italian futurists would have, but by using the evocative material as a self-reference whose agency is emphasised in a world of anonymous killing.

Interestingly, another early Dadaist also made use of this metaphor, though somewhat later. When Werner Spiess accompanied the artist Max Ernst (1891–1976) to the big Dada retrospective in 1967, Ernst told him why he was not convinced by such an exhibition (although it displayed some of his own early Dada works), with the following words:

> Being a Dadaist by profession is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as an unchanging state of revolution. To put the spirit of Dada on exhibition is no more than a weak illustration, like trying to capture the violence of an explosion by presenting the shrapnel.
> (Spiess 1991: 19).

It seems that the explosive effect inherent in Dadaist art is linked to the memory of those present. For those who no longer knew what the experience of war meant, Dada becomes a mere game, a playful exploration of sense and nonsense. Representation by material is bound to the capacity of remembering to what whole the single piece belonged. It was the mind of the veterans who forged the link and revived the total experience.

Representation 'en miniature'

As we have seen above, vision in the trenches was constricted. The only axis of visibility was between the opaque earth and the transparent sky (Leed 1979: 137). It was thus not surprising that the dream of flying was an important means to cope with the experience of blindness. A pilot of a plane would be able to survey the labyrinth of the trenches and thus see its meaning and legitimation (Ubl 2000: 179). Another way to reach the same goal was presumably applied to create a small model of a trench (12.5 × 5 cm), complete with dug-out and parapet (Figure 6.4, p. 83).

This complex piece of trench art was made out of chalk, the very material the soldiers dug themselves into at the Front in the Champagne. The soft chalk was easily carved and suitable for all kinds of souvenirs. The inscription dates it to 15 September 1916, north of France, and the dedication reads 'To my dear Trudel in memory of your Hans'. To send home a miniature model of the place where one lived, was a means of letting loved ones partake of life at the Front while omitting all the things they should not know: the mud, the stench of dead bodies, the ever present danger, the ceaseless noise. The opaque earth is transformed into a pristine white, the unfathomable labyrinth of the Front into a tidy example of what a trench looks like in theory. The authenticity of the material (the material being a cut-out of the physical landscape) in this case serves to disguise as well as to represent the actual trench experience. The same method was used when many German cities started building models of trench systems in 1915 in parks or even in town centres. These predecessors of the open-air museum were

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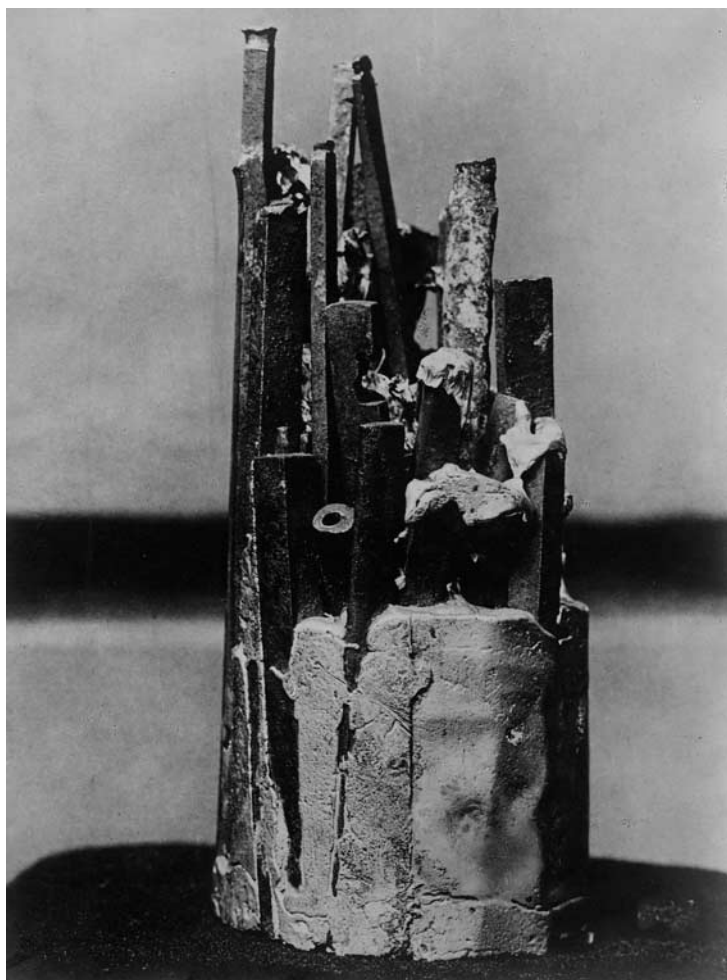
Figure 6.3 A dud French shell on display at the *Zeughaus*, Berlin (courtesy and © Swiss Federal Archive, BAR J II. 175 1986/54).

meant to instruct the civilians about the nature of trench warfare without the war (Beil 2002: 125).

The fact that the sale of such small chalk models was advertised in trench newspapers (*Der Champagne-Kamerad* 1916: 7) shows their popularity not only as souvenirs for others, but also for the soldiers themselves. The simplification of the trench system, and the bird's-eye perspective the model allowed might have had a consoling effect on the beholders. It embodied a dream of vision (the disembodied eye free to roam over the battlefield) and the power of the maker to transform the muddy mess of reality into an orderly 'ideal' trench.
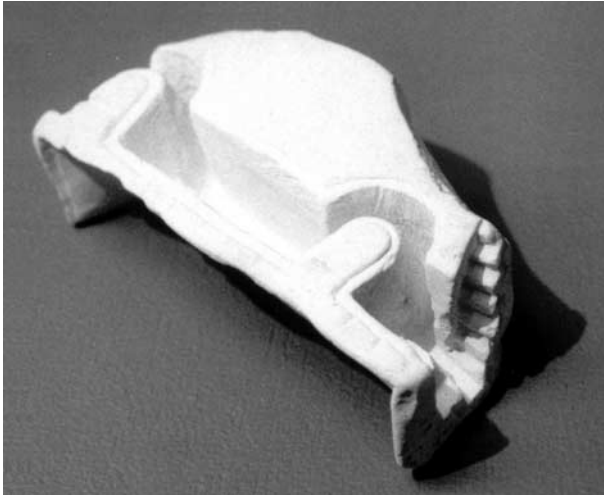
Figure 6.4 A trench model made of Champagne chalk (courtesy and © Anne Ulrich).

A sightseeing spot in war

The beginning of Dadaism, a heterogeneous movement that was as much about politics as it was about art, is usually traced to the year 1916 and the founding of the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. But there are some predecessors straight from the war and from which emanate the anarchist spirit of Dada at its purest. One of them is an improvised mock art exhibition at the Front-line town of Serre on the Somme. None of the objects on display survived the war, the only source we have is an equally mock review by a certain Ernst Ostermayer which appeared in the German trench newspaper *Der Schützen-graben* in 1916. Suffused with satire and irony, it describes in a fairy-tale-like manner a visit to the 'deadly modern exhibition':

> Sturdy brick walls guard the entry against the somewhat irritating shrapnel bullets especially at noon. On the inside of such a wall, beautifully sprinkled with yellow, red and green, is the first piece on display: 'Wilson, the neutral'. The friendly gentleman is carved out of the soft chalk rocks, which were brought up while digging the trenches. He loftily thrones with a cool smile over a gigantic rostrum of shorter and longer metal tubes. These are duds of shells and shrapnel of all sizes, made in the U. S. of America. Over them, Mr. Wilson smiles superciliously and coolly; the way only neutral Americans can smile. A pleasant gentleman!
>
> (Ostermayer 1916: 14)

The presentation of President Wilson made of trench chalk and artillery shells (Figure 6.5) bears a striking resemblance to the soldier puppet with a pig head by George Grosz, hung from the ceiling at the first International Dada Fair in Berlin in 1920 (for a picture see Bergius 1989: 362). It caused a scandal because of alleged 'offence against the military', several artists were charged and Grosz received a substantial fine.

Although the political opinions expressed in those two examples were the opposite of each other, the staging principles were the same and were presented with the same ironic bent. Both are assemblages that make use of original material to mock what is represented. The desired effect of alienation was heightened by using real things in conjunction with others to create a new image and thus a new meaning for a familiar object. If war was seen as the triumph of material over humans, this ironic representation was humanity's revenge: the triumph of the signified over matter. With the necessary staging, even a hole in a wall could become meaningful:

> Now we arrive at another brick wall. A shell tore an enormous hole into it. A poster says, 'Here lies the offensive attack of Joffre'. One looks inside. Nothing special is to be seen. 'Well you see', says the major, readjusting his monocle and smiling sphinx-like, 'it's often like this, much ado about nothing at all!'
>
> (Ostermayer 1916: 22)

The use of assemblages between political agitation and art was taken up in the Weimar Republic by pacifist and left-wing groups, most notably by Ernst Friedrich (Beil 2002: 205–222). In 1925 he opened the 'Anti-Kriegsmuseum' in Berlin, a small private institution stuffed with pictures of mass graves and disfigured soldiers, and with ironic assemblages made of bayonets, gas masks and other war-related things. A French steel helmet re-employed as a flower pot drew a lot of attention, and was read as a symbol of international understanding, because its war-trophy character was successfully subverted.

Following the classification by Saunders (2000: 47–54, elaborated in 2003: 38–51), the mock exhibition, and the assemblages at the anti-war museum, both belong to the wide range of trench art. They were made by soldiers during and after the war from war *matériel* and have the ability to represent complex and ambivalent attitudes, precisely because of their authenticity. The idea of using real matter instead of creating a spatial illusion was not fully received into the so-called domain of high art until after the war. If we consider the sensibility of post-war high art, and the fact that many of its creators were familiar with trench-art objects and shared the experiences embodied in them, I think it no exaggeration to postulate a relationship between the two. There is one case however, where a direct link between trench art and high art can be made.

In 1916, a touring exhibition called 'Treasures of the trenches' was on dis-

Figure 6.5 Monument at the International Art Exhibition 'Wild West 1915' on the
Front line, caricature from the German trench newspaper *Der
Schützengraben* (nr. 9, 21 March 1916, p. 58).

play in Copenhagen. The Danish painter Vilhelm Lundstrøm (1893–1950)
was greatly inspired by it, and started to collect rubbish from the streets to
nail or glue to his pictures (Wescher 1968: 55; Wolfram 1975). His efforts cul-
minated in his 1918 assemblage 'The second commandment'. The artist
circumvents the Biblical prohibition against depiction by using collected rub-
bish to refer to reality, a highly-reflected approach to the Christian tradition
as well as to the modern world of abundant waste.

The career of a principle: Max Ernst, frottage and collage

Max Ernst (1891–1976) was one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century. He started as part of Dada in Cologne and became one of the leading painters of the surrealist movement. A restless discoverer and inventor, he was crucial in the development of the collage and is said to have invented the techniques of frottage and grattage. The fact that he served in the field artillery of the German Army from 1914 to 1918 is less known. His war experience is never explicitly depicted, and remains literally in the background. Many of his post-war collages use photographic material from the war as a backdrop. In *The Chinese Nightingale* (1920), it is the photograph of an aircraft bomb, in *Sambesiland* (1921) it is a picture of a barren Front-line landscape, in *The Flamingos* (1920) it is a strategic picture of Dünkirchen, taken from a reconnaissance aircraft, in *The Anatomy as Bride* (1921) it is the motor block of a military plane (for reproductions see Spiess 1999: 55–61). The raw material was among other sources taken from the popular magazine *Deutsches Kriegsflugwesen* (*German War Aviation*) (see *ibid.*: 54).

The fragmented experience of trench warfare found its equivalent in the act of cutting up the photographs that were themselves representations of the war (see Levitch, this volume). By so doing, the artist seems to re-enact the traumatic shattering of visual perception. The final collage must be understood as an attempt to reassemble meaningfully the shards of a broken totality. The cut – a reminder and trace of the trauma – remains visible, and creates a rupture in the fixed space of the original photograph. Annette Becker reads the Dadaist collage as a means to keep the wounds of war open (Becker 2002: 142). But the collage is a flexible instrument capable of many transformations. If we follow the development of Ernst's collages we can see that they change subtly from the early works to the 'collage novels'. He started making photographic reproductions of his collages to erase the traces of the cut. The closure of the surface can thus be interpreted as a metaphorical process of healing and reconstitution. We know that Ernst planned to paint many of his collages in a large format (Spiess 1999: 128), which would close the circle to traditional painting and degrade the collage to a mere technical instrument. But he only achieved one of his collage-paintings, *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen* (*The Production of Glue from Bones*).

Another innovation by Ernst, the frottage, was essential to the emergence of a new aesthetics of material. Frottage merely means to duplicate a surface structure by placing paper over it and making a rubbing with a graphite pencil. But this simple method became a powerful artistic means in the hands of Ernst, whose sensibilities had been formed among the objects in the trenches. The prosaic things of everyday life were of exquisite beauty for one who had learned to see it. In 1926, Ernst created a series of 34 frottages and published them as *histoire naturelle*. They consisted of fantasy landscapes made of dif-

ferent, combined imprints. The materiality of the objects literally rubbed off on the paper and lent it its pattern. The resulting effect was one of primeval timelessness, a petrified forest of strange lumps of matter that seemed to proliferate.

If this sensibility is a product of the trenches, then its substitute landscapes are actually cross-sections through the earth, like trenches cut into soil, opening it to the gaze of waiting soldiers. Many of Ernst's works do indeed look like pictures from the interior of the earth. Whether this is a sexually connoted evocation of infant scatophilia as suggested by Ubl (2000: 177) may be negligible to non-Freudians. A much simpler explanation could be that the 'histoire naturelle' is just this: a probing into the earth, where soldiers took refuge from shellfire and witnessed its life-saving beauty.

The frottages could be thus read as a tribute to the soil and mud, articulating the hope or even the certainty that below the surface, the earth would stay inviolate, no matter what was done to its upper layers.

Conclusion

The *matériel* of war is both profane and potentially transcendent. Its power to decide upon life or death could give it an almost fetish-like character. The spell the war holds over our minds has grown weaker and more mysterious, but it is still there, as the success of Great War exhibitions and the rising number of battlefield tourists suggest. As we don't need to be religious any more to appreciate a beautifully crafted shrine, we don't need to be veterans of any war to feel its pull.

That leads us back to the initial question about the difference between the collage by Kurt Schwitters and the medieval reliquary. The principle of representation is the same in both cases. This parallel can be understood in terms of a historical development from material to spatial representation, a development that is interrupted and even reversed in modern warfare (see Gygi 2004). A difference remains of course. While the reliquary was meant to conserve the saint's touch to posterity, trench art was meant to give the industrially fabricated products what they lacked – a human touch.

Notes

1 The word 'spectator is misleading, at least for the early Middle Ages, when the relics were worshipped mainly by touching them. It was not until the Lateran Council in 1215 that a more visual approach was imposed and the relics were removed from direct contact and were displayed.
2 One of them being the scarcity of sources on the war experience of artists. The wartime correspondence between Fernand Léger and his friend Louis Poughon was not published until 1990 and promptly stimulated a collection of essays (Kosinski 1994).
3 The parallel development of cinematography and aerial reconnaissance described

by Paul Virilio (1984) can be read as an attempt to compensate for the complete lack of vision by visual machines in this context.

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7

THE GREAT WAR RE-REMEMBERED

The fragmentation of the world's largest painting

Mark Levitch

At Kansas City's spectacular Liberty Memorial, the US national monument to the First World War, an enormous figure-filled mural commemorating the contribution of the United States to Allied victory adorns the north wall of Memory Hall (Figure 7.1). In the centre of the crowded composition, President Woodrow Wilson, responsible for the US's entry into the war and a chief architect of its ultimately failed peace, stands at the foot of a painted bust of George Washington. Notable American military, government and civilian wartime figures, and several mythic American 'types' – such as a strutting cowboy – comprise the remainder of the American section, which totals about 100 figures. On either side of the American section are grouped leading wartime figures from most of America's 23 wartime allies.

This seemingly unified and polished composition is in fact a Cold War era, collage-based metamorphosis of the *Panthéon de la Guerre* (*Pantheon of the War*), a gargantuan panoramic painting produced in France during the First World War. With 5,000 full-length portraits, the *Panthéon* was a unique commemoration of the French and Allied war effort; it was also the world's largest painting. In the late 1950s, Kansas City artist Daniel MacMorris (1893–1981), the primary decorator of the Liberty Memorial's Memory Hall building, took shears to the *Panthéon*. He excised 24 fragments – totalling less than 7 per cent of the original French work – reconfigured them around the original American section, which had been a secondary focus of the original French-dominated composition, and repainted passages and joints to make the new collaged work look seamless.

The *Panthéon*, in both its original French and abridged American forms, has been a nationalist-inflected commemorative representation. But its meaning as a representation has always been inextricably intertwined with its materiality. Several factors tied to the *Panthéon*'s objecthood have been especially

Figure 7.1 Detail of Daniel MacMorris's reworked *Panthéon de la Guerre*, 1959, 13' × 69' (© and courtesy of Liberty Memorial Museum, Kansas City).

significant to its meaning and reception in its unlikely journey from Great War Paris to Cold War Kansas City (and the continuing journey of its fragments in the international art market to this day). These include the *Panthéon*'s status as a Great War artefact, its immense size, its (pre-Kansas City) circular shape, its portability and its mutability.

The salience of the *Panthéon*'s materiality as it has traversed generations, its geographic space (including different national spaces) and symbolically different venues (from the quasi-sacral to the purely commercial to the museum) makes it a prime candidate for a materiality-based analysis (pace Saunders 2000: 44). This chapter will attempt to construct a biography of the *Panthéon* – to explore its 'social life' by assessing the changing values and attitudes attached to it by different people over time (Saunders 2001: 477). Because these values and attitudes are related to the painting's reception as both object and representation, and because artists were responsible for shaping (and reshaping) the *Panthéon*, this study also will consider artists' representational and commemorative strategies as part of the *Panthéon*'s biography. After describing the original painting, I will investigate the *Panthéon*'s social life during three periods: in Paris, 1918–27; on its interwar tour of the US, 1927–40; and the period of its fragmentation from 1952 to the present. Such an approach will demonstrate that the status and shaping of the *Panthéon de la Guerre* have, in a reciprocal relationship, both informed and been informed by the experience and memory – or lack of memory – of the First World War in France and the United States.

The *Panthéon de la Guerre*

In its original guise, the *Panthéon de la Guerre* was a complex mélange of art, commerce, propaganda and commemoration. The *Panthéon* was conceived and overseen by two academic French artists well known in their day, Pierre Carrier-Belleuse (1851–1933) and Auguste-François Gorguet (1862–1927), who were assisted by 20 other established French artists. Most of the artists were too old or infirm to serve militarily, but like many other French artists they felt compelled to support the French war effort as best they could (see Silver 1989: 31–41 and Goodman 1991: 193–44). Ultimately, the *Panthéon*'s creation coincided almost perfectly with the duration of the war (1914–18), which would insure it a particular symbolic status as a Great War artefact. Carrier-Belleuse and Gorguet began their work after the French victory at the Battle of the Marne (5–10 September 1914), and French President Poincaré inaugurated it in Paris amid great fanfare on 19 October 1918 – just three weeks before the 11 November Armistice. Structurally, the project was an unusual, quasi-official hybrid – a private, commercial enterprise (see *Panthéon* 1915), it nonetheless received official support from French government and military authorities that recognised its wartime propaganda value (Carrier-Belleuse 1919: vi).

The final work, for which a special building in Paris was constructed on government-allotted land near the historical Invalides complex, was celebrated as a grandiose monument to the war's heroes, known and unknown. Measuring an astounding 402 feet long by 45 feet high, the *Panthéon* contained about 5,000 full-length portraits of notable wartime figures from France and French allies. Carrier-Belleuse and Gorguet sketched hundreds of the war's leading personalities from life, with the remaining portraits based on photographs.

The *Panthéon*'s largest section and principal focus was a Parthenon-like 'Temple of Glory' dedicated to French heroes (Figure 7.2). The temple and its long staircase were crowded with animated portraits of about 4,000 figures – mostly be-medalled soldiers selected from war citations, many of whom had been killed. At the base of the stairs, a golden winged Victory statue soared upwards from a pedestal engraved 'Aux héros' ('To the heroes'). France's leading military, government and civilian figures stood at the base of the pedestal, flanking a beloved French 75 mm cannon. At the temple's wings, French soldiers streamed back from the Front to parade victoriously before the heroes.

The second focus of the *Panthéon* stood directly across the circular panorama from the staircase: an immense, sober monument to the dead engraved 'Pro Patria'. At its summit, four monumental bronze 'poilus' (French infantrymen) held aloft a coffin draped with the French flag; at its base a solitary veiled female figure in black knelt, weeping, a wreath next to her dedicated 'Aux héros ignorés' ('To the unknown heroes'). Leading figures from France's allies were grouped by nation in two symmetrical hemicycles that linked the temple
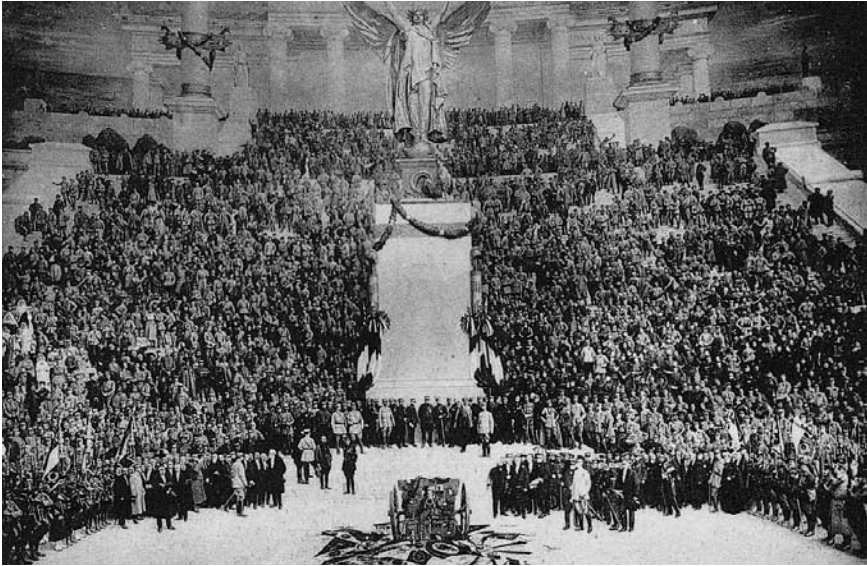
Figure 7.2 The 'Temple of Glory' and 'Staircase of Heroes' in the original *Panthéon de la Guerre*, 1918.

and the monument on either side. France's four West European allies were ranged against one wall, the remaining 19 allies, including the United States, against the other. Almost one half of the panorama comprised an enormous topographical landscape map of the nearly 500-mile-long Western Front, from the North Sea to the Swiss border.

French reception, 1918–27

From conception through to completion, the *Panthéon* was a stylistically and ideologically conservative, even backward-looking attempt to encapsulate the war – seemingly more suited to the nineteenth century than the twentieth. It is a quintessential example of what Winter (1995: 2–3) has referred to as the 'traditional' approach to imagining the First World War. It is overloaded with 'reassuring' classical references (see Silver 1989: 86–145 and Hannah 1996: 146–54), including its name (which pointed simultaneously to the ancient Roman *Panthéon* and the Paris resting place of France's great men), its painted architectural framework and the Doric-porticoed building constructed to house it. With these references, its glorification of individual heroism, and the absence of anonymous, modern, mechanical war, the *Panthéon* embodied 'patriotic certainties, "high diction", incorporating euphemisms about battle, "glory", and the "hallowed dead", in sum, the sentimentality and lies of wartime propaganda' (Winter 1995: 2).

It was the *Panthéon*'s unique figuring of this traditional approach, however,

that led perhaps eight million people to visit it in Paris between 1918 and 1927. Why and how did this passé representation of modern, industrial war resonate with these visitors, French and foreign? The answer lay primarily in the *Panthéon*'s ability to impart meaning to the war and its sacrifices. At once celebratory and funerary, the *Panthéon* provided a solemn, nostalgic and seemingly commensurable vision of the war that encouraged viewers to regard the conflict as a definitively finished and therefore comprehensible historical event.

The *Panthéon de la Guerre* provided a meaningful visual summation of a war that in its momentousness, duration, modernity and horror had seemed impossible to grasp, either visually or conceptually. In France, the war was an individual and collective trauma of unprecedented dimensions. While all the major combatants suffered terrible losses, France suffered the worst casualties in relative terms (Becker 1985: 6), and virtually every family in France suffered at least one casualty (Prost 1997: 308).

Visually, the war had triggered an explosion of images to compensate for a perceived information gap (Gervereau 2000: 87–91). The new pre-eminence of photography and film effectively marked this conflict as the first media war (Veray 1994; Dagen 1996; Beurier, this volume). Traditional artists, meanwhile, turned en masse to sketches and other small-format works that suggested reportage (Perreux 1966: 316; Lacaille 1998: 10–11). But after several years of fragmentary documentary images, artists and the public alike were eager for images that could synthesise, or at least summarise and impose some order on the inchoate and devastating war experience (Goodman 1991: 205–6; Robichon 2000: 70).

No medium was more suited to synthesis than the panorama, a word that comes from the Greek for 'see all'. Upon entering the *Panthéon*'s custommade building, viewers would walk along dark passageways until they emerged on a viewing platform and were literally encircled by the enormous painted canvas bathed in a diffuse and shadowless light. The panoramic effect is disorienting, but the viewer also has an unparalleled sense of omniscience, totality, and complete control (see Oettermann 1997: 5–47). The entire war is within one's grasp: leading figures, realistically portrayed, seem about to move (*NYT* 1952). And the Front, seen at the rear only in small-scale maps (see Laffin 1993), here unfolds grandly, accessibly, and legibly from a bird's-eye perspective – a unique adaptation of panoramic military photography that came into its own during the war. As one reviewer noted, the *Panthéon* provided a *vision d'ensemble* (Lectures 1918: 177), a vision of the whole. By bringing together pieces of the war that were too scattered to be perceived at one time, the *Panthéon*, like earlier panoramas, fulfilled an all-knowing and all-seeing fantasy (Comment 2000: 142).

If the *Panthéon* provided a plausible total vision of the war, it was a vision enmeshed in nostalgia. Nostalgic yearning, Boym has written, appears 'as a defense mechanism in a time of historical upheavals' (Boym 2001: xiv–xv).

This yearning was pronounced in the aftermath of the First World War which many regarded as creating a 'gap' in history where time itself had been ruptured (Hynes 1990: xi, 116). The *Panthéon* did not deny the war but it effectively tamed it by masking this gap in time. By representing the Great War in traditional visual terms, the *Panthéon* suggested that, while larger in scale, it was not fundamentally different in kind. On the contrary, the *Panthéon* portrayed the war as a discrete event that could now assume its place in a larger national historical narrative crowded with other glorious wars.

The circular panorama (or cyclorama, as it is sometimes known) was itself a throwback to the nineteenth century. Military-patriotic panoramas had been enthusiastically received in France after the 1871 defeat at the hand of the Prussians (Puisseux 1997: 148) but the panorama craze faded with the advent of film in 1895. By the turn of the century, the panorama had become 'an object of nostalgia and pleasure, something people felt fondness for because it was becoming obsolete' (Comment, 2000: 257).

The *Panthéon*'s stylistically traditional painting also had nostalgic connotations. The First World War marked the ascension of photography and film in reporting current events (Dagen 1996). Yet the *Panthéon* tapped directly into a continued valuation, perhaps need, for art produced by hand alongside mechanically reproduced war images. Painting lent both a dignity and a mental distancing from events – and death – that photography did not (see Benjamin 1985: 236 and Desbois 1989). With its stylistic emphasis on verisimilitude, and with many of its portraits based on photographs, the *Panthéon* could credibly lay claim to a certain photographic authenticity while simultaneously affording viewers painterly dignity. By its inauguration in 1918, the *Panthéon*'s uniquely individualised, heroic presentation of the war could be construed as nostalgic. As Robichon and Herment (1988: 33–4) have written about the *Panthéon*,

> the vision of history that the panorama wanted to transmit was already obsolete in 1918. It is the fruit of artists from another age who did not understand that this 'modern' war had, in the eyes of history, killed the Heroes.

The essential premise of the *Panthéon* is that enumerating and individually representing its great actors on a single canvas could tell the story of the war – forcefully refuting a construction of the war as anonymous, faceless and formless.

