edited by
ALEX HOUEN *and*
JAN-MELISSA SCHRAMM

SACRIFICE & MODERN WAR LITERATURE

From the Battle of Waterloo to the War on Terror

OXFORD

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To Gillian Beer

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All references to the Bible throughout the essays in the volume are to the King James Version.

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A.H. and *J.-M.S.*

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Introduction
Sacrifice and Modern War Literature

Alex Houen and Jan-Melissa Schramm

I

Writing in 1857, after the Crimean War had finally ended forty years of peace in England, the novelist and clergyman Charles Kingsley meditated on 'the necessary human art of war' and the extent to which 'the history of the world has been as yet written in blood': 'This . . . is the normal type of human life . . . as long as cruelty and wrong exist on earth, man's destiny is to dare and suffer, and, if it must be so, to die.'[1] And, as G. W. F. Hegel observed in his famous *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, translated into English in the same year, given that 'history [is] a slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of States, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized—the question involuntarily arises—to what principle, to what final aim these enormous sacrifices have been offered'.[2] From time immemorial, writing about war has been preoccupied with these questions about the 'principle' on which it should proceed and the human costs of its implementation. The idea of 'sacrifice'—a multivalent term laden with both theological and economic associations—has frequently underpinned the literature of war, and it is the aim of this volume to explore some of the contested forms that sacrifice has taken in writing that engages with modern conflicts and their consequences between the nineteenth century and our contemporary period.

While there is a large body of criticism on war literature,[3] and another body of critical work on the social and cultural significance of sacrifice,[4] to date there has been no monograph or edited collection dedicated to exploring the significance of sacrifice in a corpus of modern war literature. That is despite the fact that over the last two centuries the costs of war have continued to be associated with sacrifice in

[1] Charles Kingsley, *Two Years Ago* (1857; London: Thomas Nelson, 1908), 542–3.

[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (1837), trans. John Sibree and published as *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1857; London: Bell, 1894), 35.

[3] See, e.g., Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[4] See, e.g., Derek Hughes, *Culture and Sacrifice: Ritual Death in Literature and Opera* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), Douglas Hedley, *Sacrifice Imagined: Violence, Atonement, and the Sacred* (London: Continuum, 2011).

political rhetoric and literary writing, as the chapters of this volume show. Other critical studies that have focused on the relation of sacrifice and war have been limited to a single conflict; for example, Allen J. Frantzen's *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (2004).[5] Conversely, Susan Mizruchi's magisterial study *The Science of Sacrifice: American Literature and Modern Social Theory* (1998), which tracks the prevalence of sacrifice as an organizational principle of both the social sciences and society more generally, does not dwell on the significance of war.[6] This volume draws upon their work as points of departure, but it seeks to range far more widely across a diverse body of writings composed in the course of the last two hundred years to enumerate, lament, and memorialize the personal and national costs of war.

In discussing the literature of different military conflicts, the subsequent chapters show how writers (and others) have invoked differing conceptions of sacrifice even within the one literary work. There has, for example, been continuing interest in the traditional sense of sacrifice that harks back to its Latin etymology (*sacrum*, *facere*): *to make sacred*. In contrast, sacrifice has also been associated with making some other *ideal* that inclines more to the secular; for example, 'democracy' or 'freedom' or the 'cause' of a political party. Then again, there has been growing reference in literature to sacrifice as a kind of *economic rationalism* that converts costs of life or limb into military or political gains that are seen as lacking any ideal, whether religious or secular. In exploring such different senses of sacrifice in relation to war, writers have frequently drawn on religious and literary traditions while making innovations in literary form and genre to offer fresh perspectives on how war in their cultural context is underpinned by religious and secular values. In order to consider some of those traditions and innovations, we need to consider first how religious and secular values of sacrifice have become increasingly imbricated.

II

At the start of the nineteenth century, it was still possible to speak of a widespread public adherence to orthodox Christian literalism, which ensured that the Old and New Testaments of the Bible were venerated as reliable records of external miraculous events. The story of man's creation and redemption took centre stage of this Christian cosmology, providing a reassuring narrative framework for the events of the human life cycle—birth, marriage, and, most importantly, death:

> We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed... for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible... So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:51–5)

[5] Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[6] Susan Mizruchi, *The Science of Sacrifice: American Literature and Modern Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

