In the past decade or two the First World War has undergone a transition from one to the other. A few centenarians can remember soldiers marching through the streets on the way to the front, or home in parades to mark what proved to be a hollow victory. Otherwise, the written word in memorandums, letters, diaries, despatches and memoirs forms the basis of our understanding of the period, together with extensive recordings made of old soldiers, sailors and airmen from the 1950s onwards. Now no one is alive who served in the trenches or on a dreadnought, and the reliance is entirely upon documents, there can be, paradoxically, far more rigour in the analysis, as sources are tested against each other, and the unreliability of active memory ceases to intrude.