

The Strategy of Indirect Approach: Centre and Periphery in Fiction about the First World War

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Abstract: The article discusses a number of World War novels written in countries or areas described as secondary theatres of war. Operations in those theatres were often mentioned as examples of the 'strategy of indirect approach,' that is as attempts to disrupt the enemy's war effort by attacking in an unexpected, seemingly remote and unimportant place. During the First World War, the Gallipoli Campaign was the best-known example of this strategy, but indirect strategy propagated the war in many other countries, and affected a great variety of literary cultures. Therefore, the article is an attempt to compare the principles of indirect-approach strategy with the literary responses to war in those areas where the war was fought according to those principles. There seem to be some interesting parallels between military strategy and literary work created in the areas affected by it.

Keywords: First World War, indirect approach, core and periphery

Introduction

The distinction between core and periphery in historical and cultural research (Morton 2011) is similar to the military distinction between direct and indirect approach in strategy, as proposed by B. H. Liddell Hart in the 1940s (Liddell Hart 1942; Mearsheimer 1988). The present discussion assumes that the difference can also be seen in cultural and literary responses and subsequent modes of historical remembrance, and that the distinction consists mainly in genre selection, that is in compositional differences defined in terms of rhetorical features of genres, demarcations of suitable themes, rules of decorum, constructions of the implied authorship and readership, as well as genre-specific

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practices of writing, reading, publishing, and literary distinction. Most generally and importantly, the indirect approach in war literature is characterized by absence, or limited use, of the realist epic novel as the principal genre of war literature, in the manner of Erich Maria Remarque, Henri Barbusse, or Arnold Zweig, who may be described as representatives of the literature of direct approach. Instead, peripheral fronts were either described in epic realist genre used by foreigners, such as Franz Werfel or T.E. Lawrence, or they were described in other non-epic and non-realist genres. There was, perhaps, a similar shift in poetry.

This distinction in terms of genre corresponds to McLoughlin's rhetorical study of war literature (2011). Her notion of 'spheres' and 'zones' in representation of space in war literature, derived from the classic tradition of epic and pastoral poetry, and continued in realist war fiction in the 20th century, is closely related to the notion of a war's 'centre' (or *Schwerpunkt*) in the strategy of direct approach:

The idea of pastoral as a critical space gives a special timbre, or charge, to the rural setting. Similarly, the war zone can be seen as a specially charged space, a place apart, a demarcated area subject to its own laws where things are different. Geographically, it is hyper-defined, subject to intense surveillance (alongside the war machine, as Paul Virilio points out, there has always existed a 'watching machine'), imbued with strategic significance, its access restricted. (...) Indeed, pastoral can be understood not only as a flower-strewn retreat but as a psycho-physiologico-physical area for extended mental activity: concentration, contemplation, meditation, view formation, creativity. When, in contemporary parlance, sports psychologists speak of pre-race athletes entering or being in 'the zone', a phrase defined by the OED as 'a state of perfect concentration leading to optimum mental or physical performance', it is such a psycho-physiologico-physical space that is being described. As has already been shown, the soldier entering or in the war zone must acquire similar mental focus, blocking out distractions, focusing, visualising what lies ahead, preparing and motivating the self, achieving and maintaining a hyper-vigilant outlook, experiencing

and managing extreme physical and emotional feelings. In this sense, the war zone is itself a version of pastoral (McLoughlin 2011, 99-100).

Thus, in literatures related to the strategy of direct approach, the sublime core of traumatic experience of the First World War (163) is strongly positioned in the front, as in the Western Front, whereas fiction and poetry about home front, much as it is affected by war, are positioned in a different zone. In other words, direct-approach literary war is staged in a heterogeneous space, organized by means of highly modified conventions of the pastoral. On the other hand, in literatures related to the strategy of indirect approach, the dark-pastoral front zone is rarely mentioned, and the organization of war space is more homogeneous; the war is everywhere and nowhere, and the pastoral war zone is rarely used. This is one of the several types of rhetorical genre distinctions that will be discussed in more detail, presently.