But, despite a shared faith in Christ's resurrection and eternal life for believers, Catholics and Protestants disagreed strenuously about how the founding sacrifice of their religion should be understood and commemorated. Protestant writers often expressed discomfort with the perceived brutality of Catholicism, with its Mass of Sacrifice and its explicit iconography of suffering saints: Anglican sermons frequently described Christ's crucifixion not in terms of the explicit and prolonged sufferings of the body, but as a manifestation of divine 'Sorrow'. English writers insisted less on devotion to Christ's wounded body and more on the crucial role of self-abnegation—submission to God's will and the commitment of one's self to the greater good in the vocation to which one was called—as a mechanism of defence against the alleged exponents of self-interest, the advocates of capitalism, utilitarianism, and laissez-faire economics. In fact, so great was the literary suspicion of self-interest that authors from Charles Dickens to George Eliot felt compelled to advocate an ethics of self-sacrifice: 'better to be Abel than Cain' in Dickens's terms, 'more comfortable to be the calf than the butcher' in Eliot's.[7] The trope of self-sacrifice proved to be extraordinary supple, offering novelists a rich range of theological options for narrative closure: in its Protestant formulation, the idea of self-sacrifice could inspire a life of service lived mindfully for others (in the cases of Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852–3) and *Little Dorrit* (1857)), but in its more literal (and residually Catholic) manifestation the idea of sacrifice also provided a template for understanding those cases in which efforts to educate or incorporate the outsider eventually resulted in scapegoating and tragic death (for example, in Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) and Eliot's *Romola* (1863)).

The economy of (self-)sacrifice that underpinned both models presupposed some reward for altruism in this life or the next. In the most famous of the sacrificial novels, Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), the protagonist Sidney Carton voluntarily lays down his life for his friend on the scaffold during the French Revolution while recalling the promises of John 11:25: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live'. Although Dickens is aware of the potential self-interest of such heroism, on the whole he triumphs in depicting Carton's death as a foundational act of patrilineal legal succession: above all, it is a reverential parody of the liturgy of Holy Communion as Dickens draws upon the liturgical invocation of *Hoc Est Corpus Meum*, 'this is my body, broken for you: do this in remembrance of me' (1 Cor. 11:24) to create a distinctively Protestant textual icon. Sacrifice is here re-presented in a sanitized form for a generation traumatized by the Crimean slaughter. In *Romola*, Eliot revealed a more nuanced awareness of the moral complexity of such transactions—while the sacrificial victim follows in the footsteps of Christ's Passion and gains sacred value from that mimetic journey, his death also illuminates the risk that the rhetoric of religious submission could be used to indoctrinate the 'one' voluntarily

[7] Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–5; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 770; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1896), 218. For discussion of this theme in more detail, see Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–37.

to consent to his or her own sacrifice for the 'good' of the 'many'.[8] The nineteenth century was the era of democratization, in which 'the people' acquired political significance as a constitutional entity, yet narrative art by and large continued to focus on the individual: this was at least in part driven by the ethical idea of 'sympathy' that powered Victorian realist writing. For George Eliot, the pedagogic agenda of the Victorian novel was to encourage the education of our sympathies through the practice of imaginative identification—to expand our capacity for compassion by learning to 'change places in fancy with another', in Adam Smith's influential formulation.[9] Such readerly identification was habitually directed towards characters on the margins of political power—women, children, working-class men—thus positioning art as inherently sympathetic to the plight of the scapegoat rather than the masses for whom such a scapegoat might be sacrificed. For much Victorian writing that addressed the duty of an active Christian—in the army or otherwise—the greatest ethical aporia was precisely the tension between a willingness *to die for* or *to kill for* a greater good. The proximity of sacrifice and revenge was revealed in the copious literature that addressed the atrocities of the Indian Mutiny of 1857—for example, Frederic Cooper's *The Crisis in the Punjab* (1858) and V. D. Majendie's *Up Among the Pandies* (1858), published almost coterminously with Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), yet much less figurative in their depiction of the brutalities of sacrifice. And Victorian war poetry grappled with precisely these fine discriminations between the duty to die or be killed; famous examples range from Alfred Lord Tennyson's rousing 'Charge of the Light Brigade' (1854), which celebrated a willingness to die even when the command to do so resulted from a 'blunder', to Thomas Hardy's *Poems of the Past and Present* (1901), which referenced the solitary and confused sufferings of combatants in the Boer Wars. While the ideals of 'muscular Christianity' and athletic prowess underpinned the expansion of empire in the nineteenth century, the process of colonization depended on the brutal reality of blood spilt on both sides, with almost genocidal damage inflicted on some native peoples as a consequence.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the foundations on which the confident faith of the nation was premised were dealt a number of devastating blows: textual and historiographical studies increasingly positioned the events of first the Old, but eventually also the New, Testament as at best poetic and allegoric and at worst fictional or even fraudulent. In the 1830s, Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830–3) challenged the temporal framework of the biblical stories of creation with the discovery that the evidence of the fossil record testified to the existence of a 'deep time' prior to the emergence of human life on earth. Finally, Charles Darwin's formulation of an evolutionary explanation for life on earth, dependent entirely on random forces of natural and sexual selection, completed the displacement of man from his privileged position as protagonist of God's story. While the national loss of communal faith was gradual rather than instantaneous, the implications of these

[8] Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice*, 216–32.

