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The Fallen, The Broken, and The Resilient

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The Fallen, The Broken, and The Resilient

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The Fallen, The Broken, and The Resilient

Abstract

The conventional wisdom of the Great War is that it was a disaster on all fronts and that the terrors of the war overshadowed any redeeming qualities. The Great War was an epoch of mass infrastructural damage, civilian life turmoil, reckless political and economic decisions, and the horrors of modern warfare. The literature and memoirs on the Great War were dominated by the idea of "The Lost Generation". "The Lost Generation" encompasses the broken and the fallen. The fallen soldiers were those who tragically died by the grips of the battlefield. The broken soldiers are defined as the ones who survived the war, but remained disillusioned by the futility of a destructive international war. I will be examining and referencing the memoirs of those who survived and remained disillusioned. There will also be memoirs of those who had found the Great War an exhilarating experience and the mentioning of those who have found the silver linings of a time and space of war who will be called the resilient. I want to present the argument that the war was not entirely negative, and highlight some of the positive attributes that came out of the Great War.

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Introduction

The Making of World War I

> *The error was a failure to understand the depths of emotion*
> *that nationalism and democracy were capable of*
> *producing, and equally disastrously but perhaps more*
> *justifiably, a failure to foresee the coincidence of*
> *technologies that would bring great armies into deadlock*
> *and to overlook insoluble problems that would be opened*
> *up, like old wounds, once war began.[1]*

The Great War was undoubtedly a disaster. The clashing factors of imperialism, insecurities, nationalism, and expansionism resulted in the Great War. Germany and its influence appeared to have been the focal point of how World War I came about. Prior to and during the war, there was a continual attempt for the balance of power. Great War scholars such as Sean McMeekin argued that Russia and France shared responsibility for the outbreak of the international war. Niall Ferguson argued that Britain was at fault for prolonging the war under naïve assumptions of German aims. With all the contributing factors in conjunction with the advancement of warfare technology and techniques, World War I became known as the 'first modern war,' distinguishing it from all previous wars.

Expansionism and imperialism were contributing factors of how and why World War I came to be. Imperialism also became the central factor to why alliances were so important to the European nations. The Balkan states clashed and collided over

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[1] Laurence Lafore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1997), 188.

territory, which ultimately led to the first Balkan crisis, two Balkan wars, and tensions over the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia in 1908 served as a catalyst for Serbia's hostility towards Austria-Hungary. Serbia wanted Bosnia for its own taking, and it was the target of Serbia's nationalism. Serbia was aggressive and began to stir up agitation of South Slavs, leaving Austria-Hungary with the idea of effectively taking away Serbia's independence. It was not surprising, then, that the Black Hand of Serbia took to action the arrangement of the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, which was merely a part of the long fuse to World War I.

The insecurities and tensions that ran through Europe made forming alliances desirable. The nations shared the fear of a collective war, thus, forcing nations to stand beside their allies whatever issue may arise. Because France was not as densely populated and did not have the comparable industrial strength than that of Germany, France was obligated to ally themselves with Britain, but more importantly, Russia. The alliance between France and Russia was crucial due to the fact that when or if Germany declares war upon either of the countries, it would be a two front war. This was advantageous for Russia because Russia was already in turmoil due to the Russo-Japanese War in 8 February 1904 – 5 September 1905. However, historian Sean McMeekin argues that it was Russia that had more to fear in terms of encirclement:

> If anything, the Russians had a better case then the
> Germans to complain of *Einkreisung* [encirclement]: the
> Romanov Empire's long and ragged borders butted up
> against no less then five powers, either actively hostile
> (Germany Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Turkey), recently

> hostile (Japan), or certain to be hostile if she ever got her
> act together (China).[2]

Russia had its own concerns of encirclement and that it was the "*fragility* of Russia's strategic position"[3] that may have largely influenced Russia's conduct during the July Crisis. Russia could not afford another defeat because it would have aggravated another domestic revolution.

The shock of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination influenced Germany to reinforce its ally, Austria-Hungary. Germany allied with Austria-Hungary and Italy until World War I. During the war, Italy shifted its support towards the Allies because of their agreement: the secret Treaty of London 1915. If the Allies won the war, Italy would able to have control over the territories of Trentino, southern Tyrol, Istria, Trieste, as well as parts of the Dalmatian Islands.

Some European nations were wary about Germany's rise to power. France grew increasingly unsettled with German's annexation of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871, which were rich sources of coal and iron ore. Britain was not pleased with Germany's economic competition in their foreign markets. German products were sold at comparably lower prices while Germany encroached upon Britain's colonial regions. In addition to Germany's encroachment upon valuable resources and foreign markets,

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[2] Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.
[3] Ibid.

Germany also built a high seas fleet comparable to Britain's. The German Secretary of

the Navy, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz explained the risk theory of "navy-building":

> The purpose of navy-building…was not to achieve equality
> with possible enemies; it was to provide a naval force
> strong enough to threaten serious damage to the most
> powerful of the world's navies. That navy (the British, of
> course) would not dare to attach Germany, for the damage
> Germany could inflict would be enough to deprive the
> British of their margin of safety.[4]

Britain was universally known to have a premier naval force. It was necessary

for Britain to maintain a strong Naval force because geographically, Britain was

geographical isolation. Britain depended heavily on the importation of consumable

resources. Germany began to enter the Naval race with top-tier naval force Great

Britain in order to protect its colonies abroad, secure its foreign trade, and simply to

establish its strength and dominance. Because Germany began to advance its Naval

force, Britain began to strengthen its ties with France and Russia. Alliances formed and

multiple reasons gave way for the European countries to engage in war.

Germany's blatant violation of Belgium's neutrality greatly influenced Britain

to engage itself in World War I against Germany. After much hesitation and

deliberation, Britain entered the war on the side of the Triple Entente. Belgium was also

crucial to Britain in terms of security by the logic:

> Since 1905 it had been assumed by German planners that
> military success in the west would be possible only if
> Germany struck at France through neutral Luxembourg and
> Belgium. The assault would pass along two corridors on
> either side of the Ardennes Forest, one leading through

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[4] Laurence Lafore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I,* 131.

> Luxembourg, the other squeezing around the tongue of Dutch territory known as the Maastricht salient to cross southern Belgium. A broad, five-armed, concentric attack into northern France would bypass the *places fortes* around Verdun, Nancy, Epinal, and Belfort, enabling the German armies to threaten Paris from the north-east and thereby to achieve a swift resolution of the conflict in the west.[5]

Geographically, this plan would be one dangerous step towards Britain. Germany entering Belgium was also a main concern of the British because they feared losing control of the channel ports that lead straight into the heart of London. After German troops invaded Belgium on August 4, 1914, Britain's entered into World War I.

Among the many battles fought during World War I, the Battle of Verdun (February 1916 – December 1916) and the Battle of the Somme (July 1916 – November 1916) stood out. In the Battle of Verdun, the goal of both the French and the Germans was not necessarily to advance forward across land, but to wear the opposing forces down. The Battle of Verdun is most commonly known as the war of attrition. The French were determined to maintain their defense and not allow Germans to pass, and by the end of this war of attrition, the casualties were tremendous. It was the Battle of Somme that sustained even more casualties. The Battle of the Somme premiered the utilization of tanks, which were rather unsophisticated, and air warfare. The Battle of Somme was a purely offensive battle, and it was a battle for the British to alleviate some degree of pressure on the French at the Battle of Verdun.

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[5] Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 547.

The war at sea influenced America's declaration of war on Germany on the 17th of December 1917. Even with established international laws about attacking contraband while leaving the non-contraband ships in peace, they were eventually abolished. The attack of the Lusitania in May 7, 1915 initiated hostility between Germans and Americans, but Germany agreed to refrain from fully utilizing their submarines until unleashing them once again in January 1917. It was in February 1917 that the Zimmermann telegram further developed United States' resentment towards the Germans. The Zimmermann telegram was meant Germany to make an agreement with Mexico: if Mexico joined the German's side of the war, Mexico would be rewarded with United States territory. However, Woodrow Wilson still clung onto America's neutrality in the war. When German began to use unrestricted submarine warfare and having American ships being sunk because of it, America finally declared war on Germany. America's entrance to the war came at a necessary time for the Allies, because at this time, Russia has essentially been defeated by exterior and interior factors such as the Russian Revolution of 1917.