The *Pantheon*'s portraits, especially those on the staircase of heroes, not only contested the war's facelessness, but also offered consolation – private and public – by refusing to privilege the war's mass death. Civilians felt a need to pay tribute to dead soldiers both during and after the war (Sherman 1999: 16). Remembering their sacrifice was necessary but not sufficient. For many, the dead had to be seen as still living. In a 1918 All Saint's Day speech,

barely a week before the Armistice ending the war, the president of the 'union of fathers and mothers whose sons died for the country' described his hoped-for vision of a victory parade:

> I want that they [the dead] should have a place, not just in our mem-
> ories and in our hearts, but a visible place, and that the eyes, veiled
> by tears but still blazing with pride, the eyes of . . . all who love them
> really see them passing in the front ranks of our armies.
>
> <div align="right">(Union 1918: 20).</div>

This aptly describes the *Panthéon*, where the dead soldiers on the staircase stand informally but animatedly with their comrades while the victorious French armies return from the Front to parade before them. The *Panthéon* acknowledged the war's deaths, but more importantly also provided a uniquely uplifting form of consolation. The artists used their brushes to enact a painterly resurrection: 'Mourning women in long black veils, crying while bringing their images [to the studio], sacred relics of a dearly departed, and soon, from this dead man, a living one was made' (Carrier-Belleuse 1919: 87).

The portraits were immeasurably important to those whose loved ones were pictured in the *Panthéon*. In the *Panthéon*'s catalogue, parents sending the artists the last photograph of their son alive write how pleased they are 'that our Jean figures among the heroes immortalized by the masters' (Bazin 1918: unpaginated). Nearly 40 years later, a son trying to forestall its cutting up in Kansas City would write with similar pride that his father had been included (LMMAa). In the end, the portraits could only be metonymic – the 4,000 French heroes stood for a fraction of the 1.45 million French dead. Still, the number of figures, their verisimilitude, the size of the panorama, and its solemn setting, all lent the *Panthéon* a sense of commensurability with the war as an historical event that no other representation attained.

The visitor played a uniquely participatory role in the event, as was suggested partly through painted devices. For example, the bouquet of white flowers at the feet of Edith Cavell, an English nurse executed by the Germans, looks as if a visitor had just placed it there. Participation was also suggested by the catalogue's description of the *Panthéon* as a wartime 'family portrait' (Bazin 1918: unpaginated), which echoed a familial metaphor that had been central to the wartime construction of the nation as a unified entity (Huss 2000: 12). Standing on the viewing platform in Paris, enveloped by the war's major figures, and the thousands of dead heroes made alive, the *Panthéon*'s visitors effectively completed the portrait. The *Panthéon* experience interactively created an 'imaginary community' along the lines suggested by Anderson (1991: 6).

Embodying faith in victory, the *Panthéon* was probably most popular before and immediately after the Armistice, when the joy and relief of France's victory were still fresh. As the 1920s progressed, the French were less intent on

reliving or celebrating the war than on forgetting it, even if this was an impossibility (Becker and Berstein 1990). Moreover, as time passed, the bravura flurry of the *Panthéon*'s wartime creation seemed more historically quaint than contemporarily relevant. At the time of the Armistice, the *Panthéon* had been almost redolent of the war – both demanding teamwork and sacrifices over four years, and both victoriously completed almost simultaneously. But this link between representation and event grew more attenuated as people's memories of the war were filtered through other post-war representations, material objects, and their own post-war experiences.

The *Panthéon*'s construction of the war also faced increasing competition as national and local commemorative efforts, large and small, public and private, became the focus of people's time, money, and energy across the country (Sherman 1999: 65–141). More than 30,000 monuments were erected across France, most of them modest communal endeavours engraved with the names of local residents killed in the war (Becker 1988: 7; Kidd, this volume); Armistice Day ceremonies at these sites made them the loci of the nation's commemorations (Prost 1997: 317–18, 323). Despite its size and evocative power, the *Panthéon* ultimately depicted only a small percentage of those killed and in an ephemeral medium. And the vicarious war experience provided by the panorama would become less salient as war tourism enabled visitors to access the 'real' war via battlefields, ossuaries and military cemeteries (Lloyd 1998). The *Panthéon*'s home-front-based view of the war from on high also lost credibility as combatants started narrating their own trench experiences and playing leading roles in the construction of war memory (Sherman 1999: 110–15).

While interest among the French waned, among Americans it did not. With its sizeable American section, the *Panthéon* for several years stood as the most significant recognition in France of US participation in the war. For instance, the Paris branch of the American Veterans of Foreign Wars held part of their 1921 Armistice Day celebration at the *Panthéon* (*NYT* 1921). It featured in guidebooks and became a regular stop for American tourists visiting Paris in ever-greater numbers throughout the 1920s. The material legacy of these visits is the large number of *Panthéon de la Guerre* postcards and English-text catalogues still easily found in the US today.

Even if French citizens were tiring of the *Panthéon*, few relished the purchase of their national panorama by US businessmen in 1927. French and American officials trumpeted its impending American tour as a cementing of Franco-American ties. But French goodwill towards the US that followed the doughboys' arrival in 1917, had largely dissipated by 1927, a year in which three influential, stridently anti-American books appeared (Golan 1995: 79–81). With the franc plummeting in value, Paris seemed to be colonised by profligate and boisterous Americans (Wiser 1983: 183). Moreover, French gratefulness for US intervention in the war had always been hedged – many French resented both that Washington had waited so long to enter the war

and that the US was given so much credit for the victory in which they suffered comparatively little (about 50,000 battle deaths compared to 1.45 million for the French). The French likely found little solace in the new US owners' promises that the *Panthéon* eventually would be returned to France.

US road trip: 1927–40

The *Panthéon*'s arrival in New York in May 1927 marked a fundamental and enduring change in its existence and meaning. 'If the meaning of objects derives from the orders into which they are incorporated, then the same artefact may change its implications simply by being introduced into some new order' (Miller 1994: 400). In Paris, the *Panthéon de la Guerre* had been a quasi-sacral place of pilgrimage, a self-proclaimed temple of heroes linked by name and location to France's Pantheon, the resting place of the nation's great men. The *Panthéon de la Guerre* was also near France's most important military site, the Invalides, which houses the tomb of Napoleon; many visitors combined visits to the two patriotically charged places.

People in the United States perceived the war and the *Panthéon* differently. Americans had a mostly celebratory view of the conflict, devoid of the funereal angst that had inevitably marked the memory of the war in France (Kennedy 1980: 366). The US had sacrificed, but the sacrifice was smaller, began later, and was decisive to Allied victory; after Europe's years of bleeding itself, the erstwhile isolationist US had joined the fight, tipped the balance and emerged as the pre-eminent world power. For US viewers, the *Panthéon* offered a chance to relive their victory by bridging the distance – temporally, spatially and mentally – that separated them from the hardships of wartime France. The *Panthéon*, an American speaker said at its farewell ceremony in Paris, 'carries the atmosphere of the World War to our country' (*NYH* 1927a).

From its inauguration in 1918, the *Panthéon* had formed part of what Saunders (2001: 477–8) has called the interwar 'memory bridge' – a bridge composed of materiality, emotion and memory that linked the two world wars during a particularly turbulent period. But the *Panthéon*, as part of this bridge, would do different cultural work in the US from the more solemn duties it had performed in Paris – as suggested by an early US advertisement for the *Panthéon* that proclaims one can see 'The battlefields of France brought to America!' (*NYT* 1927b).

The *Panthéon* was exhibited at five venues across the United States between 1927 and 1940, resonating slightly differently at each site and at each time. The US stops were nevertheless marked by several similarities, especially in comparison to its exhibition in Paris. The *Panthéon* had always been a commercial venture, but in France this had been concealed for fear of tarnishing its seemingly more high-minded patriotic ideals and commemorative function. Americans were unfazed by treating the formerly sacral *Panthéon* as

entertainment; indeed, its owners promoted it as a 'spectacle' to compensate for the symbolic resonance it had possessed in Paris. Similarly, the *Panthéon*'s relevance to an American audience was emphasised by focusing attention on the American panel and the landscape map of the front at the expense of other portions.

Moving the *Panthéon* to the US precipitated two precedent-setting changes even before it reached its first venue, New York's Madison Square Garden, in May 1927. The new US owners ordered that Colonel Edward House, a key wartime advisor to President Wilson who was prominently depicted near the president, be painted out. House had fallen from political favour, so the sponsors of the US tour did not want to risk looking like supporters in the House of Representatives. Shortly before the *Panthéon* left Paris, a French artist painted the longtime US ambassador to France, Myron Herrick, over the figure of Colonel House, igniting the first controversy over the *Panthéon*'s fidelity to historical accuracy (*NYT* 1927b). Other changes were more profit-driven: several women and an African-American soldier were added, presumably in the hope of attracting a wider audience. The *Panthéon* would always be an artefact of war, but as a document about war it would now be periodically 'updated' to reflect contemporary, and usually market-driven, conceptions of the war and its ongoing relevance.

The second change involved the logistics of the move itself and how it changed the valence of the *Panthéon*'s materiality. Miller notes that size itself can be expressive, as in monumentality (Miller 1994: 409). Certainly, the *Panthéon*'s immensity had been integral to its meaning since the work's inception; its size embodied the elderly artists' wartime sacrifice, evoked awe in visitors and lent the *Panthéon* a gravitas symbolically commensurate with the war itself. But with the need to transport the *Panthéon*, its sheer size became a focus of curiosity apart from its contents. American newspaper reports and *Panthéon* catalogues devoted articles to the logistics of moving the painting: custom-built crates, knocked-down walls, special trucks and cranes, and total weight (ten tons). Superlatives were used that had nothing to do with the subject matter: 'the largest package to cross the ocean' (*NYT* 1927c), 'one of the most difficult trucking undertakings' (*NYT* 1927d) and 'the world's largest painting' (*NYH* 1927b). As a result, the *Panthéon*'s status as a physical object became as meaningful as its standing as a representation.

The *Panthéon*'s transformation from a solemn war work to a 'mammoth spectacle' is exemplified by the move from a temple-like building near the Invalides to New York's carnivalesque Madison Square Garden. The 19 May 1927 opening ceremony, attended by 25,000 people, was broadcast live on the radio; fire marshals had to close off the viewing platforms until the crowds thinned. Theme nights honouring allies (such as Belgium night) guaranteed the presence of leading officials and consequent press coverage. The owners showed wartime propaganda footage to impart a flavour of the 'real' war, subverting the *Panthéon*'s Parisian function as an anti-modern refuge.

The United States was in the throes of the depression when the *Panthéon* was next exhibited, in 1932, at the George Washington Bicentennial Fair in Washington, DC. Two episodes there suggest how divergently people could view the *Panthéon* – from significant to trivial – 14 years after the war had ended. On the one hand, American service nurses celebrated the success of their long-time campaign to have one of their number painted into the *Panthéon*, thus securing their rightful place in 'the greatest story ever told on canvas' (Noyes 1932). Their efforts to be included suggest the authoritative status that some continued to afford the *Panthéon*'s construction of the war.

At the same time, circus-like advertising and a depression-related ownership dispute undercut the *Panthéon*'s solemnity. When the *Panthéon*'s new owner fell behind on payments, the former owner attempted to repossess it, and before police arrived, seized 300 of the French artists' preliminary sketches that accompanied the exhibit. The press treated the incident lightly:

> Heroes of the World War are still standing their ground in mute triumph in the *Panthéon de la Guerre* today after a realistic battle to dislodge them from the local sector that began right in sight of the trenches last evening and was continuing today in a lawyer's office.
>
> (*WES* 1932)

The article's facetious use of combat vocabulary underscores the levity with which the war and the *Panthéon* could be treated in America in 1932.

By the time the *Panthéon* was exhibited in Chicago at the Century of Progress exhibition in 1933 and 1934 the owners realised it was imperative to maintain a sense of decorum. Each entrance session was introduced by a snippet of the Marseillaise. A narrator over a loudspeaker would then describe the principal sections of the panorama, terming the whole a 'temple of the immortals of war' (cited in Donovan 2001: 99–100). The Chicago catalogue contains a 12-foot-long colour foldout of the panorama, which remains the only record of the *Panthéon* in its entirety, and an extensive list, by nation, of the figures pictured – a recognition that some 15 years after the war a new generation was growing up with little or no knowledge of the conflict and its personalities.

The Chicago model, deemed a success, was maintained for the fairs in Indianapolis (1936–7) and San Francisco (1940). The *Panthéon* apparently continued to attract enough visitors to justify the staggering costs involved with transporting and erecting it, but demand had waned significantly by Indianapolis. Partly a function of time, it also reflected growing US isolationism. Americans were disillusioned that the war had failed to secure a liberal peace. Despite US intervention, Europe was awash with communism, fascism, and Nazism. In 1935, Congress passed the Neutrality Act. By the time of the Golden Gate International Exhibition in San Francisco in 1940, Europe was again at war, the US was not, and the *Panthéon* seemed irrelevant.

After the exposition, the *Panthéon* was put in storage pending more auspicious conditions.

Fragmentation from 1952 to the present day

Conditions were never again auspicious. The Second World War erased interest in commemorating its predecessor. In the span of a single generation, the First World War was transformed from history's most important and deadly conflict – the war to end all wars – to being merely the opening act for civilisation's most violent century.

The *Panthéon* was rolled up, stored outdoors and forgotten until 1952, when art enthusiast William Haussner, a German First World War veteran who had emigrated to the US and opened a well known restaurant in Baltimore, outbid scrap metal dealers eager for its tons of armature at an auction for storage back pay. The next year, *Life* magazine covered Haussner's unrolling of the football-field sized painting at a circus lot (*Life* 1953). One of the people who saw the *Life* story was Daniel MacMorris, a Kansas City artist and First World War veteran who had studied in Paris in the early 1920s with Gorguet, one of the *Panthéon*'s two principal French artists. MacMorris recognised the opportunity of his artistic career: working at the time on decorating Kansas City's First World War Liberty Memorial, he envisioned using a portion of his master's work to cover the one wall of the Memory Hall that he had not yet composed.

Haussner, among others, was eager to preserve the *Panthéon* whole, but nobody was willing to pay for a building to house a panorama commemorating a distant war. Moreover, if the *Panthéon* had once been comfortingly nostalgic, it was, for many, by the 1950s, irredeemably anachronistic. A *New York Times* art critic, who had considered the *Panthéon* a 'masterpiece' when she saw it in Paris as a child, was 'startled' that it had resurfaced in 1952, just as two abstract approach bridges to Hiroshima's Peace Park had been unveiled for the seventh anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb. The critic argues that the bridges 'expressed man's hope and dignity', while the *Panthéon* merely 'recorded appearance and trivia' (*NYT* 1952). In these circumstances in late 1956, Haussner gave the Kansas City artist the *Panthéon* and carte blanche to dismember it for the Kansas City memorial.

MacMorris's changes were the most dramatic the *Panthéon* had undergone. A former owner of the *Panthéon*, desperate to forestall the 'crime' of cutting it up, nevertheless had to acknowledge its white elephant status amid the tensions of the Cold War: 'America', he wrote, 'is not interested in World War I now, they are waiting for World War III' (LMMAb). Consequently, MacMorris was free to take liberties that today look cavalier – cutting it up, reconfiguring it, overpainting figures, throwing away some unused sections and giving away others. MacMorris had no qualms justifying the *Panthéon*'s fragmentation: it was deteriorating outdoors and nobody wanted to house it.

Using a significant portion of it in a First World War memorial would at least preserve it in an appropriate setting.

MacMorris's reconfiguration, which he compared to 'whittling down a novel to Reader's Digest condensation' (KCS 1959), was technically masterful (Figure 7.3). He cut and pasted what he considered were the most important aspects, repainted several figures and passages for reasons of scale or composition, and painted over the seams to make it appear a single work. He ultimately reduced the original composition to one-16th its original size, which was dedicated on 11 November 1959.

While technically accomplished, MacMorris's reworking completely transformed the focus and intent of its French creators by making the American section the centrepiece. After giving the United States pride of place, MacMorris placed a condensed version of the French section to the right of the US panel – instead of the US being France's ally, as in the original, now France is depicted as one among many US allies. MacMorris defended his changes partly on aesthetic grounds, suggesting the US section was a 'dynamic composition that was more spirited than any other panels' (LMMAc). He denied that putting the US center-stage meant privileging the US's national contribution to the war. His purpose was not the glorification of the USA nor the damning of any other nation's glory, but instead to render homage to Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations – the inception of the United Nations of today' (LMMAc). To underscore this point, he prominently added a quote from Wilson across the top of the composition: 'We demand human justice . . . and peace sustained by the laws of men based on the tenets of God . . . to make the world free'.

MacMorris also added several figures, including Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Truman, who was painted in over an unidentified American soldier, was the most dubious addition from a First World War perspective, but the most obvious from a local Kansas City perspective. Truman had been only an artillery captain in the war, but he was a Missouri native son and lifelong Kansas City political fixture. MacMorris cited as a precedent for his additions the replacement of Colonel House by Ambassador Herrick in 1927 – but then, claiming his fidelity to the historical record, MacMorris repainted in Colonel House over another unidentified American military figure (LMMAd). MacMorris also paid homage to the two principal French painters of the *Panthéon*, his mentor Gorguet and Carrier-Belleuse, whom he painted next to each other at the far left of the canvas.

While doubtless sincere about reconfiguring the *Panthéon* as a tribute to Wilsonian idealism, MacMorris fundamentally transformed the panorama into a Cold War inflected nationalist construction of the First World War. MacMorris did not include either of the principal axes of the original panorama – the staircase of heroes and the monument to the dead – or the map of the Western Front. The war is no longer presented as a great and costly test passed by the French nation with like-minded allies, but as usher-

Figure 7.3 Daniel MacMorris, standing, reconfigures the original *Panthéon de la Guerre, c.* 1959 (© and courtesy Liberty Memorial Museum, Kansas City).

ing in the American century – an idea conveyed through the heightened profile of the flag-bearing US figures, who appear to be strutting on to the international stage, and through the bouquet set at Wilson's feet, presumably

by grateful allies who now incline compositionally towards the US section. This was the same bouquet that lay before the martyred English nurse Edith Cavell in the original *Panthéon*.

The Liberty Memorial, to its credit, has always highlighted the *Panthéon*'s entire history, including MacMorris's radical transformations. MacMorris himself included a disclaimer in the lower right-hand corner of the composition that says the painting has been 'taken out of context' from the original *Panthéon de la Guerre*. But even with this knowledge, the viewer is visually tricked by MacMorris's ability to make the fragments successfully masquerade as a seamless whole. The majestic setting of the Liberty Memorial only reinforces the perception of the *Panthéon* as a timeless, authoritative history.

Although MacMorris jettisoned large swathes of the panorama, he preserved the staircase of heroes and was later able to incorporate most of this section into a second building at the Liberty Memorial. The effect of this fragment also is unsettling because it was cut to fit the available space. Dozens of portraits are cut in half where the wall ends or where a doorway pierces the work in the centre, disconcerting croppings that draw attention to its status as a fragment.

The *Panthéon*'s ironic, fragmented history continues to evolve. After condensing the *Panthéon*, MacMorris sent two unused sections – each 10 feet high and 16 feet long – depicting French and North African cavalry back to Haussner. They hung in Haussner's Baltimore restaurant until it closed in 1999, were subsequently auctioned, and are now for sale at an antique store in a Paris flea market – the only fragments of the original to make the promised return journey to France. Neither looks exactly as it did when the *Panthéon* left Paris in 1927 – for example, the original neo-classical background of the North African cavalry has been 'restored' to a desert scene, which it never was (Figure 7.4). On a smaller but equally telling scale, a tiny fragment of the *Panthéon*'s staircase of heroes that probably was given to a friend by MacMorris recently found its way to auction on ebay, the Internet auction site – a pathetic end exacerbated by its being wrongly billed as a painting of a 'French military parade, circa 1900'.

Conclusion

The *Panthéon* and its history, as object and representation, can be viewed as a metaphor for the war itself and for how the war has been and continues to be remembered. The French artists' traditional approach to commemorating the war – a painted panorama replete with classical references and paeans to individual heroism – reflected the widespread belief in 1914 that the war would resemble previous conflicts. Precisely because it did not, the *Panthéon*'s *passéisme* provided a welcome dose of nostalgia afterwards. In the end, however, the history of the war refused to be neatly summed up in a single, traditional work, no matter how large. The circular format of the original

Figure 7.4 The North African Cavalry with a 'restored' desert background in 2003,
10' × 16' (© and courtesy Versailles Antiques, Paris).

panorama implied the possibility of total comprehension of the war, its complete legibility, and final closure that the war and its memory continue to deny.

Daniel MacMorris both saved and destroyed the *Panthéon*, and in so doing also drastically rewrote its original story. In the midst of the Cold War, the condensing of the *Panthéon* became an opportunity to celebrate the US contribution to the Great War retrospectively as the ushering in of the American century. MacMorris's revised *Panthéon* is seemingly as academic and traditional a work as the original from which it was composed. Yet the very process of reworking the *Panthéon* – even while hidden in the final mini-panorama – associates it with a modernist mindset that the war itself helped usher in culturally and artistically.

The moment MacMorris conceived of the *Panthéon* as combinable fragments rather than as a whole, he made it a modernist document more in tune with the cultural and intellectual repercussions of the war itself. Fragmentation is a hallmark of modernity (Nochlin 1995), a trope that took hold on a grand scale during and immediately after the war – the fracturing of vision, of knowledge, of reason (Eksteins 1989: 211, 236). The war exploded notions of wholeness and omniscience and reason that the *Panthéon* embodied; the *Panthéon*, too, has now literally succumbed to the decomposition associated with the war's destructiveness and its aftermath. In this respect, the tiny, battered *Panthéon* segment recently sold on ebay is as representative of the valences of the *Panthéon*'s materiality as MacMorris's polished mural high on the wall in the Liberty Memorial's Memory Hall.

From its inception, the *Panthéon de la Guerre* reflected the dictates of history. Its French creators, who scrambled to keep up with wartime developments, surely believed the completed panorama would forever remain the definitive, contemporary record of the war that it then seemed. But time did not stop, the memory of the Great War changed, and the *Panthéon*'s continuing relevance demanded its materiality be changed as well. The *Panthéon*'s story is in many ways tragic, especially for those who thought they had assured immortality for loved ones by securing their inclusion in the painting. But the seeds of the work's subsequent dismemberment and revisions were embodied in the project itself, namely in its anachronistic treatment of the first modern, industrialised, total war. The *Panthéon de la Guerre* is no longer the encompassing monument its creators envisioned, but its fragmentation and ongoing dispersal are, in the end, a more accurate reflection both of the war's modernist impact and of how the war itself has been remembered – and forgotten.

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DEATH AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The case of pictures during the First World War[1]

Joëlle Beurier

In 1915, Freud suggested reintegrating Death in the heart of life in war (Freud 1981: 40). This sounds strange in a world and a time that were already totally immersed in conflict, from the front line to the Home Front, from the elderly to the young, from the military sphere to the deepest part of each individual. Nevertheless, this apparent contradiction raises the issue of death in wartime, which was perhaps the main issue of the time. This period is also marked by the significant increase in production of all kinds of objects, such as crucifixes, rings and other items made with bullets or bombs at the front (Saunders 2001), and also plates, button or posters made behind the lines.[2] It seemed as if the whole of French society attempted to deal with the conflict by the production of material objects.

How are these two aspects combined? More precisely, how is death presented in the mass of photographs produced in that time,[3] both as itself, and through other issues, such as daily life and battlefield experiences? Above all, what does it say about the societies that are simultaneously editing and looking at these images: first, in terms of information about war (i.e. pictures and journalism), and second, regarding mentalities during the First World War (i.e. societies at war)? Observed, understood, assumed or rejected – how was death perceived during the world's first industrialised conflict?

Death

At the beginning of the war, death was reassuring. The first dead who appear in French pictures are definitively 'other'. In a corpus of images mainly composed of photographs, France chose to show death progressively, by means of the bodies: from 22 August 1914, the magazine *L'Illustration* shows, for instance, corpses of numerous horses scattered on the street, their limbs

stretched out. The caption does not hide reality: 'First pictures of warfare'[4] reminds us that war kills. But it was not until the issue of *L'Illustration* of 26 September that we see the first human bodies of 'German soldiers fallen between Meaux and Varreddes'. Even so, only enemy dead are shown in what will become a recurring edited version of reality throughout the war. Occasionally, photographs will add the bodies of Allied soldiers. However, all are alike: the bodies are shapeless, mostly with their faces turned towards the earth. The choice of the photographer or of the journalist is to show no close-up of the face, whose eyes and mouth so strongly symbolise the main features of life. Sometimes, the dead are accumulated, lined up or piled up. In every case, the snapshot declines to show violence, but serves to establish a stark fact: the end of life.

These documents feature death without emotion. The bodies appear as limp and shapeless rags, defying any possibility of action. Nevertheless, this apparently easygoing attitude towards showing and thus thinking about death is limited and partisan. The display of enemy bodies expresses a bellicose and simultaneously misleading tonality: for if death can be displayed, it is simply because it concerns only foreigners that the reader does not sympathise with, and which, also simultaneously, imply the victorious actions of friendly forces. As an example, another magazine, *Le Miroir* of 5 September, takes advantage of two particularly violent photographs of dead Turks with flushed faces in order to emphasise the heroism of 'our' troops: 'Because of their attacks in close order, like German troops, the Turks suffer enormous losses . . . But the ardour of our Senegalese and our Marsouins, and of the Australian and Hindu troops is matchless'.

Here again, the 'Image of the Other is a pretext to talk about itself' (Frank 1994: 7). In this way, the death of others is primarily used to underline the heroism of 'our own'. It also satisfies the feeling of hatred towards the enemy, which is a major element of the culture of wartime (Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2000: 122). Unconsciously, these pictures bring the reader closer to the idea of death in general, even that of relatives.

Nevertheless, even if there are few French dead in these particular French magazine pictures, it cannot be argued that the death of 'our own' is hidden. Very quickly the specialised weekly publications take up the subject, carefully but systematically. Once more, the images focus on the bodies and the transformations caused by the fighting. It is almost exclusively the French press that progressively accustoms its readership to the idea of danger, first with pictures of wounded soldiers. Spectators are then offered radiographs of broken or cut bones, of all kinds of bullets, shrapnel or grenades embedded in German and French limbs or necks.[5] Next, the public is shown battlefield crosses suggesting the presence of a French body.[6] Entire bodies of dead French soldiers then appear, but this time they are drawn rather than photographed. A few months later, the next step displays a photograph of the body of a Zouave (a French African colonial soldier) that had been aban-

doned after an assault – perhaps a halfway house, as Zouaves were a kind of French people, but their deaths did not touch the feelings of the metropolitan readership as deeply as those of white French soldiers.[7] A photograph of two lonely French feet follows,[8] and then comes a vague form on a stretcher.[9] Finally, complete bodies of French dead soldiers appear in a hospital destroyed by German bombardment.[10] This sequence of images reveals how pictures, like bullets, mistreat human bodies. They inform the public of medical improvements and demonstrate the increasingly serious damage caused by the war (Delaporte 1996). Simultaneously, the pictures themselves enter and cut the bodies (the two feet for instance), or observe them clinically, without emotion. The images break the taboo of what might be represented by exhibiting the innermost parts of the bodies, and thus they behave as war itself, familiarising us with the idea that there is no possible nor justified intimacy.

In every case, death is instrumentalised to stigmatise an enemy described either as a barbarian who kills wounded or defeated soldiers, or as a loser whom death, even if it pleases some, convinces everyone of the inevitable outcome of war. For that reason, death is closely connected with the war's culture, based upon hatred of the enemy. But this presentation of death goes further, by showing the hoped for defeat and death of enemies; it also means assuming the reality of death, of letting it enter one's home, here and now, as magazine images. By means of the photograph, the public does not content itself only with hating the 'other', but witnesses his death, enjoys and takes part in it. The totalising effects of war involve and implicate the private sphere in the massacres in public space. Sanctioned by the press, the official censor and the surrounding culture, individuals give way to the desire to kill when they look at the images. Pictures advance the familiarisation of violence, renounce the forbidden and ancestral taboo against killing, and authorise the collective enjoyment of the death of 'others'.

