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Introduction

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One hundred years after the outbreak, historians and media commentators alike agree that the First World War occupies an almost unique place in cultural memory. Shared ways of remembering the conflict continue to develop even as those who had personal experience of the war have died. But whereas traditionally, historiographical focus has rested on the Western Front, more recently scholars have begun to consider the real global repercussions of the war. Although the direct protagonists were the great powers of Europe, their involvement had the effect of pulling many other nations towards the conflict. In the century and half before 1914, European powers had competed to develop empires that covered the world. These colonies included many conquered nations, in Africa, India, and the Far East as well as British Dominions, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada. All these nations were called upon to ‘do their bit’ to send troops and medical support around the world to sites of conflict in Europe and the Middle East. Always subordinate to the combat soldier of the Western Front, these soldiers, nurses, and civilians present multiple alternative stories of the war that need to be explored.

The edition offers an integrated set of studies aimed at providing a wider view of war experience through focussing on landscapes less commonly considered in historiography and on voices that have remained on the margins of popular understanding of the war. Building on the arguments of Janet S. K. Watson that the war, far from being a unifying experience, spawned numerous conflicting accounts even as it unfolded, each essay describes the perspectives of participants whose experience of the war was determined by their geographical location and explores how this constituted an alternative war experience. Each essay deals with a different colonial space, examining the ways in which men and women responded to the different, even alien cultures they experienced in the Middle East, Africa, and the Far East. Many of the writers examined considered themselves to be on a unique journey, one that took them to exotic locations and offered experiences that only the war could provide. Collectively, they combine to offer further fresh insights into the multiplicity of war experience, an alternate space to the familiar tropes of mud and mayhem.

Only relatively recently has there been an increasing academic interest in colonial aspects of the First World War. Das's important edited collection *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (2011) focuses on the racial and colonial aspects of the Great War in order to 'embed the experience and memory of the First World War in a more multiracial and international framework' (2011: 2). Das notes, 'The litany of place names often becomes a marker of the "world" nature of the First World War' (2011: 3), emphasizing the importance of viewing the war in broader terms in order to properly understand it. However, this need is tempered by the lack of authentic colonial voices as so few combatant and non-combatant recruits from the colonies (rather than the Dominions) kept written records. Das goes on to observe, 'What are often considered sideshows in the grand European narrative of the war were momentous events with enduring consequences for the local communities' (2011: 5). However, many of the essays in this collection engage primarily with the experiences of colonial and Dominion subjects in the European theatre rather than the alternative colonial spaces of the war.

The first three essays in this collection travel to the war in the Middle East and engage with a range of perspectives, both female and male, on the colonial spaces there. Christine Hallett's 'Argonauts of the Eastern Mediterranean: Military Nurses on Hospital and Transport Ships, 1914–1918' focuses on the war experiences of nurses from Australia and New Zealand, 'ANZAC' nurses who travelled to serve at Gallipoli, in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Many were anxious to prove their worth as professional women, others were motivated by a desire to travel and experience both challenge and adventure. As Hallett shows, their expectations were often met. She frames these experiences, as did the women themselves, within a larger, more powerful cultural narrative of heroic tropes dating back to the classical world, identifying the ways in which the quest narratives of the ancient world resonated as the women followed in the footsteps of classic and mythological heroes. War-service enabled them to travel further than they had believed possible and to encounter not only clinical but also practical challenges, such as life in tented hospitals or on-board hospital ships. Some of the most remarkable journeys were taken by members of the Australian Army Nursing Service many of whom served in Egypt, on hospital ships in the Mediterranean, on the Island of Lemnos, in Salonika, and then in England and Northern France. They were amongst the few nurses who served both in the Eastern Mediterranean and on the Western Front. Hallett draws on a range of sources including memoirs of their experiences, in which they found spiritual as well as geographical meaning in their journeys. She suggests that most viewed their war-service as a personal quest, or mission, not only to serve what they saw as a 'just cause', but also to challenge themselves both as human beings and as female actors on a world stage.