In general, the First World War in literatures of indirect-approach tends to be represented in modes other than the realistic epic novel. Examples, some of which are discussed below, include Stratis Myrivilis's *Life in the Tomb* (1924), Mikheil Javakhshvili's *Kvachi Kvachantiradze* (1924), Grigol Robakidze's *The Snake's Skin* (1926), Stefan Żeromski's *Seedtime* (1925), and Kurban Said's *Ali and Nino* (1937). Their shared features seem to be individual rather than national, point of view, preference for the picaresque plot structure with many episodes not related to the war, frequent use of tropes of irony, deception, and uncertainty in descriptions of history. Given the fact that most indirect-approach war theatres were also sites of atrocities and humanitarian disasters, cultures seem to have responded ironically and deceptively, but with constant awareness of almost universal hardship and suffering, not limited to the front zone.

1. Direct and Indirect Approach in Strategy

The Strategy of Indirect Approach was published in 1942 by Liddell Hart, an important war theorist and historian. Although Hart discussed many historical examples, his most useful, defining examples of indirect approach came from the First World War: for the Western Allies and Germans, the direct-approach strategy was to concentrate effort on the Western Front,

see-sawing along an imaginary line between Paris and Berlin, which led to a stalemate of a static front, and to horrors of trench warfare (Liddell Hart 1942, 219–234). That line Hart describes as the ‘natural’ and predictable direction of attack and defence, comparing the direct approach to a motionless balance of two fighters in wrestling:

More and more clearly has the fact emerged to one’s mental object, or physical objective, along the ‘line of natural expectation’ for the opponent, has ever tended to, and usually produced negative results. (...) To move along the line of natural expectation consolidates the opponents equilibrium, and, by stiffening it, augments the resisting power. In war, as in wrestling, the attempt to throw the opponent without loosening his foothold and balance can only result in self-exhaustion, increasing in disproportionate ratio to the effective strain put upon him (Liddell Hart 1942, 4–5).

Thus, during the First World War, when the Western Allies tried to attack in a theatre of war other than the Western Front, for example at Gallipoli, they followed the strategy of indirect approach: putting strain and effort far away from the line of natural expectation was supposed to put the enemy off balance, and gradually change the course of the war. However, already in this quotation can it be seen that Hart’s idea is not only geographical: he writes about ‘mental object,’ ‘equilibrium,’ and ‘expectation’ rather than about theatres of war. Consequently, finishing his survey of war history, Hart presents a more general notion of indirect approach:

Combining the strategical and the tactical examination, we find that most of the examples fall into one of the two categories. They were produced either as a strategy of elastic defence – calculated retirement – that was capped by a tactical offensive, or by a strategy of offence, aimed to place oneself in a position ‘upsetting’ the opponent, and capped by a tactical defensive: with a sting on the tail. Either compound forms an indirect approach, and the psychological basis of both can be expressed in the word ‘lure’ or ‘trap’. (...) For the second compound, although superficially and logistically an offensive move, has for its underlying motive to draw the opponent into an ‘unbalanced’

advantage. The most effective indirect approach is one that lures and startles the opponent into a false move – so that, as in ju-jitsu, his own effort is turned into the lever of his overthrow (Liddell Hart 1941, 181).

Hart quickly adds a comment on the general quality of the notion of indirect approach, comparing the line of least expectation to the line of least resistance, known from natural science, and comparing surprise to physical dislocation and imbalance:

In the psychological sphere, dislocation is the result of the impression on the commander's mind of the physical effects which we have listed. The impression is strongly accentuated if his realization of his being at a disadvantage is *sudden*, and if he feels that he is unable to counter the enemy's move. In fact, *psychological dislocation springs from this sense of being trapped*. (...) Thus, a move round the enemy's front against his rear has the aim not only of avoiding resistance on its way but in its issue. In the profoundest sense, it takes the *line of least resistance*. The equivalent in the physical sphere is the *line of least expectation*. They are two faces of the same coin, and to appreciate them is to widen our understanding of strategy. For if we merely take what obviously is the line of least resistance, its obviousness will appeal to the opponent also: and this line may no longer be that of least resistance (Liddell Hart 1942, 194).