What made the Great War so distinct from prior wars was its advancement in technology. The introduction of machine guns made it nearly impossible for soldiers to successfully advance across no man's land. Because of this stalemate, trench warfare was a necessity. Trench warfare was a tactic used throughout the war because digging trenches provided some protection from open gunfire. But even with the slight protection with the use of trench warfare, it would not protect soldiers from the use of

gas warfare, which would essentially liquefy the lungs when inhaled. The

advancements in warfare technology thus dubbed World War I the 'first modern war'.

Chapter 1

The Conventional Narrative I: The Fallen

The Great War produced literature and memoirs rife with disillusionment and disenchantment. However, the war was not viewed with such hopelessness in the very beginning. The beginnings of the Great War inspired the youth of the European nations. The common tropes consisted of patriotism, the search for a noteworthy purpose in life, love of adventure, and the ideals of masculinity were enough to motivate the young men to eagerly enter war.[6] Most of the young men had either enthusiastically enlisted or were societally pressured to join the war force via conscription, and followed the tradition of earlier volunteers. This chapter's focus is to develop the framework of how people initially perceived the war with optimism until the fallen soldiers met their untimely death. Months into the war, soldiers saw the war transition from a beacon of optimism into a phenomenon of disillusionment. The fallen soldiers perished in vain and became a part of "The Lost Generation" narrative.

"The Lost Generation": The Fallen

"The Lost Generation" in the context of this project encompasses both the fallen soldiers and the broken soldiers. "The Lost Generation" in terms of the fallen soldiers were those who perished in vain, especially those who were relatively young. The soldiers had been influenced by the idea that enlisting for the war would confirm their loyalty to "King and Country," unparalleled excitement of war to civilian life, and

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[6] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 53.

reaffirmation of their manhood. The fallen soldiers had unknowingly created the Myth

of the War Experience. Historian George Mosse argues that the myth was a necessity

because:

> it had an impact on the home front and especially…after
> the war was lost. Youth and death were closely linked in
> that myth: youth as symbolic of manhood, virility, and
> energy, and death as not death at all but sacrifice and
> resurrection.[7]

The youth that had fallen early into the war had served as "symbolic of manhood,

virility, and energy…sacrifice and resurrection." This sentiment influenced more men

to enlist their lives for the war effort in the following years; however, it should be noted

that this sentiment remained a myth. As the Great War waged on, this seemingly

virtuous sentiment was obliterated by the cold reality of the war. By mid-war, the lust

for war had been exhausted and so had the symbolic myth that had interrupted and

ended the many lives of the youth.

Dealing With the Casualties of the War

      The soldiers who had experienced and seen the dregs of war wanted to highlight

that it was not nearly as glorified as propaganda or many news headlines described it to

be. The impact of the Great War reverberated the words and sentiment of fallen British

soldier Roland Leighton:

> Let him who thinks war is a glorious, golden thing…but
> look at a little pile of sudden grey rags that cover half a
> skull and shin-bone and might have been ribs…and let him
> realize how grand and glorious a thing it is to have distilled
> all youth and joy and life into a heap of hideous

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[7] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, 73.

> putrescence! Who is there who has known and seen who
> can say that victory is worth the death of even one of
> these?[8]

This statement despondently underlines the message of all disillusioned soldiers: the Great War was a tragedy pertaining to the expansive loss of youth. The war was not a "glorious" or "golden" phenomenon as it was initially thought to be. The war had the power to reduce battalions of young men full of life and potential into a "heap of putrescence." It was only after Leighton entered the war that he had eventually realized the Great War had turned out to be less Great, and more damning to the lives of the youth. The millions of family members' heartbreak becomes the national anthem when "For King and Country" becomes "a grim and dogged 'Carry On!'"[9] Families of the fallen soldiers had no choice but to carry on with their lives after suffering the deaths of their beloved, and disillusioned by the woes of nationalistic pride.

For some families, it was cathartic for the remaining family members of fallen soldiers to share stories and reminisce the positive legacy the fallen soldiers had left behind. Glorifying the fallen soldier was part of a recovering process, and dealing with a familial death came in many different ways. Great War historian Jay Winter explains the sliver of solace in the death of the fallen soldiers and how separation brought unity for some families:

> Families were torn apart by war. Nothing could have
> reversed completely this tide of separation and loss. But
> after 1914 there was as well a gathering together, as people

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[8] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 198.
[9] Ibid., 259.

> related by blood or by experience tried to draw strength
> from each other during and after the war.[10]

It was as if the fallen soldiers were able to give their remaining family and friends the gift of solidarity. Sharing memories and experiences of the fallen soldiers were a source of comfort and "strength" for those they had left behind. For English nurse Vera Brittain, her fiancé's, Roland Leighton, death was inspirational as she recalls her tender; however, brief sentiment towards his death:

> Perhaps now I shall one day rise, and be worthy of him
> who in his life both in peace and in war and in his death on
> the fields of France has shown me 'the way more plain.' At
> any rate, if ever I do face danger and suffering with some
> measure of his heroism, it will be because I have learnt
> through him that love is supreme, that love is stronger than
> death and the fear of death.[11]

Brittain regarded Roland's death with a sense of dignity. His "heroism" left behind a legacy full of love for Brittain to grapple onto in her time of despair. His bravery for serving in the war Brittain's exalted emotions pertaining to Roland's death did not last too long for she had nursing responsibilities to divert her attention. Holding onto a romanticized memory of the fallen soldiers contributed to further glorification of the war; however, it was also seen as an outlet to alleviate the loss of a loved one. As Jay Winter suggests, storytelling was meant to "convert trauma into misfortune." and that "remembrance through storytelling was…a path to recovery."[12] The courageous legacy

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[10] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 29.

[11] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 265.

[12] Jay Winter, "Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War" in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* ed. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 42.

the fallen soldier left behind helped their family members grieve and come to terms with the soldiers' deaths in a unifying manner.

In L.M. Montgomery's war-centric novel, *Rilla of Ingleside*, Rilla Blythe loses her dear brother Walter in the midst of the Great War. Although this novel is based on fictional accounts, it "became a 'true' record of Canada's war, and fictionalization was merely an artistic device that only served to accentuate the book's authenticity."[13] The manner in which Rilla reacted to Walter's death can be sympathized by the several million family members who had similarly lost their fallen soldier. In light of Walter's death, she felt "lifted above pain and loneliness" and speaks into the void:

> I will keep faith…I will work – and teach – and learn –
> and *laugh*, yes, I will even laugh – through all my years,
> because of you and because of what you gave when you
> followed the call.[14]

In this scene, Rilla promises to Walter that she will continue to enjoy life as much as she possibly can, and she dare promises to "laugh" again despite her beloved brother's passing.

Vera Brittain and Rilla Blythe both pay homage to the men they lost on the battlefield. Their lives were forever altered when they had learned that their beloved family member had been lost by the gripes of warfare. It was a matter of respect and love that the family members continued on with their lives as a form of tribute to their

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[13] Jonathan Franklin and William Vance, *Death So Nobel: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 176.

[14] L.M. Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 193

fallen men. For many families of the fallen soldiers, the Great War was neither won nor

lost.

The Numbers: Who Won The War?

On 11 November 1918, Germany and the Allies, to end the war, signed the

Armistice of Compiegne. Germany surrendered, and the Allies were able to claim

victory after nearly four years of destruction. However, the magnitude of deaths

throughout the war and in European civilian zones determined that no country was the

true victor. First World War historian Niall Ferguson points out:

> the Central Powers were far more successful in inflicting
> death on their enemies. According to the best available
> totals for wartime military deaths, some 5.4 million fighting
> for the Entente powers and their allies lost their lives, the
> overwhelming majority of them killed by the enemy. The
> equivalent total for the Central Powers of just over 4
> million.[15]

It was the Central Powers that had 'won' the Great War by number of casualties

inflicted upon the Entente powers, although they lost it in the field.

The statistics of total casualties indicated that although the Triple Entente had

technically won the war, they had suffered the highest rate of deaths at a higher rate of

financial expense. It is calculated that whereas it had cost the Entente powers

$36,485.48 to kill a Central Powers serviceman, it had cost the Central Powers

approximately $11,344.77 to kill an Entente power serviceman.[16] One of the reasons of

this paradox is that German morale had almost entirely disintegrated by the end of the

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[15] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1998), 294.
[16] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 336.

war. Another reason was that the soldiers of the Entente powers were too eager to go 'over the top'. In the first half of the war, the number of French casualties reached 129,000 in a space of two months and a half million by the end of the year of 1916 while nearly two years into the war, the British soldiers had not yet learned the harsh lesson that to advance in a line was a form of mass suicide.[17] It was a much more life and fiscally conserving tactic to machinegun down soldiers than to charge through no man's land exposed.