However, death in pictures does not only concern the enemy. French photographs deal discreetly with the death of 'their own', but British and German examples are much more expressive. First, they privilege a more traditional way of representing death by means of drawings. Second, their approach is similar in dealing with the 'heroic' aspects of the increasing number of attacks and the brute violence of hand-to-hand fighting. *The Illustrated War News* refuses 'right-thinking pictures' (Dagen 1996: 73) and does not hold back:[11] everything concerning death in hand-to-hand fighting is shown, even exaggerated; the picture doesn't try to hide any part of reality in order to protect public sensibilities. In Germany, if the sensation of disorder prevails from *Kriegsnummer 1*,[12] violence increases mainly in Felix Schwormschtadt's works. It increases first in perpetrated acts, then moves on progressively with bayonet blades sticking vertically into chests,[13] and groups of men killing each other. Here, an Austro-Hungarian soldier is stabbing a sabre-brandishing Serb with a bayonet, while his wife is shooting point-blank

at the soldier,[14] while there, a body is thrown in the air by the blast of an exploding shell.[15]

A paroxysm of violence is reached in *Kriegsnummer 12*.[16] As usual, we are confronted with a hand-to-hand fight. But our eyes are immediately drawn to some white and touched-up parts of the bodies. The contracted hand of a French soldier is gripping at the enemy's face while driving his nails into his enemy's jaw, and catching hold of one of his lips – the nails of a German soldier are sinking into the French soldier's eye socket and another French body is bending as a result of shock. Elsewhere, a rifle is branded ready to strike the enemy who is trying to protect himself with his arm.

So many pictures of incredible violence accumulate before the astounded and aggrieved reader's eyes. Furthermore, the reality of war, or rather the reality of death, is exhibited by means of emotions that are supposed to be provoked by the violence of the fighting. In such cases, the eyes of the assailants jump out of their eye sockets[17] and the mouths of the wounded are opened by the shock of an attack. One can almost feel the suffering of a wounded soldier, leaning against a tree, holding out his hand to his approaching horse in a gesture that seeks reassurance. Behind him are piled up corpses of his dead comrades. Emotion is strong, the spectator's heart is being wrung, and it would all become unbearable without the figures of stretcher-bearers in the background.[18] British and German weekly magazines exhibit the processes of death of all fighters, enemies and allies.

Nevertheless, although the violence is indescribable, neither French, German nor British photographs express sadness or any negative tonality. Everything is action, agitation, tension and life. The frenetic rhythm, engendered by the succession of pictures, or the multiplication of actions within each picture, demonstrate the violence of the fighting, but finally reminds us of the importance of what is at stake, and at what cost in human lives. Death is but one of the two possible outcomes of this type of fighting. When it happens, indicated by abandoned bodies on the ground, it is characterised by the ending of that tension. The death of 'our own' is not supposed to bring about the end of horror or anguish, but rather to engender astonishment at the sight of such incredible energy being expended. Whether the loved soldier lives or dies, he will be a hero. The texts that describe this type of representation confirm this. Without exception, all associate death with the greatness of the act that takes place before our eyes. This is the case in a drawing by Lucien Jonas showing a soldier in front of the gates of death's realm:

> In the quiet and the silence that follow the tumult of the fray, a soldier is going to die, as a victor. Gathering his last forces, he could lie against a caisson and take a sheet of paper from his over-coat. He wrote his last thought: 'I'm suffering. I'm alone . . . Goodbye mother; goodbye my dear wife and my dear children . . . Vive la

France!' How many such letters have been collected on our battle-
fields in the crisped hands of our soldiers. All of them had the same
tone of heroic simplicity, the same tenderness, the same faith.[19]

In fact, this patriotic act appears like the last thought of the soldier. Physical
pain and suffering are not absent, but they are justified, remote, sublimated
by the self-conscious act of sacrifice. In other words, death in war is not for-
bidden or denied, it is definitively heroic.

Whether one flaunts the death of enemies in photographs, or exhibits the
heroic death of one's own soldiers by drawings, pictures will always talk the
same language: the heroism of the fighters in action is the kind of death dis-
played at the beginning of the First World War – expected and absorbed in
the reader's mind. It is also sublimated by the fact that the soldier is an actor
in his own death. If he wins, he will become a hero, if he loses, he will
become a martyr. Corpses are regularly distilled in each subsequent edition of
the weekly magazines in a vivid atmosphere that helps overcome the taboo
of death and dying. After the initial shock at the display of violence, the
reader becomes hardened to such images, especially as soldiers themselves no
longer appear to take precautions, even when they tidy the trenches by
removing dead soldiers in sacks, walk over lifeless bodies, and quietly smoke
a pipe or a cigarette.[20] Not to be left behind in the growing insouciance of
war behaviour, the readers do the same, by mimesis. In the exaltation of the
idea of death and justification of violence in the heroic act, one witnesses the
gradual beginnings of a process that consists of an iconographical and
mental trivialisation of death.

Daily life and battlefields

A turning point in the manner of representing death took place in the spring
of 1915, as fewer and fewer images of death now appear in the weekly mag-
azines. After a rapid increase of pictures showing fallen soldiers from August
to December 1914 – and which is maintained until spring 1915 – one can
observe a slow but constant decrease from April onward.[21] After December
1916, *Le Miroir* does not show more than one or two photographs of dead
people a month, though usually none at all. This implies a shift in the repre-
sentation of death, and in the emotional environment created by the pictures.
Two main changes are obvious.

First, there develops an atmosphere that I call 'peace at war time', i.e. a
period during which no important battles take place. Then, particularly in the
German and British magazines, the heroic drawings disappear and are
replaced by photographs of daily life in the trenches. The German theme-
oriented photo-reportage is developed from an ethnological perspective. War
is revealed through the various daily micro-activities of the soldiers. *Illustrierte
Blatt* from 3 October 1915 talks about the work of digging, which occurs

regularly in the pictures; the issue of 24 October 1915 explains how war is carried on – the soldiers pose, perfectly lined up at the front line and in firing position, or behind the lines with rifles on shoulders. How is 'No-man's land' controlled? A patrol is walking in military order, between rows of barbed wire. What is the entertainment at war? One can witness several festivities like fancy dress and dances, roundabouts and music.[22]

These insights show a healthy and active civilisation during wartime. As a matter of fact, it is all about informing the readership of the new conditions of a new kind of war. The reality of the trenches that is portrayed reveals astonishing features, such as the adaptation of the soldiers to life in the snow,[23] but excludes any idea of danger. Within these daily scenes, bodies are active, even energetic, pulling the ropes of boats or the reins of horses.[24] In such cases, texts are presenting soldiers from an anthropological point of view, documenting a new kind of 'civilisation' with its own 'culture'. On 28 November 1914, *L'Illustration* published a photograph of a trench on a hill-side. While the men appear to hold on tight to that quite insecure position, the text underlines the exotic dimension: 'We showed last week one of the huts and straw-hut villages, where our soldiers are living behind the front line; somewhere else, they settle like cave dwellers in lines of superimposed shelters, dug out in the abrupt hill-side which encloses certain valleys'.

Beyond its purpose of informing the reader, the text locates the picture in a network of antecedent iconographical references, inherited from previous ethnographic information about the colonies: we are shown 'types' of soldiers, while before there were 'types' of colonised people (Puiseux 1997: 108). And the journalist writes about them in a style reminiscent of an ethnological inquiry into tribal societies – 'huts', 'straw huts', and 'cave dwellers'. In all countries, these photo-reportages, which from now on privilege photographs, reduce the war to an original, unexpected, active and healthy life where death is absent. The former energy of conflict is now transposed to a difficult and distinctive quotidian. But the ethnological perspective maintains a gap between Home Front and Front-line, in order to continue to evoke admiration and notions of heroism. In this way, soldiers maintain daily life during exceptional events. Whereas at the beginning of the war they were heroes of hand-to-hand fighting, by the spring of 1915 they have become heroes of everyday life. Here, soldiers remain heroes but the spectre of death has disappeared.

The second line followed by the pictures of war takes place during the periods of 'war at war time', i.e. the most intensive moments of battle, which take place in 1916. During this year, two major battles of the Western Front were fought: the battle of Verdun (from February until December), and the battle of the Somme (from 1 July to mid-November). In order to inform readers of the most important reality – a battle in which almost everybody knows and loves a soldier – the pictures focus on the battlefield itself. It is striking here that the photographs eliminate any images of civilised war.

Something is at stake, and the shift from pictures of battle and death to those of war landscapes is clear.[25]

The first step in this shifting of what is essentially an anthropological perspective takes place at Verdun and creates the sensation of a natural apocalypse. Three main points characterise photographs of the Verdun battlefield landscape. First and foremost there is the presence of trees. In fact, they are no longer nature's trees, but artefactual objects – trunks without branches and leaves.[26] Even more, there are forests of trunks – a testimony to previous forests, now destroyed, wounded and mutilated.[27] Very often, they are associated with a dark homogeneous and watery earth – the infamous mud that gave the area its reputation as the 'Hell of Verdun'. Soon, pictures show large holes left by fallen bombs, regularly scattered, and forming craters that justify the expression 'lunar landscape'.[28] The second feature of the Verdun pictures is that about 60 per cent show large, often aerial, views of the landscape.[29] The third characteristic is an almost total absence of people – a consequence of the scale that emphasises landscape at the expense of human figures (Figure 8.1, overleaf).[30]

This kind of information has two emotional consequences for readers. The first is that large-scale views without men remind us of the European tradition of landscape painting. Together with the cleanliness and simplicity of the setting, we perceive a poetical, even quiet picture, comparable to eighteenth-century painted landscapes. Here, a new kind of aesthetic is presented, based on the mechanical repetition of the same motif (trees in that case, but elsewhere the motif could be piles of material, or the accumulation of prisoners' bodies[31]). These repeated elements represent the pictorial translation of the modernity of the world – or, to be more precise, they symbolise the industrial war. As a consequence, the reader feels primarily a kind of poetical shock when looking at these pictures, and then grasps the new reality of the new war based on industrial supremacy.

The second consequence is related to the absence of any human beings in the landscape. If, on the one hand, this contributes to the poetry of the 'mechanical aesthetic' described above, it tends, on the other hand, to dehumanise the conflict. And, beyond the emotion elicited by this wild beauty, the reader then acquires an appreciation of what seems to be the main emotional feature of the First World War experience – the total passivity of soldiers. The dehumanising effect of a mechanically destroyed landscape signifies not only the horror of the violence, but, even worse, the impossibility of reacting to such violence. Facing this new sight of battle, we come closer to the stupefaction of contemporary observers who realised to what extent this passivity reduced the soldiers to being nothing. Verdun appears as the symbol of passivity revealed at an intense level, depriving soldiers of their basic humanity. This is the Apocalypse seen as the end of the world.

The second example of such a symbolic setting takes place during the battle of the Somme, which also appears as a human chaos. At first glance it

Figure 8.1 A typical view of the Verdun battlefield, published in *Le Miroir*, 2 April 1916 (photograph © author).

looks different from Verdun. About 65 per cent of photographs are views at close quarters or middle distance.[32] This helps distinguish more detail, particularly of the trenches, which appear covered with all kind of objects.[33] This creates a feeling of chaos that is present in 74 per cent of the images. Among these objects can be discerned human legs and headless torsos.[34] Trees also contribute to the chaotic scene but, unlike at Verdun, they are not a forest of trunks, but branches upside-down and lying scattered on the ground.[35] Finally, the ground itself, visible in black and white, is a mixture of mud and calcareous matter that genders a kind of general disorder.[36] This chaos is the main characteristic of representations of the Somme. The battlefield is presented as an enormous rubbish dump that signifies the urgency and violence of what has taken place there. A third feature of the Somme is that, as photographs adopt a closer view, so human beings are more often present, which is the case in 58 per cent of the documents[37] (Figure 8.2, p. 118).

How can we explain this second kind of battle? First, it is clearly the result of different geography. The Somme is less heavily forested, and the nature of the ground is chalk, which explains, for instance, the presence of white stones in the landscape. However, geological reality is not sufficient to comprehend fully the creation of such a new type of battlefield landscape. In fact, the close-up views of the Somme, compared to those of Verdun, are the result of human choice rather than natural determinism. The combination of disorder on such a vast scale and the reintegration of human beings in these pictures breaks with the previous aesthetic and poetical vision of Verdun's battlefields. In this way, war becomes more real, that is to say more

connected with soldiers. Thus, the rubbish-dump battlefield of the Somme represents extreme violence, not only as the result of 'mad machines', but also as the consequence of action and destruction perpetrated by humans. The landscapes of the Somme, therefore, could represent an awareness, not of the brutality of war – already well known from Verdun – but its totality. In this sense, the presence of aeroplane propeller blades reminds us of the invasion of all physical spaces (earth, sea and air), and of every kind of material involving the logistics of total war and that bridge the battle zone and the Home Front. This kind of conflict is neither more nor less violent than the other, but it expresses another step in the awareness of the First World War as total war.

Here we have observed two kinds of battle and their topographical settings which reveal the reality of this new type of war and the public awareness of it. The sensational aspect of these pictures, new, shocking, and previously unimaginable, corresponds to the scope of the battles in terms of dead human beings, of suffering and material damage. The shock felt by the reader when confronted with these pictures, corresponds to the psychological shock – shell shock – of the soldiers facing total war. Both reactions signify the high level of violence of the war, and the fact that society has become conscious of that brutalisation. Death is no longer represented. It has been replaced, either by a healthy vision of daily life, or by the sensational landscape of the battlefields.

Pictures and journalism

However, through various processes, spectacular information leads also to a trivialisation of this new and shocking reality. The most important process of photo-journalism is metonymy. In terms of journalistic method, at the end of 1916 we can conclude that we do not need to name the battle in order to recognise it. It proves that metonymy, where the battle is replaced by its landscape, has become both recognisable and accepted. Consequently, given the notoriety and the clichés of violence and death associated with these battles, one might think that it is no longer necessary to depict pieces of bodies or dead soldiers in order to understand the idea of violence. In other words, we need only to observe pictures of the landscapes of Verdun or the Somme to understand fully. The second step of the metonymical process is that landscape means violence. Finally, the same metonymy can be observed when landscape means death. Effectively, even though there are less dead bodies in Verdun's landscape (less than 8 per cent), compared to some 17.5 per cent for the Somme, all appear only until the fourth month of each battle, and then they too disappear. Again, metonymy seems to be at work, leading to the disappearance of actual death, and replaced by its evocation by battlefield landscapes. The third and last step of the metonymical process is that landscape means death. In conclusion, this process of metonymy established

Figure 8.2 A typical view of the Somme battlefield, published in *Le Miroir*,
3 September 1916 (photograph © author).

by the medium of photography ensures an immediate legibility and under-standing – one of the weapons in the arsenal of journalism.

Of course, this process has limits. Even though it ensures an immediate legibility, it also provokes a certain trivialisation. The first is a familiarisation with the sensational, that is to say, in the present context, with death. This is a problem associated with each kind of media. If intensity grows with the multiplication of new photographs and with their regular and frequent appearance, this recurrence provokes a fixing of archetypes of any battle. Consequently, what was sensational at the beginning becomes familiar, and the process of metonymy loses its new character. This appears to have been the case for the autumn of 1916, where we can identify each battle without being given its name. In terms of the method of information, it means that sensation disappears for the benefit of knowledge. The second problem is that of reductionism. In fact, the immediacy of reading, which ensures shock for the reader, limits the accuracy of horror. Since creating an 'archetype' implies setting up short cuts, which allows for the understanding of total war and creates the shock, it constitutes at the same time an obstacle to perceiving the daily reality of war – no details, and no sensations of the kind that bring us closer to the soldiers, their lives and fears.

The process of metonymy implies that the readers have no real dead sol-diers before their eyes, even if they are increasingly able to imagine them. Finally, metonymy and sensation define the archetypes, and from that point

on, there is no originality in the representations of battles. Archetypes become stereotypes. As an example, we can assess the representation of the battle of the Chemin-des-Dames, in April 1917. This is a new and atypical kind of battle on the Western Front, not least due to the distinctive topography. The battlefield consists of a plateau more than 100 m in height that French soldiers were expected to assault while, on the summit, German soldiers armed with machine guns hid in caves. The outcome of 16 April 1917 was complete slaughter for the French army. Nevertheless, we do not find in the weeklies any photographs of new images representing different outcomes of the event. What is shown is already known – a mixing of the photographs developed in 1916.[38] The reuse of old clichés indicates that this kind of symbolisation has become the paradigm of violence for all battles, and even more of the brutalisation of the entire war.

To summarise, these journalistic features put limits on the public reception of the spectacular, and limited their proximity to the reality of the battlefields. In particular, the reality of death virtually disappeared. Such images, which were supposed to better portray the realities of war, have instead trivialised it. This is the problem inherent in each form of communication, information and representation. But one has to consider that the sensational could have been constantly renewed, portraying for each new battle the horrors specific to each.[39] We must suppose thus that this making of archetypes does not serve as a better way of showing reality. It should be considered that we might observe mentalities themselves. For if we agree that the metonymy of the battlefields refers not only to the battle and its violence in general, but also to death as a consequence, we must question the idea that landscape could represent death without explicitly referring to it. This idea, combined with the decrease of dead soldiers shown in the pictures, brings us closer to the idea of the psychological repression of death in societies at war.

Societies at wartime

What happened around mid-1915 to transform contemporary society's perceptions of the war? One could posit that the sight of mass death suddenly begins to frighten people. Or one could point out that censorship now forbids such images. If these two assumptions contribute to the disappearance of death in the pictures, even more important is the explanation given by Freud:

> For great human individualities, populations and States, have given up their moral restrictions . . . and they have tended in a comprehensive way to temporarily ignore the pressure exerted by Civilisation and to give free rein to their otherwise restrained impulses. Probably, the morality that was part of their own nation did not suffer any damage.
>
> (Freud 1981: 40)

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At the beginning of the war, according to Freud, neither states nor their populations had been shocked by these terrible, numerous and violent pictures of death. Everybody got something from these heroic and 'heroising' representations of death because they merged the patriotic act with the idea of an active death, in which the individual is the main actor. But from the spring of 1915 the change in the pictures reveals an awareness of another reality of the war – the change from a mobile conflict to one of entrenchment. As Philippe Ariès (1975: 63) reminds us, previously death could be faced by the dying, and later also by his family, in organising the act of dying.

From 1915, when mobile warfare ceased, the public realised that death was something other than the *élan* of a glorious assault, and that henceforth, their beloved soldiers were dying under a rain of shells without any possibility of escaping. In other words, soldiers had lost any initiative in the act of dying – and death could no longer be so easily accepted by the Home Front. When the public became aware that the most heroic actions were powerless to save life, death itself becomes almost impossible to bear. In other words, the development of trench warfare signals the end of any heroic death, yet remains the last refuge of the 'beautiful death' described by Ariès, where each human being could play the most essential role: organising funerals, seeing his whole family around his bed, writing his last testament. With the advent of industrialised war, death has become collective and anonymous, and has deprived individuals of their freedom to act in their own death. Thus death does not seem to belong to life any longer, but just signifies the tragic loss of loved ones. Perhaps this is why death in war can no longer be shown.

Nevertheless, a step is missing in the process of denying death. Although terrible, it could have been felt as painful, and exhibited as such. But people do not cry over death – they repress it. Now, the process of psychological repression requires a juxtaposition of two antagonistic feelings about death within the same person. The understanding lies in the strongly patriotic context of societies at war. Until the spring of 1915, a heroic death permitted by mobile warfare ensured the combination of individual interests – for whom dying heroically for one's country meant being active and having a 'beautiful death'. From the spring of 1915 onward, the conditions of trench warfare are well known by people on the Home Front, who have come to understand that soldiers can no longer be pro-active in their own death. This new situation creates a contradiction between collective interests. On the one hand, soldiers are devoted to the Motherland, but on the other, families have to see their beloved soldiers dying without any possibility of taking the individual actions that mark them out as human beings. Here is the painful and monstrous contradiction between collective duty and individual desire. The taboo of death, described by Ariès is almost established. As with mourning (Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2000: 205), death has to be hidden in order to mask the extreme heartbreak it provokes. Therefore, pictures at best symbolise this by the rhetorical process of the metonymy of landscape.

Throughout this chapter, I have explored the several layers of meaning and the objectification regarding representations of death. It has been shown how some journalistic processes represented war without showing it as a way of expressing a specific relationship between society and death. Finally, material culture in the form of pictures (drawings or photographs) tell at least as much, if not more, about mentalities and societies at war, than the reality of it. These artefacts exemplify the power of objects to embody the experiences of war and at the same time highlight the central role of materiality in creating and representing physical and social worlds. In every case, it seems clear that wartime weekly publications with their emphasis on visual images allowed populations to accept the conflict, and then helped them to continue making war. At the same time, they reflected the great and deep crisis within each individual. In this way, these pictures situate us within the trauma of the Great War.

Notes

1 This chapter details a progression of photographs taken from my dissertation 'Pictures of the Great War: France, Germany and Great Britain, 1914–1918'.
2 L'Historial de la Grande Guerre, in France, presents a great sample of objects produced at the Home Front.
3 For France, *Le Miroir* and *L'Illustration* have been consulted; *The Illustrated War News* for Great Britain; *Illustrierte Zeitung* and *Das Illustrierte Blatt* for Germany. All of them are weeklies whose characteristic feature is their use of many pictures (mostly photographs).
4 *L'Illustration*, 22 August 1914.
5 *Illustrierte Blatt*, no. 43, 24 October 1915. *L'Illustration*, 28 November 1914, where three out of seven radiographs represent German bodies.
6 *L'Illustration*, 24 October 1914.
7 *L'Illustration*, 16 January 1915.
8 *L'Illustration*, 13 February 1915.
9 'La mort du capitaine Bruno Garibaldi', *L'Illustration*, 27 February 1915.
10 *L'Illustration*, 13 March 1915.
11 *The Illustrated War News*, 13 January 1915.
12 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 1, 6 August 1914.
13 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 4, 27 August 1914.
14 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 7, 17 September 1914.
15 *The Illustrated War News*, 13 January 1915.
16 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 12, 22 October 1914.
17 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 4, 27 August 1914.
18 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 12, 22 October 1914.
19 *L'Illustration*, 12 December 1914.
20 *L'Illustration*, 26 June 1915.
21 Apart from some exceptional occasions such as Christmas or the sudden increase of the autumn of 1916. For more detail on the graph, see J. Beurier (2001).
22 *Illustrierte Blatt*, 24 October 1915.
23 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 35, 1 April 1915.
24 *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 68, 18 November 1915.

25 I will focus here on one French weekly, *Le Miroir*, which is the only one I have systematically examined for that theme.
26 *Le Miroir*, 30 April 1916.
27 *Le Miroir*, 2 April 1916; *Le Miroir*, 30 April 1916.
28 *Le Miroir*, 13 August 1916.
29 *Le Miroir*, 5 March 1916; *Le Miroir*, 2 April 1916.
30 *Le Miroir*, 2 April 1916; *Le Miroir*, 4 June 1916.
31 *Le Miroir*, 3 December 1916.
32 *Le Miroir*, 29 October 1916.
33 *Le Miroir*, 27 July 1916; *Le Miroir*, 6 August 1916.
34 *Le Miroir*, 8 October 1916; *Le Miroir*, 15 October 1916.
35 *Le Miroir*, 13 August 1916.
36 *Le Miroir*, 3 September 1916.
37 *Le Miroir*, 13 August 1916.
38 *Le Miroir*, 17 June 1916; *Le Miroir*, 2 May 1916. The same thing could be demonstrated in 1918, with the battle of The Marne which should have been represented as the return of mobile warfare.
39 Even if one must take account of the fact that the other battles did not take place over such a long period of time, which of course allows one to find time to build a precise image of any fact.

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A MATERIAL LINK BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE

First World War silk postcards

Pat Tomczyszyn

Two days after the German army penetrated French territory, on 2 August 1914, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa answered the call to arms. For these Allies, it would be no short war, nor would it be without great cost of human life. The slaughter on both sides still staggers the imagination: at the battle of Somme in 1916, the British lost over 400,000 men, at Verdun the Germans lost 281,000 while 315,000 French were killed at this same location. In total, some 13 million men died in the First World War.

The separation of women from their husbands and sweethearts caused by the First World War gave rise in popularity to a particularly distinctive type of material culture – the embroidered silk postcard. Somewhere in villages behind the battlefront, French women and girls began to embroider flags and flowers and attach them to card. Popular with the soldiers billeted in towns, a thriving cottage industry was born. In one collection there is a card that reads '. . . the French girls work on them at their homes which are located only a few miles to the rear from the front lines'. Most commonly made in France, these richly coloured designs were sent home by the soldiers stationed there. There was also a small quantity of cards that were embroidered in England by refugees from France.

These embroidered silks constitute a unique category of material culture that serves to explore and link the ways combatants and their loved ones at home were drawn together through a material object. In an age of letter-writing, the silk postcards certainly served as a means of communication, but they were viewed by the soldiers in a somewhat different light for none of the cards was franked, a clear indication that they were sent in a separate envelope or with a letter, in an effort to keep them in perfect condition. Their material value was meaningful to at least one soldier expressed on a card written in January 1916 from Belgium – 'I hope you are keeping these cards in

your album as they will be nice to have when I get back which I hope will not be long, although there are so signs of peace on our front'. Two months later he writes 'Let me know if you are getting all these cards I'm sending you. You never say in your letters'. This was followed by 'I hope you will put this with your collection and I'll see them when I get home'. Clearly, these cards had significant material value to this man.

These beautiful cards, an extreme example of a way to escape the ugliness of war at the front, served to send home a miniature piece of handcrafted art. One such collection, owned by the author, contains 167 cards sent to members of a close-knit family in Winnipeg in Canada. As such it may be one of the largest collections in Canada sent to members of a single extended family.[1] All the cards in the collection have been protected against light, and consequently against fading. As a result, they are as dazzlingly colourful today as they must have been more than 80 years ago when they were made by rural artisans in France.

The largest number of cards in the collection was received by the author's great-aunt, Alexandra, or 'Ex' as she was called. Most of these cards originated with her Irish-born husband Samuel James Patterson. Sam joined the 27th City of Winnipeg Battalion, 6th Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Canadian Division Royal Expeditionary Forces on 8 December 1914.

Alexandra's sister, Ernestine, also received cards from Sam in addition to a few from her American-born husband Frederick McClelland. Fred was formerly with the US Army Corps and joined the 78th Canadian Infantry Battalion, 100th Regiment Winnipeg Grenadiers, 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade on 17 February 1916. On 13 January 1917 at the age of 27, Fred was killed in action and is buried at Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez, France. Pregnant before he left for the front, Ernestine gave birth to his namesake, Frederick, while he fought in France.

Isabelle Simpson, the author's aunt, received cards from family and sweethearts alike. Bella, as she was known, also received at least one card from Fred McClelland. Not dated, it wishes her a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Since he died in February 1917, it may be assumed that he is referring to Christmas 1916. Regrettably, there are no longer any surviving family members to provide additional information on these men, nor on the women left behind.

Bella was born at the beginning of the twentieth century, making her 14 to 18 years old during the First World War and probably too young for a serious romance. The collection contains some especially touching cards from Ernest Samuel Walker, one of thousands of young men taken out of the routine of daily life and thrust into a foreign environment. Born in England, Ernie joined the service on 4 July 1915 as a private in No. 5 platoon, B Company, 78th Overseas Battalion, 100th Regiment Winnipeg Grenadiers. Ernie has been described as 'an old flame' of Isabelle.[2] The cards sent by him bear witness to her considerable charm for Ernie has written 'To Bella with best

love from yours always', 'Here's to your health sweet girl', and the long, but touching note that reads:

> How pleased I was to receive your nice long letter; I only wish that I'd got it a little earlier so that I could have written you a real nice one in return. I haven't the time now as we are just about to go in for another spell 'dans les tranchées'. Xmas Eve too. Tough luck – anyway cheer up. With love from Ern.

Ernie must have been a close family friend as he sent at least three other cards to Alexandra Patterson.

This attempt to reduce the war to a predictable and ordinary routine, typical of the one that governed ordinary life back home, is a theme that runs through many of the messages that were meant to reassure and comfort worried relatives and friends at home. The use of clichés like 'keep the home fires burning' and 'we are having quite a good time out here' attempted to produce a stability of sorts on both sides of the ocean.

