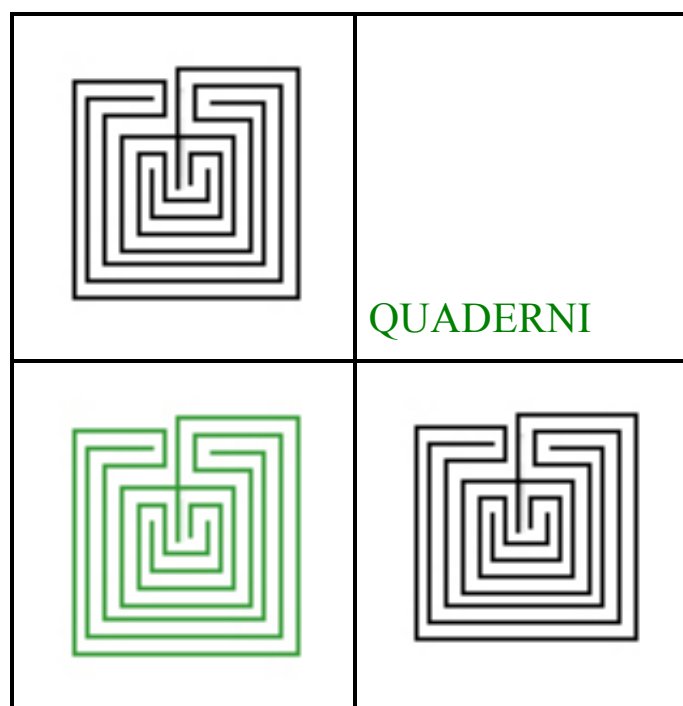

CONTACT ZONES

CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY
CONNECTIONS IN ENGLISH

edited by Maria Micaela Coppola,
Francesca Di Blasio, Sabrina Francesconi



LABIRINTI 179

Università degli Studi di Trento
Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia

Labirinti 179



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TRENTO
Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia

COMITATO SCIENTIFICO

Andrea Comboni (coordinatore)
Università degli Studi di Trento
Francesca Di Blasio
Università degli Studi di Trento
Jean-Paul Dufiet
Università degli Studi di Trento
Caterina Mordeglia
Università degli Studi di Trento

Il presente volume è stato sottoposto a procedimento di *peer review*.

Collana Labirinti n. 179
Direttore: Andrea Comboni
© Università degli Studi di Trento-Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia
Via Tommaso Gar 14 - 38122 TRENTO
Tel. 0461-281722 - Fax 0461 281751
<http://www.unitn.it/154/collana-labirinti>
e-mail: editoria@lett.unitn.it

ISBN 978-88-8443-852-2

CONTACT ZONES:
CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC
AND LITERARY CONNECTIONS IN ENGLISH

edited by

Maria Micaela Coppola, Francesca Di Blasio,
Sabrina Francesconi

Università degli Studi di Trento
Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MARIA MICAELA COPPOLA, FRANCESCA DI BLASIO, SABRINA FRANCESCONI, Introduction	7
CARLA LOCATELLI, Un ricordo di Alessandro Serpieri	15
CARLA LOCATELLI, The (Non)Places of World Empathy: Are They Literary Contact Zones?	19
STEFANO EVANGELISTA, Classical Fragments: The Geopolitics of Desire and Deracination in Nineteenth-Century English Literature	39
GLORIA CAPPELLI, Pragmatic and Lexical Skills of Learners with Dyslexia and EFL Learning	55
SILVIA ANTOSA, Embodiments, Disorientations and Misalignments: Jackie Kay's <i>Trumpet</i>	75
ELEONORA RAVIZZA, Repositioning the Self in the Contact Zone: Derek Walcott's <i>Omeros</i>	89
ELENA MANCA, Linguistic and Cultural Perceptions of 'Space' in the Tourist Experience: A Contrastive Analysis of a Contact Zone	105
MICHELE PERONI, History and Literature in the Contact Zone. First World War Historical Novel as a Space of Debate	129

