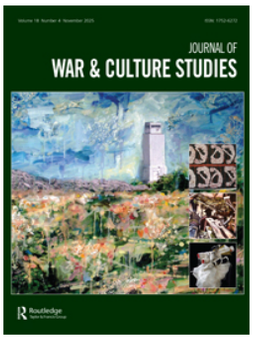

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Classicisms and Modern War in the Long Twentieth Century

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This special issue addresses the entanglement of various expressions of classicism with modern war in the long twentieth century, from the Great War to its centenary commemorations. By revisiting varied expressions and concepts of classicism through broader geographic and temporal lenses and by approaching the various topics with fresh questions, the six essays in this collection bring new findings to the scholarship around classicism and war. The issue features themes on art and disability, war and disillusionment, local war memorials, masculine identities, the poetry of unease, and national aggrandizement. Collectively, the articles encourage us to think in terms of multiple classicisms, to recognize instability and fluidity within classicisms, to acknowledge paradoxes and ambiguities, to emphasize the role of culture, and to better engage with inclusivity.

KEYWORDS classicism, modern war, twentieth century

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Visual and textual allusions that entangle the classical world and modern warfare are both ubiquitous and unexpected. For instance, if you travel to the Snowy Mountains in New South Wales, Australia, for a skiing trip in winter, you may stop in the town of Cooma to hire some skis, to stay the night, or to take a meal break. And if it is a pide that you fancy, you may go to a particular Turkish café on the main street.

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FIGURE 1. Detail of the wall mural in a Turkish café, Cooma, NSW, Australia. Artist: Betty Braden, 2012. Photo: Christine de Matos, 16 April 2014.[1]

When you walk inside, your nose is met with the aromas of baking pizza and kebabs, your ears greeted by the sounds of people chatting and cutlery clanking, and your eyes attracted by the bold yellow, blue and orange of a large mural on the side wall. This mural depicts a map of Türkiye painted in 2012 by a local artist, Betty Braden (Figure 1). Its minimalist style evokes the kind of maps reproduced in school geography texts. Sketches of wheat denote the main grain-growing

[1]Efforts were made to contact the café concerned to confirm permissions to use this image, taken by one of the authors, in this introduction, but there was no response.

regions of the Anatolian peninsula. Colourful umbrellas signal the location of popular seaside resorts. Ancient ruins mark points of historical significance. On the left side of the map is the Dardanelles, the Hellespont. On one side of the straits lies a three-dimensional artificial red poppy, that inescapable symbol of the Great War. In this case, the poppy marks the Gallipoli campaign, or Çanakkale Savaşım, in which Australian, New Zealand, British Indian, British and French troops fought against the Ottoman empire and their German allies. On the other side is, unmistakably, a Trojan horse; a reference to the ancient war celebrated throughout the Homeric tradition. The symbols of remembrance act subtly yet undeniably to link these temporally disparate yet geographically adjacent conflicts. Most significantly, the mural is symptomatic of a recurring need to engage imaginatively with the classical world and to create meanings out of contemporary calamities.

This special issue addresses the entanglement of various expressions of classicism with modern war in the long twentieth century, from the Great War to its centenary commemorations. It generates new insights into and novel perspectives on this persistent yet continually adapted, and therefore heterogeneous, cultural phenomenon. By revisiting varied expressions and concepts of classicism through broader geographic and temporal lenses and by approaching the various topics with fresh questions, the six essays in this collection bring new findings to the scholarship around classicism and war. Our attempt at a transnational (including papers on Australian, British and Greek interactions with classicism and war) and transtemporal (over 100 years) emphasis encourages new ways of interrogating and understanding the relationship between different iterations of classicism and the violence of modern war.