The vast majority of the cards indicate that the men were taking great pains to conceal the reality of what was happening from their loved ones at home. The single exception in this collection is from Sam and was written to his wife's sister Ida on 29 December 1915. It sends home the message:

> When writing this card the Germans were sending over some large shells which we call coal boxes. We always send 3 shells over to their one, it looks very much like being very short of ammunitions. Their machine guns are playing the Devil with our boys, there is hardly a day goes by but we have some wounded. Now dears (Ex and Ida) I'm taking care of myself the best I can, it's very hard to keep dry. I wish the fine weather would come soon.

This collection of silk postcards is valuable not only for the tangled story they tell of strength, love, patriotism, and patience, but also for a view of the First World War that brings that reality to life. Some messages written in haste are testimony to the trials of the time: war diaries, records and historical summaries indicate that all too often, particularly grim battles can be linked to postcards with the briefest of messages. For instance, Sam Patterson writes to his wife on 16 April 1916: 'Belgium. Dear Ex, I [am] hoping you are quite well and everyone happy under the trial circumstances.' Twelve days earlier, the area between St Eloi and the Ypres-Menin road in Belgian Flanders was the scene of considerable activity when the 2nd Canadian Division lost 1,292 men, battling in the mire for possession of mine craters. On 11 June, Sam briefly scratches out: 'To my dear Ex, from Sam'. That same month brought a pressing siege from the Germans preceded by the heaviest artillery bombardment hitherto experienced. In November:

Canada paid a heavy price for Regina Trench. For weeks the close
battle swung backwards and forwards across the battered quarter-
mile of trenches . . . Desire Trench was carried on the 18th. The
corps lost 2,000 men on the Somme . . . [3]

Ernie Walker wrote to Bella in that same month: 'Somewhere in F. Keep your
heart up – all's well'.

The tradition of embroidered postcards has its origins much earlier than the
Great War. The first French card of this type dates back to 1907. They were
known in Austria in 1903 and by 1910 had gained considerably popularity.
Until the outbreak of the war most designs featured flowers as their main
iconographic theme. While the poppy carries a strong association and is sym-
bolic of the Great War, it was the pansy that was the most popular flower
shown on the cards in the author's collection. Poppies can also be identified,
along with daisies, lilies-of-the-valley, carnations and roses (Figure 9.1).[4] The
use of nature on postcards and images of the pastoral symbolised peace and
tranquillity and served to mask the ever-present death and destruction of land-
scape and nature as well as men.

Once war enveloped Europe, the major themes soon changed to flags of
the Allies and regimental designs. Among the regiments represented in this
collection are the Royal Army Medical Corps, embroidered 'RAMC'; Cana-
dian Army Medical Corps, embroidered 'CAMC'; Royal Flying Corps,
embroidered 'RFC'; Royal Field Artillery, embroidered 'RFA'; Royal Engi-
neers, and Canadian EF in France. One card that is likely to be an embroidery
error is for the British Red Cross Society, that is embroidered 'BRSC'.[5]

While the French did not invent the embroidered card, they were certainly
one of the largest producers. The cards flourished during the war, enjoying
particular success with the military. Ports like Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe,
Rouen and Le Havre were especially rich in these silks, and nearly every shop,
large or small, had them for sale. Several genres established themselves. Cards
conveying affectionate tidings were by far the most favoured, followed by
patriotic sentiments, then regimental badges. As a result, cards in the first cat-
egory are more plentiful. The earliest of this type is embroidered 'Forget me
not' and was from an unidentified friend to Isabelle Simpson. She has written
'I received this card in 1914 during the war he was then at Ypres.' Even
though the popularity of the silk postcards waned after the war's end, manu-
facturers continued to make them and supplied troops stationed at Gibraltar
with the silks until 1926.

All the cards have similar aspects: a white silk rectangle on which the mes-
sage and design were embroidered. The embroiderers began with long strips
of silk about 190 cm × 11 cm, long enough to accommodate up to 25 designs.
The strips were starched before embroidery began. Generally the silk portion
of the card measures approximately 6 cm × 11 cm and is enclosed within a
cardboard border measuring about 1.25 cm to 1.6 cm in width. When com-

Figure 9.1 A typical pastoral floral scene, with sentiment 'To my dear wife'
(© author).

pleted they were sent to factories for finishing. Here they were attached to a card that framed the embroidery on one side with borders embossed to simulate lace, geometrical or blossom and foliage designs. The alternate side was a regular postcard back.

Little is mentioned in the literature as to the manufacture of the cardboard portion: none of the sources consulted provide this information. However, examination of the cards in this collection reveals that a number of manufacturers appear to have been involved in France, England and Switzerland. The most frequently seen printer's marks are those of CM; J .J. Saint-Omer-Paris; H. S. The latter had his border patterns registered; the term 'Modèle depose' appears on those of his manufacture. One card indicates that it was made in France but carries a London address: 'Inter-Art Co., Red Lion Square, London, WC'. While most of the cards are printed in French or French and English, one card that originated in Paris bears five languages: 'Carte Postale', 'Post Card', 'Cartolina Postale', 'Tarjeta Postal' and 'Bilhete Postal'.

The obverse of the card, like a typical postcard, has space for a message and address. One collection card is printed 'Tous les pays étrangers n'acceptant pas la correspondance au recto, se renseigner à la Poste' leaving the reader to wonder how the mainly monolingual Canadian and British forces were expected to comprehend the message.

All the cards in this collection share one thing in common: they have no postage stamps nor are there any names and addresses written in the section provided. It appears that the men in the trenches preferred to guard their

souvenir silks against damage and enclosed them in the lightweight semi-transparent envelopes sold with the cards. Since one message in this collection refers to a 'letter under separate cover' this may have been the way that particular card was mailed although no envelopes exist in the collection.

More refined examples had an embroidered flap that formed a small pocket in which a decorative message card could be found; occasionally an exquisite silk handkerchief was tucked into them.[6] Nearly all these examples are embroidered 'To my dear wife', 'To my dear mother' or 'To my dear sister'. Images on the smaller cards represent landscapes, or a couple, and are sometimes the work of well known illustrators like Xavier Sager, who drew many of the designs used for these small insert cards and that bear mostly patriotic messages. All his cards are signed. G. Miehler designed sepia-coloured landscape war scenes sometimes showing a soldier with his country's flags.

The subject of the cards is evidently a response to the demand of the principal clientèle: the military engaged in the Great War who wanted to give news of life at the Front, to send messages of affection to those from whom they were separated. In an analysis of the cards, two principal themes dominate: patriotism and military life on one hand (e.g. the names of locations where soldiers served (Figure 9.2)) and anniversaries and sentiments on the other.

Patriotic cards, often showing the flags of various countries, celebrate the participation of the Allies in the war (Figure 9.3, p. 130). Certain figures are shown side by side to symbolise the patriotism of the fraternisation of the alliances. The accompanying text is usually of a patriotic nature: 'All united', 'For right and liberty', 'The maple leaf forever' and 'Send him victorious'.

But the sentimental theme dominates with simple messages conveying the thoughts of those in the trenches: 'I long to see you', 'My thoughts are at home' and 'You are ever in my dreams'. In addition, there were special occasion cards for Christmas, New Year and Easter, and these bore more traditional messages of 'A happy New Year' and 'Christmas greetings'. More often, the messages were personal and dedicated to a loved one: 'With love to my dear wife' and 'To my dear sweetheart'.

Occasionally, the written message was a direct response to the embroidered message. One card, embroidered with 'A kiss from the trenches', has an accompanying written message that reads 'Just a kiss from the trenches. I wish it was natural then I know I would be home'. Another reads 'In case you become doubtful P.T.O.' where the embroidered front declaration is 'Ever true'. An undated card with the message 'Will soon be home' has Sam Patterson clinging to that thought when he writes 'I hope that this card is right, don't you hope so my dear Ex. I will be glad to get back as 9 months in these trenches are sufficient for any man'.

While undated, the comment of '9 months in these trenches' is an indication that it was sent fairly early in his tour of duty, since the 27th Regiment saw action that began in February 1915. Sam had joined the regiment on 8 December 1914, and postcards indicate that he saw action for two more

Figure 9.2 A postcard recording the embroidered names of the infamous towns of Givenchy, Ypres and Festubert along the Western Front that saw particularly heavy fighting (© author).

years. One of the last postcards Sam sent from France is dated January 1917; the following month he wrote the first of several from Lady Warner's Red Cross Hospital, Ipswich, in England.[7]

Although the number of symbolic elements is limited, the variety of their combination and the richness of the colours add a great deal of charm, and give proof of the inventiveness of their creators. In effect, the embroiderers who worked from a series of designs and motifs evidently had a certain margin of artistic licence and placed their own personal marks on the cards through a combination of elements and colours. Occasionally the first line of a song, or a well known line within a song, hymn or anthem has been embroidered on the card, as in: 'It's a long long way to Tipperary' and 'Send him victorious'.

The possible list of countries whose flags might appear on embroidered postcards numbered 20.[8] But for some countries, more than one flag may be represented. For example, there are the three ensigns of Great Britain: the white ensign of the Royal Navy, the blue ensign of the Royal Naval Reserve and the red ensign of the Merchant Navy. A second example applies to Russian flags, one being that of Imperial Russia, a double-headed eagle on a yellow background, and the other the Russian civil flag of 1914–17, a tricolour with equal horizontal stripes white over blue over red.

This collection has a number of flags that can be identified: New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Belgium, Canada, France, United States, Italy,
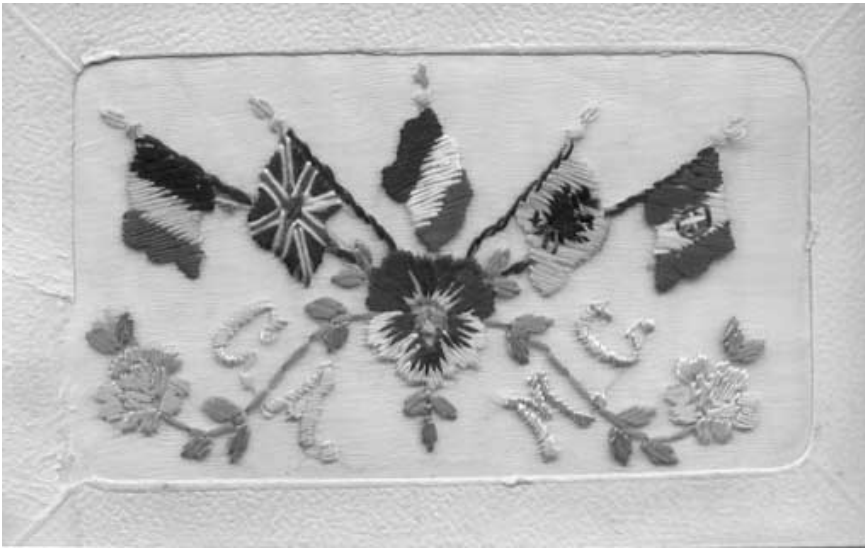
Figure 9.3 This postcard presumably dates to before the United States declared war
     on Germany in March 1917, as its display of embroidered Allied flags
     does not include the stars and stripes (© author).

Luxembourg, Russia and Serbia. As well, the International Red Cross flag
has been reproduced in silk. The appearance of the familiar stars and stripes
of the US flag in two of the cards also provides a means for dating. Such
cards must have appeared only after the US entered the war on 5 April 1917.
Frequently, a number of flags were used to create butterflies, the RAMC
insignia, horseshoes, and crosses. One example uses four flags to create yet
another flag.

Early in the twentieth century, Thomas Stevens commercialised woven silk
picture postcards. Stevens had been producing woven 'Stevengraphs' for a
number of years, but not as postcards: these were a twentieth-century pro-
duction. Usually the cards show the name of the manufacturer but where
they do not there are differences in the border around the picture that nor-
mally identifies them. Some were woven in a single colour while others were
created using many colours.

Stevens is known to have produced bookmarks woven with the word, or
verse 'Mizpah'. One postcard in this collection has the 'Mizpah' poem woven
for the front but there are no marks of identification on the back to indicate
that it is an authentic Stevens piece.

The Coventry firm of W. H. Grant followed Thomas Stevens in producing
woven silk picture postcards. Grant postcards were woven and mounted at
his factory until 1941 when it was destroyed during the Blitz. One worker,
Beatrice Heath, who began work there in 1910, recalled some of the silk
postcard titles, among them 'Lead kindly light', complete with words and

music score. Grant is known to have produced similar cards with words and music to 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'Killarney'. The 'Lead kindly light' postcard in this collection is of a similar genre and further research may reveal it to be a genuine Grant.

The third woven silk in the collection is definitely of French creation. The back of the card shows that the silk was woven by E. Deffrène, rue Montmartre, Paris.[9] This silk-woven card titled 'Martyr Ypres' is similar to the scenery weavings of Stevens and Grant.

The price of silk cards, from one to three francs, was relatively high for a French soldier who could only afford to make the purchase for a special family occasion or to serve as a souvenir of the war. This provides one explanation as to why so many cards of French manufacture bear a text in English; the members of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) found the exchange rate made the cards easily affordable. The French are also known to have sold them to British Expeditionary Forces for half a franc or one franc each.[10]

There was also a multi-sensorial dimension to these distinctive kinds of materiality, as some cards originally had a perfume fragrance impregnated into the card. However, after more than 80 years, the fragrance has long disappeared and it is impossible to know today whether any of the cards in this collection were at one time scented. One can only imagine that the scent of the postcards as well as the beauty of the embroidery must have made the servicemen feel closer to home and thus, closer to the daily routines that had previously governed their ordinary lives. One card from Sam Patterson remarked that the front of the card 'reminds me of your fancy work'. Sam, like thousands of other soldiers, chose this card over others for the personal significance it held for him (see Becker, this volume).

The filth and mud of the trenches and the smell of death that surrounded the men on a daily basis were in sharp contrast to the beauty of the silk postcards they could hold in their hands. Thus the cards became a material means of keeping their lives linked to those left behind. Being far away, the beauty of the cards served as a means of bringing the women closer to the hearts of those in the trenches.

The Great War was supposed to bring about change by putting an end to tyranny. Unsuccessful in achieving its goal of being the war to end all wars, the First World War did end war fought entirely or even mainly in trenches. But location makes no difference to those who died in battle or to those who were left to mourn. Silk postcards, beautiful though they may be, are silent and ambiguous reminders of the events surrounding their popularity.

Notes

1 The literature identifies an English collection of 210 embroidered silk postcards sent by an English serviceman to his fiancée, cards that were later acquired by a collector.

2 Personal communication, May 1996 with Leonard W. Simpson. Simpson married Isabelle in 1929.
3 *Brief Review Operations Canadian Corps*, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, Canada: National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG24, vol. 1872, file 12.
4 One may question whether the use of the pansy was intentional since the French word for pansy is 'pensée' and carries the double meaning of both 'flower' and 'thought'. The messages sent home clearly show how much the men were thinking of their loved ones.
5 According to Hollingsworth's list of regiments known to be embroidered on the cards there is no BRSC hence the assumption that the artisan has made an embroidery error (Hollingsworth 1977: 35).
6 One postcard in the collection has a message that refers to a silk handkerchief that had been sent earlier. Quite possibly it was included in a card with a flap.
7 Today, 92-year-old Irene Munro, Sam's niece, recalls that once he had returned from the front he still suffered greatly from 'shell shock' and any unexpected loud noise would cause him to shake.
8 Hollingsworth (1977: 6) identifies the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Russia, Serbia, South Africa and the United States.
9 The precise inscription reads: 'Soie tissé E. Deffrène, édit., 77, rue Montmartre, Paris. Visé no. 13, Imp. le Gall, Paris'.
10 Colgrove (1969) explains that the French franc at that time was worth US 20 cents.

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10

'THANKS FOR THE MEMORY'

War memorials, spectatorship and the trajectories of commemoration 1919–2001

Jonathan Black

This chapter enquires into the nature of memory, the rituals of remembrance, and memorials to the British dead of the First World War. It has often struck me that while memorials are supposed to serve as tangible weighty structures denoting consensus, their design and style of figurative sculpture can just as easily divide as unite a community of involved/actively engaged or committed spectators. By the latter I mean those with particular emotional investments in the memorial such as ex-servicemen, parents, wives, children, brothers and sisters, and lovers of those who are being mourned. As to the issue of memory, it is also clear from the many texts generated by the processes of commissioning and unveiling memorials that how the spectator remembers assumed critical importance. It is essential for those present at a memorial unveiling and at an Armistice Day ceremony to be seen to behave in a way that has been stipulated and sanctioned by the wider community. However, building on important research by Alex King, Adrian Gregory and Serguisz Michalski, it would seem the often sharply contrasted agendas for a memorial held by ex-servicemen and those who for one reason or another did not fight in the war have been all too frequently glossed over or treated superficially (Gregory 1994: 5–6; King 1998: 2, 13–14; Michalski 1998: 45–6; see also Winter 1995: 6, 36).

It should be kept in mind that commissioning a large piece of public sculpture was usually a new experience for those groups that did so after 1918. Indeed, it should not be assumed that a war memorial committee would automatically recommend that their memorial take the form of a statue or statuary with an architectural surround. During the period 1919–20, many municipal war memorial committees considered spending money they had raised on utilitarian structures such as a library, art gallery, school, hospital, or a ward within an existing hospital, rather than commissioning sculptors to produce something figurative and symbolic (King 1998: 26, 65–8).

Here, I investigate four war memorials commissioned by different organisations. Three belong to the period 1919–25, when the memory of the war was still raw and its psychological wounds unhealed: a municipal memorial commissioned by the borough council of an East Cheshire silk-processing and garment-manufacturing town; a memorial to a military unit which owed its brief existence to the war and was disbanded soon afterwards, and a memorial to the Royal Regiment of Artillery, still extant today. The fourth memorial, to those 'shot at dawn' for desertion in the face of the enemy or mutinous conduct, was unveiled as recently as 2001. It is, I argue, uniquely part of a campaign to mobilise and focus public opinion in order to put pressure on the British government to change what is perceived by some to be its intransigent support for an unjust position on the granting of pardons.

In September 1921, a war memorial designed by the Manchester-based sculptor John Millard (1862–1948), was unveiled in Macclesfield, East Cheshire, to commemorate the town's 700 war dead (Figure 10.1, overleaf). A series of public meetings took place in 1919, but the eventual war memorial committee was dominated by municipal worthies in their fifties and sixties who had been too old to serve in the war and who greatly outnumbered anyone with combat experience on the committee (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 7 December 1918: 4; 31 May 1919: 5). Indeed, it is indicative of the times that no veterans organisations were represented, and when the sole Labour Party representative on the committee proposed that 'the opinion of the widows and parents of those who had lost sons in the war should be sought as to the form the memorial was to assume', he did not find a seconder (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 7 June 1919: 2).

Two local ex-servicemen's groups, the Comrades of the Great War, linked to the Conservative Party, and the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, with close links to the Liberal Party, were both unhappy with the figure of the soldier who had died from inhaling poison gas. This particular image of a dead British soldier is, indeed, a unique detail not to be found anywhere else on a British Great War memorial. In July 1921, the committee received a letter from the secretary of the local branch of the Comrades of the Great War criticising the manner in which the dead British soldier had been presented. He also protested that the dead man was too 'harrowing and gruesome'. The veterans thought this man had been unacceptably portrayed as having died owing to his own carelessness (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 30 July 1921: 7). Ex-servicemen were also angry that Alderman Frost, the retiring mayor, had accepted an offer from the memorial committee that he unveil the memorial and lay the first wreath without having first consulted them. When representatives from both groups protested, Frost and the committee said there was nothing to be done since the inscription recording the fact that Frost had unveiled the memorial had already been cast in bronze and was ready to be set into the stone on the plinth beneath the main figure group (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 17 September 1921: 8). Frost owned a number

Figure 10.1 Gassed British Soldier, John Millard, 1919–21, bronze, 2.13 metres long, municipal war memorial, Macclesfield, Cheshire (© author).

of silk mills and much of the money for the memorial came from the Silks Trades Employers Association. Frost and his brother alone contributed over one-third of the cost of the £4,000 memorial (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 1 May 1921: 3).

A compromise was eventually reached by which a blind soldier and a crippled sailor would lay wreaths together immediately after the Alderman had unveiled the memorial, and before his wife who would lay a wreath as a token of the appreciation felt by the womenfolk of the town for what the men had sacrificed (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 17 September 1921: 8). During the spring of 1921, there was a lively debate within the town as to how the names of the dead would be recorded on the memorial, or indeed whether the names of all those who had served would be commemorated. At about the same time, the memorial committee discussed the poignant and tragic case of William Knight, a 43-year-old builder's labourer. In April 1921, Knight, who had served for four years on the Western Front with the Royal Engineers, hanged himself in a local barn. Knight's wife and brother petitioned the memorial committee that his name be recorded on the memorial (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 30 April 1921: 8). The committee was unanimous that Knight's case was, indeed, a most unhappy one, but decided it could not overlook the fact that the man had taken his own life and not been killed in action (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 14 May 1921: 7). The committee then explored whether the names of the dead should be listed alphabetically, by rank, unit, or by the theatre of war in which they had served. Eventually it was decided that the names would be entered by rank (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald* 30 July 1921: 7).

The 24th Infantry Division memorial represents an unusual case in which the sculptor was given *carte blanche* to design and execute a memorial, and given considerable leeway to suggest where the memorial should be situated (Figure 10.2, overleaf). The idea for a memorial originated during the autumn of 1921 among a group of senior officers who had once served with the duration-only unit, which was disbanded in March 1919 (*The Times* 2 May 1922: 12). These officers felt the memorial ought to be erected somewhere in France, near an area of the old Front where the division had distinguished itself in battle by conducting a dogged defence during the major German offensive of March 1918 (Mitchinson 1998: 66). However, a group of more junior field officers thought the memorial should be placed somewhere in London where it could easily be reached by men who had served with the division and by relatives of the dead since the unit had been largely composed of men from the Home Counties. This group was also unhappy with those sculptors proposed by the older men to execute the memorial. None of the suggested artists had fought in the war or had any military experience, and the younger officers wanted an artist who had the background to design something appropriate for a division that had enjoyed such a formidable fighting reputation (24th Division file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London).

Figure 10.2 24th Infantry Division Memorial, Eric Kennington, 1921–4, Portland stone, figures 2.06 metres high, Battersea Park, London (© author).

At this juncture, Eric Kennington (1888–1960) was approached by Lieutenant-Colonel M. V. D. Hill MC, DSO, former commanding officer of the 9th Royal Sussex – one of the battalions with which Kennington had stayed while attached to the 24th Division as an official war artist in December 1917. Asked by Hill whether he had any sculptor friends who might undertake the commission, Kennington promptly offered to carve a memorial in stone himself, and furthermore said he would not charge for his labour. Indeed, at the unveiling of the memorial, on 4 October 1924, Major-General Sir John Capper (a former commander of the division) emphasised that Kennington had carved it as a 'labour of love' for which he had 'taken no price', and that without him it was unlikely any memorial would have been created at all (*Daily Telegraph* 6 October 1924: 11). In the end, the only formal pay-

ment for the sculpture Kennington could be persuaded to accept was an engraved silver cigarette case. This was presented to the artist by Field Marshal Sir Herbert Plumer at the 24th Division Reunion dinner held on the evening of the unveiling (*Daily Express* 6 October 1924: 5). An inveterate smoker, Kennington prized the gift throughout his life.

Most unusually, a ballot was then held among 1,200 men who had once fought with the division, and a large majority voted to accept Kennington's design and that it should be sited in Battersea Park since three-quarters of the units which had once made up the Division had their depots scattered throughout the Home Counties and the south-east (24th Division file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London). Considering that this was a memorial to a now disbanded Kitchener volunteer division, not to a major part of the armed forces, nor to the dead from a particular geographical area or urban centre, its unveiling in October 1924 was given an inordinate amount of publicity, while photographs of it appeared in over a dozen newspapers and illustrated magazines. Field Marshal Sir Herbert Plumer's unveiling speech, for example, was quoted at length by *The Sunday Times*, 5 October 1924, *The Times* 6 October 1924, and *Daily Telegraph* 6 October 1924. Meanwhile, photographs of the memorial were reproduced in *The Illustrated London News* 27 September 1924: 598; *Evening News* 3 October 1924; *Manchester Guardian* 4 October 1924: 9; *The Graphic* 4 October 1924: 549; *Country Life* 4 October 1924: 526; *The Sunday Pictorial* 5 October 1924; *The Queen* 15 October 1924: 5 and *The Sphere* 30 October 1924.

In addition, Kennington's close friend T. E. Lawrence requested that the respected poet and literary critic Harold Monro write a four-page pamphlet explaining the symbolism of the memorial. Two thousand copies were printed in time to be distributed after the unveiling ceremony (Kennington to Monro, 19 August 1924, private collection). After the unveiling, a number of newspapers also interviewed the artist, who described the soldiers as engaged in the 'battle of life', as well as a number of ex-servicemen in the audience (*The Daily News* 4 October 1924). In his notes for Field Marshal Plumer, concerning his thoughts on the evolution of the memorial design, Kennington described the central figure as 'the youngest . . . lighthearted, carefree, physically exuberant and irrepressible.' To the right of this figure was a more mature man whom Kennington thought had achieved 'self-mastery, sound judgement and the knowledge based on experience – while retaining the strength and energy of youth'. To the left, was a man 'more profound than his fellows, being at once soldier, athlete, poet and intellectual.'

At the time, Kennington did not reveal to the public that the models for the three memorial figures were all men who had fought with the division. Thus, the three figures served as portraits recognisable to their relatives and friends and thereby introduced an additional concealed element of spectatorship at the unveiling ceremony and after. The central figure was a certain Sergeant Woods of the 9th Royal Sussex who had acted as Kennington's

combined batman and bodyguard while the artist was attached to the battalion in December 1917 (24th Division memorial file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London). The model for the soldier to the right of the sergeant was one Trooper Morris Clifford Thomas who served for three years without a scratch with the division's machine gun battalion. Perhaps most intriguing of all, it transpires that the man to the left of Sergeant Woods was modelled on the 27-year-old Robert Graves who was yet to achieve fame or notoriety as the author of the bestselling *Goodbye To All That* (1929) and *I Claudius* (1932).

Kennington had first met Graves, known then for his war poetry, in May 1918. The following month Graves wrote the introduction to the catalogue of Kennington's first major solo exhibition, *The British Soldier*, in which he declared that Kennington alone among official war artists possessed '. . . the trench point of view' (*The British Soldier*, Leicester Galleries, London: 3). The exhibition was held at the Leicester Galleries, in London, between June and July 1918. Towards the end of 1920, Graves was instrumental in arranging a meeting between Kennington and the enigmatic 'Uncrowned King of Arabia' T. E. Lawrence. It is interesting to note that, with the passage of time, memories of the exact identities of the three men who had served as models for the 24th Division memorial became hazy. In 1981, Lieutenant-Colonel Hill described the figure to the right of Sergeant Woods in the centre as '. . . an imaginary one meaning to depict a physical man without any brains'. Hill noted, with amusement, that the majority of ex-servicemen at the unveiling ceremony assumed this figure (actually derived from Trooper Thomas) was based on Robert Graves, much to the poet's irritation (24th Division memorial file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London).

Further interviews with veterans who had served with the 24th Division during the war were conducted at a divisional reunion dinner that took place in the Victoria Hotel on the evening of the unveiling ceremony. Present at the dinner was the art critic of *The Observer*, P. G. Konody, who concluded that Kennington had created an 'impressive monument . . . intensely human and, without being sentimental, intensely tender' (*The Observer* 5 October 1924: 15). 'Dragoman', writing in *The Daily Express*, described the unanimous verdict of the ex-soldiers he questioned after the unveiling. They were convinced it was 'the finest war memorial in the country' (*Daily Express* 6 October 1924: 5). A reporter for the *Manchester Guardian* at the dinner noted 'the greeting of rank and file comrades – now far divided by the fortunes of life – silk-hatted men wearing medals on their fine overcoats hailing with delight a man in cap and scarf'. Talking with the veterans around him, it was evident that the memorial had made 'a strong impression' on them. One man told the reporter: 'It's the real thing . . . you can see these fellows walking into action all keyed up and knowing what's coming and ready for it. Real tommies they are and going through it' (*Manchester Guardian* 6 October 1924: 6).