[9] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (1759; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11–12.

developments echoed across the century. How was death to be understood if there was no Christian judgment, no afterlife? It was undeniable to all that 'the *human* Body *dies*, and that it *sees Corruption*': how was the body of Christ, then, to be reconfigured after *The Origin of Species* (1859)?[10] If Christ was not raised, then his death was simply another example of state-sanctioned judicial execution, an idea explored in Chartist and socialist fiction such as Eliza Lynn Linton's *The True History of Joshua Davidson* (1872), which depicted his disciples dying on the barricades in Paris during the Commune of 1871 and Joshua himself torn to death by an angry mob of clergymen on his return to England. The emphasis on Christ's humanity forced authors to address the politics of capital punishment and the ideologically driven theatricality of the rituals that underpinned the English legal system. Yet, even as scepticism, positivism, and science seemed increasingly to effect the 'disenchantment' of the world in the course of the nineteenth century, the literature of the period does not suggest a simple or straightforward narrative of secularization. In fact, the political resurgence of Catholicism in the 1830s and 1840s was followed by an extraordinary renaissance of Catholic art in the second half of the century, together with a concomitant national rediscovery of the uses of ceremonial and the senses in worship by the end of the century. Victorian conceptions of the significance of sacrifice in pursuit of a greater good were contested but not discarded at the century's end.

Nor were the conceptions of sacrifice as 'making sacred' simply dissolved in the new wars of the nineteenth century. Much critical attention has been paid to the importance of Siegfried Sassoon's and Wilfred Owen's poems that criticize the ideals of noble sacrifice associated with giving up one's life in fighting for one's country. Both poets question the religiosity of those ideals, yet their poetry inclines more to criticizing the Church's role in upholding them than in questioning spirituality, God, or Christ—see, for example, Sassoon's 'The Redeemer' (1916) and Owen's 'At a Calvary near the Ancre' (1920). As Paul Fussell and Jay Winter have argued, the critical focus on First World War poetry that 'de-sacralizes' the religious and 'romantic celebrations of sacrifice' has often lost sight of the many poems written by soldiers and civilians alike that 're-sacralized' it throughout the war as well as in its wake.[11] There were also concerted efforts to ensure that soldiers had access to reading matter that would inspire spiritual and religious faith: for example, Robert Bridges' anthology *The Spirit of Man* (1916) was printed to be used by troops, and contained a wide selection of relevant poetic and philosophic texts that attest to spirituality being 'the basis and foundation of human life',[12] while Oxford University Press sold 4.5 million copies of the New Testament for use in the field.

[10] Robert Holmes, *The Resurrection of the Body, deduced from the Resurrection of* CHRIST, *and illustrated from His Transfiguration: A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, on Easter-Monday, March 31, 1777* (Oxford: Daniel Prince, 1777), 12–13.

[11] See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 131; Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 219–22.

[12] Robert Bridges, *The Spirit of Man: An Anthology in English and French from the Philosophers and Poets Made by the Poet Laureate in 1915 and Dedicated by Gracious Permission to His Majesty the King* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1916), p. iii.

From reading through anthologies of war poetry such as *A Crown of Amaranth* (1915) or Josephine Trotter's *Valour and Vision* (1920), it is clear that the New Testament accounts of Christ's sacrifice remain particularly central for many poets in reflecting on their own situation and the war's dead. (The same holds for poetry of the Easter Rising in Ireland in 1916.) Even Ford Madox Ford's later tetralogy *Parade's End* (1924–8)—which is as critical of the war effort as Owen's and Sassoon's poetry—repeatedly draws Christ into the frame when figuring the aspirations to saintliness and chivalry of the main protagonist, Christopher Tietjens. Many other writers after the First World War continued to draw on the New Testament when figuring sacrifice as salvific or redemptive in some way: David Gascoyne, Roy Campbell, and Hilaire Belloc in relation to the Spanish Civil War; Evelyn Waugh, T. S. Eliot, and Graham Greene in relation to the Second World War, to name just a few. Often, though, their religious references, like those in Ford's tetralogy, are counterpointed against what the writers saw to be a secularized sacrificial economy that weighs military or political gains against the lives lost. That is not to say that the religious and secular are always in strict opposition. In the Spanish Civil War, for example, various Anarchist and Marxist writers and militants adapted religious ideals in characterizing the political 'sacrifices' and 'martyrdoms' of those who died for their 'cause'. Similarly, both Marxists and Catholics involved in the Spanish war claimed to be fighting a 'crusade' against each other.

Old Testament sacrifices have also repeatedly been associated in literature with war's mass slaughters, often in order to depict them as being shamefully regressive. For example, Moloch, the Ammonite deity to whom children were sacrificed (see the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus), is invoked in H. G. Wells's *Mr Britling Sees It Through* (1916), Osbert Sitwell's 'World—Hymn to Moloch' (1919), and Vernon Lee's *Satan, the Waster* (1920) to characterize the First World War as an industry of primitive blood sacrifice. Dan Billany's novel *The Trap* (1950) and Allen Ginsberg's poem 'Howl' (1956) follow suit in associating Moloch with the horror of young lives being consumed in the Second World War and the Cold War, respectively. Abraham, another Old Testament figure associated with child sacrifice, is also repeatedly featured to cast a critical light on the slaughter of youth: examples stretch from Owen's 'Parable of the Old Man and the Young' (1920) in the First World War, through to Marianne Moore's Second World War poem 'Keeping their World Large' (1951), and on to Nadeem Aslam's novel about the war on terror, *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013). It is thus not the case that theological and religious versions of sacrifice have ceased to have currency in war literature. Jay Winter, reflecting back on the 're-sacralization' of war and sacrifice in the First World War, argues that it occurred largely through a 'flaring up of older languages' (religious and romantic), and that the same flaring did not occur after the Second World War.[13] He is right that war has increasingly been 'de-sacralized' and seen to be driven by secularized economies of losses and gains. But, as is clear from the examples we have cited, that does not mean 'older languages' of religion have

