

WAR HYSTERIA AND PATRIOTISM: REFLECTIONS
ON AUSTRO-GERMAN LITERATURE AT THE
BEGINNING OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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The essay discusses the frightening impact of war hysteria on Austro-German lyrics during the first months of World War I and how these emotions gradually weakened and eventually went into reverse. Inasmuch as most of the writers affected by war hysteria in their literary efforts were for one or the other reason exempted from military duties at least in the frontlines, the question is raised whether we face a subconscious confession of guilt, overcompensated by extreme aggressiveness against the enemy. The essay does not assail such feelings but tries to understand them. It is of interest in this context that only an amazingly small

group of authors of high rank were able to remain consistent in their attitude toward the war throughout the years from 1914 to 1918. Linked to these facts the motivations of a noble, non-chauvinistic patriotism are stressed which many of the literary men of the period did not lack by any means.