State of International Devastation Post-War

After the Great War, many, if not all of the participating nations were left in turmoil. The relationship between France and Germany after the Great War was even more hospitable than it had been prior to the international war. Under the sanctions of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was not only defeated but also broken, bankrupted, shamed and humiliated.[18] France had suffered much of the severe rippling effects from the international war, perhaps even more so than Germany had sustained. Statistics show that the French nation lost approximately 1,320,000 military men and 250,000 civilians during the war period. Due to the fact French birthrate was relatively low prior to the war, these losses would recover over an extended span of time.[19] In addition to a devastating cost of lives, the infrastructural damages came with immense costs.

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[17] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 340.

[18] Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World From The Twenties to The Nineties* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 107.

[19] Felix Gilbert and David Clay Large, *The End of The European Era: 1890 to The Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 185.

Article 231: A Political Act of Revenge

The 'Big Three' signed the Treaty of Versailles on 28 of June 1919: British statesman David Lloyd George, French statesman George Clemenceau, and United States President Woodrow Wilson. Of the Treaty of Versailles, Article 231, also known as the war guilt clause. It was created to aggressively demand financial reparations from Germany to the victorious nations, and it was also meant to undermine Germany. The exact determination of monetary compensation was not initially defined because it was believed that the amount that Germany was capable of paying was disproportional to the amount that the victorious nations were demanding. However, the treaty did in fact insist that in the following several years, Germany would be required to pay approximately $5 billion. It was even more humiliating because the treaty had multiple amenities that financially weakened Germany's already crumbling economy. Subsequently, the amenities diminished Germany's ability to pay her reparations. Throughout the reparations process, historian Gerhard Rempel writes,

> Germany lost 13 percent of her territory, 10 percept of her population, 15 percent of arable land, 75 percent of iron and 68 percent of zinc ore, 26 percent of her coal resources, the entire Alsatian potash and textile industries, and the communications system built around Alsace-Lorraine and Upper Silesia.[20]

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[20] "The Truth About Weimar, The Hyperinflation Horror Story That Still Haunts Europe Today," last modified November 11, 2011, http://www.businessinsider.com/fears-of-weimar-style-hyperinflation-euro-area-misguided-2011-11.

In a way, the end of the war marked the fall of Germany, until Germany's rise under the

Nazi regime in the 1930s. Germany was publically shamed and was not even allowed to

participate in reparation negotiations.

Chapter 2

The Conventional Narrative II: The Broken

The broken are those who initially entered the period of war with high spirits; however, came to realize that the reality of war was not as romantic as it was expected to be. Waves of soldiers came back from the war disillusioned and civilians who had pressured young men to enlist had come to understand that the Great War was a time of widespread devastation. Mental anxieties and violent tendencies arose from the strain of the war, and wartime literature shifted from war glorification to a more realistic and bloody depiction of the war.

Shamed Until Enlisted

There were societal pressures for young men to enlist in the war as soon as they could. Paul Baumer, a fictional character in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, expresses the pressure to enlist:

> …because at that time even one's parents were ready with the word "coward"; no one had the vaguest idea what we were in for. The wisest were just the poor and simple people.[21]

The need to cast away the degrading labels and defend one's own manhood was felt on all fronts. It was so easy to label a young man who had not enlisted as a "coward" because the public had not realized the severity of the war just yet. In Britain, the societal pressures were unusually heightened. Friends and family members morally

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[21] Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Trans. A.W. Wheen. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 11.

deduced the young men if the men did not were display eagerness to enlist for the war.

British civilians cheered on the "Tommy Atkins"[22] while relentlessly insulted men's

masculinity when they shirked their duty to 'King and Country.' Because during war,

> label of 'woman' could be regarded as an insult,
> reassigning the taunt of femininity was thus a way of
> demonstrating that fear and frailty were no longer the
> province of women, but belonged instead to the realm of
> the unenlisted men.[23]

The rearranging of gender characteristics played an important catalyst for men to enlist

in the war. The shaming became increasingly personal, and on a deeper level,

questioned the ability of the men who were not enlisted to live up to their gender roles

in society. In a way, the war effort was a means of determining a man's masculinity in

society.

The romance of the war effort of volunteer soldiers goes even further for the

soldiers who were physically marked by the war. There was an element of perversion in

the degree or amount of scarring or wounds the soldiers carried home. The scars and

wounds on the soldiers carried from the battle served as a reminder to the public that

the soldier's manhood was proven and intact.[24] Masculinity depended heavily on the

young men's zeal and ability to serve their time in the war. Many of those who

pressured the young men into enlisting for the war tended to be of the older generation.

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22   "Tommy Atkins" was a term to describe the "ideal-typical British soldier, was characteristically brave, cheerful, martial, and fair" and was typically used during World War I. German and French soldiers can be seen referring to British soldiers as "Tommies." Nicoletta F. Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 36.

23 Ibid., 44.

24 Ibid., 94.

The older generation grappled onto old traditions of war at heart only to let many of

those who were more youthful perish at the prospect of national glory.

Old Traditions of War Are Rendered Obsolete

      The glorifying sentiment was a reiteration of old wartime values that dates back

to the Middle Ages. The initial Great War sentiment echoed the "power of chivalry" by

"setting off to defend the weak, uphold his king's honor, and find glory in combat, the

armored knight supplied a vigorous model for the modern soldier."[25] The Great War

invigorated young men into sacrificing their lives to noble war virtues especially for the

greater love and loyalty to country or king. However, when examining the sentiment

expressed by war poets such as Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," the

conventional love for king and country shatters amidst the reality of war. The final

stanza in Owen's poem undermine the archaic wartime values:

> If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
> Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
> And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
> His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
> If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
> Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
> Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
> Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
> *Pro patria mori*[26]

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[25] Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 13.

[26] Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Twentieth Century and After*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, Jon Stallworthy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 2037.

The last two lines of Owen's poet is from the Roman lyrical poet Horace's *Odes* and it roughly translates to: "It is sweet and glorious to die for one's country." The poem focuses entirely on the brute physicality of the war and contrasting it to the outdated war sentiment. The inhalation of mustard gas infected the victims' lungs as they experience their "gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs." Victims of chemical warfare choked on their own blood for 'King and Country'. As Owen first-handedly saw his own men suffer, he comes to the conclusion that there is nothing "sweet and glorious" about war. Owen dejectedly warns those who glorify the war, "My friend, you would not tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory," because it is not befitting to obscure the true nature and carnage of the war by nationalistic sentiment.

Wartime Literature

The Great War transformed the literary world of the early twentieth century. Writing letters back home and poetry were intrinsic pastimes on the front. They served as an outlet for soldiers to express the woes and intensity of the war. There was a popular shift from idyllic Victorian literature to deepen a more experimental form of wartime poetry. Historian David Lundberg describes the literary and sentimental shifts as the war waged on:

> Gone were the lofty sentiments and inflated rhetoric of the Victorian and Edwardian periods which glorified war and sanctified death. War was now portrayed as horrible and senseless; death as brutal and meaningless. Suffering and

> destruction were described in an ironic, and detached
> manner.[27]

In the beginning of the war, poets would romanticize the war until they eventually

realized the full extent of horror on the battlefield. Their literary imaginations and poetic

techniques shifted and reflected this realization. Writers abandoned writing about the

"glorified war and sanctified death" and began to perceive how truly hellish their lives

had become.

The Great War was predominantly a physical experience, and verbally

conveying the endless noises and the physicality of the war was downright impossible.

Writers would at times describe their experiences in onomatopoeia: the "Bang! Boom!

Scream!"; however, it did not fully encompass the extremities of the war. More often, it

was the speechlessness of the war that indicated how profoundly new and traumatic the

war experience really was.

The Dreadful Realization

Initially, the war was expected to be short, easy, and gloriously fought. A few

months into the war, French civilians had realized the dire gravity of the war. The war

did not seem like it had a bloodless end in sight. Corporal Louis Barthas recalls his

melancholy departure from his hometown:

> But there was no longer the enthusiastic, delirious crowd
> which attended the first departures. They threw no flowers,
> sent no kisses; they didn't deafen our ears with hurrahs and

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[27] David Lundberg, "The American Literature of War: The Civil War, World War I, and World War II" (Johns Hopkins University Press: American Quarterly Vol. 36, No. 3, 1984), 377.

