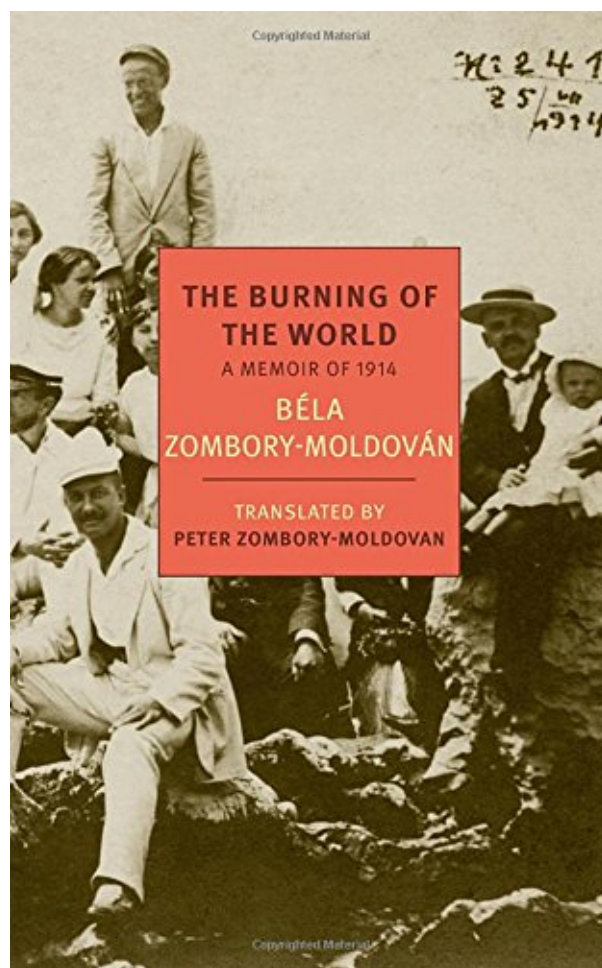
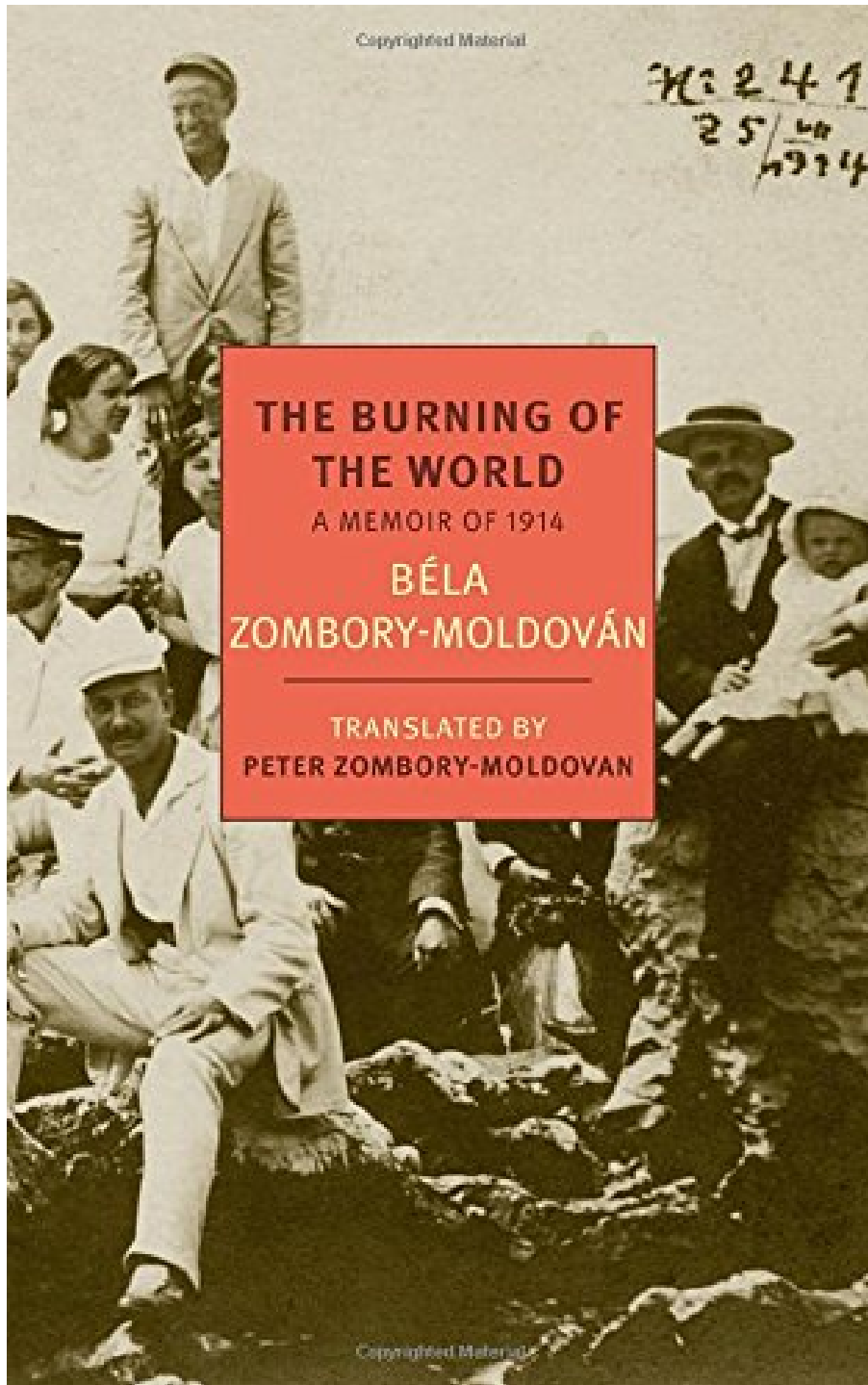