The Royal Artillery Memorial, unveiled in October 1925, was by far the

most controversial discussed and debated memorial produced between the wars. For example, after his death, Charles Sargeant Jagger MC (1885–1934), the monument's sculptor, was described by the *Daily Herald* as the 'sculptor of one of the best-known monuments in Europe – the Artillery memorial at Hyde Park Corner' (17 November 1934). At the other end of the political spectrum, the deeply conservative *Morning Post* referred to the Royal Artillery as 'the greatest' of all memorials erected in the British Isles during the 1920s (17 November 1934). The Royal Artillery War Commemoration Fund Committee (RAWCF) had representatives from the ranks on it while its elder members stipulated that the sculptor chosen should talk to a young officer gunner for advice. Jagger was selected partly for the design of his work and partly because of his impressive war record as an infantry officer who had fought at Gallipoli and in Flanders. He was unapologetic that the imagery first and foremost would be aimed at ex-artillerymen who would be the ultimate judges as to its success or failure. That was why he had decided to top the memorial design with a one-third over full-size reproduction in stone of a 9.2-inch siege Howitzer. Despite the suggestion of the King's representative that the artist should consider incorporating a 'peacetime' element, Jagger was adamant; from the outset his memorial had been conceived as one to 'men who died on active service and I cannot help feeling that the memorial should be *in every sense* a war memorial . . . any element of Peace or suggestion of relaxation would be very inappropriate' (C. S. Jagger, 22 July 1921, Jagger file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London).

A minority on the committee was opposed to the figure of the dead gunner, suspecting he might upset female spectators such as widows and those related to the dead (Figure 10.3, overleaf). Their spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. E. Lewin, argued that 'Mr. Jagger . . . regards a war memorial as a means of forcing home on the minds of the public the horror and the terror of war . . . Imagine the feelings of a Mother or a Widow coming to see the memorial . . . and finding . . . such a grim, realistic, presentiment of [a] stark, dead corpse . . . with the coat thrown over his face to cover the ghastly stare of death' (12 November 1924, Jagger file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London). In the end, the Committee decided by 50 votes to 15 to accept the contentious figure. The overall design and imagery of memorial were defended vigorously by one of the senior members of the RAWCF committee, General Sir Stanley von Donop, in a pamphlet published to coincide with the unveiling ceremony, and then in the letters pages of *The Times* by General Sir Herbert Uniacke. Both had been prominent supporters of Jagger's initial and then modified design. Uniacke felt compelled to write to *The Illustrated London News*, concerning the *Dead Gunner*, that its 'critics ignore the fact that . . . this figure typifies the only method in which it is permissible for a gunner to leave his gun when it is in action against the enemy – dead, or wounded on a stretcher' (*The Illustrated London News* 30 October 1925).

Figure 10.3 Dead Gunner, Charles Sargeant Jagger, 1923–5, bronze, 2.6 metres long, Royal Artillery memorial, Hyde Park Corner, London (© author).

The Manchester Guardian thought that the imagery on the memorial was so revelatory that it gave 'the soldiers who have never spoken frankly to their home folks of what they went through . . . a means of expression.' It had brought ' . . . a new idea of art to the people. Men will bring their wives and children here to show them things they have never been able to tell them – what happened and what they went through . . . It is a terrible revelation long overdue' (*Manchester Guardian* 19 October 1925: 10). The following day, the paper returned to discussing the unprecedented impact of the memorial:

> Since the Cenotaph was unveiled, I do not think that any London war memorial has stirred the same quality of interest and emotion . . . The pictures in stone were felt to be the real naked thing . . . The feeling of the men who had been through it was clearly that here was something that came home with a shock of reality.
> (*Manchester Guardian* 20 October 1925: 10)

Despite such warm praise, the memorial was subjected to withering criticism in other quarters to the effect that it had been a monumental waste of £25,000, with its design a piece of mendacious sensationalism calculated to appeal to the artistic cognoscenti rather than so-called 'ordinary' people. The cost of the memorial was condemned, for example, in a letter to the *Daily Mail* from one Cynthia Sturmer in which she asserted that the money could have been far better spent on disabled ex-gunners and on needy dependants of the dead (*Daily Mail* 22 October 1925: 7). Meanwhile, the prominent cultural pundit Selwyn Image heaped opprobrium upon the memorial as a sacrilegious celebration of ' . . . the latest mechanical invention of man's wit for blowing his fellow creatures . . . to pieces' (*The Times* 22 October 1925: 8).

A few weeks later, Sir Herbert Uniacke penned a lengthy article stoutly defending the memorial, for publication in the Armistice Day 1925 issue of *The Illustrated London News*. In the course of the article, Uniacke drew particular attention to an incident that casts an intriguing light on class and gender aspects of spectatorship in relation to the Royal Artillery memorial. He described how before dawn on 20 October 1925 (two days after the official and very grand unveiling ceremony) 'a small crowd were seen gathered in reverent groups round the Memorial'. Men stood 'bare-headed in the pelting rain' while all the women present wore 'some emblem of mourning' and a few knelt 'on the wet, muddy stone'. Uniacke identified the mourners, men and women as 'workers' who had risen 'especially early to pay a tribute to what they regarded as a shrine to the memory of their lost comrades, relatives and friends'. He concluded the article by robustly declaring that he paid far more attention to 'the verdict of the humble folk assembled that Tuesday morning' to that of any carping, cynical 'highbrow critic or milk-and-water sentimentalist of either sex' (*The Illustrated London News* 11 November 1925: 6). Evidently, by 1925, Uniacke took it as axiomatic that the 'chattering classes', in the guise

of 'highbrow' intellectuals were automatically opposed to unsentimentally realistic war memorials and all they symbolically encapsulated.

I conclude with the case of the *Shot at Dawn* memorial unveiled on 21 June 2001 by the 87-year-old daughter of a British soldier executed for desertion in 1916 after £6,500 was raised from private donations (Figure 10.4). The figure has been positioned at the heart of the campaign to gain pardons from the British government for the 274 British servicemen shot during the First World War for 'mutiny, cowardice and desertion in the face of the enemy' (Shepherd 2000: 67–9). The *Shot at Dawn* Campaign was started in 1990 by John Hipkin when the court martial papers of British soldiers executed during the Great War first became available at the Public Record Office. In July 1998, Dr John Reid (Minister of State for the Armed Forces) announced that, after a year-long review, the Government had decided it could not grant a comprehensive pardon to all those British soldiers shot for desertion or cowardice in the face of the enemy during the First World War. However, the minister voiced the hope that the names of the executed soldiers be added to the appropriate war memorials and Books of Remembrance. In November 2000, for the first time, a contingent from the *Shot at Dawn* campaign, as well as relatives of those executed, were permitted to join the Remembrance Sunday march past the Cenotaph in London.

On 21 July 2000, the 2.6-metre-high statue, made from a combination of sand and concrete, was installed at the eastern end of the 150-acre National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on the anniversary of the execution for cowardice in July 1915 of 17-year-old Private Herbert Burden of the 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Born 22 March 1898, Private Burden arrived in France towards the end of March 1915 and was executed 21 July 1915. His sentence was confirmed by the commander of the Second Army, General Sir Herbert Plumer, who went on to unveil Kennington's 24th Infantry Division memorial in October 1924 (Putkowski and Sykes 1992: 102). The Birmingham-based sculptor Andrew de Comyn has indicated that the figure was inspired by the case of one Private Burden he saw included in a 1999 BBC1 *Everyman* programme on John Hipkin and the *Shot at Dawn* campaign. The design of the statue came to him

> immediately after the documentary . . . I intended the image of the soldier to appear youthful and innocent. The buttons and insignia have been cut away, and his one epaulette hangs from his shoulder. Over his heart there is a disc for the firing squad to aim at, and his feet are struggling to be free of the block that traps him. With hands tied and eyes blindfolded, I wanted to capture the tension of the moment immediately before a young life was cruelly taken away.
>
> (personal communications: 23 July and 2 September 2001)

Figure 10.4 Shot at Dawn, Andy de Comyn, 1999–2000, concrete and sand, 2.6 metres high, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire (© author).

Interestingly, in some initial accounts of the statue's evolution, de Comyn mentioned that the figure was equally based on the only black soldier shot for desertion – 17-year-old Jamaican Private Herbert Morris of the West Indian Regiment. Morris enlisted in the 6th Battalion, the British West Indies Regiment, in December 1916, and was one of a total of 15,440 West Indians who volunteered to fight for Britain between 1915 and 1918. In May 1917, he arrived in the Ypres Salient and performed non-combatant duties, such as carrying shells up to exposed artillery batteries, since the War Office had long ordained that West Indian soldiers on the Western Front could never serve in

combat units. On 20 September 1917, Morris was shot for desertion after a perfunctory trial at which he claimed he was 'troubled with his head' and could not stand 'the sound of heavy guns' (Putkowski and Sykes 1992: 108). This aspect of the memorial had faded from view by the time the project's cause was taken up by the readers of *The Daily Telegraph* early in January 2001, by which time sponsors were urgently needed to finance the memorial's completion (*Daily Telegraph* 5 January 2001: 8 and 6 January 2001: 4). It is indeed intriguing that readers of a newspaper very much on the right-wing of the national political spectrum should have subscribed funds for a project explicitly critical of the behaviour of the authorities during and after the Great War. This memorial does not commemorate traditional soldierly virtues such as obedience, devotion to duty, and fortitude, but instead drew attention to the emotional fragility and vulnerability of men at war.

De Comyn has written that he was especially moved by the fact that Burden was serving while under age. Indeed, he had enlisted at the age of 16 and this fact alone should have saved him from the firing squad. After ruminating on the *Everyman* documentary, de Comyn approached John Hipkin with the idea of erecting a memorial. Hipkin, in turn, put him in touch with the Friends of War Memorials who recommended he contact the Director of the National Memorial Arboretum, David Childs. It was Childs who suggested having the figure standing in front of 306 pine posts arranged in a semi-circle, so as to suggest an ancient amphitheatre synonymous with ancient tragedies, and facing six conifers to symbolise the firing squad. The natural setting also touched on the poignant fact that Private Burden had been the son of a gardener, and the figure would be so positioned as to catch the first rays of dawn. One is struck by the extent to which the tragic figure of Burden was constituted within and emerges from an emotive and very contemporary discourse of suffering and victimhood. Interviewed by *The Daily Telegraph* in January 2001, Childs stated 'the youngsters, and they were mostly youngsters, were as much victims of conflict as many others . . . we felt at least we could acknowledge the fact that they had suffered in this way'. He added that the memorial would not have been possible even a few years ago but since then 'there has been a sea change in attitude towards more understanding . . . about the psychology of trauma'. Indeed, as early as 1980, the American Psychiatric Association officially adopted the term 'post-traumatic stress disorder' while, five years later, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies was formed (Shepherd 2000: 385, 387, 397). The assumption seems to have been that the public was more able to confront and comprehend the painful realities of what damage stress and emotional tension could inflict. It may even be that this sort of memorial could only have been possible after the highly emotional and indeed irrational reaction many among the general public displayed following the sudden death of Princess Diana in August 1997 (see Anderson and Mullen 1998).

John Hipkin and the sculptor have also referred to Private Burden and to

those who suffered the same fate as 'victims', accompanied by the underlying assertion that the individual has been the subject of an injustice inflicted by a merciless and inhuman state apparatus. Hardly anywhere is the counter-argument advanced that the behaviour of Burden, Morris and others who were executed could have endangered the lives of their comrades, or that thousands of under-age soldiers served at the front without committing major offences against military discipline. The campaign seems to suggest that all shall be absolved and pardoned unconditionally. Undeniably it is a movement from the bottom up, and has touched a chord with a public that has become used to public servants seeking counselling and compensation after an accident in which death and injury has been experienced and witnessed. At the same time, the movement can be linked to the 1995 reintroduction of the two-minute silence at 11 am on 11 November, the popularity of which among the general public took the Conservative government of the day by surprise (*The Times* 31 October 1995: 9). Intriguingly, the British Legion's call to observe this custom, which had long fallen into abeyance, struck a chord not only with those old enough to have fought in the Second World War and the Korean War, but also among those within the 18–25 age-group (*The Times* 12 November 1996: 1).

One can only return to the question, which was debated with equal vigour immediately after the Great War, about just how should the dead be remembered and how should we be seen to honour them – as heroes, which is how artists who had fought in the war such as Jagger and Kennington thought of them, or as victims, the more fashionable contemporary view. In an interview he gave in 1927, Jagger spoke of his exasperation with the 'demeaning' and 'sentimental' image of the ordinary British soldier fostered by the newspapers (*T. P. and Cassell's Weekly* 12 March 1927). After his seven-month stint as an official war artist, Kennington wrote to an official at the Ministry of Information of how he had been impressed by '. . . the magnificence of the men . . . all their fine qualities and varied characters' and so different from the lazy and patronising image of them in the press (Kennington to Alfred Yockney, 6 June 1918, Kennington 1918–19 file, Department of Art, Imperial War Museum, London).

We may today be more comfortable with the figure of the British soldier of the trenches as a hapless, demoralised, sacrificial victim but this does not mean we should remain complacently oblivious to the memorial imagery created by artists, such as Kennington and Jagger, who took a very different and contrary view of the men alongside whom they had fought in the trenches. The motto of the National Memorial Arboretum is 'Remember the Future'. I would contend we have yet to come to terms with how we should remember and, just as critically, understand, the legacy of the First World War.

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11

THE LION, THE ANGEL AND THE WAR MEMORIAL

Some French sites revisited

William Kidd

Ecole primaire Michelet, Hettange-Grande (Moselle, eastern France): in a corner of the school playground, a diminutive but extravagantly whiskered *lion couchant* in weathered stone provides an unusual focal point and occasional bench for the children. In another part of the commune, an angel sculpted from the same honey-coloured Jaumont stone stands at the junction of two rows of graves in the cemetery, its hands held simply in front with a wreath, like a guide provided for mourners or visitors.

Finding these sculptures was the conclusion of a process of enquiry that had begun with the discovery of an old 1920s photograph of the village war memorial; the lion and angel are the vestiges of a First World War *monument aux morts* erected in 1924 and badly damaged two decades later, in one of the last and bloodiest instalments of what French historians have come to consider as the 'thirty years war' (Miquel 2000: 428). Whence the importance of the photograph, which shows the memorial in its original form, situated against the outside wall of the church, with an altar-like central section and the lion recumbent at the base. Though aspects of the group were unusual, not least the angel with its non-idealised, almost human face and vanquished serpent of sin lying at its feet, it was the unmistakable lion which identified the work as that of the sculptor Scherer of Buzonville who between 1920 and 1924–5 created memorials for at least seven other Mosellan communes (Kidd 1999: 42–3). Five of these featured a lion or lions, in four cases the same lion as at Hettange-Grande, though instead of that singular angel, they incorporated an equally unusual, almost enigmatic, grieving female figure, a *pleureuse*.

Their discovery also marked a stage in another, earlier process of investigation, one triggered by a comment by Maurice Agulhon, France's leading scholar of republican iconography, concerning the lion's absence from French 1914–18 war memorials, and by a related problematic, derived from Antoine

Prost, about the distinction between 'patriotic' and 'funerary' memorials and the juxtaposition of realist and allegorical elements. The latter appeared to suggest that these categories were distinctive and distinct (Prost 1977: 49), the former that human and animal figures such as the cockerel and the soldier were almost interchangeable (Agulhon 1985: 184). In a fundamental sense, of course, the realist/symbolic antithesis is a false one: the sculpted lion, however realistically wrought, is always symbolic, and enhances by a reverse anthropomorphism the human qualities (courage, strength, endurance, nobility of character or demeanour) of those it commemorates. The familiar comparison between the British 'Tommies' of 1914–18 and their commanding officers as 'lions led by donkeys' springs to mind. Similarly, the allegories used to evoke the Republic, 'la Patrie', victory or peace, differ from the grieving female figures found on many memorials, often in local or regional costume; but even when modelled on an individual, such statuary goes beyond particular cases to represent all women so bereft (wives, mothers, fiancées) and, by extension, the community as a whole: the country widow in everyday hat and coat at Grammat (Lot), René Quilivic's grief-stricken Breton mother at Plouhinec (Finistère) or her various provincial sisters from the Pyrénées to the Alps. What, however, are we to make of Paul Dardé's remarkable group for Lodève (Hérault) which, in addition to the dead *poilu*, grieving widow and children, includes four women side by side (mother, grandmother, sister, neighbour?) dressed in resolutely contemporary, and by normal commemorative iconographical conventions, resolutely fashionable period style? If, according to the sculptor himself, these aligned figures were intended to form a dynamic 'wave' (*onde*) linking the two buildings flanking the memorial space, the Mairie (town hall) and the barracks (Rivé *et al.* 1991: 243–5), to a modern eye the overall effect is one of spectacular materiality more reminiscent of the catwalk than the cenotaph, the wardrobe than the war memorial.

Compromise-formations generated by artists and commissioning committees faced with complex and contradictory thematic imperatives – loss and memory, horror and heroism, individual sacrifice and national justification – memorials are symbolic and textual constructs as well as physical artefacts. Materialising memory, they embed commemorative themes in social as well as artistic practice whose conventions, familiar to previous generations, are less so to their successors. Like Bourdelle's stylised bronze Victory at Montauban (Tarn-et-Garonne), a combination of Minerva and Pallas-Athena with the serpent-motif of the Gorgons (Figure 11.1), they have gradually acquired an 'otherness' which makes them problematic but fascinating sites of interpretation for the cultural historian seeking to reconcile their original artistic or commemorative intentionality with their contemporary significance:

> What we commonly refer to as the history of collective mentalities, or sometimes as socio-cultural history, or the history of cultures,

Figure 11.1 The Montauban memorial (© author).

would often like to see itself as a sociology or anthropology of the past. This is a legitimate ambition. The problem is that if sociology, ethnology, and psychoanalysis supply historians with suggestions and concepts, they do not easily supply us with methods, since their own methodology is based on surveys done on the spot.

<div style="text-align: right">(Agulhon 1985: 200)</div>

Annette Becker's analysis of the memorial 'site' at Les Chauffours (Oise), a system of subterranean galleries used as a 1914–18 field casualty station, offers one pertinent and potentially fruitful response to this challenge. Here, wounded soldiers had carved in the chalk graphic representations of their hopes and fears, anxieties and unassuaged desires which constitute a time-capsule of material habitually and properly occluded from most official commemorative art (Becker 1988: 5–7). Such material may include the desire for love and sexual release, the 'fantasme du poilu' objectified in the exuber-antly fashionable or provocatively naked females engraved at Les Chauffours and in another underground system at Haramont in the department of the Aisne (*ibid*.: 82–4).[1] Moreover, the soldier-artists had situated the ensemble under the impassive gaze of a contemporaneously sculpted Sphinx whose mythical and more popular sexual associations were well established, and which occasionally did find unintentional public expression in the memorials themselves. Examples include the controversial statue of 'La Délivrance', inaugurated in Nantes in 1927 (Rivé *et al.* 1991: 90–9) or the seated and, for some tastes, too scantily-clad *pleureuse* inaugurated at Rosbruck (Moselle) in 1926 which acquired the not entirely complimentary local nickname 'Mari-anne' (Kidd 1999: 87). And if, as Daniel Sherman (1996: 82–107) has argued, an unstated part of the societal commemorative function of memorials was to address the wartime crisis of masculinity by sculpturally consigning post-war women to conventionally gendered roles, these artefacts are often sites of repression as well as sites of memory which invite an archaeological as well as an anthropological reading.

To these two paradigms of discovery, the relocation of the Hettange-Grande lion and angel added a third interrogation: what happens to war memorials, material signs, and allegorical symbols when they too become casualties of conflict or when, by accident or design, they reach the end of their useful (commemorative) life? Focusing on France, but also more widely, this chapter asks and attempts to answer some of these questions. Its title is only partly whimsical: an indirect homage to C. S. Lewis whose allegorical lion, witch and wardrobe serve as a mnemonic symbol of the locus where history and story, the real, the imagined and the material, coincide.

Of the use of human or animal figures in French memorials to the fallen of the First World War, Agulhon wrote:

> This figure may be either a woman (who could be interpreted, according to her attributes, to mean homeland, town, region, repub-lic or even a mourning woman of the common people), a soldier, or a rooster (never a lion, despite the prestigious example of Bartholdi's Lion of Belfort in Paris: it seems that, from this time on, the lion was perceived as uniquely British).
>
> (Agulhon 1985: 184)

This text usefully reminds us of the polysemy of 1914–18 memorial statuary as well as of the importance of the cockerel, *gallus gallus*, a patriotic symbol and iconographical motif since the Revolution. Regarding memorial lions, however, the writer's tone is perhaps best characterised as one of surprise ('never a lion') mixed with caution ('despite the prestigious example . . . '): surprise, that what belonged within a self-evidently French republican tradition as well as a British monarchical one could have failed to find iconographical expression in that most universal representation of France's national feeling, the 36,500 *monuments aux morts* erected after 1918.

Part of that caution may have derived from the historian's sense that the notional explanation attributed a perception – and hence an intention – of national iconographical exclusiveness to hundreds if not thousands of memorial artists and an even greater number of local memorial committees which is both uncorroborated and, in the context of the Allied victory, highly implausible. But it may also have derived from the fact that Agulhon was writing in 1982,[2] at a point when he was avowedly conscious of the necessarily limited sample of memorials then available, in the groundbreaking survey published five years earlier by Prost (1977).

Prost catalogued 564 memorials from 35 selected departments. His example has since generated wide-ranging further work on European commemorative practice, including French regional and departmental studies too numerous to list here.[3] Drawing on field-work conducted by staff and students for Stirling University French Photographic Archive whose holdings exceed Prost's sample and offer a wider if more random regional coverage,[4] my own research has identified 17 1914–18 war memorial lions. This is an infinitesimal number in absolute terms but one which, experience suggests, surely understates the true position and is in any event greater than the total absence suggested by Agulhon. Two are battlefield memorials: one commemorates the dead of the French sector of the Ypres salient, the other is at the Chapelle Sainte-Fine, Verdun, and a third is departmental, the Chambéry memorial *aux savoyards morts pour la France*, and do not therefore constitute *lieux du souvenir* for a particular commune. Others identified to date which do come into the latter category, the principal focus of my enquiry, are in departments as diverse and geographically distant from one another as the Hérault, the Lot, the Seine-et-Marne (two examples), the Aveyron and the Ardennes, while there are eight in the Moselle. The reasons for that concentration we shall examine in due course; first, however, the issues raised by the iconography itself.

Memorial lions have a long pedigree and are but part of an ancient tradition of feline symbolism that goes back at least to Pharaonic Egypt and Assyria (Saunders 1998: 1–11). The vigilant guardian who never sleeps was used as a grave-marker in Classical Greece (e.g. Athens, Delos and Naxos), and shares physical and iconographical characteristics with the mythological Sphinx (Boardman 1978: 76–9) (Figure 11.2). Subsequently associated with

Figure 11.2 Sphinx, Luxembourg Gardens, Paris (© author).

Christian ideas of resurrection and the triumph over death, it has adorned individual funerary memorials and monuments to the dead of successive wars and different countries. Major examples of the latter include Thorwaldsen's Lucerne memorial to the Swiss guards killed in 1792 during the French Revolution, and the Waterloo memorial, erected in the 1860s by a grateful Belgium, and of necessity a nationalist, anti-French and pro-British statement (Agulhon 1989: 131). The lion also features on monuments to other nineteenth-century conflicts, notably the Franco-Prussian war and thereafter, of course, the Great War of 1914–18. By virtue of its long heraldic associations, the lion also functioned as a political or ideological signifier, and found particular favour in public sculpture in France during the decade of Republican consolidation, from 1879 to the centenary of the Revolution in 1889. In the Morice brothers' monumental statue of 'la République' erected on the Parisian 'Place' of the same name (1879), the lion stands guard over the ballot box of democracy. In the ex-Communard Jules Dalou's very different treatment of the same subject ten years later, on Place de la Nation, the allegory of the Republic bestrides a globe pulled by two lions.

In addition to Bartholdi's magnificent 'Lion de Belfort', the *locus classicus* of the military and the republican, the dead of 1870–1 are commemorated by a lion and a Phrygian-capped 'Marianne' in the purest republican idiom at Salon-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône). The lion was also adopted for a

number of German memorials of the Franco-Prussian war that were erected on the annexed soil of Alsace-Lorraine. One of these, a powerful *lion couchant*, cast by the Imperial iron works in Berlin to commemorate the First Army Corps, is at Noisseville-Retonfey (1873), the site adjacent to which was adopted for the emblematically nationalist Noisseville memorial (1908) sponsored by 'le Souvenir Français'. Other leonine German memorials, including those to the 57th Infantry Regiment and the Third Guards, were so aggressively triumphalist that they were demolished by the returning French after 1919 as part of the symbolic reappropriation of public space which has periodically marked the territory between 1871 and 1945 (Maas 1994: 195–222). In that perspective and *pace* Agulhon, the lion's relative rarity on 'metropolitan' French memorials might be more plausibly ascribed to the likelihood that elsewhere in France its associations were perceived not as too British but (along with the more familiar Imperial eagle) too German.

In contrast to the United Kingdom, where most examples are found in the more populous urban-industrial areas such as Glasgow, Newcastle, Blackburn or Southampton, or major county towns such as Gloucester, whose memorial incorporated the Sphinx variant (Boorman 1988: 155), French memorial lions are a predominantly small-town or rural-regional phenomenon. Moreover, despite the Bartholdi precedent, the lion rarely constitutes the sole sculptural feature of such memorials but is usually one of a number of signifiers in a composite commemorative construction. Perhaps the most complex of these is at Haybes (Ardennes). A winged allegory with torch and fasces (enlightenment and the law) is accompanied by a lion and an adolescent bearing two sacred Republican texts, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* and, much more unusually, Jaurès's *L'Armée nouvelle*. The memorial at Bessan, between Agde and Pézenas in the department of the Hérault, part of the historically radical (and Radical) 'midi rouge', is a substantial two-tier structure composed of an allegorical female figure – winged victory with her sword – on the apex, and, on the lower plinth, a lion devouring an eagle. Bessan, which in 1884 replaced a decaying *Tree of Liberty* with a statue of the Republic, has a lion on its municipal coat of arms. But as an obvious symbol of French military (and moral) superiority, its memorial lion fulfils a similar ideological function to statues found elsewhere in France: statues of other animals (a cockerel improbably defeating the eagle), and of the victorious *poilu* defending the Mother country (*ils ne passeront pas*), or advancing with the flag and trampling the diagnostically (and metonymically) German *pickelhaube* helmet underfoot.

Similar attributes are evoked in the memorials at Meaux (Seine-et-Marne) and Espalion (Aveyron). In the former, a lion stands defiant in front of an obelisk surmounted by a Renommée bestowing a victor's crown. In the latter, which bears the inscription 'La commune d'Espalion à ses héros 1914–18', the obelisk is flanked on one side by a lion resting on a bronze sword and, on the other, by an allegorical female flowering the names of the fallen, also

symbolised in the universally familiar *casque d'Adrian* (French infantry helmet), a standard sculptural motif. At Villeneuve-sur-Lot (Lot-et-Garonne). a victorious *République* triumphantly brandishing the inevitable *pickelhaube* surmounts a panelled lower plinth whose four angles are formed of sculpted lions' heads and front claws. The link between the leonine *force populaire* and the feminine allegory of the republic was well established before 1914 in serial busts of Marianne (Agulhon and Bonte 1992: 39, 49). That synecdoche, the use of a detail for the whole, is strikingly exemplified on the memorial at Fontainebleau (Seine-et-Marne) in the Ile-de-France, a populous northern commune whose 246th Infantry regiment, successively decimated at Verdun (1916) and the Chemin des Dames (1917), was one of only four metropolitan units to be awarded the normally individual Légion d'Honneur (Miquel 2000: 449). Here, a monumental granite centre-panel and two side-panels listing the names of the dead under the dedication *à nos morts* are supported on four sculpted claws. Creating the lion, it is the spectator who 'resurrects' the fallen, whose heroic nature is metaphorically conveyed and metamorphosed into the 'lion-hearted'.[5]

The wall-like structure of the Fontainebleau memorial is evocative also of the human shield represented by the French armies against German militarism in what was perceived as a *défense du foyer* (defence of home/land and hearth) and commemorated thus on memorials elsewhere, such as Brioude (Haute-Loire). And since it also incorporates the initials RF (République Française) and a cockerel, it is in Prost's terminology a Republican-patriotic and not a funerary memorial. But just as Becker argues, contra Prost, that 'works of art, like war itself, challenge the historian's rational categorizations', (*'monument funéraire? monument patriotique? Les oeuvres d'art, comme la guerre elle-même, défient la typologie raisonnable de l'historien'*) (Becker 1988: 22). Other features of the memorial are more ambiguous and inflect the meaning. Those long lists of names, which dissolve into absurdity if one attempts the impossible task of reading them (as distinct from the 1920s survivors' task of identifying the already known), present an intellectual as well as a material impenetrability. Like the Sphinx with which it is generically and commemoratively linked, the Fontainebleau lion both invites and denies our interrogation about a conflict whose most acute Franco-German expression is encoded in that lapidary dedication *à nos morts*. Unusual in inland communes, it was and remains prevalent in the former annexed territory of Alsace-Lorraine (1871–1918), the great majority of whose combatants died in the armies of the Wilhelmine Reich.[6] Since the annexation was ratified in international law by the Treaty of Frankfurt, neither *de facto* nor *de jure* could they be considered *morts pour la France*, a designation determined by legislation in 1915 and 1922 (Rivé *et al.* 1991: 306–8). The suitably unspecific possessive adjective '*nos*' allowed both sides and all shades of spiritual or political opinion to lay claim to the dead.