GIULIANA REGNOLI, Local and Global Ideologies in Transient Contact Zones: Evidence from an Indian Student Community	143
MARIACONCETTA COSTANTINI, Challenging Encounters: The Cultural Presence of France in Victorian Sensation Fiction	163
CHIARA POLLI, Of Multimodality and (White)Men: Robert Crumb and the Contact Zones of Comics	181
EMANUEL STELZER, Transformative Touches in Tunis: Imaginary Contact Zones in Two Early Modern English 'Turk' Plays	201
CRISTINA GAMBERI, Colonialism and Resistance: Problems of Perspectives in Doris Lessing's Auto- biographical Writings	217
CRISTINA PARAVANO, A Contact Zone in Seventeenth Century England: The Case of Richard Brome's <i>A Jovial Crew</i>	239
LORENA CARBONARA AND ANNARITA TARONNA, English as a <i>Lingua Franca</i> in the Italian as a Foreign Language Class: Issues of Self-Narration and Reflexivity	253
GRETA PERLETTI, Fashionable Sensibilities, Female Pathology and the Consumption of Novels: Jane Austen's Women Readers in the Contact Zone	289

MICHELE PERONI

HISTORY AND LITERATURE IN THE CONTACT ZONE.
FIRST WORLD WAR HISTORICAL NOVEL AS A SPACE OF DEBATE*

In this paper I am going to borrow Mary Louise Pratt's definition of contact zone to apply it to a different research topic from that originally intended by the author of the term.

Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as «social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power».¹ She uses the term to refer mainly to contexts of «colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths»,² but, in this paper, I will identify the concept of 'social space' with a literary space constituted by the corpus of First World War historical novels published from the 1990s until the beginning of the First World War Centenary commemoration. This literary space is 'social' in that it provides a *locus* for interaction and confrontation: it is my aim to show that within this literary space different disciplines and epistemological approaches coexist and interact producing critical and often controversial understanding of the First World War. This interplay generates disputes and confrontations that result in an asymmetrical relationship by means of which a literary interpretation of the conflict prevails over a historical one.

The year 2018 marked the centenary of the end of the war: a hundred years divide our generation from that event, but interest in the conflict never abated and the war still exercises a deep fascination within British popular culture. The large number of fictional representations of the First World War produced in recent years is one of the clearest signs of this long-standing

* I would like to thank Dr Ann-Marie Einhaus (Northumbria University) for her useful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

¹ M.L. Pratt, *Arts of the Contact Zone*, «Profession», 91 (1991), p. 34.

² *Ibidem*.

fascination: from its beginning in 1914 to the present day, the conflict has endured as a favoured topic for films, TV series, graphic novels, video games and, most importantly, literature.³

Literature has always been central in the representation of the Great War for Britons. Richard Holmes emphasises the fact that in Britain the war «usually enters our mind not as history, but as literature».⁴ From the war poetry published when the conflict was still going on, to the novels and memoirs written during the so called ‘war books boom’ in the late 1920s, up to the historical novels published in more recent years, literature has always been crucial in shaping the British popular view of the conflict.

It is consequently not surprising that one of the issues that has been at the centre of public debate since the 1930s is the portrayal of the war in literary texts.⁵ What has been questioned ever since is the accuracy and historical reliability of literature in the representation of a complex and multifaceted event such as the Great War. The historian Douglas Jerrold published a critical analysis of some of these novels and memoirs in 1930, a pamphlet aptly titled *The Lie About the War: A Note on Some Contemporary Books*. Jerrold maintains that the war books published in the late 1920s were offering only «half the truth»⁶ about the conflict. A similar concern about the improper representation of the Great War was picked up in the 2000s by a

³ A recent survey carried out by the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction discovered that, over its eight-year history, 9% of all submissions were set during the First World War and nearly a quarter (23%) of the books shortlisted for the prize were set during WW1. An overview of the survey findings is available at <http://www.walterscottprize.co.uk/research-period-settings-revealed/>, last accessed October 10, 2017.