Nadia Atia's essay, 'Fictional Depictions of Nursing in the Middle East' also examines the experiences of British and Dominion women in the Middle East, but this time through the alternative lens of fiction. Atia focuses on two fictional representations of this colonial space and considers what new freedoms the genre might

bring to the stories. The first, Helen Halyburton Ross's *Sin and Sand: A Romance of the Palestine Campaign* was published in 1929, only a decade after the end of the war, and presented landscapes that may have been more familiar to her readers. Atia juxtaposes this novel with Thomas Keneally's *The Daughters of Mars* (2012), a twenty-first century interpretation of the journey from Dominion to colony. Both of these novels draw on the lived experiences of those who served in the Middle East during the First World War. In very different ways, each novel also negotiates the many mythologies that surround the figure of the war nurse, whether professional or voluntary. Atia explores the evolution of fictional representations of nursing and the possibilities for evoking a human experience of nursing work in an arena so heavily overlaid with the iconic.

The focus moves to male experience as Justin Fantauzzo explores the importance of personal memorabilia to combatant soldiers in the Middle East. His essay, 'Soldier Photography, Scrapbooks, and the Private Remembrance of the First World War in the Middle East' illustrates the importance for soldiers of being able to chronicle their experiences of 'other' or 'alien' cultures and landscapes in these colonial spaces. Fantauzzo argues that many soldiers defied the censor and documented the war against the Ottoman Empire through the lens of a small, low-cost box camera. Once demobilized and returned to Britain many ex-servicemen transformed their scattered collection of snapshots into meticulously constructed scrapbooks that chronicled their experience of the war in the Middle East. He examines soldier photography in First World War Sinai and Palestine and the production of post-war scrapbooks as an alternate space of individual remembrance. Wartime photography catered to a range of emotional and psychological needs from updating family members on a soldier's changing physical appearance to pacifying the wandering minds of hospital convalescents. Just as stonework tributes and symbolic silences around Britain provided spaces for collective remembrance, soldier-produced scrapbooks performed much the same function but in a personal, safe, and above all private setting.

The collection then moves further afield to the turbulence of colonial Africa for Michèle Barrett's essay 'African soldiers and carriers: the problem of dehumanisation'. Barrett builds on her earlier work to offer a fresh and nuanced exploration of oppression and inequality in the further reaches of the British Empire, highlighting the extreme dehumanization of African porters and carriers during the course of the war in East Africa. Drawing on a range of sources including memoirs, diaries, and personal papers, as well as literary texts, Barrett shows how colonial administrators and other residents and travellers had already established these dehumanizing attitudes in the years before the 1914–18 war. She then moves on to consider the general policy of the Imperial War Graves Commission in its work in Africa, which was that the large majority of carriers were not considered 'worthy of commemoration'. Many African soldiers, and all African carriers were even denied a name in the limited process of commemoration. The essay moves on to consider post-colonial

attempts to rectify this discriminatory policy, noting the different attitudes in various geographical locations.

Finally, Sandra Barkhof takes us to the other side of the globe to explore an empire turned in on itself in her essay, 'From colonial masters to occupied enemy aliens: The occupation of German New Guinea and German Samoa during WWI'. Heather Jones has argued, 'The notion of "race" was central to how Germany viewed its African and Asian prisoners' (Jones in Das, 2011: 175–6). That centrality remained when, after the outbreak of the First World War, the German colony in New Guinea surrendered to Australian troops, while German Samoa was occupied by the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. For the Germans living in these colonies, the occupation meant a radical challenge to their individual and national identity, as their status changed abruptly from colonial masters to occupied foe, from neighbour to enemy alien. Attitudes to the race of their captors dominate these 'imperial' responses to being colonized. Barkhof draws on a variety of primary sources, including contemporary newspaper articles, surviving letters, archival material from the Australian, New Zealand, and German National Archives, as well as memoirs to compare for the first time, the occupation of German New Guinea and Samoa, and analyse the ways in which the resident Germans negotiated the changed power dynamics in these colonies. These colonial Germans, cut off from their distant metropolis, relied on national identity and patriotism to re-affirm their identity as part of the German diaspora abroad in this unexpected colonial space of the war.

Together, these essays form part of a new wave of First World War scholarship, determined to move beyond more traditional historiographical boundaries. By the time we reach the centenary of the end of the war in 2018, this body of work will have helped to shape an alternate way of looking back, imposing a global dimension on cultural memory, and enabling us to gain a more authentic impression of the experiences of all those who participated, whether as soldiers, medical personnel, or civilians caught up in the conflict.

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