This is the kind of reasoning that is sometimes quoted from Hart in strategy manuals for businessmen, because it is very general. For the same reasons, it is applicable in literary history: indirect approach in war literature is not simply referring to texts about theatres of war other than the Western Front, but rather to a mode of writing which 'lures' the reader by representing the war deviously, ironically, in a manner that upsets 'obvious' expectations and questions, defies the conventions of 'ordinary' war literature and throws the 'direct' reader off balance. This can be observed in unusual themes, subversiveness, irony, uncertainty about authorship and genre, unexpected twists, inconsequential plots, or incomprehensible messages: war literature

based on indirect approach is a separate mode of representation, rather than simply a set of novels about various 'secondary' theatres of war. The qualities of this mode of representation will be discussed below.

2. Centre, Periphery, Strategy

During the First World War, campaigns listed by Hart as examples of indirect-approach strategy were often staged in countries treated as peripheries by Western Europeans: Iraq, Gallipoli, the Caucasus, Greece and the Balkans, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, and then the German colonies in the Pacific and in Africa. The peripheral status of those countries is variously defined, geographically and economically, as exemplified in the compilatory list by Derek Aldcroft (2006, 3):

As a working concept we have defined the impoverished peripherals as those countries which in the early twentieth century still had around one half or more of their population dependent on agriculture and with incomes per capita of less than 50 per cent of those of the advanced nations of Western Europe. On this basis, therefore, we would then encompass much of Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria), Spain, Portugal, Greece and Turkey in Southern Europe, along with the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and ending up with little Albania. It so happens that most of these countries could also be classed as peripheral in a geographic sense and many of them were fairly small in terms of population.

As Aldcroft subsequently observes, the peripherals share a number of economic and political disadvantages, which described them in the aftermath of the First World War, and in most cases perhaps continue to do so today:

1. Concentration on the production of primary commodities, a large part of which are exported to the richer core in unprocessed form.
2. Dependence on imports of manufactured consumer goods and capital equipment.

3. Heavy reliance on foreign technology, know-how, skilled expertise and capital.
4. More generally the situation may give rise to 'a condition of cultural, psychological, social and political dependence' (Colman and Nixon 1994, 48), which in the European context is especially relevant given the political subordination of many peripheral regions to imperial masters (Aldcroft 2006, 19).

An important quality of those countries is that many of them during the First World War either were exploited colonially (or semi-colonially), or were areas of warfare based on the strategy of indirect approach. For many of them, the war years led to the beginning of independent statehood, which was in many cases quickly lost. The condition of 'cultural, psychological, social and political dependence' (Colman and Nixon 1994, 48) led to the development of a different type of war literature, whose defining qualities were akin to the elusive concepts of indirect-approach war: military and economic weakness led to an emphasis on deception and unconventional warfare, reliance on foreign technology and know-how led to dependence on sponsoring states and on supplies of weaponry, and the need to retain agency led to double-dealing and false loyalties to sponsoring states, or even to the adoption of 'decorative' forms of modernization as part of prestige-building in foreign policy (cf. Aldcroft 2006, 34–36). One of the key issues for peripheral countries was modernization, seen as something that would support a national military struggle for independence. Thus, on the one hand, peripheral countries tried to modernize, but the urgency of their military situation forced many countries to rely on direct foreign help, sometimes at the cost of concessions and limitations to their independence. The resulting forms of modernization were often superficial, 'decorative,' used as a ruse to attract more foreign help and gain credibility with sponsoring states, whereas the underlying motivations and economic decisions were not related to modernization. In other words, 'decorative' modernization was one of the strategies of indirect approach in contacts with enemies, with allies, and with sponsor states as well. In literature, similar strategies can be identified, assuming that Western (or 'central') literary forms were used superficially or deceptively, as camouflage for a different type of (peripheral) literature. These strategies, importantly, are definable in terms outlined in Liddell Hart's study of indirect

approach military strategy. The result was a war literature of indirect approach, defined by the following qualities:

1. Giving an 'unbalanced advantage' to a foreign literary influence: creative imitations of Western realist and modernist fiction, but modified according to indigenous requirements, fashions, and to specific purposes of local politics. This often meant writing in a manner that would be recognized and praised in a given sponsor state, e.g. imitating German or French forms of modernism in war fiction. This effectively means that a number of intended and unintended readers, such as foreigners from sponsor states, censors, or members of conflicted factions at home, are treated as opponents.
2. 'Upsetting' the expectations of opponents, to throw them 'off-balance': indigenous elements (such as interludes or secondary plots) are added, or Western elements are omitted, which leads to the development of localized forms of war literature. This limited compliance translates into ironic or parodic treatment of decorum and conventions of (Western) epic and novelistic war narratives.
3. 'Calculated retirement' as part of a flexible defence: In many cases, there seems to be a greater emphasis on individual survival, often through superior intelligence and deception. The theme of submission to military organization is either absent or played out comically, as through images of evasion and false compliance. Nevertheless, the narrative is still a potent statement about the war.
4. Emphasis on camouflage, false preparations, mimicry, and deceptive actions: this consists in a creative distortion of the author persona, effectively creating 'the author' unrelated to the agency and identity of the writing individual, along the lines discussed by Barthes and Foucault in their seminal essays. By extension, this can refer to self-referential conventions, such as the use of frame devices, lost-manuscript frames, and the epistolary novel.
5. Avoiding the 'lines of natural expectation': Instead of putting emphasis put on direct military struggle, the narratives often focus on secondary plots, distant locations, background characters, and themes unrelated to military action. This often leads to forms of picaresque, episodic plots, frame devices, and ironic distancing from representation of war.

6. Emphasis on diversion and demonstration: when, as in Western war novels, there is an emphasis on representation of fighting, it can be an element of an ironic or deceptive game with readers.

Perhaps the most important feature of literature based on indirect-approach strategy is the absence or radical modification of Western-style war novel in a national literature. This posits genre criticism at the centre of the present argument: war novels about strategic theatres of indirect warfare were often innovative, as ironic treatments of the conventional war novels from countries whose primary war experience was that of warfare based on strategy of direct approach. A number of texts discussed in the following articles seem to corroborate this statement. In the following section, two novels will be discussed as preliminary examples.

3. Examples

When England and Germany temporarily occupied Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia in 1918, their actions can be described as examples of the strategy of indirect approach: territories in a secondary (by then) theatre of war were easily captured, probably in order to seize vital supplies and to throw the enemy (Russia and Turkey, respectively) off balance. For Turkey, and for the newly formed Caucasian states, however, the contemporary military actions in the Caucasus would seem to be examples of direct strategy, of direct struggle for survival. However, their brief military struggles against Turkey, White Russians, and the Red Army, was characterized by many qualities of indirect-approach warfare: dependence on foreign military supplies and expertise, long lines of supply, small armies, and dynamic, small-scale engagements. Military leaders had to depend on improvisation, ruse, disinformation, and partisan tactics, rather than on mass warfare or prolonged war

of attrition. Consequently, the experience of warfare was different, and so were the literary responses to it. For most of the nations involved, the First World War was a crucial moment, either a beginning, or a major transformation of their statehood.

This was reflected in war literature, too, as the war seemed to demand a new type of literary response, usually identified as realism. Thus, Köroğlu observes on genre evolution in representation of war in Turkish literature,

in the work of Ömer Seyfettin, who initially adapted old epic poetry, transplanting old poetic heroes into patriotic short stories set during the First World War:

As the war approached its inevitable end, Ömer Seyfettin's interest in the story, used both as a propaganda medium and as a way of increasing national consciousness, was substituted by a totally different approach. Having observed the penury suffered by the people in their daily life, Ömer Seyfettin started to satirize the policies of the government, which he had supported throughout the war. As the first news concerning an eventual peace began to appear, Ömer Seyfettin started his new series, *Zamane Yigitleri (Heroes of Our Time)*, in which rough and tough types were described. In these stories, and in other stories describing the difficulties encountered during the war, the writer began to abandon his interest in history and started to struggle with the problems of the present time (Köroğlu 2007, 165).