⁴ R. Holmes, *Tommy. The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918*, Harper Perennial, London 2005, p. xvii.

⁵ See C. Falls, *War Books. An Annotated Bibliography of Books about the Great War*, Greenhill Books-Presidio Press, London-Novato (CA) 1989 and D. Jerrold, *The Lie About the War. A Note on Some Contemporary Books*, Faber & Faber, London 1930.

⁶ D. Jerrold, *The Lie About the War*, p. 42.

number of military historians that lamented the impact of «supposedly “anti-war” poetry, memoirs, novels, plays and films»⁷ on popular understanding of the war. Historians like Brian Bond, Correlli Barnett and Gary Sheffield, belonging to the so-called ‘revisionist’ school, maintain that a nuanced and factually based historiographical interpretation of the war has been obscured by the enormous success of war poetry, war memoirs and later fiction. The asymmetrical relation that I mentioned in the introduction of this article can be located in this prolonged interaction of literature and historiography.

Military historian Correlli Barnett states that «thanks to the lasting power of their prose and verse, our own modern-day response to the Great War and the Western Front is still emotional rather than rational».⁸ What the revisionist historians criticise is the portrayal of the Great War as a *cliché*: a collection of myths that are perpetuated by fictional representation and that reduce the conflict to a narrative of trauma, suffering and disillusionment, a futile slaughter devoid of any meaning. The myth of a futile, meaningless war led by incompetent generals, clashes with a more nuanced view of the conflict and with what Sheffield calls the «learning curve»⁹ of the British Army: an improvement in the conduct of the war that led to the final victory.

Military historians started to raise their voices after a number of highly successful historical fictions appeared around the 1990s and rekindled public and academic interest in the conflict: the BBC sitcom *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989),¹⁰ Pat Barker’s

⁷ B. Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front. Britain’s Role in Literature and History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, pp. vii-viii.

⁸ C. Barnett, *The Western Front Experience as Interpreted Through Literature*, «RUSI Journal», 148 (2003), 6, p. 56.

⁹ G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory. The First World War. Myths and Realities*, Headline Book Publishing, London 2001, p. xi.

¹⁰ *Blackadder Goes Forth* is the final series of the period sitcom *Blackadder*. It is set in the trenches of the Western Front in 1917 and is often cited by military historians as a major influence in promoting a distorted view

Regeneration trilogy (1991-1995)¹¹ and Sebastian Faulks's *Birdsong* (1993).¹²

Pat Barker's *Regeneration* (1991) follows the life of the war poet Siegfried Sassoon in 1917, after the publication of his protest against the continuation of the war that led to his being sent to the Craiglockhart Military Hospital diagnosed with shell shock. The novel focuses on Sassoon's meeting with Wilfred Owen, on the relationship with the psychiatrist W.H.R. Rivers and on the latter's treatment of officers recovering from war trauma. The subsequent books that complete the trilogy, *The Eye in the Door* (1993) and *The Ghost Road* (1995), gradually shift their attention from Sassoon to Rivers and to one of the fictional characters of *Regeneration*, Billy Prior, a working-class character who was at Craiglockhart at the same time as Sassoon and, like him, was one of Rivers's patients. Barker is interested in the investigation of lesser known facets of the war, and in the trilogy she tackles themes such as class, gender and masculinity, as well as exploring the life of women on the home front and their role in the war effort.

Sebastian Faulks's *Birdsong*, probably the most successful historical novel about the Great War, is a novel with a non-linear structure that is set in three different chronological periods. An account of Stephen Wraysford's visit to France in 1910 is followed by the story of his experience as an officer of a tunnelling unit on the Western Front. The narrative of the war years is interwoven with a third story line depicting the reconstruction of Stephen's story by Elizabeth, Stephen's granddaughter, after she discovers her ancestor's journal in 1978.