[13] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 228.

ceased to be used to address either war or its secularization. Nor is the persistence of 'older terms' purely parodic: the chapters that follow chart the ways in which the modern experience of conflict has reanimated traditional conceptions of sacrifice and what constitutes 'the sacred' or ideal. Chief among the ideas debated in both creative and critical conversations about sacrifice in war is the role of religious consolation in the understanding of an event as 'tragedy'. In George Steiner's analysis, all Christian tragedy is 'paradoxical . . . in part a *commedia*': death in this cosmology is 'drastic and irrefutable; but it does not carry the major or the final meaning of the play'.[14] For I. A. Richards, drawing on this argument, the sorts of transfiguration that faith might offer undermined more ancient senses of nihilistic loss: 'The least touch of any theology which has a compensating heaven to offer the tragic hero is fatal.'[15] The war literature discussed in this volume contributes to this debate about tragedy in history, and how its meaning may be shaped by changes in faith and public opinion.

III

George Eliot retained a religious vocabulary after her own well-publicized loss of faith: 'in the image of sacred things was there not some of the virtue of sacred things themselves?'[16]—their meaning was not evacuated or emptied out by changes in the intellectual or devotional context that had given rise to them in the first place. For Eliot, life was a conflict between the generic demands of comedy and tragedy, Hellenism and Hebraism, Carnival and Lent, and, while Christian (particularly Protestant) orthodoxy seemed to deny the claims of the body on earth in place of an abstract (and arguably joyless) devotion to duty, what it offered in return was hope—of forgiveness, of redemption, of God's understanding of the plight of man because of the embodiment of Word as frail human flesh. But, as Mizruchi has shown, as the century progressed, ethical interrogations of origins and afterlives made it harder for Victorians to decide if biblical sacrifice was a divine comedy to be embraced or an all-too-human tragedy to be memorialized but discarded as primitive and uncivilized.[17] According to Deborah Shuger, sacrifice is archaic precisely because of this element of vicariousness: 'sacrifice violates the contours demarcating the autonomous individual':

> To the extent that persons are regarded as parts of a whole, they may offer their lives for that whole, whereas insofar as a person is viewed as an autonomous moral subject, *coram Deo*, he has an obligation to preserve his life . . . The modern individual is thus defined in terms of alienation from sacrifice.[18]

[14] George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 31.
[15] I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 194.
[16] George Eliot, *Romola* (1863; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 112.
[17] Mizruchi, *The Science of Sacrifice*, 103–10.
[18] Deborah Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 192–3.

The fundamental moral objection to the Christian schema was precisely the way in which it depended upon the sacrifice of the innocent in place of the guilty—in Yvonne Sherwood's analysis, the crucifixion of Christ offers 'the most stark offence... against modern subjecthood and rights'[19]—hence the labour required in the Gospel narratives to position Christ as both priest and victim, the willing scapegoat of sin (see, for example, Hebrews 9:25–10:18). In his detailed studies of the cultural work performed by the act of scapegoating, René Girard sees in Christ's Passion an exposure of the dynamics of violence staged in such a way as to ensure its non-repetition: as Mark Johnson glosses, for Girard

> the real purpose of Christ's sacrifice and death is not to propitiate an angry or insulted Father-god, but to complete the movement begun in Yahweh's rejection of sacrifice, and finally bring sacrificial religion to an end. Christ comes, not to found a religion, but to unmask religion's origins in our most violent impulses, to render it no longer tenable as a solution to mimetically generated acquisitive tension, and finally to present a new, definitive resolution of the recurrent crisis.[20]

Girard is compelled to negotiate some difficult terrain: on the one hand, he emphasizes the irreplaceable singularity of Christ's sacrifice and proclaims its importance in literature that dwells on symbolic features of the Passion; on the other, he hopes the progress of civilization will eventually disavow the bloodthirstiness of founding murders, scapegoating, and expulsions, and finally attain a post-sacrificial religious equilibrium.