> bravos…The sentiments of the crowd had changed. On
> many faces you saw pity. Women wiped their eyes.
> Everyone watching us was grave and silent.[28]
>   [Wednesday, November 4th 1914]

There is a striking contrast from the initially cheerful crowds to the heavy-hearted reaction of the Frenchmen's departure. When soldiers left for war early on, civilians celebrated the soldiers' departure. The civilians' sentiment then shifted to a sentiment of "pity" and graveness. Civilians came to the dreadful realization that the war was not going to end in glory, but in widespread death on all fronts. The war became a sobering phenomenon to the civilians because there was a shared feeling of uncertainty as to whether the town's men would ever trace their way back home safely or at all.

In *Storm of Steel*, Ernst Junger separates the beauty of life from the reality of war. There are moments throughout Junger's memoir when he reminds the reader that he is aware of the beauty of life, but in an isolating environment of war he is unable to feel the emotional sentiment. Junger shares his sentiment of the war when he arrived at Heidelberg:

> At the sight of the Neckar slopes wreathed with flowering
> cherry trees, I had a strong sence of having come home.
> What a beautiful country it was, and eminently worth our
> blood and our lives. Never before had I felt its charm so
> clearly. I had good and serious thoughts, and for the first
> time I sensed that this war was more than just a great
> adventure.[29]

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[28] Louis Barthas, Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, Barrelmaker 1914-1918, trans. Edward M. Strauss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 19-20.
[29] Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel* trans. Michael Hofmann (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004), 33.

However, Junger immediately juxtaposes this sentimental scene with the true reality of

war he is to experience as the war waged on:

> The battle at Les Eparges was my first. It was quite unlike
> what I had expected. I had taken part in a major
> engagement, without having clapped eyes on a single live
> opponent. It wasn't until much later that I experienced the
> direct coming together, the climax of battle in the form of
> waves of attackers on an open field, which, for decisive,
> murderous moments, would break into the chaos and
> vacuity of the battlefield.[30]

This transition from admiring the natural beauty in his surroundings to realizing the

"chaos and vacuity of the battlefield" merely depicts a new chapter in Junger's life. The

war becomes a "great adventure" to a place of wartime reality. The reality was that the

war would be nothing like the charm of the "beautiful country." The reality he is about

to enter would be plagued with "murderous moments."

Numbness

For many soldiers, desensitization was a conditioned response. The value of

human life decreased as the war waged on: "When a man has seen so many dead he

cannot understand any longer why there should be so much anguish over a single

individual."[31] The matter of life boiled down to two things: dead or relatively close to

death. The pain of a death of a friend slowly became the pain of a death of a stranger until

it eventually became just another casualty of the Great War.

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[30] Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel*, 33.
[31] Enrich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on The Western Front*, 181.

The fear of one's own death eventually became a mere acceptance of the inevitable. At times, the acceptance of impending death could only be translated into dark humor such as in Robert Graves' recollection of the war, "We'll get killed whatever happens…We all laughed."[32] or, as regimental medical officer Charles McKerrow recalled, his perception of death after having seen so much of it: "He realised that somehow death had become unimportant to him. It wasn't callousness, just too much knowledge."[33] Because death was such a ubiquitous phenomenon, there was nothing more to do than to just accept and acknowledge that death and pain were inevitable for anyone in battle territory.

A feeling of numbness affected the some of the soldiers. In Ernst Junger's account of a mentally unstable soldier, there is a sense of indifference:

> It was a feature of his care, as it was of quite a few others,
> that his inability to speak made him even more pathetic, as
> he stared at the nurses in bewilderment like a tormented
> animal.[34]

In this memory, Junger remains indifferent to a soldier whose mind had been wrecked by the savagery of the battlefield. The stoic sentiment that Junger portrayed in this scene displayed the detachment as time and war wore down the soldier. Junger experienced the process of degeneration that Robert Graves soliloquized in his memoir:

> For the first few weeks, an officer was of little use in the
> front line; he did not know his way about, had not learned
> the rules of safety, or grown accustomed to recognizing
> degrees of danger. Between three weeks and four weeks he

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[32] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), 121.
[33] Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: From Battlefield to Blighty 1914-1918*, 53.
[34] Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel*, 59.

was at his best, unless he happened to have any particular bad shock or sequence of shocks. Then his usefulness gradually declined as neurasthenia developed. At six months he was still more or less all right; but by nine or ten months, unless he had been given a few weeks' rest on a technical course, or in a hospital, he usually became a drag on the other company officers. After a year or fifteen month he was often worse than useless.[35]

Just a year away from home and in the trenches, a robust and healthy man could potentially be reduced to a soldier suffering from neurasthenia and even further reduced to a useless soldier at the front. This process of human degeneration is a prime example of how the soldiers felt the disorientation and terror the war evoked. It is not entirely surprising that Junger perceived the whimpering soldier with such lack of concern. The degeneration of the soldier's sanity was merely a common process as a consequence of extreme war conditions.

The coming of acceptance and desensitizing one's own vulnerabilities was a necessary means of survival. The possibility of death and the dead lingered around in the trenches or in no man's land. It took great mental, physical, and emotional strength for soldiers to not succumb to the whirlpool of chaos, and even then the soldiers would still sometimes break down from the wartime stress. The Great War more often than not damaged the minds and spirits of those who could no longer withstand the pressures and the milieu of wartime bloodbath.

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[35] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That,* 143.

Euphemism

Euphemism played a dramatic role in wartime news articles. There were multiple articles with titles that romanticized the war, not only in 1914 but also throughout the war. Such language infuriated returning soldiers because it deceived civilians about the true nature of the war.[36] The rhetorical tactic undermined the deadly landscapes the soldiers faced and direct the public's attention towards the glory and romanticism of the war. Patriotism and the continuity of men enlisting heavily relied on prevalent news articles and headlines that used euphemism and high diction. The use of high diction was essential in maintaining morale at home. However, not all printed material omitted the "true nature" of the war:

> …these frank portrayals of modern mechanized warfare were all too often smothered by adjoining columns of vague appeals to spiritual values, portrayals of battle as the 'test of character and manhood.' and tributes in verse to 'valour' and 'sacrifice.' The truth about the war was there for civilians *if* they wanted to see it.[37]

There was more emphasis placed on the "spiritual" and glorified components of the war, while marginalizing the more gruesome information from the battlefield. The more explicit details of the war were not entirely nonexistent; rather, it just took time for literature about the true nature and carnage of war to penetrate the poplar news outlets.

The use of euphemism appeared from the battlefield as well. Wartime poets were

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[36] Ted Bogacz, "'A Tyranny of Words": Language, Poetry, and Antimodernism in England in the First World War" (The University of Chicago Press: The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 58, No. 3, 1986), 644.
[37] Ibid., 656.

>…inhibited by scruples of decency and believing in the historical continuity of styles, writers about the war had to appeal to the sympathy of readers by invoking the familiar and suggesting its resemblance to what many of them suspected was an unprecedented and (in their terms) an all-but-incommunicable reality.[38]

In other words, euphemism was the primary means for the readers back home to gain some insight into the soldiers' experiences without fully exposing the unspeakable nature of the war. While the soldiers experienced utter devastation on the battlefield, civilians at home were not entirely aware of the bleak environment and continued to write and distribute old-fashioned and glorifying feelings of romanticized heroic concepts. It was understandably difficult for civilians to comprehend the explicit gore and atrocities that took place on the battlefield. No one wants to know too much.

A high volume Great War literature echoed the voices of the fallen ones. It was important for the survivors to give a platform to the fallen soldiers silenced by grips of warfare. There was abundant rhetoric that consisted of the dead and it conjured voices from the grave.[39] The literature and poems produced during the Great War pertained to objects of death such as graves, convenient coffins, dry and rotting bones. Historian Allen J. Frantzen suggests:

>Some soldiers who speak to us from World War I were not wanting human kindness, however, and their words remind us that boundaries between living and the dead are not impermeable so long as writing must be used to imagine them. Poets can do more than warn…[40]

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[38] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) 189.
[39] Ibid., 4.
[40] Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*, 259.

It was important for broken soldiers to incorporate voices from the grave to penetrate the living world and to "remind us that boundaries between living and the dead are not impermeable." The fallen soldiers tragically lost their lives; however, it is the broken soldiers who must carry the burden of painful memories of the bloody war while they outlive their fallen comrades. The "poets can do more than warn" against glorifying and propagandizing the war; in fact, they are able to concretize their fallen comrades' sacrifices.

After prolonged exposure to constant bombardment and carnage, soldiers on the front began shifting their feelings of patriotism to aversion towards the politicians. The purpose for fighting became increasingly vague on all fronts; there was even talk in the trenches about the war being solely about political survival for the 'guilty politicians'.[41] The soldiers faced long periods of massive bombardments by heavy artillery, and a sense of stalemate. When facing the constant noises and ruptures of danger, soldiers were led to believe that their living hell could go on indefinitely all due to corrupted political reasons.