Therefore, the essays in this volume recognize a range of perspectives, from the local, personal and individual to nationalistic and imperial traditions, that produced highly nuanced understandings of how modern war generated spaces and mentalities whereby classicisms were re-translated and thus transformed, in culturally specific and temporally contingent ways. In doing so, each paper draws out the complexity of meaning in various formulations of what many scholars have tended to treat as a one-dimensional 'classical tradition'. The diverse approach and conclusions produced by the authors in this special issue problematize the existing literature and challenge current understandings of classicism and war. They also extend the scholarship much further by demonstrating that twentieth-century classicism is more variegated and fluid than has been fully appreciated in the context of different wars and conflicts. These findings emphasize that wide usages of classicisms across the long twentieth century should not be understood simply as 'a return to the past' or as a mining of mythic heritage. Instead, what is revealed in this volume is more multifaceted. We thus use the plural form – classicisms – to argue that the impact of modern war in the twentieth century was profound and that classicisms are underpinned by the living organism of cultural imagination, evolving in its many contexts.

This special issue contains six articles featuring themes on art and disability, war and disillusionment, local war memorials, masculine identities, the poetry of unease, and national aggrandizement. They cover poetry, visual art, sculptures, words and discourses. Geographically, the focus is modern Britain, Australia and Greece. This collection illustrates the diversity evident in uses and interpretations of the classical over time, drawing attention to how those understandings have changed. The transnational and transtemporal lenses emphasize this multiplicity and evolution and it is hoped that this approach opens a scholarly conversation that encourages more work to be done in a similar vein, beyond the nations covered here.

Together, the articles in this special issue reveal five key themes that are both innovative and contribute to new directions being taken in current scholarship. The first theme, reflected in the title of this issue, underscores our approach in highlighting the multiplicity and adaptability inherent in various *classicisms* of the twentieth century. The second related theme considers moving beyond a monolithic tradition, instead addressing fluidity and instability in expressions of classicism. This serves to explore how different agents negotiated their own, often highly personal, perspectives and visualizations on this broad spectrum of humanist values and imaginaries. Third, the articles place a spotlight on the ambiguities and paradoxes in the use and reuse of classicism in the long twentieth century. Fourth, the role of culture in war, in its memorialization and its meaning-making, is brought into high relief. Finally, the articles create space for thinking more inclusively about classicism and war, of bringing in more voices to gain further insight into the relationships between classicisms and war, at any time, in any place. Each of these themes will be further elaborated below, but first it is necessary to acknowledge the current state of scholarship on classicism and modern war and its relationship to the special issue.

Background and literature

The relationship between classicism and modern war is probably best known in studies of the First World War. In *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Jay Winter (1995: 115) argued for the continuation of traditional or classical motifs in the language of bereavement: art 'could be angry or express despair, but it could not heal' . By contrast, Ana Carden-Coyne (2003: 40) contended that 'classical memorials attempted *to act as an antidote to the trauma* of war [original emphasis].' Memorials did this by distancing the present from the past, even as they were concurrently uniting past and present through narratives of timelessness and endurance, and engaging with modernist aesthetics. Reaching beyond present realities helped to create an alternative temporality and memory aimed at softening, or transposing, the collective memory of the extreme violence endured by human bodies by modern weapons (Carden-Coyne 2003: 41).

In a similar vein, Stefan Goebel (2013: 155) highlights how modern industrializing forces underpinning the war prompted an unprecedented refocus on both classical and medieval pasts. This reorientation attempted to bypass not only the horrors of the war, but the modern processes of industrialization that it had harnessed. He further asserts that public displays of remembrance served 'to affirm rather than reject historical continuity … with a remote, pre-industrial past' to ensure that 'the fallen had their place in history' (Goebel 2013: 136 & 144). In other words, the destruction of bodies in industrialized warfare could be remade through the lens of a romanticized past, a past that could temper the catastrophe of the present. Thus, the postwar period, as Suzanne Marchand asserts (2015: 249 & 251), embraced classicism and put it to work in a way that conveyed 'profound longings to reconstruct civilization, to express the endurance of democratic ideals, to unite humanity, and to provide healing in the wake of so much destruction and death.'