Texts like Barker's and Faulks's are no longer the product of the trench generation – with first-hand empirical connection to the war – but fictional works that turn to second-hand sources to

of the war.

¹¹ P. Barker, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, Penguin, London 2014.

¹² S. Faulks, *Birdsong*, Hutchinson, London 1993.

re-imagine a conflict through which their authors had not lived. Nonetheless, the critical and commercial success of these works is undeniable: *The Ghost Road* won the Booker Prize in 1995, *Regeneration* was made into a film by Gillies MacKinnon in 1997 and *Birdsong* was adapted into a two-part television drama for the BBC in 2012. Moreover, to mark the public impact of their works, it is to be noted that Pat Barker and Sebastian Faulks were appointed members of the Advisory Group for the World War One Centenary government's programme of events, along with academic historians and military representatives.¹³ Barker's and Faulks's works are widely read and they became a staple of the canon of First World War literature, bringing positive effects to this corpus of texts, as Adrian Barlow highlights:

Like the poetry generated by the Great War, so with prose fiction: much that is written and said about the novels of the Great War refers only to a very small number of books. For this reason, the publication in the 1990s of novels such as Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong* and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy has significantly extended the range of Great War prose fiction.¹⁴

Despite the wide critical acclaim with which the novels were received, revisionist historians have criticized these contemporary works because they draw heavily on the literary myth of the war and they are subsequently not reliable in their depiction of the past. In their opinion, contemporary rewritings of the conflict «display the tendency to dwell on “the horrors” of the Western Front»¹⁵ and they provide «a lopsided, incomplete and therefore misleading view of the First World War».¹⁶ Richard Holmes even commented that «One of the

¹³ The announcement is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-war-i-centenary-culture-secretary-maria-miller-names-first-members-of-advisory-group-to-oversee-plans>, last accessed September 29, 2017.

¹⁴ A. Barlow, *The Great War in British Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 67.

¹⁵ B. Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front*, p. 76.

¹⁶ G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, p. 16.

problems with trying to write about the First World War is that most people have already read Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, Pat Barker and Sebastian Faulks before you get to them».¹⁷

Historical novels have always been problematic texts, since they are artificial and real at the same time and they call forth issues of accuracy in the depiction of well known historic figures and events. They are set in history, but through an artistic and creative treatment of their subject they question the ways in which history is reconstructed and represented. These concerns are of central interest for writers, but also for historians, since both professions share the same goal of representing the past to a contemporary audience. As the Booker Prize two-time winner Hilary Mantel explains, the writer often acts as a mediator between past and present:

The writer of history is a walking anachronism, a displaced person, using today's techniques to try to know things about yesterday that yesterday didn't know itself. He must try to work authentically, hearing the words of the past, but communicating in a language the present understands.¹⁸

The emphasis on 'words' and 'language' in writing about the past is central: the linguistic aspects of historical writing have been explored by Hayden White in *Metahistory* (1973) where it is suggested that any historical work is «a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes».¹⁹ Hayden White's argument, through its emphasis on language and narrative strategies, aims at undermining the objectivity of historical writing and at narrowing «the substantive distance between

¹⁷ R. Holmes, *Tommy*, p. xvii.

¹⁸ H. Mantel, *BBC Radio 4 Reith Lectures. The day is for the living*, 2017. A transcript of the lecture is available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08tcbrp>, last accessed October 10, 2017.

¹⁹ H. White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1973, p. 2.

historical and fictional representation».²⁰ The similarities between history and literature are also stressed by Virginie Renard who summarised what the philosopher Paul Ricoeur had extensively outlined in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004):²¹ «history is epistemologically characterised by three distinct stages: the documentary phase, the phase of explanation/ understanding, and the phase of representation».²² Renard concludes that historical novelists «also go through the same three stages: they gather documents and information about the past, seek to understand the events they purport to relate, and finally represent them in a narrative».²³

Historical writing and historiography show many correspondences, but one must bear in mind that the two disciplines, though working on the same subject matter – the past – and consequently sharing a similar methodological approach, radically differ in their aims: historiography wishes to achieve an objective narrative of the past, while historical novels' goal is to attain a plausible and engaging version of the past. Jerome de Groot correctly underlines that «the artist has creative latitude, in contrast to the more constrained ability of the chronicler to render reality».²⁴ Historical accuracy is not the key item in the historical novelist's agenda: invention, falsification, and anachronism, are often essential ingredients of a successful historical novel, as much as a meticulous research.