Something of that ambiguity resides in the work of all the Victorian authors who found themselves compelled (by its sheer artistic potential) to deal in the currency of sacrifice, even as they wished to critique its brutality. The realist novel wanted to have it both ways—to align itself with humanitarian developments in the law, and simultaneously to exploit the opportunities for renewal and repentance that the tragic sacrifice of the innocent seemed to unleash.[21] But, as the century progressed, the intuition that scapegoating underpinned all forms of social organization was increasingly seen as distasteful. Anthropological and comparative religious studies such as Henri Hubert's and Marcel Mauss's *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (1898) stressed its primitivism, and writers like Thomas Hardy were to expose, with increasingly stark brutality, the cruelty involved in economies of sacrifice: for example, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), Hardy portrayed it less as the lynchpin of the redemptive pre-Reformation religion whose restoration would revive the rural 'merrie England' of a golden past, and more as a savage example of the struggle for survival. This, in a sense, was the central ethical challenge of a nation in the process of democratization—to implement the vision that, while all are equal, the happiness of the one must never be sacrificed to the happiness of the

[19] Yvonne Sherwood, *Biblical Blaspheming: Trials of the Sacred for a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

[20] René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), and Mark Johnston, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 163–6.

[21] See Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice*, 1–32, and Jonathan Kertzer, *Poetic Justice and Legal Fictions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 18–19.

majority. And the sufferings of the singular 'one' found a compelling home in narrative fiction and poetry that claimed a privileged capacity to represent character as individual interiority (thereby allying these art forms to the development of modern psychology).[22]

In Raymond Williams's view, modern tragedy has continued to diverge from classical tragedy in focusing less on representative action (which is what Aristotle emphasizes in his *Poetics*) and more on individual tragic character:

> Our heroes often move us most closely when they are in fact victims, and are seen as victims. Our emotional commitment, in a majority of cases, is to the man who dies, rather than to the action in which he dies. At this point a new rhythm of tragedy enters, and the ceremony of sacrifice is drowned, not in blood but in pity.[23]

Williams is not discussing war literature here, but his comment has particular resonance for it—particularly for First World War literature, which, more than that of previous conflicts, frequently draws (explicitly and implicitly) on tragedy when questioning associations of heroism, victimhood, and fate, and when striving to inculcate fear and pity in readers. The famous preface that Wilfred Owen drafted for his poems is a good example: 'This book is not about heroes . . . Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War . . . My subject is war, and the pity of war. The Poetry is in the pity.'[24] For W. B. Yeats, Owen's emphasis on the pitiful and subjective meant that his poetry failed to live up to the example of classical tragedy: 'passive suffering is not a theme for poetry. In all the great tragedies, tragedy is a joy to the man who dies; in Greece the tragic chorus danced.'[25] The comment about 'joy' here is too sweeping, but Yeats's main point anticipates the one made by Williams: Owen's emphasis has shifted from exemplary heroic action to passive victimhood, and for Yeats that is a reason not to include Owen's poems in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936). Other writers were not so quick to discount reorientations of tragedy: for example, Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929) and Frederic Manning's *Her Privates We* (1930) associate the 'tragedy' of individual fatalities in the First World War with a 'Fate' or 'Fortune' that is run not by gods but by political administration or the economy. That association is also found in writings about subsequent wars, as in Wyndham Lewis's Spanish War novel *Revenge for Love* (1937) and Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* (1952–61) trilogy about the Second World War. In contrast, Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's war-on-terror novel *The Watch* (2012) marks a return to classical roots: centred on a devout Pashtun woman seeking to recover the body of her brother, a jihadi, from an American army base, the novel is explicitly presented as a reprise of Sophocles' *Antigone*.

[22] See Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 35–6.

[23] Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (1966; London: Hogarth, 1992), 157.

[24] *The War Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 98.

[25] W. B. Yeats, 'Preface', in W. B. Yeats (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. xxxiv.

The main reason that writers have continued to draw on tragedy is that war's *mass* conscriptions and slaughters have made it all the more important not to lose sight of *individuals*. Stephen Spender during the Spanish Civil War thus ignored Yeats when affirming Owen's wish to educe pity from people while 'warning' them about war's reality.[26] Similarly, Norman Mailer in the preface to his Second World War novel *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) stated that he wanted the plight of his soldier-characters to provoke 'awe and pity' in the reader, and he reinforces the novel's link to tragedy with numerous 'Chorus' sections.[27] In many instances, war literature's allusions to tragedy have continued to exemplify Williams's claim that victimhood has taken centre stage, and that is particularly the case in works that figure executions and punishments as scapegoating—examples include Herbert Read's First World War ballad 'The Execution of Cornelius Vane' (1919), Ernest Hemingway's Spanish Civil War novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), and Seamus Heaney's poem 'Punishment' (1975). For Williams, the scapegoating of modern tragedy results not in 'a renewal of our general life, but often a positive renewal of our general guilt'.[28] That holds for the Read, Hemingway, and Heaney examples we have just cited—the scapegoating depicted in them is not figured as redemptive. However, other literary works do ascribe a salvific, regenerative aspect to scapegoating by associating it with a martyrdom that is seen in part as a 'bearing witness' to faith in a common cause. As prelude to discussing that further, we need to consider some of the ways that writers have emphasized the importance of literature (as opposed to the press or media) bearing testament to the horrors of individual suffering, injury, and fatality in war.