Additionally, Elizabeth Vandiver (2018: 499) affirms the importance of classicism to wartime and postwar literature. And it also mattered in monuments, sculptures, art, and music, and well beyond the immediate postwar period. Vandiver (2018: 439) points to the malleability of Classical literature to play different roles in societies across time, of its capacity to be 'both "enduring" and "inherently unstable"'. The task of revealing these capacities has been embraced by the discipline of Classical Reception Studies (CRS), which considers how original classical works have been appropriated and re-shaped to reflect modern sensibilities and contexts (Lauriola 2014: 38). A very recent example is the reworking of Sophocles' *Antigone* to perform environmental tragedy in the Amazon rainforests.[2] 'The present', states Low and Oliver (2013: 2), 'produces new forms of viewing the past'. Yet especially when it comes to war and classicism, the reverse is also true: the past is mobilized to find ways of viewing the present (and future). Scholar Lorna Hardwick interrogates classical themes in trench poetry for indications of contemporary attitudes towards war in this special issue. Her article recognizes the continuing agency and adaptability of classical material in times of war and trauma.

Conversations between past and present in First World War memorials, cemeteries and creative works pursued 'a dialogue between modernism and classicism' (Carden-Coyne 1999: 141). Rather than 'opposing ideas or movements', says Carden-Coyne (1999: 138), 'in the 1920s and 1930s they converge.' The emergence of modernism in art and literature was not, then, the complete rupture with the past that such a devastating war might suggest, nor only a result of 'what Robert Hughes once called 'the shock of the new" (Marchand 2015: 256). Speaking of the work of artists like John Singer Sargent, Marchand (2015: 249) claims 'even after the

[2]This theatre production, *Antigone in the Amazon* is directed by Milo Rau and was performed at the Roslyn Packer Theatre in Sydney from 4 to 8 January 2025. It was marketed as 'A political Greek tragedy for the 21st Century'. See https://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/stories/your-guide-to-antigone.

experience of mass mechanised death on Flanders' fields, good artists could still take their classical imagery seriously', especially when acting as witnesses to war (Tate 2010: 162). In this special issue, Carden-Coyne examines the postwar murals of Australian veteran and artist Napier Waller, who lost his right arm in the war, and whose oeuvre evokes a postwar utopia seen 'through an idealized, classical past'.

These observations call on us to consider the dialogue between modernism and traditionalism (Carden-Coyne 2009: 115) as well as the flexibility with which classicism could be interpreted and applied to the needs of the time. This includes its relationship not just with the national, but also with the local. Carden-Coyne (2009: 115) states that '"classical virtues"' could be fused 'with the "local idiom"' to say something of contemporary desires to heal, to unite, and to rebuild. Yet, importantly, these dialogues between the old, the present and the desired future were sometimes contentious. Karen McCluskey's contribution to this special issue investigates these exchanges in the creation of a First World War monument in the Sydney suburb of Marrickville, not just in the immediate postwar period but in its recreation in the early 2000s. Here, the long legacy of classicism as an aesthetic and as a response to war is explored. The paper highlights a conspicuous tension between old and new values; a tension typical of centenary commemorations in Australia, as noted by Bruce Scates (2021), among many others.

While much attention has been afforded to classical influences in the search for meaning during and after the First World War, less has been given to what came before or afterwards. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis (2016) reminds us that the US Civil War was likely the first industrialized war, or at least offered a preview of it. This war ended almost 50 years before the Great War began, and memorial builders there also reached towards classical ideals to heal, to unite, to rebuild. 'Classical art and architecture were well integrated into America's artistic lexicon,' says Macaulay-Lewis (2016: 448), 'and they offered a heroic, authoritative, and flexible vocabulary that could be used in Civil War monuments.' This is a reminder that we need to go beyond the First World War to better interrogate the relationship between the (post)modern and the classical, and several papers in this special issue do so by including the Second World War (Hunter Evans), the Cold War (Kazamias), and even the twenty-first century (McCluskey).