In the novels under scrutiny this tension between the use of historical elements and sources, and fiction, is evident in the

²⁰ M. Boccardi, *The Contemporary British Historical Novel. Representation, Nation, Empire*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2009, p. 7.

²¹ P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2004.

²² V. Renard, *The Great War and Postmodern Memory. The First World War in Late 20th-Century British Fiction, (1985-2000)*, Peter Lang, Brussels 2013, p. 48.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ J. de Groot, *The Historical Novel*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2010, p. 18.

Regeneration trilogy and in Barker's use of well known historical figures alongside fictional characters: Sassoon, Owen and Rivers are historic, Billy Prior is not. The reconstruction of the characters' interaction is a fabrication, but, when possible, it is based on diaries, letters and subsequent writings. In the *Author's Note* at the end of *Regeneration* Barker states that: «Fact and fiction are so interwoven in this book that it may help the reader to know what is historical and what is not».²⁵ All the novels in the trilogy offer a final commentary note that lists Barker's sources and allows the reader to discern between the fictional and the historical.

Similarly, Sebastian Faulks's novel, although this is not stated explicitly as in Barker's work, is nevertheless indebted to archival research and to previous war literature for its fictional recreation of the Western Front.²⁶ Moreover, *Birdsong* stresses the necessity of using texts to reconstruct the past by showing Elizabeth piecing together her grandfather's story with the help of his personal journal. Through the use of secondary and archival sources – whether real or fictional – these novels underline the fundamentally intertextual nature of the past long recognised by postmodern writers and critics like Linda Hutcheon who, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), wonders whether «we can ever *know* that past other than through its textualised remains».²⁷ Even though historical novels like Barker's and Faulks's cannot be ascribed to the historiographic metafiction genre that Hutcheon investigates in her study, they

²⁵ P. Barker, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, p. 335.

²⁶ See S. Faulks, *Back to the first world war front line with Tommy*, «The Guardian», 15/09/1993. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/15/sebastian-faulks-birdsong-first-world-war-front-line-1993>. Last accessed 07/08/2018. For *Birdsong*'s similarities with previous war literature see S. Ouditt, *Myths, Memories, and Monuments. Reimagining the Great War*, in V. Sherry (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2005, pp. 248-249.

²⁷ L. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction*, Routledge, London-New York 1988, p. 20, italics in the text.

certainly incorporate many of the same contemporary concerns about the way in which we reconstruct and transmit the past.

During the 2010s a second wave of historical novels about the war was published and revived popular interest towards Great War fiction. Amongst the recent re-imaginings of the war there are novels such as Louisa Young's *My dear I wanted to tell You* (2011)²⁸ and Pat Barker's *Toby's Room* (2012),²⁹ or Helen Dunmore's *The Lie* (2014)³⁰ and Robert Edric's *Field Service* (2015).³¹

These novels are informed by preoccupations regarding the treatment of history and fiction, like their literary predecessors: most of them employ a paratextual apparatus to warn about inaccuracies and fictional additions, or to acknowledge the use of historical documents and secondary readings. Like the successful books published in the 1990s, these historical novels play on received ideas of the Western Front and rewrite the myth chastised by historians, that is, a narrative based on horror and futility that has its roots in the canonical war writing produced during the war years and in the 1920s and 1930s. However, as Ann-Marie Einhaus underlines in a recent article on literature and the cultural memory of the war, contemporary First World War fiction «can serve to not only confirm existing memory discourses, but to introduce new ideas and interests into existing narratives about the First World War».³² The historical novels under scrutiny display a tendency to explore marginal and previously unexplored aspects of the war. Young

²⁸ L. Young, *My Dear, I Wanted to Tell You*, HarperCollins, London 2011.