Not only were the politicians blamed for igniting and perpetuating the war, women were on the home front were also seen as responsible for sending young men into the chaos of war. British soldier Siegfried Sassoon wrote a poem called "Glory of Women," which condemned women for encouraging and celebrating the soldiers' entry to war:

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[41] Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties*, 19.

Glory of Women

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,
Or wounded in a mentionable place.
You worship decorations; you believe
That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.
5   You make us shells. You listen with delight,
By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.
You crown our distant ardours while we fight,
And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed.
You can't believe that British troops 'retire'
10   When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,
Trampling the terrible corpses – blind with blood.
      O German mother dreaming by the fire,
While you are knitting socks to send your son
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.[42]

The "Glory of Women" reprimanded women for celebrating the gruesome deaths of the
male soldiers in line 8, "And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed".
Sassoon sheds light on the guilt women should have felt when dignifying enlistment for
war and even insulting the men if they had not already enlisted for the war.

Portrayal of the Enemy

In order to further influence men to enlist, propaganda pertaining to the Rape of
Belgium surfaced. Enlisting in the war extended beyond personal enthusiasm and for
nationalistic sentiment; it became a duty to uphold human rights and punishing the
German Huns who dared violate those rights. Depictions of Hun barbarism were widely
accepted among civilians. Print press content showed pornographic depictions of the
German's invasion of Belgium in 1914. Tales and illustrations of Germans mutilating

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[42] Siegfried Sassoon, "Glory of Women," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Twentieth Century and After,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 2025.

helpless women and children appeared in prominent publications such as the *Times*. In

addition to images and tales of mutilation, there were stories that illustrated the Huns

raping and sexually abusing women.[43] As gruesome as the printed stories were, the

pornographic element eroticized the war.[44] The eroticization of Belgian atrocities

reinforced gender norms: on a personal, public, and political realm:

> The key to the popularity of Belgian atrocities among those
> promoting stern military action lay in the universal values
> with which they endowed the war. As the personal literally
> became political, the case of Belgium offered a way to
> explain the need for military action in private and sexual
> terms.[45]

The portrayal of the enemy in public culture to British civilians only increased the hype

of joining the war effort.

The Entente soldiers viewed the German soldiers as inherently demonic, which

increased the hype for young men to join the army. A character in *Rilla of Ingleside*

shared the aggressive sentiment towards the Germans:

> I'd go myself if I was twenty years younger…I'd show the
> Kaiser a thing or two! Did I ever say there wasn't a hell?
> Of course there's a hell- dozens of hells- hundreds of hells-
> where the Kaiser and all his brood are bound for.[46]

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[43]   According to J.H. Morgan, a British attorney investigating German violations of international law in occupied France…"There is a strong reason to suspect that young girls were carried off to the trenches by licentious German soldiery, and there abused by hordes of savage and licentious men…" J. H. Morgan, *German Atrocities: An Official Investigation*, pp. 62-62.

[44] Nicoletta F. Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, 27.

[45] Ibid., 33.

[46] L.M. Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside*, 49.

 It was not uncommon for Western civilians to view Germans as bound for hell. This devilish portrayal of Germans contributed to the fanfare of war enthusiasm.

It was fairly common for Entente soldiers to come across rumors that depicted the German Huns in a barbaric light. For instance, Germans carried bayonets that had a saw-like characteristic, and stories surged portraying Germans using these weapons to tear open the British soldier's belly.[47] Other rumors also surfaced depicting Germans crucifying Canadian and British soldiers onto trees. These sadistic stories were meant to darken the perception of Germans, and at times used as propaganda tactics to elicit hateful sentiment from back home. To a certain extent, these stories of German atrocities reinvigorated the soldiers' call to action. The stories made sense of defeated battles and stagnating progress, and justified the Entente soldiers' fervor to continue fighting the savage Huns.

Whether the stories of atrocities were true, they were sometimes enough to convince soldiers to enact on an instinct to avenge. British soldier Robert Graves recalled a time when he became aware of Canadian soldiers crucifying a German officer as an act of revenge. Canadian soldiers had taken to heart the story of German soldiers crucifying a Canadian soldier as an act of sheer savagery.[48] What made these stories of atrocities more alarming is that many of these stories were not told for the sake of confession; rather, they were shared as stories of pride. The soldiers recited these stories to motivate and further convince the Allied soldiers of the savage tactics

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[47] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 126.
[48] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, 154.

the German soldiers would resort to in order to inflict as much damage as they could to their enemies.

Western soldiers rarely came into contact with Germans, either due to long periods of time spent in the trenches or not being to see the enemy across no man's land, which made it easier for soldiers to paint more sinister perceptions of the Huns. Descriptions of Huns included animalistic characteristics such as Great War soldier Guy Chapman states: "The Boche were…invisible by daylight… Sometimes in the valley on the right, a grey shadow would stand for a few seconds, and then slide from sight, like a water-rat into his hole."[49] The animalistic characteristics add a more uncivilized and unruly dimension to the German Huns, blurring the lines between monster and foe.

As more wartime violence was experienced on all sides, the enemy was no longer perceived as demonic beings. Siegfried Sassoon's poem "Glory of Women" addressed the women who were blindly unaware of the daily turmoil the soldiers faced on the battlefield, and it additionally addressed the breakdown of the portrayal of the German enemy. Lines 12-14: "O German mother dreaming by the fire/ While you are knitting socks to send your son/ His face is trodden deeper in the mud." evokes sympathy for the German soldiers, who have faced the same destructive forces of the war as the British and the French soldiers have. This poem was written by the tail end of the war in 1918 and shows noteworthy a shift in viewing the Huns as demonic or

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[49] Guy Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1933), 52.

animalistic enemies to victims of the same unfortunate war. Sassoon expressed a voice of sympathy to the German soldier, who was no longer seen as the enemy. Rather, the German soldiers were later seen as equal individuals.

"The Lost Generation": The Broken and The Identity Crisis

　　American literary writers felt the weight of the political upheaval during the Great War. There was heated discourse on whether America should engage in the European dominant war or remain neutral. When America finally joined the war by April 1917, the impact of the war experience found its way into twentieth century modernist literature. Some writers contributed to the war effort, while some watched as the American identity misaligned with the fragmented European identity. Modernist writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Aldous Huxley, and T.S. Eliot wrote in a more experimental fashion, incorporating aloof speech and dystopian elements in their literature. Depictions of frivolous expenditures and alcoholic festivities loomed in their literature to show the disorientation and boredom the youth felt after a period of war.

　　Gertrude Stein remarked to Ernest Hemingway, "You are all a lost generation." after having read *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). In this context, "The Lost Generation" encompassed the youth during the postwar period who experienced great disillusionment and displacement. *The Sun Also Rises* shows the pervasive feeling of disenchantment among the youth. This story is set in Paris, a place typically regarded as an iconic place of beauty and culture, but none of the characters within this story are

inspired by the city of love. The dialogues are often had over alcohol, and are about

nothing substantial:

> "Well, what will you drink? I asked.
> "Pernod."
> "That's not good for little girls."
> "Little girl yourself. Dites garcon, un pernod."
> "A pernod for me, too."
> "What's the matter?" she asked. "Going to a party?"
> "Sure. Aren't you?"
> "I don't know. You never know in this town."
> "Don't you like Paris?"
> "No."
> "Why don't you go somewhere else?"
> "You're happy, all right."
> "Happy, hell!"
> Pernod is greenish imitation of absinthe. When you add
> water it turns milky. It tastes like licorice and it has a good
> uplift, but it drops you just as far. We sat and drank it, and
> the girl looked sullen."[50]

This conversation, along with many others in the novel, remains curt and

predominantly centered around alcohol consumption. Perhaps Pernod was the

characters' beverage of choice due to its high alcohol content and its ability to give

"good uplift, but drops you just as far." Postwar life centered on Pernod, wine, and

parties as a means of escape from the responsibilities of real life.

The decade following the end of the Great War did not let up on the American

youth. The American youth attempted normalcy during the Roaring Twenties (1920s)

but found themselves in a perpetual state of oblivion and questionable antics. The moral

and cultural phenomenon According to Maxine Davis' 1936 research on the postwar

youth, "their health is poor and declining, they are harassed and underfed, they are

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[50] Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Scribner Publishing, 2006), 8.

dejected, bewildered, or resigned, and their ambition is ebbing away."[51] The youth

exerted unwavering energy in hedonistic pastimes, but fizzled in their idleness and

frustration in the aftermath of the Great War.