Flexible adaptations of classicisms require attention to diversity in their representations and in meaning creation. Vandiver (2018: 497) notes that her early research on First World War poetry discovered that classicism was not just used as a form of protest, but expressed a diversity of perspectives. Indeed, the very same allusions and motifs could be used to testify for or against war (Vandiver 2010: 5). In addition, Vandiver (2018: 498, also Vandiver 2010) discovered that classicism was not just used by those with a British public school education but was part of working-class literary responses as well. Both these observations resonate with

Jasmine Hunter Evans' article in this special issue. Hunter Evans examines the work of soldier, poet and artist David Jones and his turn in the postwar and Second World War not towards Greece, but to ancient Rome, to interrogate contemporary impacts of imperialism. Jones was a lower middle-class artist and writer. Hall and Stead (2020: 466–497) claim that, of the well-known British First World War poets, Private Jones was the only one not of the officer class. Diversifying the conversation here thus applies both in the creators of works that commemorate or critique war, and in the ways the classical is harnessed to make a statement or present a particular perspective.

Attention to diversity also requires inclusion of the darker sides of classicism in the context of the kind of violence that modern war unleashed, linked to its fundamentally extractive, imperialist function. Valorizing classicism often rested on 'nostalgic and utopian assumptions of western cultural supremacy' and an erasure of the diverse colonial troops and indentured labourers, through which the prosecution of the imperial warfare relied (Carden-Coyne 2009: 158). Indeed, this perspective ignores the imperialism that Jones' work tried to understand as an impetus to war, and that provided fighting and auxiliary bodies. Indeed, classical monuments to war were often rendered in white stone. Yet there is a longer history here in which the classical has been used to justify colonization, slavery, and the maintenance of class distinctions (Marchand 2015: 241). After all, it is not such a great leap to the period when classical bodies and narratives were harnessed for the purposes of Nazism and Fascism. In Germany, says Goebel (2013: 153), '[r]ight-wing professors couched revanchist sentiments in classical quotations', while in Italy Mussolini was crafted as a 'new Caesar' (Marchand 2015: 249). In this special issue, Alexander Kazamias turns to Cold War Greece to show how classical Hellenism was used in official anticommunist discourse to justify its position and actions against domestic and international communism, in turn legitimizing the use of violence and the enactment of human rights violations.

Disillusionment could also shroud the (re)-purposing of classicism for the demands of war. Most famous here is the 'Old Lie' as expressed in Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' (1920). The title itself was appropriated from Horace's patriotic cry that insisted it was 'sweet and proper to die for one's country' (Güllübağ and Baktir 2020: 95). Young men entered the First World War 'buoyed up by ideals of honour, heroism and patriotic self-sacrifice' only to face brutalities of industrialized warfare in the trenches (Hobbs 2018: 377). Part of the problem, says Hobbs (2018: 377), is 'that a classical education was proven to be positively dangerous, in that its fine but specious phrases lured innocent and idealistic youths to grim, filthy and inglorious deaths.' Monuments, too, came under fire. For instance, poet Siegfried Sassoon decried the Menin Gate in Belgium as exploiting the 'grief of the bereaved … in order to alleviate the government of moral guilt for the war' in the verse 'well might the dead who struggled in the slime, rise and deride this sepulchre of crime' (Carden-Coyne 2003: 43). Far

from being objects to comfort, to unite, to point to a more peaceful future, allusions to the classical 'anaesthetised people from the scars of war' (Carden-Coyne 2003: 43, Carden-Coyne 2009: 126).