For another example, the two important war novels about the Caucasus during the First World War are peculiar in a variety of ways, compared to Western war novels. Thus, Kurban Said's *Ali and Nino* (1937) combines genre elements of the war novel and melodramatic romance, with few descriptions of warfare and with most characters presenting a very distanced attitude to the war; the novel destabilizes genre-specific expectations, by being neither an epic war novel nor a melodrama. It also subverts the institution of the literary authorship, as testified by various controversies about its authorship and originality discussed below. Similarly, Mikheil Javakhishvili's *Kvachi* (1924) is a set of sketches reworked into a novel, which makes for a rich combination of comic episodes, erotic themes, epic historical narrative, and sensational military adventure.

Like many secondary theatres of war, Javakhishvili's novel is 'distant' from great battles in that the protagonist, for the most part, has adventures unrelated to fighting at the front: he tours Europe as a gentleman-thief, pretending to be an Afghan prince, when the war finds him, but his enthusiasm is clearly presented as another trick of a con-artist: 'Kvachi was immediately transformed: he changed fronts, invented new nets and traps, disguised his face to seem a different animal, put on the armor the times required, and girded

himself with new weapons' (292). He keeps touring Europe, as if there was no war, profiteering and dodging the draft in France, England, Germany, and Italy, representing a distanced attitude to a war which is not his war:

Kvachi in the army? Kvachi at war? At Verdun or in the Ardennes? What for, what for? For the French? What harm had the Germans ever done him? In what way was Paris any better than Vienna or Berlin? What had it to do with Kvachi if either of them went under or soared up? Suppose a bomb fell right by Kvachi, or a bullet whizzed past and spilled his blood! Were they out of their minds? (295)

The novel has many half-ironic passages like these, simultaneously critical of the war and of the shirking protagonist, who is in Russia in most war chapters, involved with Rasputin and defrauding government money, conducting fake arms deals and setting up 'The Good Samaritan Society for Aid to War Wounded and War Dead'. As a picaresque protagonist, Kvachi accidentally becomes a diplomat, an army officer, a fraudulent humanitarian organizer, but does not treat these functions seriously, and only imitates them; for him, they are decorative forms of Western modernity at war, and he treats them as opportunities to make money. The description of the first battle he sees is presented in the same way, initially, as a set-piece staged by Rasputin: 'General Sukhomlinov will write to the commander-in-chief that you're to be looked after like the apple of his eye. Hang about not too close, not too far. Get a sniff of the front, fire a gun, and come back' (307). Then, against the expectations of the reader (and the protagonist) the description of the battle becomes naturalistic and dramatic (312-313), with short, broken sentences, a collage of drastic, dramatic, and loosely related images, very much in the tradition of the 'ordinary' war novel. Kvachi gets wounded and performs gallantly, experiencing a sudden transformation, about half way through the novel. Then, the tone of the description, again, is ironic:

Kvachi suddenly had the wings of an eagle and the body of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, who had put their fiery swords in his hand. In his chest a lion's heart was beating, in his soul hell's chief devil was at work, with a thousand gremlins serving him. Kvachi, already a tall man, suddenly grew

half a foot taller; he burned the flock of frightened sheep with his eyes and deafened them with his thunder: 'Stop! Join ranks!' (318)

In the following chapter, the novel suddenly reverts to the picaresque mode, with Kvachi taking part in the assassination of Rasputin, and subsequently converting to the revolutionary cause and returning to Georgia. The descriptions of the war in Georgia are notably scarce, and they are at the heart of the novel's indirect-approach strategy: the novel combines criticism of various pre-revolutionary characters and attitudes with a sensational plot and various un-critical literary conventions and themes, approximately similar to the American tall-tale about a folklore hero. As Donald Rayfield asserts, the indirect goal of the novel was, for the author, to save his life and literary reputation in Soviet Georgia, in the aftermath of the failed rebellion in 1924, when Javakhishvili was sentenced to death but somehow survived (Rayfield 2014, 9-10). The author, apart from addressing the general audience, also addressed people like Lavrenti Beria, the henchmen and engineers of mass terror. In a way, addressing the general audience could have been a ruse in time of terror and total control over publishing; Soviet officials were perhaps the real addressees of the novel. Hence, the text relies on unpredictability and indirect approach: diversified themes and conventions, a large variety of opinions and ironic representations, and a generally unclear tendency.

