

Soldier vs Veteran: Combat Experience as Artifact in the Postwar Writings of Ernst Jünger and Wolfgang Borchert

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The “veteran,” as a transnational identity and object of governmental policy, emerges with the mass armies of the modern nation state but differs across time and space with the historical, economic and political circumstances of each individual state. The works in this limited bibliography offer comparative perspectives on veterans of WWI and WWII.

Barkawi, Tarak. *Globalization and War*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

Challenging Eurocentric, triumphalist neoliberal accounts of globalization, Barkawi foregrounds the rarely acknowledged role war has played not only in securing and maintaining the current global order, but also in acting, itself, as a form of cultural exchange and economic circulation. Chapter 3, for example, examines the colonial subjects incorporated into the British armed forces—one million Indians in WWI and 2.5 million in WWII. Exposed abroad to vastly different social norms and forms of political organization which affected their postwar aspirations, they returned home veterans of Western military training and organization, the kernel of a modern, national army no longer manageable as a colonial force.

Bochert, Wolfgang. *The Man Outside: Play & Stories*. Foreword and Translation Kay Boyle. Intro. Stephen Spender. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971.

In addition to several short stories of postwar Germany viewed through the eyes of defeated *Wehrmacht* veterans, this translation includes Borchert’s dramatization of one veteran’s return to the postwar rubble of Hamburg, homeless and bereft of familial and state support, to dump the “responsibility” he carries for the deaths of the men in his unit, as well as the Russian soldiers they killed, upon his commanding officer, now living as well after the war as he had during. An excellent point of departure for discussing moral injury and the effect of national defeat upon veterans’ identity and social policy.

Diehl, James. *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World War*. University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

One country, two wars, two generations of veterans returning home to vastly different economic, social and policy environments. In this excellent comparative study, Diehl systematically contrasts the emergence of veterans as a destabilizing political force under Weimar, distinguished from other demographic groups by their military values and common experience of trench warfare, with their post WWII status in an occupied Germany, whose de-Nazified state cancelled military pensions and disability benefits—all marks of military honor and privilege—to construct a social net serving civilians and veterans equally as victims of war.

Eichenberg, Julia and John Paul Newman eds. *The Great War and Veterans’ Internationalism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

This collection of essays on Britain, France, the U.S. and the “little entente” of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia addresses the astonishing degree of cooperation among veterans groups after WWI fostered by international associations such as the FIDAC (*Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants*), which conferenced every year between 1920-39 in differing countries—including twice in the U.S.—to express veteran identity and solidarity across national boundaries, to share data on war disabled and policy initiatives, and to press a common anti-war agenda in the national politics of every nation. Essays by

historians William Mulligan, Martina Salvante and John Horne also challenge George L. Mosse's "brutalization" theory (that veterans of WWI who returned home to "cultures of defeat" were uniquely violent and inclined to nationalist, militaristic politics) by foregrounding the internationalist, socialist, and pacifist trends of many veterans' organizations in Germany and Italy.

Jünger, Ernst. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*. Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1926. [No English translation]

All veterans of the Great War did not return home thankful it was behind them. Jünger argues that, as an unavoidable element of the human condition, war is better embraced than denied. So here the horror of trench warfare, from rats to dismembered bodies to gleaming rows of bayonets set to go "over the top," is fused in a Marinetti-like paean to war as the ultimate masculine, technology-driven, life-affirming adventure with its own peculiar aesthetic. A direct support for Mosse's "brutalization" thesis, *Der Kampf* is helpful in understanding the full spectrum of German veterans' responses to WWI as well as the full range of their political affiliations.

_____. *Storm of Steel*. [In *Stahlgewittern*]. Trans. Michael Hoffman. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Jünger's rich description of lived experience of trench warfare on the Western Front, delivered in the matter-of-fact tone of the *Feldwebel* utterly comfortable inside Prussian military order, makes a fascinating counterpoint to more critical reminiscences of WWI such as Robert Graves *Goodbye to All That* or Erika Maria Remarque's anti-war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Kuhlman, Erika. *The International Migration of German Great War Veterans: Emotion, Transnational Identity, and Loyalty to the Nation, 1914-1942*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Between 1919 and 1932, 600,000 Germans emigrated, many of them veterans chaffing at restricted economic opportunity in a defeated homeland, but also at the German state's tightening bureaucratic definition of national identity, including passport requirements and a growing anti-Semitism towards Jewish veterans and families who had sacrificed sons for the Fatherland. Using diaries, official records, and newspaper accounts, Kuhlman closely follows the life choices and experiences of six veterans who emigrated to the U.S. (including Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the alleged murderer of the Lindbergh child, and two deserters), veterans who had, as she puts it, "severed the hallowed tie . . . between soldier the nation in whose defense he had fought," but whose new lives in a new country remain informed—sometimes tragically so—by their previous experience of military service and war.

Pennington, Lee K. *Casualties of History: Wounded Japanese Servicemen and the Second World War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015. Print.

Pennington presents the evolution of veterans policy in Japan from the late Meiji period, when the Japanese state preferred that local communities and private charities care for bereaved families and disabled veterans often viewed as indigent beggars, to the interwar years when (following German and U.S. models) it gradually assumed responsibility for rehabilitation and pensions, and publicly honored war-disabled as models of heroic sacrifice, to the post-WWII years when, owing to the demilitarization of social institutions and the rise in civilian war casualties, the Allied Occupation and the state crafted a social net which no longer accorded veterans special privilege, but defined and served them as members of a general civilian population suffering war trauma.