While war affects both men and women, this issue leans more towards the study of the masculine than the feminine. As Carden-Coyne (2003: 41) says, commemorative memorials and statues could be 'profoundly gendered', with representations of 'death as masculine and beautiful, and the renewal of life in peacetime, as feminine and maternal', the latter represented in the Winged Victory of McCluskey's article. This tendency continues despite the fact that women are a crucial labour force (both physically and emotionally) in war. Also notable is the relative absence of scholarship that interprets ancient texts to understand women's varied experiences of war, then as now. One exception is Miranda Hickman and Lynn Kozak's (2018: 462) work on the modernist First World War poet Hilda Doolittle, or H.D, who exhibited, in their words, a 'feminist Hellenism'. In her translation of Euripides' *Iphigenia*, a woman sacrificed to ensure the progress of the Trojan War, Doolittle 'acknowledges the way war wounds women as well as the possibility that the extraordinary circumstances of battle can allow women initiation, even maturation, into extraordinarily empowered positions' (Hickman and Kozak 2018: 472). Hobbs (2018: 390) points to Penelope as a potential classical model of women's experience in war – left to run the household, pursued by suitors and loyally 'weaving and unpicking each day, year after year'. Hardwick (2024: 8-9) says that due to the 'relative lack of access' to classical education, women's classical allusions could be 'less intense', but their poetry gives 'voice to women's experiences in combat zones and as mothers, sisters, wives, and companions of serving soldiers.' Despite these, it is the masculine classical model that continues to dominate, one that 'offered hope to the degenerate white male body' (Carden-Coyne 1999: 138). Ancient masculine models, especially in the works of Thucydides, Homer and Horace, among others, also provided models on which to build modern masculine national identities. Christine de Matos, in this special issue, examines the case of the recently federated nation of Australia and the writings of Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean, the new Commonwealth's Official First World War historian. Here, she reveals the subtle yet persistent connections between Bean's rendition of Australian military mateship and the camaraderie displayed on the battlefield at Troy in the tradition of Homer's *Iliad*.

The literature on classicism as used, repurposed and adapted to understand modern war and its legacies is thus diverse, debated, and gendered, yet remains in need of continued scholarly interrogation. This special issue contributes towards that task, though it also has its own limitations. The contributions are Anglo-Eurocentric in focusing only on Australia, Britain and Greece. That said, the influences of classicism on the conduct, interpretation and commemoration of war were and are much wider and are thus deserving of further attention. As noted by Graziosi and Greenwood (2007: 15), the works of Homer in the twentieth century 'increasingly became part of world literature' challenging and redefining

the western canon, and this needs greater recognition, including when it comes to war. Also requiring further research is the relationship between the Second World War and classicism, along with other conflicts since (Pitcher 2010: 78). As noted, more work needs to be done on classicism, women and war. Nevertheless, a broad spectrum of topics is presented across the issue's six papers that will stimulate new discussions, interrogations and debates. The nuanced themes move across national borders, facilitating a model for further transnational comparisons.

Key themes in classicism and war

The articles in this special issue reveal five new themes in relation to modern war and its range of classicisms. Building on previous studies, the papers aim to provoke new ways of thinking about well-worn subjects. Importantly, the topic of modern war and its interaction with culture and human experience is not something located in the past. War continues to be central to human life in a very global way. How individuals, groups and nations might interact with modern conflict (whether through a classicizing lens or not) becomes fully evident in the studies that follow. Our issue brings to light a more complex and nuanced interrogation of modern war as it intersects with culture, gender, race, and disability.

Theme 1: multiple classicisms

Perhaps the most important theme to emerge from the collection is that classicism, in the singular, is inadequate to describe how people, communities and nations engaged with its aesthetic and ideas in the long twentieth century. Instead, it is more apt to think of classicism in its plurality, which we conceptualize here as multiple classicisms. The use of this new term is not meant to replace Classicism as a discipline, nor classicism as a movement or aesthetic. Instead, it is intended to expand our understanding of the ways in which various societies across time and place have engaged with both. Inspired to some extent by Martin Nakata's (2007) Cultural Interface Theory, here we interrogate how cultures interact with other cultures and ways of being and, in so doing, produce something new. Such a perspective more accurately reflects the variety of ways in which people, groups, communities and nations engaged with, interpreted and expressed the classical tradition in multiple formats to serve multiple ends. Rather than disrupting the burgeoning and allied field of Classical Reception Studies, our notion of multiple classicisms is meant to broaden the discipline's possibilities by highlighting the flexible ways in which people embodied and enacted classical ideas and forms. This tendency became increasingly obvious as the articles developed and is the direct result of the broader temporal and geographical scope explored in the issue. For example, Hunter Evans links the visual art and writings of the First World War veteran David Jones to his anti-imperialist stance and his turn towards ancient Rome. McCluskey's study of a war monument in a Sydney suburb exposes with clarity the changing attitudes towards the classical aesthetic over a hundred-year period. And,

returning to the birthplace of the classical, Kazamias interrogates the politicized employment of classical heritage for anticommunist ends in Cold War Greece. The wide perspectives employed in the issue, from nationalism to gender history, from imperialism to history from below, from disability studies to lived experiences, demand recognition of the diversity within classicism.