Another example of indirect-approach writing is the controversy over the authorship of *Ali and Nino* (1937). The novel, set mostly in Baku between 1918 and 1920, combines melodrama with war themes and vivid descriptions of exotic locations and social backgrounds. It was first published in 1937 in Vienna, in German, pseudonymously by a Kurban Said, by a publishing house that specialized in translations and works by authors unpublishable in Nazi Germany (Hall 2016), as a piece of easy-reading fiction about exotic countries, a genre that was apparently very popular and mass-produced in pre-war Germany. Since then, much has been written about the supposedly unique artistic merit of the book, which has become an international bestseller and something of a national novel in Azerbaijan. The identity of Kurban Said has been variously determined: according to the well-researched book by Tom Reiss (and another international bestseller), he was Lev Nussimbaum, a Russian-Jewish-Azerbaijani exile from Baku, who published popular-science

books about 'the Orient' in Germany between the wars, as Esad Bey, another pseudonym (Reiss 2005, 34–55). Reiss, however, mentions a variety of Azerbaijani critics (and even politicians) who claim other identities of Kurban Said, usually on grounds that the novel was an expression of Azerbaijani national spirit, and thus could not have been written by an exile Jew in Germany (189). More credible theories have been proposed, among others, by Betty Blair (2011), who proposed Yusif Vazir Chamanzaminli (an Azerbaijani statesman and author active in early 20th century), and by Injia Tamar (2009), who identified passages stolen from *Das Schlangenheim* (1928), a symbolic novel by Grigol Robakidse, a Georgian exile in Germany. The uncertainty of and various strongly voiced claims about authorship are an important quality of indirect-approach writing: *Ali and Nino* can be flexibly adjusted to the role of a national novel, a German easy-reading text in the 1930s, an ambitious anti-Soviet work by an exiled author, and an international bestseller in the 21st century, and for each of these roles the author-function is fulfilled by a different historical character.

4. Conclusions: Genre in War Literature of Indirect-approach Strategy

In her recent study of African war novels, Eleni Coudouriotis (2014, 4–5) presented contemporary texts in terms of the opposition between sentimentalized images of war victims and the empowering texts in which naturalism was appropriated and transformed:

The war novel in Africa, therefore, reveals a rift between naturalism and sentimentalism. The failures of reconciliation, its inability to deal adequately with the traumas of war, bring about a backlash, a renewed turn to naturalism, now focusing on the urban poor, made up of former fighters and the displaced rural population. (...) The war denounces through naturalism, but, as a second gesture, it also affirms by setting out to do a people's history, laying a claim on the nation for the people, grounded in their struggle and suffering.

What transpires from Coudouriotis's analysis is that European conventions of naturalist war novel were adapted to the needs of nation-making and historical remembrance in African literatures under discussion. The European convention of naturalist war novel, which often featured an innocent young protagonist confronted with brutality in a series of epic episodes, was modified into more brutal and fatalistic narratives about impossibility of reconciliation, and about cycles of harm and revenge (Coudouriotis 2014, 6). Genres, with their conventional characters and plot skeletons, are freely modified thematically, combined with elements of other genres, and intensified, in accordance with the contingent needs of a local situation. The reader, lured by recognizable markers of a genre (e.g. a naturalist novel), is caught unawares, and thrown off-balance, by a text which turns out to belong to a new, modified genre. The creative play with genre conventions is, thus, one of the strategies of indirect approach, used in literary works by representatives of nations and social groups whose experience (for cultural, strategical, or geographical reasons) did not match the dominant narratives written in more conventional genres.