After the Great War, America was at its economic, political, and cultural peak.

It seemed that the 1920s was a time of economic prosperity, until the Wall Street Crash

of 1929. Wilson's Fourteen Points outlined international policies while Europeans

generally accepted Wilson's intervention. The Jazz Age[52] defied moral traditions and

introduced new music and fashion trends. Yet, the American youth remained

disenchanted by their postwar reality.

Shell Shock

Shell shock became a widespread phenomenon that affected many soldiers.

Shell shock victims displayed symptoms of fatigue, confusion, moderate to violent

tremors, reclusive activity, nightmares, and impaired senses. Some reports of the

Russian patients affected by shell shock repeated, "Oh Lord, save the Tsar and Russia."

or some were reported to have been hallucinating that they were swatting Germans like

flies.[53] The psychological toll on the soldiers often manifested into physical symptoms

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[51] Harlan Hatcher, "The Second Lost Generation" (National Council of Teachers of English: The English Journal, Vol. 25, No. 8, 1936), 622.

[52] "The twenties have been dubbed the 'Jazz Age,' for which F. Scott Fitzgerald is conceded to have been the spokesman…It was the period of reaction from war, the day of the bootlegger and the gangster, of women's smoking, of the revolt against restraint." Francis Ludlow (*College English*, 1946) p. 183. ed. Mamie J. Meredith, "The 'Nifty Fifties,' the 'Flying Forties,' the 'Threadbare Thirties,' and the 'Roaring Twenties' of Twentieth-Century America" (Duke University Press: American Speech, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1951), 228.

[53] Catherine Meridale, "The Collective Mind: Trauma and Shell-Shock in Twentieth-Century Russia" (*Sage Publications: Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2000), 41.

such as "swatting". The constant sounds of bombardment and machine guns were

enough to bring on unrelenting psychological stress on a daily basis:

> This was something to accompany us all through the war,
> that habit of jumping at any sudden and unexpected noise.
> Whether it was a train clattering past, a book falling to the
> floor, or a shout in the night – on each occasion, the heart
> would stop with a mortal dread. It bore out the fact that for
> four years we lived in the shadow of death. The experience
> hit so hard in that dark country beyond consciousness, that
> every time there was a break with the usual, the porter
> Death would leap to the gates with hand upraised, like the
> figure above the dial on certain clock towers, who appears
> at the striking of the hour, with scythe and hourglass.[54]

Even the simple sounds of a "book falling to the floor" made some soldiers attentive to

any form of danger that the sound may have posed. The sound affected the psyche of

the soldiers to a "beyond consciousness" level so that they were constantly on edge,

and in a state of paranoia. The cavalry were not as affected by the symptoms of shell

shock; it was primarily the soldiers who worked closely with artillery who were more

susceptible to the effects of shell shock. There was death and fear all around; the fear of

death and the fear of showing fear plagued the minds of war participants.

The symptoms of shell shock affected its victims according to their job or title.

There were slightly varied distinctions in shell shock symptoms that officers of rank

had faced. Some of the officers of rank were responsible for reporting back the

casualties of their infantry units, often starting with a large unit and ending the day's

battle with a mere fraction of the number they began. Officers and soldiers were in

constant need of rest and the taking of leaves was quite common; however, many

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[54] Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel*, 8.

officers were internally pressured to skip their opportunity to take a leave of absence. To officers, the taking of leaves would be a sign of shirking their responsibilities and their commitment to the war effort. In addition to the soldiers believing the leaves showed insufficient patriotism, in some cases, the soldiers dreaded taking leaves of absences. Civilian life became too foreign to those who had experienced and fully immersed into the hell of the war:

> What is a leave? –A pause that only makes everything after
> it so much worse. Already the sense of parting begins to
> intrude itself…The hours pass quickly if a man broods.[55]

There is a sense of disenchantment from the daily occurrences of civilian life, and a feeling of disconnection when soldiers took leaves. But after having to adjust to the routine of civilian life during their leaves, and then going back to the battlefield only made "everything after it so much worse." The soldiers were again immersed in the fields of bloodshed. The leaves brought upon a feeling of psychological disorientation from the ubiquitous atrocities on the war front to the safe activities at home. It was emotionally unsettling for the soldiers to experience the terror to experiencing the normal to experiencing the terror of the war once more.

In Britain (later France, Italy, and Russia would follow suit), there was a surge after the war in the medical field to seek treatments for the shell shock victims. During the time of the Battle of the Somme, special shell shock institutions were created in light of the vast numbers of individuals needing postwar psychological aid. Volunteer institutions and charities began to form and attempted to raise funds in order to provide

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[55] Enrich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on The Western Front*, 179.

support for the severely disabled, physically and psychologically, veterans.[56] In order to

properly treat the traumatized men, new approaches were taken to alleviate the effects

of such a violent war. The psychological effects of the Great War pushed for more

attention and effective psychological treatments. By understanding the properties of

shell shock, doctors became far better at detecting the abnormal and sometimes violent

symptoms of those unnerved by the war. Shell shock became a prevalent problem for

those who had survived the war, and the effects of modern warfare coined the term

"Shell Shock", an antecedent phrase to what is known today as: Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder (PTSD).

Reconstruction of Sexual Identities: "The love that dare not speak its name"

> *Here you can't choose…At one moment a particular man*
> *may be nothing at all to you, and the next minute you will*
> *go through hell for him. No, it is not friendship.[57]*

There was speculation over how the war would affect a soldier's quality of

masculinity. Around 1914, doctors and critics anticipated that the war would

reinvigorate the men weakened by the prewar period of peacetime. However, the

brutality and the stress of modern warfare began reconstructing gender norms and

boundaries.[58] The war had also created a new kind of man and a dynamic for violent

dysfunction in postwar civilian life. Due to the violent physicality and the depravity of

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[56] Peter Leese, "Problems Returning Home: The British Psychological Casualties of the Great War" (The Cambridge University Press: The Historical Journal, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1997), 1056.
[57] Fredric Manning, *Her Privates We* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 144.
[58] Jason Crouthamel, "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany" (University of Texas Press: Journal of History of Sexuality, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2008), 60.

sexual behaviors, such as masturbation, in the trenches, postwar men were no longer

dependent on women for intimate satisfaction, and resorted to violence as a form of

sexual release.[59] The emotional response to the violence of war came from the men's

suppressed sexual urges prior to the war. The toll of the war was a rupture of

suppressed desires, and was also viewed as the cause of sexual and violent desires.

Historian Elaine Showalter identified two major patterns of emotional responses to

psychological stress in wartime: "either the outpouring of powerful feelings of love for

other men or, more frequently, 'anxieties about masculinity' that led to breakdown."[60]

Doctors and researchers sought to find the soldiers exhibiting 'unnatural'

characteristics, and raced to find some form of treatment to their homosexual and

violent behaviors.

Homoerotic relations became more open in the trenches as well as on the home

front where the civilians were indirectly affected by the war. In the framework of

wartime virtues such as camaraderie, homosexual men were more so able to openly

exhibit their preexisting sexual feelings that were previously condemned in civilian life.

The increasing acceptance for homosexual relationships in the context of the trenches

gave the men a sense of self-indulgence in a space of desolation and terror. Sexologist

Magnus Hirschfeld claimed that male sexuality had indeed become more violent than

nurturing and expressed his findings and fears:

[59] Jason Crouthamel, "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany," 62.
[60] Elaine Showalter, "Rivers and Sassoon: The Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 64.

> that war had shattered male sexuality and unleashed forms
> of violence and sexual dysfunction that threatened postwar
> society and its attempt at recovery.[61]

The wave of homoeroticism was still not widely accepted in society, and in the context

of the trenches, the extreme stress of war gave way for some men to unleash their

sexual desires in a violent manner.

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[61] Jason Crouthamel, "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany," 62.

Chapter 3

The Resilient: The Silver Linings of The Great War

There is no doubt that the war experience was plagued by disillusionment and destruction; however, there are components of the Great War that made it somewhat bearable. The resilient are the soldiers who not only survived the war, but also the soldiers who found the war to be an exhilarating experience. Women were also amongst the resilient for they were able to keep the house fires burning while implementing social, economical, and political changes on the home front. For the resilient, the war was multidimensional: unsympathetic, compassionate, and even opportunistic.