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OF 1914 (NEW YORK REVIEW BOOKS
CLASSICS) BY BELA ZOMBORY-
MOLDOVAN**



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Publishing during the 100th Anniversary of the First World War

An NYRB Classics Original

The budding young Hungarian artist Béla Zombory-Moldován was on holiday when the First World War broke out in July 1914. Called up by the army, he soon found himself hundreds of miles away, advancing on Russian lines and facing relentless rifle and artillery fire. Badly wounded, he returned to normal life, which now struck him as unspeakably strange. He had witnessed, he realized, the end of a way of life, of a whole world.

Published here for the first time in any language, this extraordinary reminiscence is a powerful addition to the literature of the war that defined the shape of the twentieth century.

- Sales Rank: #113532 in Books
- Published on: 2014-08-05
- Released on: 2014-08-05
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.94" h x .40" w x 5.03" l, .81 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 184 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

39 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

"Something had been broken inside me; or perhaps in the whole order of the world."

By John Sollami

One hundred years have passed since Archduke Ferdinand and his wife were shot dead in Sarajevo on June

28. 1914. The heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne was killed by a separatist who wanted the south Slav provinces to break away and become Yugoslavia. Austria-Hungary then declared war on Serbia, which was squarely behind the assassination plot. Shortly after the war's declaration, word reached Bela Zombory-Moldovan, who was quietly vacationing with family members in a small resort town on the Adriatic Sea. Bela was an avid participant in the cultural and intellectual life of Budapest, an illustrator, painter, and graphic artist. He was not a writer. Within a week from being called up to service, his entire pre-war world had ended, as had the entire world altogether. Zombory-Moldovan's memoir, as translated here by his grandson, Peter, covers the advent of the war and eight months of Bela's hellish experience in battle and his attempt to return to civilian life after being wounded. The shock of it all affected him for the rest of his life. He suffered from what is now labeled post-traumatic stress syndrome. This memoir was not meant to be published and in fact, was only recently discovered locked away in a strongbox. It is altogether fitting that it be published now. It remains thoroughly relevant to today's war-torn world and the soldiers and civilians who are its captives and victims. Although a memoir, this beautifully realized book reads like a piece of literature and reminded me in its descriptive brilliance of Dennis McFarlane's "Nostalgia," which imagines the Civil War trauma of a young, sensitive soldier who is quickly wounded, hospitalized, and then attempts to return to civilian life. The difference is that this memoir is real. I highly recommend it to those who want to know what those opening moments of World War I felt like, particularly to an artist.

