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Introduction: War and Culture Studies – blurred boundaries and complex identities

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A shorter introduction than is usual for a *varia* issue that incorporates a good number of examples of the variety of articles which the *JWACS* has attracted in the course of this seventh volume. These *varia* issues, of which two have been included in this particular volume, aim to provide an opportunity for war and culture scholars to consider the broad range of research areas currently covered by the discipline. Those areas may often seem rather disparate, bound together only by an interest in, and a focus on, the effects of war on cultural production in various forms and in varied ways. However, as is always the case, on closer analysis there are intriguing hidden links and themes which flow from article to article, and which offer unexpected and rewarding insights into the broader scope of the work of war and culture studies. This time the recurrent themes are those of the blurred boundaries and complex identities which the experience of war and of its aftermath, of very different types of war and in very different places, produce for those experiencing them and for the ways in which those experiences are expressed. This issue moves forward chronologically, encompassing diverse geographical spaces, fulfilling the journal's remit: from nineteenth-century South Africa with John McAleer on "The eye of the artist": Thomas Baines, the Eighth Cape Frontier War and the representation of warfare'; to Second World War London with Charlotte Charteris's 'Inside Julian Maclaren-Ross's Closet: clothing as communication in wartime Britain'; and then to Second World War Germany in Roger Wood's 'The Referential and the Relational: Victor Klemperer's Diaries in the Nazi Years'; and ending with two different aspects of a contemporary period which still turns its gaze back in time, returning once again to Britain and Germany with Peter Lowe's 'The Urge to Tell it Backwards: the Contemporary Poet and the Great War' and finally Ian Roberts's 'The Return of the Hero? Contemporary German war films'. And what of these blurred boundaries and complex identities? Represented here in art, the novel, the diary, poetry and film, they are those of the war artist's complex witnessing of and relationship to people engaged in battle; the social outsider caught up in the prevailing attitudes and ambiguities of wartime; the war diarist's referential, factual role and his relationship to other accounts and to historians; the contemporary poet 'revisiting' First World War poetry and the view from the twenty-first century; and contemporary filmmakers dealing with problematic military pasts and presents.