War is War: Nothing Less and Nothing More

Ernst Junger's *Storm of Steel* was sensational in its unsentimental toughness and the lack of personal sentiment of the Great War. From Junger's perspective, the turn of the twentieth century was a time of war and in war, things happen. In order to survive the intensity of the battlefield, it was wise for soldiers to accept what is happening before their eyes and carry on. Junger was not heartless, but his memoir makes it clear that the war did not have to be full of glory or heartfelt. As historian Michael Hofmann suggests, *Storm of Steel* does not try to make sense of the war and the book "isn't really a personal book at all – it's about the war.[62] *Storm of Steel* only gives the reader the "what" and "where" of the war:

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[62] Michael Hoffman. Introduction, *Storm of Steel*. By Ernst Junger, xix.

> The trench was appalling, choked with seriously wounded
> and dying men. A figure stripped to the waist, with ripped-
> open back, leaned against the parapet. Another, with a
> triangular flap hanging off the back of his skull, emitted
> short, high-pitched screams. This was the home of the great
> god Pain, and for the first time I looked through a devilish
> chink into the depths of his realm. And fresh shells came
> down all the time.[63]

Junger sees and he reports the awful depiction of the lacerated soldier. He does not go into depth of how the soldier came to be in such a state. Also, the opposing soldier is no longer a soldier to Junger, the perforated soldier is merely a "figure" that was "stripped to the waist, with ripped-open back." Junger does not perceive the figure as a human being; rather, he perceived his enemies as figures of war. However, Junger is not without any mercy. Junger's perception of the enemy is based solely on how much courage and militancy they exuded when in combat, but he still maintained a sense of humanity for those he was in close contact with:

> Throughout the war, it was always my endeavor to view
> my opponent without animus, and to form an opinion of
> him as a man on the basis of the courage he showed. I
> would always try and seek him out in combat and kill him,
> and I expected nothing else from him. But never did I
> entertain mean thoughts of him. When prisoners fell into
> my hands, later on, I felt responsible for their safety, and
> would always do everything in my power for them.[64]

As Junger engages in combat, he views the enemy as what they are: the enemy. Hostility and "animus" does not serve as an incentive for Junger to gun down the opposing figures, aiming at the enemy is based solely on the rules of war: to courageously kill or to be killed courageously. He views his prisoners for they are: humans that need "safety" in the

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[63] Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel*, 31.
[64] Ibid., 58.

same war. Junger does not deny his compassionate tendencies unless it is during times of battle.

Going for the Jugular

Not all Great War veterans returned back home with a resentful sentiment of from having participated in war. A psychoanalyst by the name of Wilfred Bion was surprised to hear a veteran reminiscing the enjoyment of his days in war.[65] Exhilaration and the enthusiasm for violence were not surprisingly common. This preference to the war experience could be attributed to the fact that *vis-a-vis* fighting was a rarity during the Great War. Most of the slaughtering was done impersonally and from a distance due to the innovations of modern warfare. Wounds were usually from artillery and long ranging bullets that were not aimed at specific opposing soldiers.[66] The Great War was more modernized than any previous wars; there was considerably less intimate combat than in preceding historical wars. The more long-range artillery produced during the Great War meant that soldiers could be killed from afar. This phenomenon made it less morally violating to kill the enemies.

Although the belligerence and the horrors of the Great War were devastating, it should be noted that not all soldiers regretted participating in the violence and bloodshed. Historian Niall Ferguson took a stance that war combat was not necessarily a traumatizing experience; rather, it was fun and exciting due to the violence and

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[65] Edgar Jones, "The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers During the First World War" (Sage Publications: Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2006), 234.
[66] Ibid., 237.

danger for some men.[67] For some, being in war combat meant reverting to experiencing primitive feelings and actions. The thrill-seeking men obtained what they had anticipated when enlisting themselves for the war: the experience of zest and bustle of being away from the predictability of home and civilian life.

One of the biggest proponents of the Great War was none other than Adolf Hitler. In his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler goes into detail about how the war was not initially a burden for countrymen as he states, "The War of 1914 was certainly not forced on the masses; it was even desired by the whole people."[68] Hitler speculated that German civilians did not feel that the war was "forced" upon Germans; rather, it was "desired". He even goes on to say that he was "carried away by the enthusiasm" of the war:

> I am not ashamed to acknowledge to-day that I was carried
> away by the enthusiasm of the moment and that I sank
> down upon my knees and thanked Heaven out of the
> fullness of my heart for the favour of having been permitted
> to live in such a time.[69]

Hitler was, in fact, thankful to "Heaven" for the opportunity to serve his country by participating in the collective war effort. Hitler's reasoning for enlisting in the war goes beyond collective enthusiasm. He explains that his involvement in war was not for the sake of the crumbling Habsburg Monarchy, as Hitler was a native Austrian and left for "political reasons". Hitler explains:

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[67] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 358.
[68] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy. 141.
[69] Ibid.

> …A case of Germany fighting for her own existence – the
> German nation for its own to-be-or-not-to-be, for its
> freedom and for its future…I had no desire to fight for the
> Habsburg cause, but I was prepared to die at any time for
> own kinsfolk and the Empire to which they really
> belonged.[70]

He was willing to sacrifice his life for his "own kinsfolk and the Empire" and he

strongly believed that Germany's entrance to war was grounded by "its freedom and for

its future". Hitler's involvement in the Great War felt justified and was heavily

influenced by collective enthusiasm as well as his nationalistic sentiment.

Not all compassion is lost: Sacrifice and Sparing the Fallen

However common desensitization was, there still remained glimpses of sympathy

and sacrifice. In Robert Graves' account, Samson, a fellow soldier, displayed an act of

self-sacrifice in order to prevent additional deaths to his battalion:

> Samson waved him [orderly] back, saying that he was
> riddled through and not worth rescuing; he sent his
> apologies to the company for making such as noise…The
> first dead body I came upon was Samson's, hit in seventeen
> places. I found that he had forced his knuckles into his
> mouth to stop himself crying out and attracting any more
> men to their death.[71]

Samson endured the suffering by silencing his own screams possibly because he believed

that there was still hope for his fellow peers to live on instead of dying by coming to his

aid. Even though he had been in excruciating pain and had accepted the possibility of an

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[70] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 142.
[71] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, 133.

excruciating and lonely death, he was able to see the value in sparing his fellow comrades' lives.

The soldiers experienced terrible conditions such as thickened mud marred with congealed blood, ravenous rodents, rotting corpses, and even when they have made their way 'over the top', they would often be machine gunned down as they were entangled in barbed wire.[72] Many of the soldiers were inflicted with mortal wounds in which the pain could only be slightly alleviated by the intake of morphine pills. Even then, the morphine pills did very little to help the affected soldiers. Great War novelist Erich Maria Remarque poetically describes a fatal wound of his fallen comrade: "Under the skin the life no longer pulses, it has already pressed out the boundaries of the body. Death is working from within."[73] In many cases, facing a quick and merciful death was comparatively better than a wounded soldier experience a slow and agonizing death. In British soldier Bert Payne's account of war, he came across a barely alive soldier who was blown nearly to pieces by artillery and Payne instinctively decided to shoot him in order to spare him of the pain before death overtook his life.[74] At times, the fallen were at the mercy of the broken to no longer experience the constant milieu of suffering; death was the more compassionate option.

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[72] Seth Koven, "Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers, and the Great War in Great Britain" (Oxford University Press: The American Historical Review, Vol. 99, No. 4, 1994) 1184.

[73] Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 14.

[74] Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: From Battlefield to Blighty 1914-1918*, 78.

Not All Compassion is Lost: The Fallen Protect the Broken

In many instances, the fallen soldier's earthly belongings protected and comforted the remaining soldiers. Clothing items, cigarettes, and weapons that the fallen have left behind give the surviving soldiers more than they were allotted, especially when rations became scarce on the battlefield. Ernst Junger found some comfort in a fallen soldier's belongings: "I pulled a dead man's coat over me, and fell into a sleep that incipient fever lit with lurid dreams."[75] Junger was able to fall asleep and enter into a state of "lurid dreams" as he wore a fallen soldier's coat for warmth and comfort. In another instance, fictional character Paul Baumer watched as his comrade, Muller is eager to take Kemmerich's boots. Kemmerich is at the brink of death and is aware of Muller's greater need for the boots. Moments before succumbing to death, Kemmerich tells Baumer: "You can take my lace-up boots with you for Muller."[76] In these moments, the soldiers are able to take comfort in what little their comrades or enemies have left behind.

