

World War II and Literature Chronicles Memories Resurfacings

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

With all its historical, political, ethical and social significance, World War II had a profound impact on the very essence of writing, prompting fundamental questions around the possibilities of expression. The trauma of war, loaded with destruction, pain and death, made it necessary to consider literature as a vital — though limited and probably inadequate — tool for the task of attributing meaning to what had happened.

World War II inspired and continues to inspire works that confront the memory of the period and the unsettling questions it unveiled. It immediately generated chronicles that tried, more or less directly, to give shape to what was happening (the example of Vasily Grossman will suffice). Then, soon after the end of the war, literature had to face the problem of transforming that experience into memories (one could think of Primo Levi). Obviously, the symbolic load of war did not exhaust itself with the death of those who had lived through it. There remains today an overwhelming presence on the book market of texts written by people who were born after the war but are nonetheless engaged in sifting through its resurfacings (i.e. Johnathan Littell).

This wide corpus – classified here under one method among many – entrenched in the even more complex and multi-layered system of collective memory, the functioning of which has been widely discussed, starting with the pioneering research of Halbwachs (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, 1925) and encompassing the most recent studies specifically dedicated to the memory of both global conflicts. A reflection on literary texts, in particular, and on their ability to reassemble the fragments of spaces and times, will enable a deep analysis of this issue, combining several theoretical and methodological approaches (from geocriticism to narratology, from publishing history to gender studies and so forth).

It will thus be interesting to trace a map on which to locate key points of orientation within the collective memory of World War II. Taking into account the category of “remembrance literature” in this wider framework — that is, establishing a continuity between those works that recorded the war events “live” and those that, subsequently recalled the war in any shape or form — it will be possible to investigate a wide variety of genres, from novel to poetry, from theater to screen-writing, from memoir to autofiction, from reportage to comics.

This call for contributions is addressed to scholars of all disciplines. We will consider any proposal concerning World War II across a wide thematic spectrum: occupation, resistance, liberation; segregation, deportation, massacre; remembrance, commemoration, reinvention of war events. No geographical or historical boundaries apply. We welcome theoretical, comparative and interdisciplinary articles, analyzing systemic issues or potential links between different scientific fields.

We encourage, to give just a few examples, proposals concerning the following areas of study:

- Relations between literary production and historical-geographical perspectives (i.e. through the

lenses of remembrance, trauma, resurfacing);

- Testimonies of the same event recorded by different authors and/or from different points of view;
- Phenomena of hybridization, questioning, redefinition of traditional literary genres and forms;
- The space of memory as a transnational space (works produced in a dialogue with spaces other than the literary area they primarily address; mechanisms of the international circulation of cultural products);
- Frequent tropes and motifs in World War II literature;
- The publishing market confronted with war (from propaganda to mass literature)

An abstract proposal (max 1000 words) accompanied by a short bio (max 250 words) should be sent to: svolte@writeupbooks.com.

Languages accepted: Italian, English, French

Abstract presentation deadline: 31 October 2021

Acceptance of the proposal: 31 December 2021

Paper submission deadline: 30 April 2022

Flavia Di Battista (Università degli Studi di Pavia)

Fabrizio Miliucci (Università di Torino)