The same constraints also dictated a narrower, or more inventive, icono-

graphical lexicon. Ubiquitous elsewhere in France, the commemorative stone soldier or bronze *poilu* is conspicuously rare in Alsace and even in the Moselle. In my own survey of over 180 Mosellan memorial sites, I have found only five examples, all in historically Francophone frontier communes where particular circumstances or the influence of certain local personalities determined a markedly French national, indeed nationalist, patriotic statement which the incoming authorities, despite some appalling insensitivity to French as well as German feeling, were generally at pains to discourage (Grohmann 1999). Traditional religious iconography, in a department where, as a result of the annexation, the Third republican legislation of 1905 separating church and state was never enacted, offered one generally uncontroversial solution to the commemorative dilemma. So too, paradoxically, did Joan of Arc, by virtue of the local rationalisation that the historic Joan was a regional (Lorraine) symbol as well as, and in one sense, before becoming, a (French) national one. And so, finally, did the memorial lion, present on the territory since 1871, whose historical and iconographical ambiguities, problematic elsewhere in France, presented an opportunity. At Sarrebourg, lions mark out the commemorative space whose centre is occupied by a substantial obelisk erected in 1924 to the dead of 1870 and 1914–18. At Norroy-le-Veneur, the 1870 memorial was inaugurated so belatedly (in 1911) that it belongs not to the commemoration of the original conflict but to the narrative of imminent war in 1914 whose dead it was extended to encompass in 1922 and 1927. This is an altogether more Catholic and more complex structure in which two seated lions flank a memorial altar, crucifix, and funerary urns and which, though a direct filiation is unprovable, may have influenced the most prolific of the 1914–18 memorial artists in the Moselle, Scherer of Buzonville, creator of Hettange-Grande, and at least six other works inaugurated between 1923 and 1925.

Very little is known of this artist. Apart from references in the context of individual projects submitted to the prefectoral 'Direction des Beaux Arts' which normally had to approve all memorial commissions, there is no mention of Scherer in the archives, local or departmental, many of which were destroyed by the French in 1939–40 or by the Germans during the reannexation of 1940–4. Nor does there appear to be a traceable connection at Buzonville where he was based in the 1920s, or even a family plot in the local cemetery. But that paucity of biographical information, in inverse proportion to the material evidence of the work, is precisely what challenges the commentator to rely less on artistic intentionality than on the juxtaposition of the known commemorative context of the memorials and their potential for other significance. Ironically, it appears that Scherer's memorials to others have become in a very real sense his own as well.

The Koenigsmacker-Mettrich, Algrange and Puttelange memorials were virtually identical in concept and execution: a *lion couchant* in front of an obelisk flanked by a grieving female figure. Shawled and bonneted in

Figure 11.3 Puttelange-aux-lacs, former memorial (1924–44) (© and courtesy
     M. Jean Lang).

semi-contemporary, semi-regional costume, she holds one hand pensively
under her chin and rests the other on the reversed flambeau that adorns
individual gravestones in various parts of Europe but is especially common
on tombs and cemetery gates in Lorraine (Figure 11.3). Nilvange had twin
lions face to face, more fancifully wrought, and the same flanking figure.
Here, however, the sculptor added an abundance of floral motifs which
contrast curiously with the funerary urns and wreaths marking the emplace-
ment and which doubtless contributed to a cautionary observation by the
Direction des Beaux Arts that Scherer's designs might be more 'soberly'
composed (Moselle Departmental Archives). Similar attributes adorn the
surviving elements of the memorials at Buding and Dieffenbach, which
may or may not have had the lion and female statue. At Fontoy, where the

church and cemetery are on the side of a steep hill, he devised a colonnaded cenotaph surmounted by the lion that from a distance looks like a cat sleeping on a roof. This high structure is however an exception; Scherer's memorials are generally set near ground level, on a low plinth, so that the passer by is almost at eye-level with the *pleureuse*.

In a department diagonally bisected from northwest to southeast by an internal linguistic frontier, Scherer's memorials, with their complex constructed symbolism, found equal favour in historically Francophone and Germanophone areas. The spectrum included Hettange-Grande, under whose carefully crafted dedication *à nos soldats de la grande guerre* were listed 34 'French' dead (i.e., descendants of pre-1870 inhabitants who would have been entitled to French nationality if annexation had not occurred), and Nilvange, whose 68 victims were exclusively 'Lorrains', i.e. partly of immigrant German descent. Other commissions were for Algrange, in the Francophone industrial west of the department whose residual political and cultural attachments were so strong that it was known as 'little Berlin', and Puttelange-aux-lacs, in the German-speaking eastern sector but suspected by the wartime Wilhelmine authorities of being a hotbed of pro-French activity (Kidd 1999: 13, n. 33). The post-war municipal council elected in Algrange included a number of Communists, whom the new French administration considered as representatives of a 'German' ideology and who boycotted the inauguration of the memorial in 1923 because of the involvement of the nationalist 'Souvenir Français'. Puttelange's proportion of ten 'French' dead to 37 'Lorrains' appears to have justified the vigorously nationalist stance adopted by the new mayor, who flanked Scherer's memorial with French artillery pieces, thereby undercutting the word 'pax' engraved on the base of the lion. That inscription is unlikely to have been an artist's caprice, and would normally have required approval by the local committee and, presumably, the mayor himself.

Such examples underline the complexity of the socio-political situation in the Moselle with which the commemorative process was asked to deal. Legacies of conflict, these memorials, in their complex iconography, aspire to conflict resolution. In each case, the lion, like the female figure, is part of a whole that combines the remembrance of the fallen with a strong regional dimension. Puttelange, formerly Puttelange-lès-Farschviller in the pre-unification Loewenstein-in-Wurtemberg, has a lion rampant in its municipal coat of arms that was replicated on the central obelisk of the memorial. But Scherer's serial lion also belongs to a different thematic and symbolic system. Heraldic it is not, nor, in its distinctive stylisation, was it based on Bartholdi. The Thorwaldsen memorial in Lucerne, a classical precedent surely familiar to the artist and appropriate in the Moselle where overtly 'republican' iconography was generally avoided, is a more obvious derivation. So too was the sleeping German lion at Retonfey which itself replicates aspects of the Thorwaldsen, and is replicated in turn on the memorial 'Ehren und Dank Unsernhelden' at Bliesmengen-Bolchen, just across the border in the Saar.

In the non-military register, Canova's complex Maria Christina memorial in the Augustinerkirche, Vienna (1805), incorporates a recumbent lion at the base of the pyramidal tomb and an allegorical 'genius of mourning' (Honour 1968: 156–7). Whatever the putative inspiration, however, Scherer eschews classically heroic proportions and sublimity in favour of something smaller, more familiar, and more intimate. The dead lion, the sleeping guardian of the empty tomb appears slyly awake, a child's if not a childlike representation which subverts the usual attributes and which, were it not for its unproblematic adoption by each linguistic and 'national' community, might indeed invite the spectator silently to construct the absent memorial dedication *aux enfants de . . .* with its unstated – and unauthorised complement *morts pour la France*.

In fact, by reversing the normal commemorative paradigm (soldiers as lion-hearted), Scherer comes close to humanising his lion, invested with qualities of vulnerability and the capacity for meekness. There were of course established precedents, from both sacred and secular domains. The Biblical injunction that the lion shall lie down with the lamb echoed the legend of St Jerome removing the thorn from the lion's paw in the wilderness, captured in one of Bellini's earliest works.[7] The complicity between the lion and the child is a classical trope found in much European sculpture, including the pairing on the celebrated Place du Peyrou in Montpellier (Hérault), while the notion that from strength shall flow goodness is an advertising cliché for Lyle's well known brand of golden syrup, whose trade-mark symbol is a dead lion with a wild beehive established in its open flank. Scherer's lion is not necessarily, therefore, an elision of more traditional commemorative sentiments, grief and self-sacrifice, loss and valour. But its more complex symbolism suggests that the commemorative lion can also represent the taming of the furies, the gods of war, and like the title of a recent volume of studies of patrimonial historiography, *domestiquer l'histoire* (Fabre and Voisenat 2000), remind us that iconography is a two-way street, a link between different historical epochs, a bridge into neighbouring disciplines of ethnography and anthropology through a focus on materiality.

The same may be argued for the *pleureuse*. Local memory at Puttelange, where a photograph of the original memorial is preserved in the mayor's office, holds that this figure, the so-called 'Génie de Grunewald', was based by the artist on a real-life model, a young local woman. This claim, which adduces both a classical (high culture) inspiration and a contemporary female identification, is now impossible to confirm and is in any case problematised by the dates of neighbouring commissions and inaugurations. Algrange was authorised on 18 April, Koenigsmacker-Mettrich on 3 July and Puttelange on 23 July 1923, while there is evidence that the designs for both Nilvange and Puttelange were established during 1922 (Moselle Departmental Archives). More important for present purposes is the fact that the figure breaks with commemorative convention by looking not at the obelisk, site of the 'absent'

combatant for whom she ostensibly grieves, but outwards, as if denying or challenging the spectator's gaze, and to that extent reinforces the subliminal, Sphinx-like associations of the whole. Moreover, in her semi-modern apparel of long buttoned coat, a *bonnet lorrain* which could be mistaken for a 1920s cloche hat and her reversed flambeau for an outsize folded parasol, she belongs to that ambiguous representational locus between the allegorical and the realist, between the conventionally draped and the consciously fashionable, between the gendered (sexual) object and the androgeny of her sculptural function. To that extent, therefore, she embodies the combination of the ethereal and the material which forms a greater part of the sub-text of popular commemorative art than has been acknowledged to date, and into which a modified anthropological approach could deliver new insights.

Though scarcely typical of what one French commentator has called a tendency to over-elaboration and kitsch-like accumulation – *'un peu image d'Epinal et operette, catalogue de la Manufacture des armes et cycles de Saint-Etienne, dessus de cheminée de salle à manger populaire'* ('patriotic caricature, melodrama, mail-order catalogue and serial interior design') (Ragon 1981: 122–3) – the composite, assembled structure of the Scherer memorials made them suitable for disaggregation and partial recuperation. This was to prove a particularly useful attribute in cases such as Hettange-Grande and Puttelange, devastated during the bitter and protracted fighting for the liberation of the region in late 1944. Other communes with single figure memorials were not so lucky: Gravelotte's 1914–18 *Joan of Arc* was destroyed by artillery fire, leaving only the plinth; Rosbruck's memorial *Marianne* suffered a less belligerent but more humiliating fate: she was the wartime victim of a falling tree and temporarily replaced in 1946 by a cross of Lorraine manufactured by the local blacksmith from old 105 mm shell cases. This interim structure, a remarkable but sadly no longer extant example of the adaptation of military *matériel* to commemorative use (Saunders 2003) was in due course replaced by a less artisanal cross, also the work of a blacksmith.[8] It continued to serve the community until 1988, when as part of Rosbruck's modernisation of its public and commemorative space, a memorial radically different from the original was inaugurated on a new site between the contemporary church of St Hubert and the new town hall (Kidd 1999: 134–5).

These and other developments were of course partly a consequence of evolving historical forces. The Second World War 'resistance movement' led to the commissioning of new French memorials. Unlike in the UK, many French 1914–18 monuments could not be suitably updated to accommodate the very different circumstances and combatant identities of 1939–45. And France's protracted involvement in colonial wars until 1962 added new dimensions to her commemorative culture that successive political developments (Gaullism and post-Gaullism) and the ongoing legacy of Algeria prolonged into the comparatively recent past.

In 1956, Hettange-Grande replaced Scherer's 1924 memorial with a simple,

freestanding *mater dolorosa*, a choice which asserted a continuity of religious inspiration while effecting a certain dehistoricisation. Subsequently, the memorial was moved from the church precincts to a town square named after the eighteenth-century general Chapuis de Tourville (1741–1809). Seen today, the grieving mother laments the dead children of many wars, and perhaps indeed war itself. The lion and angel, reassigned to separate vocations, the primary school and the cemetery, the alpha and omega, now define a trajectory which by an appropriate but partly unconscious symbolism evokes the absent middle term, the (young) male life now no longer at risk of the bloodletting commemorated in the original. The memorial at Puttelange was replaced in 1970 by a rectangular relief with military, civilian and Resistance representations, but here too the effect is one of dehistoricisation. As regional identities erode national frontiers and the memory of twentieth-century conflict recedes, the town square and church with its onion-shaped belfry offers the visitor a site where elements of a more ancient, but increasingly contemporary European heritage (re-)emerge. Scherer's lion survives, adjacent, in the main square, a silent witness to a historical narrative that it has mercifully outlived.

But where now are the enigmatic *pleureuses* of Puttelange and Fontoy? Did they survive, like Hettange-Grande's angel, to grace another funerary site, or find their way into a garden or park, or – an unlikely but intriguing prospect – did they fall into private hands, enjoying a new form of socio-artistic consecration in the catalogue of some metropolitan antique dealer? Either way, that would be better than the fate which befell some memorial artefacts in the UK, occasionally dismantled and rebuilt on another location to satisfy changing urban traffic requirements but sometimes destroyed, remaindered or stolen. The British War Memorials Act of 1923 empowered local authorities to maintain memorials but did not require them to, a *laissez-faire* attitude in stark if understandable contrast to the admirable work done in 'foreign fields' by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

Distressing examples of vandalism include Finsbury, Blackburn (involving the theft of decorative lion's heads) and the Victory figure which previously topped the Leeds memorial, though in the latter case deterioration appears to have been partly compounded by neglect (Boorman: 137–9). In August 1998, the bronze statue of a Great War infantryman leaning on his rifle, unveiled in 1923 in the Borders village of Walkerburn, disappeared from its plinth and was later found abandoned on an Edinburgh scrap metal dump (*The Scotsman* 2000). In some declining, or increasingly secular, Scottish urban areas, the closure and demolition of churches, and the fusion of congregations, has led to the loss of memorial tablets and Rolls of Honour, though in some cases, thanks to local foresight, a photographic record has been preserved (Kidd: in press). The establishment of the Friends of War Memorials in 1997 was prompted by the scrapping or selling of such commemorative artefacts,[9] just as the decision to create a UK-wide National Inventory of war memorials in

1989 was partly a response to increasing awareness of the importance of the national commemorative inheritance.

It is true that some French memorials have been allowed to deteriorate or become overgrown, especially in depopulated meridional communes which have fallen victim to *la désertification*. And vandalism, whether deliberately iconoclastic or simply alcohol fuelled, is no respecter of national frontiers. Generally speaking, however, their upkeep is still a matter of both local pride and public policy. Apart from the greater degree of involvement of the French State in the form of the Ministère des Anciens Combattants, le Souvenir Français looks after military cemeteries and individual plots as well as memorials themselves. Some old memorials have been replaced or upgraded, others dismantled and rebuilt on new sites to accommodate changing town-centre needs, and as we saw in the case of Scherer's work, where accidental or deliberate demolition has occurred, other uses found for the remaining parts of the original. Also in the Moselle, the plinth of the old 1914–18 memorial at Oeting, a statue of the 'sacred heart', now supports a trailing plant in the presbytery garden. The 1978 memorial to Resistance martyrs and deportees on the outskirts of Longeville-lès-Saint-Avold is a composite, constructed site incorporating three successive historical layers: a contemporary plaque in French, German and English, a 1930s Maginot line cupola brought from its original emplacement ten km away, and a bullet-pocked German calvary dated 1916 (Kidd 1999: 131–2). That process whereby new commemorative landscapes are created which are also landscapes of the imagination is a continuing one, and it is one that provides a challenge for a new generation of historians and anthropologists.

Notes

1 'Les monuments aux morts ont complètement gommé cet aspect de la guerre. Les femmes y sont vierges comme des saintes, hautaines dans leur chagrin de veuves, figées dans leur sens du devoir. On sent combien ces oeuvres sont une reconstruction idéologique. Les sculpteurs ont réussi ce qu'on leur demandait: ressusciter l'Union sacrée et l'union des familles, par-delà le drame si on se permet de représenter une femme belle, désirable, elle est si absorbée dans sa douleur que l'on n'oserait pas avoir envie de la prendre dans ses bras. Les couples sont formés de poilus sans désirs, sinon pour la France, et de veuves à jamais tournées vers des amours mortes'. ('Memorials to the fallen have totally effaced this aspect of war. In them, women are as virginal as saints, aloof in their widows' grief, frozen in their sense of duty. One realises to what extent such artefacts are an ideological reconstruction. The sculptors achieved what was asked of them: to resurrect, beyond the cataclysm, the wartime 'sacred union' of the nation and the unity of the family. When an artist has felt free to represent a beautiful, desirable woman, she is so absorbed in her grief that one would not dare seek to embrace her. Memorial couples are composed of soldiers devoid of desire, unless it be for France herself, and widows for ever turned towards dead loves') (Becker 1988: 84).

2 This was the date of his original communication (Agulhon 1985: 202, n. 1).

3 These include the departments of the Aisne, Ardennes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Fin-
   istère, Loire, Loire-Atlantique, Pas-de-Calais, Puy-de-Dôme, Pyrénées orientales,
   Vaucluse and Vendée. Daniel Sherman's recent synopsis (1999) focuses on four
   diverse departments, the Meuse, the Morbihan, the Loir-et-Cher and the Var,
   supplemented by material from other local studies.
4 Some 750 memorials from 75 metropolitan departments.
5 Enquiries about the artist and other data regarding the Fontainebleau memorial,
   conducted on my behalf by the municipal archival services, have proved fruitless.
6 François Roth calculates that of 380,000 Alsace-Lorrainers who served, only
   20,000 did so in the French armies or in the Foreign Legion (1976: 626–7).
7 The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham (*c.* 1450?).
8 Both men were local councillors, which highlights the close interface between the
   fields of work, representative (political) activity and commemorative imperatives
   in small communes typical of this survey.
9 *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1997, p. 9. In December 1999, the Highland Coun-
   cil discussed a proposal to ask relatives of the dead to contribute to the cost of
   memorial upkeep (*The Scotsman*, 29 December 1999, p. 6). Increasing national
   concern also prompted the 'Remembrance', conference on the care and conser-
   vation of war memorials organised by English Heritage and the Friends of War
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THE INTERNET AND THE GREAT WAR

The impact on the making and meaning of Great War history

Nils Fabiansson

The informality of the Internet promotes contact and communication among like-minded people worldwide, and enables network creation between international researchers in narrow topics, such as the history of the Great War.
(Kollock 1999: 220; Kollock and Smith 1999: 13)

An immense amount of research on the Great War is now in the public domain and available internationally owing to the Internet's particular characteristics, although quality is not guaranteed. The Internet provides researchers and the public previously unimagined opportunities to find, retrieve and distribute information, owing to the fact that it is available worldwide 24 hours a day at home on the desktop and, not least, owing to the fact that no commercial interests have to be involved. The materiality of the medium (Editorial 1996: 5–9) exercises a profound impact on the collective image of the Great War.

The Internet

The Internet had its beginnings during the 1960s, ironically in this context as an American military initiative. Constructed as a network, important information could be distributed along alternate routes even if one part of the system was malfunctioning. The Internet soon expanded into the academic arena and has since then been largely privatised. With e-mail and the introduction of the World Wide Web, where the Internet user browses the Internet using such software as Internet Explorer, a huge growth of interest in the Internet was created (Schrock 1997: 147–9).

In the early days, spectacular terms such as 'cyberspace' and 'virtuality'

were frequently used and it was often stated that the media created social relations that were not 'real'. This view, however, has proved to be somewhat misleading. The information on the Internet is not virtual – it is kept at a host server and, at the moment, it appears in the browser it is recorded on the computer's hard disk where it is kept as long as it is wanted. Communication on the Internet is as real or illusory as any other interpersonal communication (Miller and Slater 2000: 6; Wellman and Gulia 1999: 182). The Internet 'is not a monolithic or placeless "cyberspace"; rather, it is numerous new technologies, used by diverse people, in diverse real-world locations' (Miller and Slater 2000: 7).

Great War information on the Internet

There is a vast amount of information on the Internet, most of which is of no interest for a student of the Great War. Nevertheless, there is still an overwhelming quantity of information relevant to Great War researchers.

In order to find relevant information, the use of references, links to other sites and search engines is necessary. With a digital search engine, for example *AltaVista*, *Google* and *Yahoo!*, that has similar search facilities as computers in libraries, it is possible to find documents that contain particular words or phrases, see Table 12.1). The phrase 'First World War', for example, using one particular search engine, gave 331,000 hits a day in March 2002.[1] This means that on that particular day, the search engine found one-third of a million sites on the Internet that contained the phrase the 'First World War', not counting individual documents sub-filed under these sites. This gives some indication of the amount of Great War related information on the Internet. Not all information, however, is in English.

Table 12.1 Number of search engine hits on the Internet.

Search phrase	No. of hits	
	May 2001	*March 2002*
'first world war'	14,000	331,000
'great war'	159,000	225,000
'western front'	57,800	92,700
'world war one'	40,100	59,900
'première guerre mondiale'	34,600	59,300
'grande guerra'	26,200	33,400
'1. Weltkrieg'	20,400	27,100
'grande guerre'	19,400	23,700
'eerste wereldoorlog'	11,600	15,100
'erste Weltkrieg'	8,620	17,200
'grosse Krieg'	1,200	1,590

Source: *Google*, http://www.google.com/, 290501 and 030302.

The number of 'hits' shown in Table 12.1 reflects the general situation and trend. But there are also sites relevant to Great War studies that do not include these particular phrases. There were, for example, about 19,000 sites in English that contained the words 'Somme' and '1916', but did not contain the phrases 'Great War' or 'First World War'.

Using a search engine for retrieving relevant information from the Internet is not always an easy task, but as a consequence of the medium it could in fact be easier to find very specific information than general information. If my interest is dogs in the Great War, I could search for the phrase 'dogs in the trenches', and the search engine would give ten hits. Among them I would find the information at *Breed Networks Database* that, during 'World War I, Irish Terriers were used as messenger dogs in the trenches and they acquired a reputation for being both intelligent and fearless.'[2] If I am interested in propaganda postcards from 1914, I will doubtless find the site *Propaganda Postcards of the Great War* if I use the search words 'propaganda', 'postcards' and 'Great War'.[3]

There is much to say about how to use search engines, and how different search engines give varying results. But instead of learning how to use them properly, my experience is that people often go to one of the sites first listed, perhaps the very first, and from there find linked sites; they are 'surfing' or 'browsing' from site to site. It is crucial to find adequate lists of links to start from – the Internet is not a library where the information is more or less sorted by professional librarians, and therefore quality on the Internet is far from guaranteed.

It is often stated that all kinds of information are to be found on the Internet, but that is not correct. The Internet could in fact be described as the very opposite of libraries. Notably, texts with copyright occur relatively rarely on the Internet (exceptions do occur however). This gives the medium many of its characteristics: individuals, groups, organisations, authorities and companies put various kinds of information on to the Internet. Anyone may make a contribution, no publisher and costly distribution is involved. Even the smallest local association may announce its activities worldwide. Even the narrowest subjects may be made available, including strange and suspect ideas – the great amount of revisionist Holocaust history being one example.

The Great War on the Internet – a brief case study

Analysing Great War information on the Internet is not straightforward. The theme, content and purpose of a site, as well as the publisher's name, age, occupation, title and nationality are often neither stated nor easily discernible. There are other features of interest however, that could easily be studied: do individuals or organisations publish the sites? In what language are they published? Is the author's e-mail address given? Are references provided? What types of Great War information are there? Is Great War information mainly

found on sites with a primarily Great War focus or on sites with a different focus? Another interesting issue to investigate would be the nature (and software architecture) of sites – e.g. are they built as 'workshops' where individuals other than the web master can contribute, and are they more or less commercial? A subjective estimation could provide some indication concerning the size of web sites, and if they are based mainly on verbal or graphic information.

With the addition of '1914' and '1918' to the search phrase 'Great War', the Internet search engine Google gave 21,800 hits in May 2001. Six out of the first ten hits were sites with exclusively Great War content. The other four hits were sub-pages of sites not primarily focused on the Great War, i.e. there were two commercial sites that sold books, and two that contained various kinds of military history. The six specific Great War sites had various content related to the Great War, with a preponderance of material concerning the Western Front. Five out of these were personal sites and one was the home page of an organisation. Five out of the six Great War sites had a workshop character. Four were rather large, with more than ten web pages. All except one of the ten sites had English-only versions; one had both English and Dutch versions.[4]

The search words 'Somme' and '1916' (17,100 hits) resulted in three commercial sites among the first ten hits: one bookshop and two battlefield tour companies. There were five personal sites, of which two had a workshop character, and the remaining two were sub-pages of the home pages of organisations. Three of the personal sites were genealogies or biographies. None of the ten sites were exclusively Somme sites, but sub-pages of sites with various content, of which only two were Great War sites. The amount of Great War related information on the sites was therefore rather limited. Eight had English only versions, one was in French, and one had both French and English versions.[5]

'Verdun' and '1916' gave 10,900 hits. Three out of the first ten hits were sub-pages of commercial sites: two bookshops and one tourist office. Three were sub-pages of home pages of organisations and authorities. The remaining four were personal sites, of which three were mainly concerned with the battle of Verdun and one was a personal biography. Two had a workshop character. Six sites had English only versions, two had French only versions, one was in German, and the remaining two had French and English, and Dutch and English versions.[6]

All sites found in these three searches had the e-mail address of their web masters or authors. Most of the non-commercial sites had some sort of references. The number of Great War related links on the sites varied from none to more than a hundred, most often somewhere in the middle of these figures. The ratio of images to text varied considerably, with some sites consisting almost exclusively of pictures, while others included no graphics at all. Most often the amount of graphics was relatively high.

The character of the first ten sites listed manually by editors at 'UK and Irish Yahoo!' under '20th century military history', were somewhat different. All were personal sites except two that were home pages of organisations, i.e. associations. Only one had a workshop character. There were three genealogies, one battalion history, and one mostly concerned with British and Irish army history, strategy and re-enactment. Most sites consisted of more than ten web pages, most had references, and all had the e-mail address of the author or web master. The average number of links was 27. All sites were in English, but one also had a German version. The amount of graphic material was similar to the sites investigated above.[7]

General characteristics of Great War sites

Clearly, one cannot extrapolate too much from this limited case study. However, the results are both useful and indicative as they confirm the general impression gained, by this author at least, after many years of Internet browsing.

References, if there are any, are most often given as separate biographies rather than direct references as in academic publications. The amount of graphic information is relatively large with several sites having only maps and pictures, often scanned from old literature. A great deal of information is put as 'fact lists', chronologies and descriptions and summaries of information gathered from published literature without any interpretive assessment or comment.

'Links' themselves are often cross-linked to other sites, i.e. the linked sites link back according to an unwritten law which reflects the specific communities of the Internet (Kollock and Smith 1999). Personal sites and the home pages of organisations most often urge visitors to contact the authors via e-mail. Many sites are in workshop format.

A common and significant feature is the public discussion forum, which resembles the discussion groups and mailing lists of the Internet during the 1990s (Kollock and Smith 1999: 14–18). Such discussion lists still exist however, for example 'The World War I discussion list', which has been on the Internet since 1994.[8] Today, web sites often have 'guest books', 'discussion boards' or 'e-boards', i.e. digital notice boards that are often called discussion forums, where anyone may contribute by asking or answering a question.