IV

Different aesthetic forms and genres have presented the costs of war in contrasting ways and so catalysed different responses on the part of the reader or spectator. Choices of form have thus carried ethical implications. As Elaine Scarry observes in her seminal study *The Body in Pain* (1985):

> Injuring is, in fact, the central activity of war. Visible or invisible, omitted, included, altered in its inclusion, described or redescribed, injury is war's product and its cost, it is the goal toward which all activity is directed and the road to the goal, it is there in the smallest enfolded corner of war's interior recesses and still there where acts are extended out into the largest units of encounter . . . the centrality of injuring is . . . itself anterior to an array of intricate and morally sophisticated questions often asked about war . . . Bertrand Russell, for example, calls attention to the morally problematic human habit of saying , 'I am going off to die for my country' rather than acknowledging that 'I am going off to kill for my country' . . . [But w]hether a boy announces that he is going off 'to die' for his country' or going off 'to kill' for his country, he is saying

[26] See, e.g., Spender's 'Introduction' to the anthology he edited, *Poems for Spain* (London: Hogarth, 1939), 8–9.

[27] Norman Mailer, 'Introduction', in *The Naked and the Dead* (London: Harper, 2006), 6.

[28] Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 158.

> that he is going off 'to alter body tissue' (either his own or another's) for his country, and the eventual destination here is to understand the structural logic of an event in which alterations in human tissue can come to be the freedom or ideological autonomy or moral legitimacy of a country.[29]

As Mary Favret notes, the logic underpinning Scarry's analysis here is sacrificial: the economy of war 'seeks to collapse the boundaries of parts and wholes by substituting individual bodies for the whole nation': 'war comes into the soldier's body, invades it, and changes it irrevocably' and from this 'injuring or "opening up" of individual bodies' the meaning of the nation is generated.[30] Yet such is the cultural anxiety and squeamishness surrounding this direct confrontation with the death and mutilation of young active bodies, that the work of culture—at any time, but particularly in epochs of war—is often to deny the presence of the corpse at all: again, in Scarry's analysis:

> The centrality of the act of injuring in war may disappear—the centrality of the human body may be disowned—by any one of six paths. First, it may be omitted from both formal and casual accounts of war. Second, it may instead be redescribed and hence be as invisible as if omitted: live tissue may become minimally animate (vegetable) or inanimate (metal) material, exempt from the suffering that live sentient tissue must bear; or the conflation of animate and inanimate vocabularies may allow alterations in the metal to appropriate all attention, as in the designation of 'disarming' as central; or the concept of injury may be altered by relocating the injury to the imaginary body of a colossus. Third, it may be neither omitted nor redescribed and instead acknowledged to be actual injury occurring in the sentient tissue of the human body, but now held in a visible but marginal position by four metaphors that designate it the by-product, or something on the road to a goal, or something continually folded into itself as in the cost vocabulary, or something extended as a prolongation of some other more benign occurrence.[31]

This anxiety coincides with the Protestant aversion to the depiction of vulnerable flesh. All the writers whose work is addressed in the chapters that follow were preoccupied with the question of how best to speak of horror—whether old vocabularies and traditional forms could be renovated to accommodate the emotions elicited by the trauma of war, or whether in fact new forms and lexicons would be required—and whether there was a responsibility for artists to do so. This pushed at the boundaries of what could be represented in realism as well: nineteenth-century novels traditionally chose not to represent scenes of violence and execution in any graphic or descriptive form, and even the adaptation of novels like *A Tale of Two Cities* for the stage, which proved immensely popular in times of war,[32]

[29] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 81.

[30] Mary Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 179.

[31] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 80.

[32] Joss Marsh, 'Mimi and the Matinée Idol: Martin-Harvey, Sydney Carton and the Staging of *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1860–1939' in Colin Jones, Josephine McDonagh, and Jon Mee (eds.), *Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), 126–45.

habitually declined to show the work of the guillotine at the novel's end—usually ending with the tableau of actors in shock and mourning just as Sidney Carton mounted the stairs towards the guillotine (in *All for Her!* (1875) and *The Only Way* (1899)).

But clearly questions about the tastefulness of the art of war must be considered hand in hand with advances in technologies of representation. In the eighteenth century, news of war reached non-combatants at home after months of delay: throughout the nineteenth century, technologies of reportage expanded in their immediacy and their visual detail. When William Russell was embedded as the first Special Correspondent of *The Times* during the Crimean War (1853–6), the recent invention of telegraphy in 1851 ensured that his 'semi-weekly correspondence would generally appear a mere two weeks after the fact'.[33] The environs in which the battles of the Crimean War took place—and just a year later, the scenes in which the fiercest fighting of the Indian Mutiny occurred—were also documented by early photographers:[34] by the time the Boer War broke out in the late 1890s, silent films were able to record brief clips that captured the firing of cannon and the deployment of troops.[35]