Theme 2: recognition of instability and fluidity

Importantly, the concept of multiple classicisms draws attention to the precarious nature of the grand narrative of modern war. This tradition suggests that war has a foundation in rationality and is essential for progress; that industrialized and imperial conflict is just and necessary for the defence of freedom and democracy and for the defeat of evil; and that European imperialists were the architects of liberty, morality and justice *because* of their classical (and presumptuously superior) foundation. Such narratives tend to simplify the reception of classicism across our period of study, suggesting it was fixed and interpreted comparably across different cultures and sectors.[3] Yet, as Vandiver (2018: 439) observes, the Classics are both enduring and unstable. As Jay Winter argued, people encountered classicism in their search for the 'meaning' of the war' (Winter 1998: 224). The papers in this issue attest to the signs, symbols, meanings and interpretations of classicism as part of this lived reality and so no one assumed reading can or should dominate. The evidence and arguments across the issue demonstrate that context is key. This kind of reception, of course, is harder to pin down because it is often undocumented, malleable, impacted by memory and circumstance, and embedded in the everyday experiences of the artists, soldiers, politicians and communities who encountered it. The traditional approach to Classicism, we emphasize, is too narrow; instead, it is a multifaceted living organism that crosses time and place, and evolves and transforms.

Collaboratively, the analyses presented here sharpen our gaze and demonstrate the need to break down ingrained preconceptions and standard narratives. Instead, these papers recognize and assess how national, local and individual manifestations of classicism arise and how they are expressed.

Theme 3: acknowledging paradoxes and ambiguities

By interrogating the nuances and diversity within multiple classicisms, the studies in this issue place a spotlight on the paradoxes and ambiguities inherent in the use and reuse of classical aesthetics and ideals in the long twentieth century. An opportunity thus opens to critically assess how truth and collective memory are socially and culturally constructed. If we accept that the classical aesthetic is malleable and flexible, capable of encapsulating a whole range of emotions, perspectives and responses, and that context acts upon how it might be perceived, then we can excavate and evaluate the multitude of inconsistencies and contradictions in the reception of

[3]As noted by Winter (1998), Winter (2017), and Rolfe (2008:, pp. 149–166), among others.

different classicisms. The articles show that multiple iterations of classicism have been mobilized to effect healing and resilience, along with notions of democracy and freedom, but they have also been manipulated to provide more cynical or less positive interpretations. While often perceived as lofty and humanistic, classicism has also been mobilized for political, anti-idealistic intentions. As Mary Beard (2014: 7) asserts, the 'Classics have probably legitimated as many revolutions as they have legitimated conservative dictatorships'. This special issue shows that how and what is expressed depends on the discourse underlying the motivation. The point is clearly displayed in Kazamias' article, where both the cultural left and political right harnessed versions of Hellenism for different purposes in Cold War Greece. Christine de Matos' article argues the case for ancient Homeric masculine bonding on the battlefield, silently informing the creation of an allegedly unique national identity for Australian men in the First World War.

The meaning of one aesthetic can thus shift and change depending on the desired message. For this reason, the special issue covers an array of themes – emotions, mateship, politics, communities – and uncovers some ambiguities and paradoxes in classicism's symbolic values. For instance, sometimes classicism is used to express disillusionment or unease, and sometimes it generates a sense of healing collective suffering and bodily pain or even reimagining the future.

Theme 4: the role of culture in modern war

The papers in this issue collectively sharpen focus on the role of culture in interpretations of violence and modern war (and its memorialization), which helps to identify how discourses of war are shaped. Modern war is not just a military, technological or media event; it is also a cultural one. Culture can inform community or individual healing, and it can be part of the critique of war. The issue also highlights how truth is constructed, how collective memory is shaped and manipulated, and how fragile both can be. Carden-Coyne's contribution demonstrates the complex responses to healing in murals that reimagined a modern city's urban exteriors and interiors created by an artist with a war disability. Hardwick argues for seeing complexities in the poetry of the First World War in its unease, its protest and its pragmatism. And Hunter Evans on David Jones' art and poetry explores his turn to an ancient empire, Rome, to critique his contemporaneous British one.