Popular Great War discussion forums at the time of writing include, for example, the Western Front Association (WFA) Discussion Forum,[9] Forum Première Guerre Mondiale[10] and Diskussionsforum Lexikon des ersten Weltkriegs.[11] At various Great War forums, issues of interest are discussed and researchers help each other in public. For example: an Israeli, in search of his grandfather who was buried somewhere in a German First World War military cemetery (*Soldatenfriedhof*) in Alsace, had very little information – even the precise name of the grandfather was uncertain. Via the Internet, and

through a discussion forum in particular, he received help from Germans who searched the German archives and help from French locals, who walked the cemeteries for him. In the end his grandfather's name and grave were found, and the researcher could visit the grave thanks to Internet-based volunteer teamwork.[12]

Personal biographies and genealogies are frequent. Furthermore, many other amateur historians publish their hobby work, be it their research on a particular regiment, individual, town, battlefield, weapon, memorabilia etc. Many sites are descriptions of private collections, be they of Western Front tour pictures, collections of Great War militaria, or even personal collections of links to Great War sites. The Internet is the perfect forum for collectors, which enables them to present their collections proudly, find like-minded individuals and perhaps locate complete series or sets of their particular objects of interest (Danet and Katriel 1994: 230–2).

A common theme of Great War sites is remembrance, and this is often acknowledged as their major purpose. This statement, however, appears sometimes rather hypocritical, similar to what Stephen O'Shea calls 'voyeurism disguised as compassion' (O'Shea 1996: 7), and seems to justify all kinds of poor research or offensive content. By using the magic word 'remembrance', everything is given the veneer of political correctness. However, this does not exclude the fact that many sites do follow a long tradition of collective remembrance (Winter and Sivan 1999: 10). Visiting such sites could be seen as a form of pilgrimage (Lloyd 1998: 221), albeit vicarious and electronic. By browsing the Internet from one battlefield to another and from one cemetery to another, a battlefield pilgrimage tour is made at home – a curious blend of materiality, immateriality and spirituality.

The Internet as a forum for battlefield looters

Unfortunately, the Internet also offers a forum for battlefield relic hunters, providing unscrupulous militaria dealers with an international market. Battlefield looting is illegal[13] and can be compared with grave-desecration, as the former battlefields are often regarded as sacred landscapes of remembrance (Lloyd 1998: 24), and the archaeological record becomes disturbed forever (Courtney 2000: 26; Desfossés 1998: 48; Saunders 2002; Scott *et al.* 1989: 89; Smith 1994: 6–7). Although there have been First World War artefact dealers, looters, collectors and markets for a long time, the forum for profit-motivated relic hunters has been greatly extended since the appearance of the Internet.

On the homepage of the American company 'Great War Militaria', for example, many hundreds of battlefield artefacts are offered for sale. In some cases provenance is stated, for example some German dog tags, 'dug at Rhombas', offered for $29.50 – $89.50, a fuse 'DUG at SOMME but GOOD' and a base primer protector 'from the Somme battlefield, VG, brass, thus in good

condition'. They have artillery shell cases for $29.50, 'neat battlefield stuff / . . . / from the Vimy Ridge battlefield' and various fuses and grenades, described as 'fired, inert, battlefield pick-up', 'dug (as all are)', 'showing great age', one 'from a bunker in France / . . . / nice to fill out a collection', another for $199.50, 'dug and restored, M17 model, good for display / . . . / cleaned and lacquered (like the French love to do with all of their dug stuff)'. For $189.50 you can buy a whole sample:

> RELICS, LOT, all from VERDUN: German pioneer axe head, French Citron Foug grenade body, German folded ear shovel head, rare 20 round German trench magazine, German canteen body, and small adze for wood working. Instant collection for a display. ALL GOOD condition with usual patina/rust.[14]

Internet-boosted looting, together with the increasing number of battlefield visitors on the Western Front (Saunders 2001: 45, 47), which perhaps is also a side effect of the Internet, highlight the urgent need for cultural heritage protection of the Great War remains, perhaps similar to the Italian law of 7 March 2001, 'Protection of the historical heritage of the First World War' (*Gazzetta Ufficiale* 2001a, 2001b).

Internet as a general resource

Besides particular Great War sites, there are, as the brief case study above indicates, numerous other sites of interest for Great War research that provide information, give opportunities to find relevant literature all over the world, and make international contact easier: one contact gives an e-mail address to others, who then pass on tips to still more, etc. Useful sites are online used and new bookshops, the sites of libraries, newspapers, war grave organisations, local, regional and national authorities, institutions and universities, and sites concerned with travel and accommodation. Clearly, the quantity and range of such electronic resources are crucial for those, like myself, who are actively engaged in charting the progress and development of Western Front archaeology at a distance.[15]

It should not be forgotten that there are also various other sites, which could be of indirect use. For example, finding an association of French local veteran railroad hobbyists on the Internet while doing Great War research on a geographical site where there used to be a railroad during the war, could be of great help. For a student of von Lettow-Vorbeck's fighting retreat of 1916–18 in Africa, a simple e-mail contact with a school in Mahenge in Tanzania might result in a transcontinental on-line history project. The availability of all these innumerable resources on the Internet makes Great War research broader, easier, faster and more international than ever before.

Great War Internet communities

The term Internet communities has been mentioned above. Great War sites are most often linked to each other and almost always have the e-mail address of the author, which promotes contact between researchers. Marco Hoveling, the author of the site *An Unfortunate Region*, receives about five to ten e-mails per day:

> Most e-mails are people saying 'thanks for the website'. / . . . / Some want to know something about their relative. If they get a good reply depends on how their e-mail is written (some e-mails can be considered stupid or rude: 'Hello, my great uncle died at Thiepval, can you send the information you have to xxxxx@xxx.com. Thank you.'); how much time I have; if it looks interesting; if I have background information'.
>
> (Hoveling 2001)

Besides e-mails from approximately 15 people who now have become Hoveling's trusted Internet friends, contacts are often very loose: 'Easy come easy go, I always say. People usually promise a lot, but when it comes to delivering . . .' (*ibid.*).

Many Great War sites are constructed as workshops, a form of volunteer teamwork that especially distinguishes Great War forums where international researchers give support to each other publicly and without profit. In fact, very large projects including thousands of volunteers have successfully been organised and coordinated on the Internet without any professional staff or budget (Kollock 1999: 232). However, Great War related Internet projects have, at the time of writing, been concerned mostly with meetings and research, and e-mail and web site roll-calls for threatened Western Front battlefields (i.e. the planned airport on the Somme in France and the projected A19 motorway cutting through the old Ypres Salient north of Ieper in Belgium). But why stop there? There are undreamt-of possibilities for the size and significance of projects that could be co-ordinated via the Internet: mobilisation of an army of volunteers for documentation projects of battlefield remains or for a collective political action for adequate preservation policies, etc.

Such social behaviour is characteristic of the Internet, and is a consequence of the medium (Kollock and Smith 1999: 13–15). It is important to understand the general structures of Internet communities as it is highly probable that formations of Great War Internet communities (Kollock and Smith 1999) or networks (Hasselberg *et al.* 1997: 3) have an impact on the general understanding of the Great War.

Internet communities are distinguished by a great amount of sharing and co-operation (Kollock 1999: 220, 236). Sociologists argue that such communities could be described as 'gift economies', where 'help and information

are offered without the expectation of any direct, immediate quid pro quo' (Kollock 1999: 220). The sociologist Peter Kollock suggests that the motivations for making contributions to these communities are that benefits for the individual come partly from the increasing range and diversity of one's social network (Kollock 1999: 222). He argues that the system creates a kind of credit – one would expect to receive useful help and information in return for contributing valuable information. Contributions also have an effect on one's reputation. Valuable information, impressive answers, willingness to help and elegant writing increase one's prestige in the community – significantly important is that there is some recognition of the person's contribution for the particular community as a whole (Kollock 1999: 228).

Establishing identity and building a reputation in a particular Internet community provides a great deal of motivation (Donath 1999: 30). Power is another crucial factor – not exclusively economic power, but the possession of various assets: influence, high quality information and friends. Seeing Internet communities as social gift economies highlights the significance of the reciprocal gift. The frequently exchanged commodities within a social network consist of mutual favours and services, where the receiver is put in debt to the giver according to the unwritten social codes. Thus, being in possession of valuable information and important social relations is to have the power to choose with whom this information or social relation is to be shared. Exchange of valuable information and important social relations thus strengthens trust in the circle of power-holders in the network, power-holders who accumulate power through their own means and contacts (Hasselberg *et al.* 1997: 5–9).

Although these structures are seen in Internet communities and networks in general, there is no reason to assume that they do not apply to Great War Internet communities as well.

The presented image of the Great War on the Internet

The way the story of an event is told, together with what is left in and what excised, clearly affects the way it is received. How Great War history is presented to the public in general therefore has an impact on our collective memory and understanding of it. As a result of the specific nature of the Internet's techniques, the information distributed on it is not identical to that occurring in traditional media. Therefore one can assume that with the Internet, the history of the Great War is rewritten (Jenkins 1991: 8–11) on a structural level, albeit perhaps unintentionally.

Until the 1960s, the history of the Great War had been presented to the public mostly in texts, perhaps accompanied by a few maps and monochrome photographs. Though it could be argued that, thanks to television, a far broader public now has knowledge of the war, it also could be argued

that television history is fragmented, limited to the film sequences available, and to what can be told in 55 minutes or less (Watson and Hill 1993: 192).

In contrast to traditional media, there is no limit to the amount of information that can easily and without cost be distributed via web sites. The Internet therefore gives the opportunity to reverse a television-fragmented Great War history. However, web sites do not rival the traditional channels for distributing Great War history. The number of books, articles in magazines and television documentaries are surely no less today than before the birth of the Internet. The web site as a means for publishing research is instead mostly a channel for researchers other than those who publish themselves through traditional, perhaps more credible and presumably more prestigious means (Jenkins 1991: 25). Given the characteristics of the Internet, a probable –consequence is that the general level of Great War information becomes amateurish, i.e. a higher percentage of the total amount of Great War history produced will be done by amateurs, compared to when the only form of publication was through traditional channels.

Furthermore, in contrast to television or books, web sites need neither speakers nor colourful texts. On the contrary, its international and informal character encourages limited texts. Its physical appearance and its screen discourages text reading and promotes effortless 'drag-and-drop' graphics. With the Internet, i.e. e-mailing, web sites and browsing, the proportion of text and image probably tends to be reversed in comparison to books, with a preponderance of graphic information, with fact and object focusing as a probable consequence, something which could have a negative effect on any deeper understanding (Miller 1994: 407).

Contact and network establishing

Saying that the image of the Great War as presented on the Internet has/will become amateurish is not to say that serious research will be negatively affected. With elaborate networks, researchers have better opportunities to find relevant information and to get in contact with other researchers. And as research in general, both amateur and professional, is becoming more international and divergent via the Internet, the general image of the Great War will become less mainstreamed (Watson and Hill 1993: 107).

It should be emphasised that information presented on web sites is perhaps not the most significant (Miller 1994: 397) feature of the Internet. The published information may be of some value and weight, but most important for Great War research is probably the opportunity to come in contact with the researcher behind it, often face-to-face (Wellman and Gulia 1999: 182; Miller and Slater 2000: 6). If Great War web sites in general are actually mostly intended as international advertisements or visiting cards (Donath 1999: 41), there are reasons to assume that information presented on web sites is in fact of minor importance for both research and the general

understanding of the Great War. Instead, the establishing of contacts and networks through web sites would in the long run have a larger impact on the understanding of the Great War.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Great War history is rewritten through the characteristics of Internet technology. The Internet is a material cultural mediator of social relations as its technology actively structures such relations (Kollock and Smith 1999: 14). From this perspective, the construction of Great War associated communities is merely one example of 'the trend of technology fostering specialised relationships' (Wellman and Gulia 1999: 171). In addition, Internet and computer digital information technology itself has an impact on the very substance of the ongoing rewriting of Great War history. These two processes are closely interrelated but lead in two different directions: on the one hand, the very materiality of the Internet could slowly and indirectly create a new collective image of the Great War, an understanding perhaps more distorted and fragmented, or at best, pocket-encyclopaedia-like, and literally more graphic than before. Alternatively, its materiality indirectly creates new transnational relations, with distinguishing social structures that enables Great War research to become more international and multi-dimensional than ever before.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Searchword 'great war', *Google*, http://www.google.com/ (030302).
2 *Pro Dog Networks*, http://www.prodogs.com/breed/ BreedPages/Irish_Terrier .html (040601).
3 *Google*'s first hit, http://www.ww1-propaganda-cards.com/index.html (060601).
4 Searchwords 'great war' and '1914' and '1918', *Google*, http://www.google.com/ (290501).
5 Searchwords 'Somme' and '1916', *Google*, http://www.google.com/ (290501).
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7 *Yahoo!*, http://uk.dir.yahoo.com/Arts /Humanities/ History/By_Time _Period/20th_Century/Military_History/World_War_I/ (310501).
8 *The World War I Discussion List*, http://www.ukans. edu/~kansite/ ww_one/ arch.html (150601).
9 *The WFA Discussion Forum*, http://www.westernfront.co.uk/.
10 *Forum Première Guerre Mondiale*, http://www.histoire.org/cgi-bin/config1gm.pl.
11 Diskussionsforum Lexikon des ersten Weltkriegs, http://www.milex.de/forum/ index.html.
12 See Kahn, 'The lost tomb of my grandfather; in search of a German soldier's

grave', at *Vogesenkämpfe 1914–1918*, http://home.t-online.de/home/alexander
kallis/levimax.htm (010613).
13 *Loi du 27 septembre 1941 portant réglementation des fouilles archéologiques*, http://myweb.
worldnet.net/~clist/Archlois/Textes/Terrain/loi1941.html (210601).
14 *Great War Militaria*, http://www.greatwar.com/greatwar/Gwbrdx.htm (130601).
15 http://w1.865.telia.com/~u86517080/BattlefieldArchaeology/ArkeologENG.
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13

THE OCEAN VILLAS PROJECT

Archaeology in the service of
European remembrance

Jon Price

> The fact is, a trench is that most uninteresting of human
> devices, a compromise. It is neither satisfactory as a domicile
> nor efficient as a weapon of offence. The most luxuriant dug-
> out in spite of all biased assertions to the contrary, compares
> unfavourably with a flat in Knightsbridge.
>
> (Hay 1915: 230)

Archaeologists are conventionally concerned with material culture and with
geological stratigraphy as evidence for the activities of past societies. Material
culture takes the form of finds which are recovered as the result of excava-
tion, which can be preserved, and from which interpretive records can be
made. The stratigraphy takes the form of transformations, both cultural and
natural, in soil and rock which are uncovered as a result of excavation, and
from which an overall interpretive record can be made. The underlying
assumption made by archaeologists as well as non-archaeologists is that the
archaeological process creates interpretive data that may reveal things about
the activities of past societies that would otherwise be unknown or unclear
from any previous written records (Hodder 1999).

   Archaeologists have a difficult relationship with material culture. In part,
this derives from the art historical roots of classical archaeology (Shanks
1997). They attempt to categorise material culture into typologies based
largely on aesthetic qualities of form, fabric and decoration. This approach is
problematic since most pre-industrial material culture takes a form that
reflects function, a fabric that reflects locally available materials, and decora-
tion whose function cannot be easily deduced in cases where the material is
without supporting contemporary written evidence. The result is that finds of
mundane material from early periods are treated with reverence far beyond
their actual value, and museum stores are filled with boxes of, for example,

undistinguished grey pottery sherds. Although there may be some value in the data produced by scientific analysis of this sort of material, the methodology derived from its recovery is a positive hindrance in the archaeology of industrialised warfare where there exist a seemingly infinite number of mundane objects. For example, billions of rounds of rifle and machine gun ammunition were expended, or discarded unused, on the Western Front during the First World War. They can be categorised by firearm into no more than a dozen categories. As cultural artefacts they have no particular value, except possibly by volume. The conventional archaeological response of careful excavation, recording, identification and marking is not suitable for this category of material culture in this place, in this time. However, where the cartridge (or any example of mass produced war *matériel*) has been converted into another cultural form, such as an item of 'trench art', then the artefact transcends its mundane character and a different set of interpretive rules apply (Saunders 2002: 106).

Not only is the artefactual evidence largely irrelevant in archaeological terms, but in addition, the activities of the soldiers during the 1914–18 war are extremely well documented at an official and a personal level, and so the question arises – what is the role of archaeology in the investigation of 1914–18 battlefield activity? Official excavation of 1914–18 war material on the Western Front has generally been concerned with the exhumation of human remains, or takes place as an aspect of management of a national war memorial, or as a rescue activity in advance of development. By contrast, this chapter documents the Ocean Villas project as an example of a different process, whereby archaeology can play a part in the continuing development of local political, social and economic processes within a society, while retaining its own validity. In this way, the project is centrally located in the increasingly multi-disciplinary and anthropologically informed practice of modern archaeology, and simultaneously at the forefront of the developing discipline of twentieth-century battlefield archaeology (Saunders 2002: 107).

The economy of the regions traversed by the Western Front has, since the collapse of their primary industries, depended heavily on battlefield tourism. It is probably coincidental that this economic activity has developed significantly at precisely the time that traditional industries of the area have suffered decline. Yet, tourism and archaeology have always gone hand in hand. Sometimes, it is difficult to see which came first: for example, the grand tour or the development of classical archaeology. It is clear, however, that eighteenth-century British tourists and collectors visited classical Greek and Roman sites because they believed that these cultures embodied civilised values that were assumed to be essentially British. More recently, we can see (if only by examining car number plates) that there are significant numbers of Italians currently visiting Hadrian's Wall, despite the fact that it was only Roman and Italian in name, being garrisoned by troops from Gaul, Germania, Sarmatia, Mesopotamia and North Africa. When it comes to visitors to

Western Front sites, there can be several kinds of more direct personal connections. Many visitors can trace a connection to a relative through one, two or three generations, and may also identify with those from their home town or county because of the territorial nature of the British Army. Any archaeology carried out in First World War locations is not dealing with the behaviour and remains of racial archetypes but with the activities and remains of known individuals and often blood relatives. In other words, First World War battlefield tourism is a peculiarly connected kind of endeavour which raises further problematic issues for archaeology.

Background to survival

There are three major categories of archaeological material on the Western Front: (1) officially preserved, (2) accidentally surviving and (3) undiscovered and still buried. Category 1 includes all cemeteries and memorials, and these are clearly the focus of remembrance, and are usually outside the realm of archaeological activity. There are also preserved landscapes, such as the two on the Somme known colloquially as Vimy Ridge and Newfoundland Park which are run by the Canadian Government Veterans Administration. In these areas, officially organised archaeological activity takes place (e.g. Dolamore 1999; Piedalue 1998). They are protected from casual depredation and have, almost from their inception, included a limited amount of consolidation and (re)construction. Category 2 includes concrete fortifications that have proved too costly to destroy, such as the artillery observation posts to the southwest of Auchonvillers, and landscapes that lie within inaccessible privately owned hunting land. Category 3 is by far the largest and includes trench systems and dug-outs, scattered equipment, debris and ordnance, and unrecorded human remains. This category is exposed to the depredation of collectors, metal detectorists, accidental or deliberate destruction through agricultural and construction activity and, to a limited extent, random or rescue archaeology (e.g. Desfossés 1999; Desfossés and Jacques 2000). While in some cases human remains are carefully excavated in an attempt to determine identity before reburial (e.g. Boura 1999), in many instances the remains are disposed of or reburied by local harvesters of militaria (anonymous local personal communication; see Laffin 1987 for a published justification, and Saunders 2002 for a historical overview).

Local position

The archaeology of the 1914–18 war on the Somme may be compared to a primary extractive industry such as mining. The area is a rich resource of remains which are extracted and processed on site. This activity can be official or unofficial. The processed product is then delivered to the consumers (tourists). The processed product mostly cannot be exported since it consists

of sites and monuments and so consumers are forced to consume the product at source. This requires the provision of accommodation and provisioning. The local economy can benefit from the entire range of these economic activities.

The driving force behind the Ocean Villas project is Avril Williams – a British national who owns and runs the 'Ocean Villas' guesthouse and tearooms at 10 rue Delattre in the village of Auchonvillers (Figure 13.1). For the most part, her customers are visiting the region's battlefield memorials and cemeteries. Although these are tourists, their visits are often driven by a deeper motivation of remembrance. Because of this, Avril has a strong personal commitment to the commemoration and interpretation of the war, and her guesthouse is extensively decorated with locally discovered militaria, as well as photographs and documents relating to individual soldiers with a local connection, in much the same way as the café-museums which have operated in the area (and beyond) since the 1920s. The cellar of the house was used as a dug-out during the war and contains a number of interesting examples of graffiti carved by soldiers. By developing the interpretation of the immediate vicinity of 10 rue Delattre, the Ocean Villas project improves the sustainability of a local economic activity. Avril provides local employment in a rural village with a shrinking and ageing population. The success of her business is driven by the number of visitors using her guesthouse and tea room, and the interpretive (re)construction of a trench on her property provides added value for these visitors (Figure 13.2, p. 184). She employs local people and buys local produce. It is therefore no surprise that the local mayor supports her activities enthusiastically.

The archaeology

Archaeology is a schizophrenic activity. While university-based academic archaeologists often appear more concerned with archaeological theory concerning the meaning and typology of artefacts and the records of excavations, field archaeologists are the practitioners, technicians whose role is to excavate artefacts, identify stratigraphy and produce the archaeological record. The trend among academic archaeologists has been to attempt to render the technicians invisible: their role is to produce recorded data that are scientifically pure and verifiable, without personal interpretation or visible presence (Lucas 2001).

Whereas on other, mainly prehistoric sites, the presence of a dated artefact can provide an important *ante post* or *terminus post quem* date that can dramatically affect the interpretation of the site, this is clearly not the case on the Western Front. An unfired 0.303 rifle bullet dated 1914 indicates the probable presence of careless British soldiers after 1914, and a similar bullet dated 1918 indicates that they were still there in 1918. This does not generate data that will drastically affect our interpretation of the events of the war. The more signifi-

Figure 13.1 A barn under conversion at 10 rue Delattre, Auchonvillers. It was opened in 2002 as the Ocean Villas tea rooms (© author).

cant archaeological input to the interpretive process is to determine, through careful examination of the transforms in geological stratigraphy, what the soldiers were doing, how they were doing it, and where they were doing it.

The requirement for archaeology at Auchonvillers was originally driven by the perception of archaeology as a technical skill which would validate excavation. There was a desire to excavate and reveal the perceived authentic original form and course of wartime trenches believed to have existed in association with the cellar of 10 rue Delattre. The perception of authenticity of generated evidence was crucial to the project. Previous uncontrolled excavation by military enthusiasts had uncovered large amounts of artefacts, but had not preserved the stratigraphic elements which would have allowed the site owner to vouch for the authenticity of location, profile and extent of the trenches that would ultimately be (re)constructed and exhibited to visitors. In addition, there was a requirement that the technical archaeological process should be visible, partly as an interpretive feature, and partly as a validation of the overall activity of excavation and (re)construction of the trenches.

This approach, in a private enterprise project, is in contrast to official activity in the area. This is not surprising, as the archaeological establishment concerns itself chiefly with the process of production and manipulation of data and of conservation of sites in the pious hope of pursuing that end at an unspecified future time (ICOMOS 1964). From off the record discussion with French government archaeologists, it is clear that for them the 1914–18 war is a problem, with finds of human remains and unexpended ordnance delaying work on earlier period sites, or diverting resources of time and

Figure 13.2 A trench floor, as consolidated, looking east, Auchonvillers. The chicken wire and angle iron were replaced from excavated evidence (© author).

personnel from other projects. In a few cases, individual interest has moti-vated professional archaeological activity (Desfossés *et al*. 2000) but only where there has been significant private sector input, for example in the case of the cave systems under Arras, has the archaeology of the war been approached as an opportunity for site development.

For the Canadian government employees at Vimy Ridge, the archaeology of the war is a purely professional issue of academic knowledge production that must be strictly controlled, with conservation of data for future genera-tions of academics being the priority (Bull and Panton 2001). Despite the fact that within the same group there is a clear recognition that the Vimy Ridge site has other functions, including remembrance and general educa-tion, there appears to be little attempt to integrate archaeology into that process. In both these cases, archaeologists appear to be driven by a require-ment to maintain academic distance from the popular consumption of the remains and sites.

Archaeology as a technical competence is now increasingly utilised in an official or semi-official way to identify human remains from modern era battlefields. Human remains uncovered by chance in archaeological excava-tions on the Western Front are often examined by forensic archaeologists for identification purposes (Desfossés *et al*. 2000), but this takes place within the context of the French law on disposal of human remains, of official archaeo-logical activity, and of official reburial by national remembrance agencies such as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). In the former Soviet Union, amateur excavation of Second World War battlefield sites is carried out with the express intention of recovering, and possibly identifying, human remains, by groups such as Ekipazh. This excavation takes place with the assistance of the Russian army and is clearly driven by patrio-tism and intended to honour and memorialise soldiers killed in action (Alexei Nikiforov, personal communication). In both these examples the technical competences used by archaeologists to identify material through temporal and spatial location is employed in support of remembrance, whether driven by official requirements or popular sentiment. The archaeological activity at Auchonvillers, while unlikely to have to deal with human remains, is similar in that it is driven by popular sentiment. From the point of view of the site owner, and of the project workers, the archaeological activity on the Ocean Villas project is driven by a desire for remembrance. A further difference between the Ocean Villas project and other examples of surface battlefield archaeology lies in its focus. The emphasis in other projects is often on the processes and mechanics of the contact zone – typically ordnance and small arms fire, and their consequences in shaping the archaeological record (Fer-guson 1997; Fox 1993; Haecker and Mauck 1997). This is indicative of a process-driven approach where archaeological activity forms part of a self-contained academic archaeological agenda. Activity in the contact zone has never been the norm of military activity. Shooting has never been a normal

part of a soldier's daily existence in war. The Ocean Villas project's focus is, importantly, on the rear areas, where activity is more likely to reflect the day-to-day experiences of soldiers, and thereby illustrate the activities that formed the greater part of their time at the front.

The excavation

Many people feel they have strong personal links with the history of the 1914–18 war, and this has generated often violent controversy. The participants in the Ocean Villas project are driven by a range of motivating factors. The regular team, although mainly British, includes a German member, and volunteers from France and Canada have also taken part. To be successful, the project must accommodate this range of motivations. Many archaeologists are aware of the fact that they are not the guardians of the only truth about the sites on which they work, or whose records they study. This is critical on sites that fall within the historic period. The study of documentary evidence (history) can claim to be the older discipline, and there is often a feeling among historians that documentary sources should take precedence when interpreting a site. Indeed, many archaeological projects appear to be set up specifically to validate or challenge historical documents (e.g. Fox 1993). Similarly, some archaeologists have argued that an excavation should proceed untainted by historical inference so that a 'pure' record can be generated (e.g. Barker 1982). However, approaches that take on board a multiplicity of interpretations and of methods of consumption of the heritage experience, are gaining favour (Chippindale *et al.* 1990).

A process-driven academic approach, with the exclusive ownership of special knowledge that that implies, would be completely unsuccessful at Auchonvillers. Decisions made for archaeological reasons, and interpretations based on archaeological data have had to coexist with a multiplicity of personal responses. These responses might include varying historical analyses and strong personal beliefs, as well as emotions of anger and grief. Furthermore, the same participant at different points in the project may have exhibited different responses. This can colour interpretations during excavation and lead to disputes about the status and veracity of documentary records, as well as requiring careful team management when individuals respond emotionally.