²⁹ P. Barker, *Toby's Room*, Hamish Hamilton, London 2012.

³⁰ H. Dunmore, *The Lie*, Hutchinson, London 2014.

³¹ R. Edric, *Field Service*, Doubleday, London 2015. It is interesting to note that, apart from Louisa Young, the authors of these recent fiction have already written about the First World War in the past: Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy was published between 1991 and 1995. Helen Dunmore published *Zennor in Darkness* in 1993 and Robert Edric published *In Desolate Heaven* in 1997.

³² A.M. Einhaus, *Cultural Memory, Teaching and Contemporary Writing about the First World War*, «Literature & History», 25 (2016), 2, p. 188.

and Barker concentrate on soldiers suffering from facial injuries and on women's experience. Both novels offer multiple narrative perspectives on the conflict, since the story is told from different points of view, in Young's case these are: the facially injured soldier, the shell-shocked officer, the women serving as VADs, and the officer's wife. Dunmore and Edric deal with the immediate aftermath of war, their works focus on the difficulties to cope with the consequences of the war both personally and collectively. *The Lie* revolves around the life of a veteran returning to his hometown in Cornwall, while *Field Service* looks at the work of the War Graves Commission in France and at the social and political implications of dealing with mass death and mourning.

Apart from a wider spectrum of themes, these historical novels reveal a different approach to the representation of the chronology of the First World War. The novels examined here question the legitimacy of imposing chronological boundaries on the event, the narratives of these texts are expanded as to include the years before 1914 and those after 1918: *My dear I wanted to tell You* and *Toby's Room* both begin before the war, respectively in 1907 and in 1912;³³ *The Lie* and *Field Service* are instead set in the post-war years. By presenting a larger time span these novels aim at underlining an issue that was already considered by historian Ross J. Wilson:

[E]vents on the Western Front have been constructed in chronological order, to explain and narrate the circumstances of the conflict from August 1914 to November 1918, and the specific events, individuals and battles of the war. In effect through their narratives historians have bracketed the events of the Western Front into the years 1914–

³³ As a matter of fact Louisa Young and Pat Barker wrote their books with a larger project in mind: both novels are part of a trilogy that explores the life of the characters across a wider temporal frame that stretches from the First until the Second World War. The sequel to Louisa Young's *My dear I wanted to tell You* are *The Heroes' Welcome* (2014) and *Devotion* (2016). *Toby's Room* is the second instalment of a trilogy comprising *Life Class* (2007) and *Noonday* (2015).

1918 (Cobley 1993). Such a position inevitably prohibits a consideration of the effect the events have on contemporary society, it neglects the overwhelming public response to continue talking about the events and it closes off the past.³⁴

Contemporary historical novels tend to challenge this chronological bracketing and they also question the idea of an ordered sequence of events limited to the war years. In order to understand the trauma of war on society and on individuals, the war must be examined from a wider perspective and beyond its duration. This attitude was already clear in *Birdsong*: in the book three different chronological levels intersect in order to provide an interpretation of the past that includes the present. As Jerome de Groot emphasises: «The novel [...] dramatises in the central character of Elizabeth the ways in which people in contemporary societies understand their past».³⁵ According to Mariadele Boccardi, linking the past and the present is an essential element of historical narratives, since they provide

a representation of the past which depends, for its coherence, on the knowledge of the consequences of that past, of what followed the events narrated: something which can only be attained in the future.³⁶

The persistence of the First World War as a topic in British literature reflects the long-standing interest towards this event, as well as contemporary society's need to comprehend it. As we move out of living memory, the role of historical novels in rethinking the First World War is that of bridging the gap between then and now, between the past and a contemporary readership that has lost all personal connections to the war. In this understanding, this corpus of works has an important influence on the cultural memory of the conflict, since it can affect the way in which the war is remembered. The multidisciplinary field of memory studies is indeed another

³⁴ R.J. Wilson, *Memory and Trauma. Narrating the Western Front 1914-1918*, «Rethinking History», 13 (2009), 2, p. 255.