Since then, advances in both military and communications technologies have accelerated in step with each other (largely because they have increasingly been intertwined), and consequently writers have needed to reconsider and reorient the value and originality of literary responses to war and its reportage. As the First World War introduced a new industrial scale of war, replete with innovations in armaments and battlefield tactics, many writers felt the need to eschew previous occlusions of the centrality of injury so as to register the reality of the war's shocking novelty. We have argued that in general First World War literature did not simply 'de-sacralize' and 'de-mystify' the war in order to depict its pitiful reality. Even the poetry anthologies that incline more to sacralizing are intent on presenting fresh truths about those who are putting their bodies and souls on the line. E. B. Osborn, for example, introduces his anthology *The Muse in Arms* (1917) by asserting: 'The object of this Anthology is to show what passes in the British warrior's soul when, in moments of aspiration or inspiration, before or after action or in the busy days of self-preparation for self-sacrifice, he has glimpses of the ultimate significance of warfare.'[36] Many of the anthology's poems are traditional in form and tone, and do marginalize bodily injury by converting it into national glory. In that respect, the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and other war poets who emphasized the real horrors of bodily disfigurement and suffering served as a timely and necessary rejoinder to such glorifications. Yet the fact that Osborn's anthology

[33] Stefanie Markovits, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17.

[34] Most notably Roger Fenton: see, e.g., Alison and Helmut Gernsheim, *Roger Fenton: Photographer of the Crimean War* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), and Pat Hodgson, *Early War Photographs* (Reading: Osprey Publishing, 1974).

[35] See, e.g., John Barnes, *Filming the Boer War* (London: Bishopsgate, 1992).

[36] E. B. Osborn (ed.), *The Muse in Arms: A Collection of War Poems, for the Most Part Written in the Field of Action, by Seamen, Soldiers, and Flying Men who are Serving or Have Served, in the Great War* (London: John Murray, 1917), p. vii.

(and others like it) was published is indicative of another First World War novelty: the rise of the 'soldier–poet'. Comprised of poems by a wide range of armed servicemen who had experienced combat, *The Muse in Arms*, argues Osborn, is 'far more valuable than all the huge harvest of war poetry by civilian verse-makers'.[37] Such a stance does a disservice to the many fine poems (not to mention other forms of literature) by men and women non-combatants who have portrayed the effects of war on the home front; poems such as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Four Quartets* (1943), which are remarkable in figuring the effects of war through innovations in pastoral elegy. Yet the valorization of writing by those who have seen combat continued after the First World War not only with memoirs such as Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929) or Richard Hillary's *The Last Enemy* (1942), but also with poetry and fiction.

It is notable that even in memoirs such as Graves's and Hillary's the authors do not shy away from fabricating events. 'The memoirs of a man who has been though some of the worst experiences of trench warfare are not truthful', argued Graves, 'if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities. High-explosive barrages will make a temporary liar or visionary of anyone.'[38] True to that, Hillary, in his account of the Second World War Blitz on London, invents an episode in which he rescues an old woman from a bombed house. Such recourse to embellishment or poetic licence is partly symptomatic of the difficulty writers have faced in representing the extraordinary physical and emotional states that arise in war. Numerous writers have also affirmed that representing and memorializing war necessitates the fashioning of new images, associations, and truths. As Spender argued: 'Poetry does not state, it conditions truth.'[39] And it has often been through innovations in literary form and genre that writers have sought to *make* truths anew: Virginia Woolf's modernist innovations with narrative in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Kurt Vonnegut's incorporation of science fiction in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), and William Burroughs's cut-up experiments, to name just a few. When literary *making* bears on sacrifice in war, it enters into an intimacy with sacrifice's *making*—whether it is of the sacred or of some other value or ideal. On that basis, literature can variously amplify, reorient, or undermine the values and ideals that are at the heart of sacrifice. For many writers, that literary work has been particularly important for counteracting the pervasive influence of news reportage of war, along with the increasing role played in it by photography and screen media.

During the First World War, for example, the aversion some combatants felt towards civilians was exacerbated by a sense that civilian consumption of news gave no insight into the war's reality. Recounting a period of convalescence back home in 1916, Robert Graves wrote that 'England looked strange to us returned soldiers. We could not understand the war-madness that ran wild everywhere . . . The civilians talked a foreign language; and it was newspaper language.'[40] Hence the

[37] Ibid. p. xiv.
[38] Robert Graves, *But It Still Goes On: An Accumulation* (New York: Cape, 1931), 32–3.
[39] Stephen Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (London: Gollancz, 1937), 197.
[40] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (1929; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 114.

need for poetry like Siegfried Sassoon's, which, as Virginia Woolf put it, presents 'the terrible pictures which lie behind the colourless phrases in the newspapers'.[41] Of course, since the First World War the press and news media have increasingly presented their own terrible pictures in the form of photographs and film footage. In particular, footage of death camps such as Auschwitz, combined with accounts by inmates who survived them, has been crucial in establishing the appalling reality of genocidal atrocity that took place in the Shoah. The increasing preference of 'Shoah' (disaster, catastrophe) rather than 'Holocaust' (which bears connotations of sacrificial burnt offering) as the term of reference for that genocide indicates the growing and understandable refusal to see industrial extermination, which casts and kills people as debased things, in terms of a classical conception of sacrifice as a labour intent on 'making sacred'.[42] While some philosophers in the wake of the Shoah have thus reconsidered the intimacy of sacrifice and war, Theodor Adorno famously questioned the value of even attempting to represent the genocide in literary writing: 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.'[43]