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Another view of the Great War from the soldiers' perspective

By Ronald H. Clark

Among the dozens of books commemorating the outbreak of the Great War in August, 1914, two are unique and deserving of special attention because they are written by actual participants in the carnage. The first is "Fear" by Gabriel Chevalier which I previously reviewed on Amazon. The second just out is a book that had not been previously published until discovered in the author's papers by his grandson. It is Bela Zombory-Moldovan, "The Burning of the World." The first is a highly autobiographical novel published in 1930 by a French veteran. "Burning" is by a Hungarian survivor of the intense battles on the Russian front. Both offer the incredible first-hand perspectives of two soldiers who were there; but they also differ in important ways as well.

"Fear" spends much more time on actual horrific scenes of battle--moving and frightening at the same time. "Burning" is concerned with the severe battle fatigue that the author suffers as he recovers from his wounds and awaits returning to the front. Since the author is a painter, he sees things differently than the French soldier. To be sure there are some fearsome scenes of battle, largely with an enemy who remains unseen. But the readjustment process after the battles, and the psychological effect upon the author, are the real focal points of the book. One wonders if soldiers, especially those severely wounded, ever make a complete recovery; are ever the same person they were before the battles.

This New York Review Books edition contains the components we have come to expect in this fine (and inexpensive) series. The grandson/translator's introduction fills us in about the author, his family background and his postwar career (he died in 1967). There are some maps, a couple of the author's paintings, and some helpful notes which aid in understanding Hungary and the war setting. Particularly interesting is the cover photo, which shows the author on holiday at a beach with friends just days before the outbreak of the war. In fact, the transition from peacetime vacation within the course of a few days to being a soldier at the front is one of the most remarkable aspects of the book. It is also interesting to note that much like the French civilian population, all gung ho to fight the Germans, so too the Hungarian population is enthusiastic about the war and expects a quick victory. But of course, it was not to be. Both books, much like their historical counterparts, are full of criticisms of wasteful and inept high command leadership.

The weighty historical studies recently issued explain what happened on a macro basis. These two books look at the war from the perspective of the individual soldier caught in a worst hell than he ever could have imagined. Both kinds of books are essential to understanding the Great War; but "Burning" is essential to "feeling" what it was all about. We are fortunate indeed that the author left his unpublished manuscript behind and that his grandson, living in England, found it and undertook such a skillful translation.

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

A Memoir of a Man Wounded in War, and its Aftermath

By John Mccarthy

I share the sentiments of the three 'Five Star' reviews already published.

But let me add this:

First, reading the book's intro by the author's grandson, Peter Zambory-Moldavan, is vital to appreciating this text to the fullest. Not only does it provide a snapshot of the author's background as well as the context of this memoir, but it also carries the reader forward with a glimpse of the rest of the life of the admirable author of this magnificent read.

For the book itself covers only 8 months of the author's life from the day he discovered while on vacation that he had been drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army through the time of training and then when he was wounded in battle and concluding in the period when he was painfully and fitfully readjusting to his own personal post-war life.

Sadness is the prevailing emotion of this book...Sadness relating to the end of his prewar life; sadness with respect to his leaving the home of loving parents, especially his father; sadness experienced in the helplessness of men caught dead center in the midst of a withering artillery attack. It is the sadness of a sensitive human being whose life has moved totally beyond his own control.

The rest of the book narrates the author's traumatic return to life after the Russian attack in which he was wounded. This is the story of the journey back from the horrific, dumbfounding experience of a battle against an unseen, unknown enemy. It is also the painful personal story of a recovery never fully completed. The author feels that his entire life has been ruptured in ways beyond his and, of course, our understanding. He feels, as so many severely wounded soldiers feel, alien to all around him who cannot possibly understand, as he himself cannot understand, what happened to him in the catastrophic moments of battle.

This is a book which, for obvious reasons, is as relevant today as it was back in 1914 when the events of 'The Burning of the World' transpired.

I recommend this short book unequivocally.

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