³⁵ J. de Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 103.

³⁶ M. Boccardi, *The Contemporary British Historical Novel*, p. 20.

important discipline to include – along with history – in the analysis of the ‘literary space’ outlined in the introduction of this article. The role of fiction in transmitting the memory of the First World War is prominent, the popularity of best seller texts promoting a disillusioned view of the war – such as *Regeneration*, *Birdsong*, along with the recent surge of historical novels published on the eve of the Centenary – has certainly affected the public perception of the war. The wide reach of First World War historical fiction also includes secondary education, where historical novels are frequently used by English teachers alongside classical war writing. A research project carried out by Ann-Marie Einhaus and Catriona Pennell aimed precisely at exploring the role of the classroom in shaping and transmitting the memory of the war.³⁷ The findings highlight that English teachers use contemporary writings because, thanks to their accessible nature, they provide an appealing and captivating way to engage pupils with war writing, but, in so doing, they also run the risk of encouraging «cultural or historical bias towards a modern, retrospective and necessarily limited interpretations of the war».³⁸

It is in this understanding that a dialogue between disciplines appears necessary. Several First World War scholars have already pointed out the need to look at other fields of study and establish a dialogue with them: writing in 2006, Esther MacCallum-Stewart acknowledged the necessity to «dissolve some of the tensions between literary and historical academia» and maintained that «for a more realistic (and multi-faceted) view of the war to emerge and be fully understood by the popular reader, both disciplines must work together to facilitate change. Indeed, this understanding is rapidly becoming the

³⁷ A.M. Einhaus, C. Pennell, *The First World War in the Classroom. Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory. Final Project Report, May 2014*, University of Exeter, (2014), n.p. Available at <http://www.lintheclassroom.exeter.ac.uk/>, last accessed October 11, 2017.

³⁸ A.M. Einhaus, *Learning, Literature and Remembrance in English Classrooms*, «The Use of English», 65 (2014), 3, p. 13.

prevailing sentiment in both historical and literary studies».³⁹ Similar opinions about the need for different disciplines to interact in the field of First World War studies emerge from two works published in 2012: literary critic Virginie Renard, taking her cue from MacCallum-Stewart, underlines the necessity to «create a dialogue rather than a confrontation»⁴⁰ between literary analysis and cultural history; likewise, Catriona Pennell, commenting on the role of academic historians in the Centenary commemorations, expresses positive thoughts about the possibility for mutual cooperation:

Ideas and discussions need take place among academics, teachers, community organizers, curators, archivists, librarians, and a whole host of stakeholders. The First World War is not the sole territory of the academic historian, and settings that promote dialogue and exchange should be supported and encouraged.⁴¹

In the area of First World War studies the tension between disciplines – and especially between history and literature – rather than merely prompting recurring and unresolved debates, should be used as a productive tool to trigger discussion about the way in which we make sense of the conflict. An exchange across different branches of knowledge could produce a more nuanced and thorough understanding of the complexity and many facets of the war. In the ‘contact zone’ of First World War historical novels, fiction is ancillary to history, and the two disciplines must be seen as complementary actors in the complex task of reconstructing the history and memory of a conflict that – after a hundred years – still challenges interpretation.

³⁹ E. MacCallum-Stewart, *The Cause of Nowadays and the End of History. First World War Historical Fiction*, «Working Papers on the Web», 9 (2006), n. p.

⁴⁰ See V. Renard, *The Great War and Postmodern Memory*, p. 21.

⁴¹ C. Pennell, *Popular History and Myth-Making. The Role and Responsibility of First World War Historians in the Centenary Commemorations, 2014-2018*, «Historically Speaking», 13 (2012), 5, p. 13.