'Making sacred' is just one sense of sacrifice, though, as we have discussed, and since the Second World War, writers have continued to represent war's mass killing as sacrifice in the sense of an economic rationalization of losses and gains—and they have done that precisely to draw attention to its barbarity. Writers have also continued to defend the importance of using literature to address the back stories and rhetoric that can surround war reportage, just as they have sometimes sought to counteract the way the media 'packages' it. For example, discussing *The Yellow Birds* (2012), his semi-autobiographical novel about fighting in Iraq, Kevin Powers argues that, in contrast to media reportage, literary war writing can still 'confound expectations' that ossify when 'people become inured to the violence . . . presented to them in the same way for ten years or more'.[44] For Powers, this bears on the importance we have already discussed of producing new images and truths in literature to 'allow you to see the same thing in a new way'.[45] Shaping people's perceptions is also intrinsic to propaganda, though, which is why so many writers have engaged with propaganda in various ways; from denouncing it, like Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), to having a hand in it, as William Le Queux did with *German Atrocities* (1914), his assemblage of purportedly reliable witness statements and interviews about German outrages in Belgium.

[41] Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Sassoon's Poems', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume II*, ed. Andrew MacNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), 120.

[42] On this point, see Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 28–30.

[43] Theodor Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society' (1949), in Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 34. For examples of philosophers reconsidering the relation of sacrifice to war after the Shoah, see Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), 20–38, Moshe Halbertal, *On Sacrifice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), and Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Agamben's book is discussed in Vincent Sherry, Chapter 6, Adam Piette, Chapter 12, and the Afterword of this volume.

[44] Kevin Powers, *The Yellow Birds* (2012; London: Sceptre, 2013), 239.

[45] Ibid.

Atrocity stories have long been a feature of war literature, and they often bear on sacrifice in detailing a victimhood of scapegoats and martyrs. During the First World War, for example, there was international outcry at the execution of the Anglican British nurse Edith Cavell. As Katie Pickles has written, the press widely compared her to Joan of Arc and referred to her as 'one of the Great martyrs of the centuries'.[46] The British government's propaganda bureau produced pamphlets that also attested to her virtue as a martyr for the national cause. Such victimhood differs from that of the modern scapegoat that Raymond Williams sees as instilling collective guilt rather than a sense of communal regeneration. Cavell's martyrdom was lauded for bearing stoic faith in her religion and her role in the war effort, and historians have estimated that her death resulted in around 40,000 extra army recruits.[47] It was not unusual in the First World War for soldiers to be figured as *milites Christi*—warring Christian martyrs; see, for example, Robert Bridges's poem 'The Last Salute' (1917)—the most famous of them being the poet and soldier Rupert Brooke. The rebels of the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland were also widely eulogized in poetry as martyrs prepared to sacrifice their lives for the nation, and martyrdoms were similarly ascribed to individuals by both sides engaged in the Spanish Civil War—the assassinated poet Federico García Lorca being one of the notable examples commemorated by Republicans. As Andrew Chandler and Anthony Harvey have pointed out, the Catholic Church officially canonized and beatified more martyrs in the twentieth century than in any previous century, and those included individuals who died in the Spanish Civil War and the two world wars.[48] In general, though, from the Second World War onwards the references in war literature to individuals being martyrs are often ironic in suggesting that someone is exaggerating his or her predicament (see, for example, Henry Green's novel *Back* (1946) and Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour*). With the 9/11 attacks and the war on terror things have changed again: there has been a surge of interest in the sacrificial martyrdom claimed by Islamist jihadis.[49] Like the English word 'martyr', the Arabic word for it (*shahid*) also means one who 'bears witness' to faith, and novelists such as Nadeem Aslam and James Meek have offered valuable portrayals of how jihadis' bearing witness to religious and political faith is complicated by the communications technology that enables others to witness their 'martyrdom operations' from a distance. Figuring intimacy across distances is important for many of the writers considered in the chapters that follow; intimacy with the lives, beliefs, and sufferings of distant others, as well as with the various cultural, religious, and political faiths that inform them. Progressing chronologically up to the present period, each of the chapters provides an insight into how writers

[46] Katie Pickles, *Transnational Outrage: The Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 66.

[47] Ibid. 68.

[48] Andrew Chandler and Anthony Harvey, 'Introduction', in Andrew Chandler and Anthony Harvey (eds), *The Terrible Alternative: Christian Martyrdom in the Twentieth Century* (London: Cassell, 1998), pp. xi–xii.

[49] For a comparative survey of Islamic, Christian, and secular militant martyrdom, see Dominic Janes and Alex Houen (eds), *Martyrdom and Terrorism: Pre-Modern to Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).