The landscape around Auchonvillers is rolling chalk downland. In the village, the underlying chalk is covered by a thick blanket of yellow-brown wind-blown loam, locally called *limon* because of its colour (Doyle 1998; 2000). The *limon* is easy to cut in dry weather, although it becomes dusty if conditions are too dry. Exposed soil and trenches cut into the *limon* become waterlogged during heavy rain. Trench lines at nearby monument sites such as Newfoundland Park have lost all definition as a result of weathering. The preliminary uncontrolled digging at Ocean Villas had not left any clear evi-

dence of cut lines and our initial concern was that any cultural transforms such as trench cutting, usage erosion, or later deliberate infilling might have been eradicated or terminally masked by natural weathering transforms in the post-abandonment phase of the site. This was particularly significant because the presence of brick flooring had created an expectation in the site owner that excavation would produce visible structures which would be suitable for empathetic interpretive purposes. A brick floor on its own, without associated trench cuts, would not serve this purpose. In fact, the first section, cut in 1997 at the southern limit of the area of uncontrolled excavation, showed a very clear stratigraphic sequence. It was possible to distinguish a vertical sided, flat-bottomed cut, which was evidently an original trench cut. The upper portions of the cut had been eroded away and a sequence of layers with profiles indicative both of dumping, and of natural sedimentation processes, filled the cut. It was possible to devise a broad phasing of activity at this point and further excavation has largely confirmed this preliminary phasing across the site. The phasing is presented here with tentative interpretation based on additional historical and archaeological data:

Group A Initial construction and use
Phase I   Trench cut, drain gulley and sump cut, brick floor laid (1915?/ 1916?)
Phase II   Trench in use, brick floor kept clean, build-up of sediment in drain gulley

Group B Final use
Phase III   Clean run-off from sides of trench (may be a single rainstorm incident)
Phase IV   Build-up of dirty tread on top of clean run-off (trench no longer maintained at same level of cleanliness)
Phase V   Deliberate infill of trench (post-1916?)

Group C Re-use of trench
Phase VI   Usage surface in trench with wire debris and surface run-off from ground level
Phase VII   Slumping from east side of trench
Phase IX   Usage surface in trench with wire debris and surface run-off from ground level. 0.303 fired round (1918?)

Group D Trench no longer in use
Phase X   Gradual slumping and run-off sedimentation into trench
Phase XI   Debris collected from surrounding surfaces and backfilled into trench (1918–19?)
Phase XII   Garden soil laid across whole site
Phase XIII   Uncontrolled excavation and spoil distribution 1996

The phasing, and its confirmation at each subsequent section, allowed effort to be concentrated on those layers most likely to be productive of interpretive data. After each short season of excavation in the spring the uncovered trench was consolidated and (re)constructed to form an interpretive feature for visitors throughout the summer season (Figure 13.3).

Conclusion

The interaction between prior understandings of the site, the methods employed, and the resulting (re)construction and associated information have led to a significant enrichment of the visitor experience. This enrichment is crucial in the development of the visitor facility as a service for battlefield tourists. The interplay of contexts is critical in validating a museum or heritage experience: a monument, or a site, or a display, or a (re)construction, or a tea-room is not experienced in isolation (Falk and Dierking 1992). By approaching the excavation with the intention of delivering a product, rather than simply pursuing a research agenda, we have optimised the contextual synergy of the site, and have gone some way to establish the footings of a new and distinctively First World War kind of archaeological methodology.

The earliest popular histories of the war (e.g. Hammerton 1934) make only passing reference to Auchonvillers, the focus being firmly on action at the front line, and artillery is discussed only in terms of the arrival (or not) of ordnance on target on the German lines. Generally, the early histories focus on Corps- and Division-level actions. These, and diaries personally owned by the visitors, would have been the focus of early battlefield tourism (see Lloyd 1998). More recently, histories have used oral and written testimony to focus on the experience of the participants (e.g. Macdonald 1993; Middlebrook 1971) and current battlefield tourism is served by detailed guides which focus more on the individual experience of soldiers and the detail of small unit actions (e.g. Cave 1994, 1996). Even so, little reference is made to areas away from the front, except to make reference to battlefield cemeteries, and thus large quantities of material culture have been overlooked.

The Ocean Villas project specifically examines spaces that fall outside the immediate military contact zone. We do not expect, nor have we found, direct evidence for close quarters combat. What we have found is the debris of the range of activities that were carried out to support close combat in the military contact zone. The outcomes of the project (which at the time of writing is ongoing) include the creation of a usable and sustainable authentic interpretive site; and making the findings, archaeological and historical, accessible in as wide a range of forms as possible.

A starting point for this process is the project website – http://www.time travellers.org – a kind of dissemination which, for the First World War in particular, has unique advantages as well as drawbacks (see Fabiansson, this volume). Beyond this individual project, participants have their own aims and

Figure 13.3 A typical small kit assemblage from lower trench contexts: coffee
essence bottle, British 1908 webbing set buckles, fired 0.303 rifle
cartridges, toothbrush handle (© author).

objectives, but there is a general consensus that the project should work
towards producing a 'thick' description of the activity of visitors and inhabi-
tants in Auchonvillers from the first impact of war to its final resolution in
the rebuilding of the village during the early 1920s.

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14

AFTERMATH

Materiality on the Home Front, 1914–2001

John Schofield

For a war fought almost entirely on foreign soil, the 'Great War' has had a remarkable impact on British society, no section of which was immune from its repercussions. Manners and morals changed as a result of the War. The working class and the nation came closer together, though this was due to what the ruling class now considered to constitute the nation rather than to a change of attitude among the working class (Bourne 1989: 227). And there were other more obvious and visible changes to British life. For example, smoking increased in popularity, and men and women smoked more publicly than before. Swearing became more socially acceptable. For women, hemlines shortened and hair styles became more practical; more 'mannish' (*ibid.*: 235). More women worked, and there was a change in the nature of the work that women undertook. More important still was women's belief in what they could do, and society's belief in what they might be required to do. The consequences of all of this remain with us (*ibid.*: 198).

Less obvious are the effects of militarisation, many aspects of which remain legible today as some of the more tangible traces of the war on the Home Front. First came the preparations for war: the armament and rearmament of coastal fortification and the construction of anti-invasion defences; and the sites and buildings concerned with explosives manufacture – the production of *matériel*, a characterising feature of this first industrial war, and one clearly reflecting the gender divisions between actions at home and on the fields of battle (Saunders 2002). Second was the emphasis on military training, including the preparations for trench warfare, for gas, and the pioneering phase of aviation – a feature of both the immediately pre-war and war years. Third was the physical impact of the war itself; for example damage to coastal towns in northeast England from enemy craft at sea and in the air. Finally are the places of memory and commemoration created and maintained in the post-war years in the form of war memorials, museums and their associated landscaping and

architecture which constitute a further dimension, a further layer to this materiality of the Great War. While clearly related, remembrance is a subject that has received recent critical attention (e.g. Tarlow 1997; Winter 1995) and is discussed by Black (this volume). For that reason, and as an archaeology more of remembrance than of the Great War itself, this subject is deliberately excluded from this assessment.

This chapter will examine this archaeology of the First World War, outlining and assessing what survives in England, and what it contributes to our understanding of the Home Front between 1914–18. A final section will contrast it with material culture across the English Channel, where the battlefields themselves will inevitably create greater emotion among visitors than training areas and coastal batteries can possibly achieve at home (see Saunders, this volume). However the point will be made that both records form significant components of this 'total war' and both therefore merit retention albeit for a slightly different combination of reasons. I will also draw on this example of the Great War, where the passage of time has combined with changing social responses to warfare to create a selective material record, to examine critically approaches to assessing and preserving the remains of more recent conflicts, notably of the Second World War and the Cold War.

Remembering

The material culture of the Great War had relevance almost from the moment of its creation, initially for reasons of remembrance, cultural tourism and understanding; later (and additionally) as a means to interpreting past events in a landscape no longer so easily read as a battlefield. But battlefield tourism has been there from the start. As the introduction to the recently republished Michelin guide to the Somme points out, while newspapers of the day did not tend to publish photographs from the war zone, other journals did, 'and from magazines like *The War Illustrated*, *The War Record*, *The War Budget* and *The Illustrated London News*, the public gained some impression of what the battlefields were like' (Peacock 1994). Films such as *Britain Prepared*, *The Battle of the Somme* and *The Battle of Arras* also gave an impression of conditions at the Western Front. But it was all sanitised of course, and for those left at home there was an intrinsic sense of curiosity to see what it was really like, as soon as the opportunity arose.

It was against this background that the Michelin guides were published (see Eksteins 1994). These and other comparable guides typically show plans, portraits of key figures, general battlefield scenes, cemeteries, damage to cultural property, and what we would now describe as monuments of war: bunkers, observation posts, trench systems and so on. People touring the battlefields wanted to see these structures but more especially they wanted to witness for themselves these conditions of the Front; it was the most effective way to feel the experience of war in what was then a silent place with a clear

and tangible sense of sanctity, facilitating quiet reminiscence (King 1998: 229). They visited these places also perhaps for therapeutic reasons, for reasons of guilt (among those that stayed at home), to help comprehend the scale of the conflict, but nearly always for reasons of remembrance and mourning. Whatever the motivation, these structures and places played an important role for those left to rebuild society and their own lives in the immediate post-war years.

As a consequence, and for the related reason that unexploded ordnance typically hampers any clear-up operation (Webster 1997), these historic resources have survived comparatively well, and now once again play a significant role in cultural tourism in this region. Furthermore, the monuments themselves now also play a role in commemorating the war dead and remembering the fallen: some cemeteries and memorials now incorporate bunkers or concrete fragments in their design, while the presentation of other sites (like Vimy Ridge with its trench systems and shell holes) is periodically reappraised to meet changing standards, perceptions and expectations (Cave 2000).

By contrast, what survives away from the Front has only accumulated cultural values much more recently within the context of a developing interest in the archaeology of the recent and contemporary pasts (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Graves Brown 2000), in military archaeology (Dobinson *et al.* 1997; English Heritage 1998; Schofield *et al.* 2002), and with the growth of popular interest in military history and its spin-offs in publishing, the cinema and television. In England, numerous related projects and studies have combined to provide a record of First World War activity (some as part of the Monuments Protection Programme or MPP [English Heritage 2000]), and it is a review of these initiatives that forms the basis of this chapter. The motivations for preserving components of this materiality on the Home Front I will return to again at the end.

Cultural resources

Defences

The Riddle of the Sands, Erskine Childers's (1903) fictional account of the preparations for an enemy invasion of Britain across the North Sea, was ahead of its time, but not by so much as some might imagine. Britain was prepared for invasion during the First World War. As the German army advanced through Belgium to Ostend it was estimated that an invasion of Britain could be undertaken by a force comprising 70,000 men carried in barges. It was furthermore realised that naval intervention involved a 24- to 28-day delay, thus requiring some further anti-invasion measures to be put in place (Wills 1985). These included a series of stop lines comprising fieldworks and pillboxes, designed to prevent or slow an enemy advance. An

earlier line of London Defence Positions (based on a number of mobilisation centres) was brought back into use, as was a defence line at Chatham (Smith 1985) where entrenchments with pillboxes were built between Maidstone and the river Swale (Kent). A further three lines were constructed to the north and east of London. Pillboxes were also built along the east coast, some facing inland to prevent ports from an overland attack. In Suffolk and Norfolk, these early pillboxes were circular in plan, contrasting with those in Kent that were hexagonal, similar in form to later Second World War examples.

To give an idea of scale, in the winter of 1914, 300,000 troops were deployed on the east coast to man these defences (Saunders 1989: 213). Today 11 of the 13 mobilisation centres survive, with some of the buildings remaining in use for accommodation and storage. Those at North Weald (Essex), Alderstead (Surrey) and Farningham (Kent) are among the best preserved. Surviving pillboxes have been recorded as part of the Defence of Britain project, a review of anti-invasion defences in the UK, revealing that some 50 examples survive, about half of which remain in good condition (Figure 14.1, overleaf).

Britain's coastal defences were well prepared at the outbreak of war, owing both to the close attention paid to home defence, and the realisation of the German naval threat over the previous ten years. However on only one occasion, 16 December 1914, were coast defences required to fight off German warships. This was at Hartlepool following earlier attacks on Great Yarmouth and Gorleston. Saunders (1989) describes the event (see also Dobinson 1999a: 118–9):

> Hartlepool was defended by Heugh Battery with two six-inch guns, and Lighthouse Battery with just one. The first shell from the [battle cruiser] *Seydlitz* fell between the two batteries cutting all the fire-commanders telephones. In spite of many shells falling close to the batteries there were only four fatal casualties among the gunners, though 112 civilians were killed in the town, and much damage done to its buildings and docks. The coast defence guns, despite the initial damage, hotly returned the enemy fire. It was held to be a creditable performance by a severely under-gunned coast artillery unit, and the principal members of the batteries were decorated.
>
> (Saunders 1989: 209)

But although Britain was in a state of readiness, substantial additional works during the war were needed, especially to the east coast batteries (indeed, as Dobinson has observed [1999a: 46], for coast artillery the period 1914–18 was more a building programme than a war). A heavy battery (Brackenbury Battery) was constructed at Felixstowe, Suffolk, to provide added protection for the Harwich approaches, while defences were also placed in the Humber

Figure 14.1 A First World War pillbox near Bawdsey, Suffolk (© author).

and Tyne, at Plymouth, and in the Bristol Channel. Batteries were also built to flank the Solent boom defences. Of the coast batteries in use during the First World War, 35 were newly opened in the period 1900–14 and a further 23 between 1914–21.

As part of the MPP, English Heritage has completed archival research into coast artillery 1900–56 (Dobinson 1999a), with a subsequent assessment of what survives (Schofield 2002: 277–9). Of the 286 twentieth-century coast artillery sites, 35 are well preserved and a further 129 remain in some form. Of those that no longer survive, the majority are Second World War Emergency Batteries. Most that were newly opened in the period 1900–21 have some surviving remains, as do those of earlier date.

Another significant group of sites were anti-aircraft and airship defences, in the form of artillery or gun sites with their associated searchlight positions. These guns were positioned to provide defence against aerial attack by Zeppelins (causing in all 557 fatalities and £1.5 million worth of damage during the First World War) and, later, Gotha bombers (one raid on London in 1917 killed 162 and wounded 432 people). A review of these sites, again based on documentary sources, has been undertaken for MPP (Dobinson 1996: 11–47; Dobinson 2001: 3–58). Sources describe how the majority of First World War anti-aircraft guns in Britain were fixed guns established at permanent sites, many of which were purpose-built. They also show how the emphasis shifted through the war, from defending military targets early on, to the protection of civilian targets by 1916 (Dobinson 1996: 11). The total number of

sites in England is currently documented as 376, at which few traces are likely to survive.

In terms of passive air defence, experiments with acoustic detection began during the First World War, with the result that concrete sound-detecting acoustic dishes were built in at least eight locations around England's south and east coasts (Dobinson 1999b: 8–12). These could, in theory, pick up the sound of an approaching aircraft at ranges of 13 to 24 km. They proved unreliable, however, and this technology in any case was soon overtaken by experiments with radar. Some examples of these earliest sound mirrors survive on the northeast coast. In addition, there were radio telegraph stations for ship to shore communications. These were located around the British coastline in 1915 though most had been closed down and removed by 1920 (Sockett 1991). Where airships or aircraft did get through they were often confused as to the location of their intended targets by primitive decoy sites, i.e. lighting arrangements designed to mimic the real target. These decoys were successful on occasion (Dobinson 2000a: 2–3), but were only ephemeral structures, and it is unlikely that any of these First World War examples have survived.

The production of war matériel

Munitions production has been the subject of a recent and comprehensive overview by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME, now merged with English Heritage) (Cocroft 2000). As Cocroft states, only four days after the declaration of war – on 8 August 1914 – the first of the Defence of the Realm Acts (DORA) was passed, giving the government powers to acquire land for the prosecution of the war, and to control everything necessary to make munitions (*ibid.* 155). This involved the supply of essential raw materials (such as acetone for the production of cordite). A notable survival is at Holton Heath (Dorset), where the first purpose-built plant exists to exploit the Weizman process by which starch sources (in this case maize) were fermented directly to acetone (*ibid.* 161–3). This plant survives as the footings for a large barn for storing maize, a cooker house for reducing it to mash, and six of the original eight fermentation vessels, later adapted to serve as air raid shelters in the Second World War.

Of the factories, three categories exist: for propellants manufacture, high explosives manufacture and National Filling Factories. Of the first category, several existing sites were enlarged and continued in production (e.g. Waltham Abbey [Essex]; Cliffe [Kent], Figure 14.2, overleaf), while other new factories were created, as at Holton Heath and Gretna (Cumbria). Today, much remains at Holton Heath, but little at Gretna, which was largely demolished in the 1920s and was later reoccupied by the army. In the case of high explosives manufacture, TNT was to become the standard filling for land

Figure 14.2 A propellants manufacturing site at Cliffe, Kent (© Crown copyright
NMR, courtesy English Heritage National Monument Record Ref.
NMR 15033/25 TQ 7278/9).

shells, with lyddite important for naval shells. Early in 1915, there were ten
TNT plants in operation, though by June this had risen to 16 (Cocroft
2000: 168). Purpose-built plants include Oldbury (West Midlands), while at
Hackney Wick (London) the Phoenix Chemical Works was converted to
TNT manufacture. Tetryl was also important, though as an intermediary
explosive. A key site here is Waltham Abbey, where tetryl production began
in 1910, while another is at Holton Heath. Finally, National Filling Factories
at the outbreak of war were limited to the Royal Arsenal Woolwich (London)
and factories at Lemington Point and Derwenthaugh near Newcastle. Other
examples, including those for small components, cartridges and gas, came
later.

Training

Although most battle training for the Western Front was done in France, military training was also undertaken on home soil and the traces of this survive as a cogent and compelling record of the preparations for combat. Although no synthesis is yet available (beyond an annotated list of military training establishments in England – Dobinson 2000b), recent work by English Heritage's survey teams on Dartmoor (Probert, personal communication), Salisbury Plain (McOmish *et al.* 2001) and Exmoor (Riley and Wilson-North 2001) and by others elsewhere (e.g. Welch 1997) has produced a record embracing all main phases of twentieth-century military training activity. In terms of First World War remains, the trench systems on Salisbury Plain, representing practice trenches dug from at least 1902, are the most complete and extensive to survive in the UK, amounting to one of the largest earthwork monuments on the Plain.

In some places, contemporary obstacles, such as wire entanglements secured by screw pickets, remain in place. As McOmish *et al.* (2001) describe, the trench systems were composed of three elements: Front Line, support and reserve – all of which were connected by a further series of communication trenches. In addition, shelters and smaller specialised trenches were constructed. The outstanding example is on Perham Down (Figure 14.3, overleaf), although now reduced by modern ploughing. This example covers over 100 ha and comprises at least three separate trench systems, illustrating 'the ebb and flow of warfare where successive firing lines were constructed as the battle progressed' (McOmish *et al.* 2001). A further example relating to trench warfare is the survival of concentric gas trenches on Porton Down, Wiltshire, now protected as a scheduled monument.

In addition to trench warfare, the emergence of the tank during the First World War has left its mark. Also on Salisbury Plain, on the edge of Shrewton Folly, an anti-tank range was constructed in 1916 comprising two parts: a firing line where artillery guns were deployed, and a target in the form of a hessian or canvas screen shaped like a tank and mounted on a trolley that was towed along a railway line at various speeds. The range covers 65 ha and much of it survives today.

Another dimension of military training, and one of social historical as well as archaeological interest, are the badges and insignia cut into the chalk scarp at places like Fovant, Wiltshire (Holyoak 2001). Nine of the original 19 badges remain visible at Fovant, a tradition started by troops stationed there during the First World War. The earliest badge (1916) is thought to be that of the London Rifle Brigade, the 5th Battalion of which is known to have been training here between January and May of that year. Initially present during 1916–17, soldiers belonging to the Australian Imperial Force, Australia's expeditionary force, took over many of the camps around Fovant from October

Figure 14.3 Practice trenches on Perham Down, Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire (© Crown copyright NMR, courtesy English Heritage National Monument record ref. CCC11754/5232 SU 2445/3).

1917 until after the Armistice. During this time they cut the so-called 'Rising Sun', the General Service badge adopted by the Australian Commonwealth Military Forces from 1911 onwards. These badges and insignia are prominent and poignant features associated with a number of regiments or units either subsequently disbanded or whose members left Fovant to fight in some of the most bloody battles of the First World War (*ibid.*).

Aviation

Aviation has its origins in the immediate pre-war years of 1911–14 and with the onset of the First World War, the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), and later the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), were given the air defence role. When the RFC took over this role in 1916, following air raids by long-range German Gotha bombers and Zeppelins, Home Defence Stations were established in eastern England. In late 1915, training was decentralised to cope with the numbers of volunteers, and many new training aerodromes were established. From 1917, Reserve Stations for training pilots for the Western Front became the greatest airfield construction programme of the period and, by 1918, 301 sites were in occupation. Aerodromes in this early period were usu-

ally laid out as four groups of buildings: the officer's mess and quarters, regimental buildings, technical buildings (including hangars) and the women's hostel (Francis 1996: 12).

A review of aviation sites and buildings by English Heritage (Lake 2000) has demonstrated what survives from this early phase of aviation. The majority of buildings from this period were of temporary materials expected to last only for the duration and were either cleared after 1918 (271 of the 301 sites) or have since decayed. Of those that remain, hangars survive on eight sites (including Calshot [Hampshire], Old Sarum and Yatesbury [both Wiltshire]). However, only one site (Old Sarum) has retained its suite of hangar and technical buildings fronting on to an airfield relatively unaffected by later development.

Summary

There are other classes of monument of course, such as hospitals (Richardson 1998: 98–100), internment camps and naval facilities that are not covered here. However, while it claims to be neither definitive nor comprehensive, this brief review of the materiality of the First World War on the Home Front does demonstrate the scale and diversity of material culture in the form of buildings and monuments, and the extent to which England's landscape was altered at this time for reasons of preparation, production and fortification. To give an overall impression of scale, it has been estimated that in England over one million acres were occupied or used for military purposes during the First World War. Some of these impacts on the landscape, and much of this materiality, survive despite the fact that it represented unfashionable and unconventional heritage assets until only very recently. But attitudes have changed and, just as the meaning of the Remembrance ritual has altered, in part due to a loss of emotional intensity and partly because those involved with its celebration have reglossed it (Tarlow 1997: 118), so the disposition towards these material records has changed. I now turn to the relevance of these First World War remains in contemporary society.

Not forgetting

Have you forgotten yet?

Siegfried Sassoon (1983: 143)

Much has been written recently about the relevance of the recent past, and of its material records, whether merely *as a record* and to ensure significant past events are not forgotten, as cultural benefits now and in the future, for reasons of retribution, or for more personal and perhaps psychotherapeutic reasons (Forty and Küchler 1999; The Ludlow Collective 2001; Schofield 1999; Schofield in press). But how relevant are these considerations 'at

home', when the meaningful action all took place overseas, and at sites rightly recognised and treated as sacred?

A significant point here is what these sites on the Home Front represented within the broader context of the Great War. As Horn has said (2000), the First and Second World Wars both represent examples of 'total war', a defining component of which is that the division between military and civilian worlds is effaced and the Home Front is integrated into the practice of warfare. More specifically, 'the fighting men depended for the instruments of victory upon the merchant seamen and upon the work of non-combatants at home' (Woodward 1967: 453). So, if we consider the preparations and execution of warfare as a process, involving phases, events and social actions set within this wider socio-cultural and political context, and within a longer time-frame than merely the battles themselves, then the activities on the Home Front, preparing and producing for war, and responding and reacting to it, form part of that process and are not separate from it. In other words, in total war, the spatial limits of warfare are extended from the battle zone to explicitly include the Home Front, making the classes of monument described in this chapter significant as 'reference points or landmarks to the totalitarian nature of war in space and myth' (Virilio and Lotringer 1997: 10), alongside battlefields and bunkers. To put this in emotive terms we might talk of such places as being symbolic of the sacrifice made by a lost generation; in more objective terms we can talk of cultural assets and sites of national importance – places that represent the preparations for a war that was supposed to end all wars: the trench systems where soldiers practised before heading to the Western Front, the insignia they carved on chalk escarpments, and the coastal defences, including those which engaged the *Seydlitz*.

Either way these are significant sites because, as Buchli and Lucas (2001: 80) have argued:

> From books to computers, from mementoes to war memorials, material culture shoulders the larger responsibility of our personal and collective memory. The corollary of this, of course, is that the decay or destruction of these objects brings forgetfulness.

Along the line of the Western Front, battlefield tourism and the inherent danger in clearing explosives have meant that much material culture remains in the form of trench systems and dug-outs, concrete emplacements and scattered *matériel*, to provide an experience for visitors. And some of these places speak for themselves; they have an atmosphere that is tangible and can easily be drawn out by reading the first-hand experiences of those who were there: Delville Wood, on the Somme, for example, where it is said that birds never sing, is a case in point.

> In Delville Wood – in Delville Wood
> The shattered trees are green with leaves,

And flowers bloom where cannons stood.
And rich the fields with golden sheaves –
Sleep soft ye dead, for God is good –
And peace has come to Delville Wood.
                    (From 'A Soldier's Song', by Lieutenant Fred C. Cornell)

Of course, it is the battles themselves that this material culture represents; the places where three-quarters of a million British men died as a direct result of the war (recalling the total figure for the First World War of some 20 million deaths) and twice that number disabled (Tarlow 1997: 110). It is therefore a material record strong on emotion and one where interpretation has to be carefully managed to avoid the risk of trivialisation. Care must be taken to ensure interpretative motivations do not override the responsibility towards personal and collective memory and that a strong sense of the sacred is retained.

By contrast, what survives in England are those places where soldiers trained for the battles to come, where they prepared for an anticipated invasion and, in some cases, where civilians died as a result of air- or sea-raiding or in industrial accidents. These are also the places where *matériel* was produced – often by women – an industrial process that started at home and ended on battlefields like the Somme and Ypres. These monuments of the Home Front may not have the same degree of emotivity, they may not be sacred sites to the same extent, but they are cultural resources that tell of past times and events. Furthermore, they are all that survive of some aspects of the war (e.g., the role of women), thus giving them significance for interpretation, education and awareness.

As the growth of interest in military history shows, people want to know, and – we assume – will continue to want to know in the future. Retaining sites that represent military training and production, and coastal defences, will contribute to meeting that need. Some sites also have other more specific values. Aviation sites around Salisbury Plain for instance represent early experiments with military flying, while others – like Holton Heath – display the evidence for developments in industrial production, in this case biotechnology. This was an industrial war, like no other before it, and much of the evidence for that industrialisation survives on the Home Front, though the effects were seen most clearly and so terribly overseas.

Work is already underway to retain and present these sites. Waltham Abbey, for example, is now a visitor attraction, following a detailed survey of the site (described in Cocroft 2000). Many of the sites that survive have statutory protection either through listing (for buildings which have a future in use), or scheduling (where a future beyond everyday use is envisaged). Another important issue is that the archaeology of modern warfare, specifically, here, of the First World War, is also an archaeology of us, reflecting our changing attitudes to conservation and to the need for preserving memories of past

conflict in contemporary society (see Gilchrist 2003). It is only partly the case that once personal memories fade the horror will be forgotten (Forty 1999: 6). The horror of the First World War can also be seen through engaging interpretative displays, with photographic images, first-hand accounts and – importantly – the actual places where conflict occurred (Schofield in press). However, it can also be seen in the sheer scale of this war and in how it enveloped all aspects of life at home and abroad – and here war memorials, with their lists of names, form one aspect, as do the many sites and areas in England where soldiers prepared for war and its *matériel* was produced.

Finally, there are lessons that the material culture of the First World War provide for assessing and managing more recent heritage assets. Like the First World War, much of the fabric relating to Second World War defences has been removed in the post-war years (Anderton and Schofield 1999) and a few key sites shoulder much of the responsibility for commemoration and remembering. Control towers and D-Day embarkation slips for example are particularly symbolic of the Allied war effort. Yet as we know for earlier periods, a range of monument classes is required for a full and informed understanding of past events. For these wars – arguably some of the most significant events in world history – it is generally a limited range of classes that survives, inevitably given that these were structures typically built to last only 'for the duration'.

At the time of writing, English Heritage is beginning to formulate an approach to managing Cold War remains, some of which will be retained for many of the same reasons described earlier. The advantage is that more survives, though the threats from brownfield development proposals are growing as the Ministry of Defence sells off some of its estate. For the Cold War we have the opportunity to learn from the recent experiences of assessing sites of earlier conflicts to define the full range of structures, to establish which sites best characterise or 'represent' their class, and how best to ensure the long-term future of these key sites. As with the First and Second World War, this will include sites representing (what were in effect) Front-line operations (airfields and radar establishments), as well as those that supported that primary mission: food stores, telecommunications sites, factories, and experimental and training facilities. Again, all are important for reasons of interpretation, understanding and awareness, to ensure the events that dominated people's lives throughout the twentieth century are not forgotten, and can continue to be interpreted and reinterpreted in the future.

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