McLoughlin (2011), among the conventional features of war fiction, lists the need for 'credentials' of a specially constructed character, who can provide reader-identification while asserting that (s)he has been through the most important, historic moments (21-25), the epic catalogues of 'details' and statistics, usually listed by a character, that show the magnitude of the war (51), the creation of 'zones' around the dark core experience of war (83-85), emplotment patterns that provide clear temporal boundaries of the war and define it as an exceptional state (107-111), the trope of adynaton (*impossibilia*), where the author claims that wartime experience defies description, or has left him/her speechless (135-138), and the profound seriousness of description with an undercurrent of an equally serious, ironic, or absurd sense of humour (164-166). Randall Fuller, in his study of the impact of the Civil War on the American literature in the 1860s, compares the development of these features with the emergence of American realist fiction:

In many ways, the task of assimilating the war imaginatively—of constructing a coherent narrative about the conflict that would make sense of its bitter costs and enable Americans to adapt to a changed national landscape—would fall less upon Emerson and his contemporaries than upon the next generation of authors.

Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and Ambrose Bierce were just a few of the many writers who participated in an epic reimagining of the war in the last third of the nineteenth century. For them, the war was a tragic farce, a sick joke that belied the lofty rhetoric of writers and politicians from the previous generation. Avatars of a new literary realism that would dominate American letters through the end of the nineteenth century, their attitude toward the killing was also a minority view (221).

Thus, the development (rather than subversion) of realist conventions can be conceived as a response to the chaotic and destabilizing experience of war, a statement recently made by Denis Boak (2012, 217-228) in a theoretical article about war memoirs, with reference to the novel and romance. A similar need for literary innovation and development, this time from conventional realism into modernist fiction, is commonly mentioned in studies of literary responses to the First World War, for example in Hawkes's (2012, 99) discussion of war novels by Ford Madox Ford:

As I have been arguing, Ford's are destabilising narratives: baffling and unsettling works which persistently defy the expectations of readers by stimulating whilst simultaneously undermining the desire and need for narrative coherence. At times, in works like *The Good Soldier*, the destabilising aspects of Ford's writing are those which most clearly signal his modernism. Other works, such as *The Inheritors*, *A Call*, *The Fifth Queen*, and *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes* are much less overtly experimental and many display affinities with popular fictional forms such as science fiction, fantasy, romance, political satire, and the detective story, forms which depend on traditional stabilities of character and plot. Indeed, Ford's Edwardian novels are founded on classic realist character-systems which, although rendered radically unstable by overjustification, continue to hold out the hope of an encounter with a rounded, knowable protagonist. Furthermore, they consistently activate readerly expectations for narratives structured and shaped by plots, whilst remaining disconcertingly resistant to interpretive finality and closure. The instabilities encountered in Ford's works have prompted

us to reflect on how the same set of traits operate in other Edwardian novels by writers who, like Bennett and Wells, are usually considered to represent the antithesis of modernist experimentation, or who, like Conrad, hesitate between modernism and popular romance.

Thus, the advent of modernism is seen in terms of destabilizing and baffling the readers' expectations through the incoherent use of conventional 'stabilities' of character and plot. This, in Hawkes's view, was a response to the wartime experience of modernity: an attempt to provide a truthful rendering of an overwhelming experience. Larabee (2011, 19–25) has compared the development of modernist war fiction to the cartographic procedures of mapping, used on the Western Front. When, however, the attempt is not motivated by truthful rendering of a baffling experience, but by a desire to manipulate or persuade the reader, to create a personal or national self-image, or to avoid censorship or punishment, then war fiction often cannot be described as an aesthetic experiment, it defies this description. Instead, it can be described as a ruse, in terms of the strategy of indirect approach. On 'secondary' theatres of the First World War, this strategy necessitated the use of deception, secrecy, and luring the enemy into a false guess about one's intentions. Concurrently, and perhaps consequently, literary responses to such war are similarly deceptive, unpredictable, and elusive.

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