In turn, revealing such constructions through cultural interpretations using classicism as a frame is not only about understanding the past, but applying past cultural understandings to encourage a more critical approach to current events, violence, and misinformation.

Theme 5: inclusive classicisms

Finally, breaking the monolithic idea of classicism into the concept of multiple classicisms offers a malleable field for more inclusive histories. Decentring western, masculinist, heteronormative narratives in how war is understood or perceived

opens space for a broader range of experiences. As this issue has shown, old cultural paradigms can be revisited with new perspectives and fresh questions; this approach gives voice to the everyday person and marginalized groups. This is not to discard official narratives, but rather to present a more holistic view of war and classicisms. Carden-Coyne brings attention to war and disabilities, McCluskey to suburban communities. Hunter Evans focuses on a First World War poet who was not an officer, while Kazamias includes the perspectives of both the state and the oppositional voices of writers and artists. Our special issue pushes the field in new directions not only by building on previous scholarship but also by critically assessing it. This, then, contributes towards telling more nuanced stories about classicisms and modern war.

Conclusion

In 1919 the famous Canadian physician Sir William Osler attended an exhibition of war paintings in London. Here, he stopped at John Singer Sargent's commemorative commission, the 20-foot-long monumental work, *Gassed*. Designed in the form of a classical frieze, it depicts a sorrowful parade of blinded and bandaged soldiers tentatively making their way across a toxic, mustard-hued landscape strewn with agonized soldiers, following a chemical attack. Osler had lost his son in the war, and yet the painting's collision of classicism with horror shocked him. Addressing the British Classical Association, he said: 'I am sorry to have seen … *Gassed* … it haunts the mind like a nightmare'. Still, its resonant cultural potency led the Art Academy to vote it Picture of the Year. This story captures the contrasting possibilities of classicism as reinterpreted through modern war's violence. The search for meaning brought the classical repertoire to bear on modern memory. It also reminds us that this relationship of past to present was, and still is, an ongoing negotiation, which conjures mixed emotional responses in different actors.

Approaching the multiplicity of contexts in which classicism was entangled with wartime across the twentieth century and beyond allows us to consider both the malleability of the tradition and its power within western frameworks of understanding war. We have largely concentrated on the twentieth century in this volume but note there is much scope beyond this. What we hope is that, after reading our contributions, students and scholars will be inspired and newly equipped to go back and interrogate the problems posed by classicism and its many expressions and meanings across time and place. We also hope we have modelled some new perspectives and directions to enable future scholarship to succeed in rendering a more inclusive and holistic picture in which the messiness of the classical aesthetic, including memory, perception, gender and culture, is fully realized.

There are many future possibilities for expanding on the themes identified in the papers in this special issue. One is to turn towards more rigorous transnational and comparative analyses of war and classicisms; another is to focus on gender, especially women, war and classicisms. In addition, moving beyond white,

European perspectives is essential. Some great work is already being done in this area. For example, Soon-Tzu Speechley (2024) has analysed the phenomenon of Malayan classicism, an aesthetic transmitted through a British colonial lens, and its evolution into a unique, South Asian style. Although not exclusively about war, Pollock (2014: 1) explores the 'alternative classicity' expressed in India that evolved through complex cultural processes emerging from its ancient links with the Hellenic world to its modern occupation by the British Empire. John Davidson (2019) has discussed the use of Māori language, along with English and Greek, in New Zealand playwright Phillip Mann's adaptation of *The Trojan Women*. Marguerite Johnson's (2019) edited text *Antipodean Antiquities* contains several chapters on the relationship between classicism, Indigenous Australians, and colonialism. We therefore hope that the papers in this special issue encourage further reinterpretations of classicisms and relationships to war, trauma and conflict from other places and times, whether by taking a global perspective or taking a micro one, like the wall of a Turkish café in a place called Cooma.

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