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# *Baptism of Fire:*

*The Birth of the Modern British Fantastic in World War I*

Edited by Janet Brennan Croft

World War I has been called “the poets’ war,” as it was characterized by a massive outpouring of works of literature during and after the war. Much of this literary harvest, as Paul Fussell brilliantly demonstrated in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, hinged on an ironic response to the deadly absurdities of World War I.

Yet, Fussell also acknowledges that fantasy could be a legitimate literary response to the war, a way of transforming the horrible experiences of the war into something more bearable, applicable, and relevant; into myth and “Escape” in the sense that Tolkien used the term in “On Fairy-stories.”

This present volume sprang from a desire to examine selected examples of the fantastic response to World War I among British authors. The contents comprise a mix of five classic articles from the pages of *Mythlore* and twelve new essays. The first half of the book considers the Inklings, the Oxford literary group centered on J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, while the second half deals with other authors.

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