Not All Compassion is Lost: Nurses

Nurses were essential to the medical force on the battlefield. Nurses volunteered for the opportunity to help the countless wounded soldiers, and they also found themselves in an entirely unfamiliar environment from what they are accustomed to. English nurse Vera Brittain described the unsanitary conditions of the nursing stations of having "gruesome human remnants heaped on the floor."[77] Brittain's personal narrative

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[75] Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel*, 31.
[76] Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 28.
[77] Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, *World History: Connections to Today*, 831.

over the course of the Great War gives historians insight to how certain women dealt with the ripples of war, even if they were not armed and on the battlefield. Brittain was not a woman to stand idle and just complain about how "women get all the dreariness of the war, and none of its exhilaration." as she replied to Roland Leighton's letter.[78] Brittain possessed the determination to take part in the war that seemingly only men sought glory from. The combination of her determination and maturity motivated Brittain to enlist as a V.A.D. nurse for the war. In a way, she was unable to abide by the notion that male soldiers are perceived as active and participatory, while many other female civilians remained passive and were excluded from the war, and adhered to their expected role to 'knit and wait'."[79] The "exhilaration" that Brittain envied the men for is reminiscent of the stress she endured while trying to save the wounded soldiers.

Many nurses faced emotional trauma when treating the wounded soldiers brought to their care. Nurse Brittain faced anxiety whenever she received a new batch of men placed under her care, for it was uncertain the state of when the men were brought to her:

> Day after day I had to fight the queer, frightening sensation
> – to which, throughout my years of nursing, I never became
> accustomed – of seeing the covered stretchers come in, one
> after another, without knowing, until I ran with pounding
> heart to look, what fearful sight or sound or stench, what
> problem of agony or imminent death, each brown blanket
> concealed.[80]

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[78] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 104.
[79] Jean Mitchell, *Storm and Dissonance: L.M. Montgomery and Conflict.* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 88.
[80] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 280.

Nurses were constantly facing the daily challenge of seeing men with various sorts of

"problem of agony or imminent death." The sight of the endless stream of soldiers

maimed by shrapnel, or other various fatal injuries was never a phenomenon nurses got

"accustomed" to. It would have been easier for the nurses to adjust to the grotesque

scenery by forcing "all the warmth out of themselves before they could be really good

nurses;" however, Brittain chose to "suffer ever so much in my work than become

indifferent to pain."[81] Nurses had the option to numb their emotions and merely treat the

soldiers as numeric patients, but their compassionate gestures for the soldiers mattered.

Nurses had the opportunity to make the soldier's last moments as comfortable as

possible, or treat the soldier's injuries as best as possible before sending them back to

home or to the battlefield.

It was a heavy burden upon the nurses knowing that once they had remedied the

injured soldiers until that are in a relatively healthy state, the men would have to be sent

back to the hell of trench warfare. Nevertheless, the nurses had to maintain their focus on

the patients at their care at the moment. The nurses tried hard to direct their concentration

away from the horrid conditions outside the medical tents. The nurses had maternal

responsibilities in the medical stations:

> …the nurses remembered how much their patients
> appreciated the luxury of clean linen – a fresh sheet, a
> white pillow case, fluffed blankets – so they scrubbed and
> pegged and folded, understanding that this too was an act
> of nursing and healing.[82]

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[81] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 211.
[82] Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: From Battlefield to Blighty 1914-1918*, 91.

The nurses aided the soldiers by giving them rare and simple comforts such as "a fresh sheet, a white pillow case, fluffed blankets." These acts of "nursing and healing" may have been the last moments of "luxury" the patients could experience before either being sent back onto the battlefield, or before they drew their last breaths. These simple and compassionate gestures given to the soldiers were the nurses' way of treating the soldiers with dignity in their time of pain.

Not All Compassion is Lost: On-Site Medical Personnel

Stretcher-bearers, medical officers, and surgeons had one of the most dangerous and hardest jobs in the war. They shared the responsibility of saving the wounded amidst constant shellfire and artillery bombardment. One of the most difficult responsibilities on the front was being a stretcher-bearer. Stretcher bearers were responsible for transporting wounded soldiers from the battlefield to safety as well as treating them until the wounded were brought to more specialized care under doctors and surgeons. In many cases stretcher bearers had to carry heavily armed men from no man's land, which made them even more vulnerable because stretcher bearers were neither armed nor could they physically defend themselves in a space of open fire. They had to learn to maintain their composure under taxing circumstances. Some of the other experiences that stretcher-bearers faced were:

> They learned to watch men die. They learned how to turn
> away from the dying and find others who would live. It was
> never easy. One bearer left a man to die because others
> needed him more. But it troubled him all day, so in the
> evening he went back, found that the man was still alive
> and fetched him in. He never found out if the soldier
> survived, but at least he was able to sleep. Bearers also got
> used to the seriously wounded men who waved them away,

sending them to more deserving cases nearby. And they
always made sure there were matches and cigarettes in their
panniers, kept dry in their oilskin alongside their map, so
that they could give a dying man a last smoke.[83]

Stretcher-bearers placed their lives in mortal danger and stretcher-bearers endured the

worst that the battlefield had to offer. However, they were able to rescue countless men

stranded on the battlefield. Stretcher-bearers either gave mortally wounded soldiers

comforting company before death took its toll. They gave the near-death soldiers

"matches and cigarettes" for their "last smoke", or they desperately tried to carry the

wounded back to safety.

Surgeons were perpetually working, as there was a steady stream of wounded

soldiers needing to visit the operating theater. The sheer volume of wounded men on a

daily basis was a shock to many of the warfront surgeons. The surgeons had previously

been accustomed to sanitary work conditions in their respective hometowns prior to war;

however, the war demanded that the surgeons work constantly with little to no proper

sleep, and often under poorly equipped conditions:

But Souttar [surgeon] tried to reassure his staff: had they
not opened the hospital – had they not tried – every single
man now in their care would have died on the road to the
coast. So despite the bodies stacked in a cool outhouse to
the rear of the hospital awaiting the sanitary squads, No. I
Belgian Field had been a success. They had saved the lives
of so many men, some within an hour of their wounding.
No base hospital ever saw the kind of casualty they did.
What they were doing was unprecedented.[84]

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[83] Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: From Battlefield to Blighty 1914-1918,* 34.
[84] Ibid., 59.

At times, hospitals were set up in any available facilities, like in the instance of Doctor

Souttar. Despite having inadequate equipment, surgeons had to concentrate on their tiring

work and had to remain composed under pressure in order to save as many lives as they

possibly could. They often performed amputations to prevent the spread of infections,

and 'debridement' was practiced in which the tissue around the lacerations was cut away

and the wound smeared with bismuth iodoform paraffin paste to further prevent

infections. Completing such laborious tasks was considered an "unprecedented" task, and

the gratification was rooted in the fact that the surgeons were able to save the many lives.

On many occasions, the surgeons had to work from early morning and throughout the

night to operate and treat as many wounded soldiers as they humanly could.

It was not always certain that men would go on to survive the entirety of the war,

but it was important for the soldiers' morale to celebrate life, may their morale be

prolonged only for a few more days or months. French soldier Henri Barbusse recalled a

memory of unshakeable gratitude during his time served at war:

> There men were happy, despite everything, as they emerge
> from hell- for the very reason that they are emerging. They
> are coming back, they are saved. Once again death was
> there, but spared them…For everything, great and small,
> front-line troops never look too far around them or in front
> of them. They think more or less from day to day. Today,
> each of these men is sure that he will live a little while
> longer.[85]

This was a relatively healthy mindset for the soldiers to grapple onto because it secured

the solder's sense of livelihood during a time of relative hopelessness. Many of their

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[85] Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 47.

comrades had succumbed to the afflictions of shell shock or had extremities destroyed by shrapnel or suffered from other fatal wounds. It was not due to mental weakness that the shell-shocked patients suffered; it was more likely due to the constant exposure to the dangerous milieu, and to the disintegration of civility on the battlefield that perpetually wore down the victims. Despite having faced inescapable hardships and carnage, a number of soldiers were simply thankful and "happy, despite everything" just to have survived the war thus far. The soldiers were happy and lucky enough to have some, if not all, functioning limbs, relatively good health, and just the chance to live another day.

The Women

The two concepts of "women" and "war" do not seem to mix in the narrtive of the Great War. The Great War was largely a masculine experience, and in many works of historians, the narratives and roles of men often overshadowed the subject of women. However, it is important to seriously consider and examine the framework of women in a time and space that reinforced and redefined the preexisting roles of women. While some women realized the gravity of sending their men off to war, other women were either trying to maintain their households as well as they could manage, or they were other women who decided to enlist themselves to serve as active participants in the war effort. Women played integral roles in the war effort, and contributed to their respective countries on a social, political, and economic level.

While the men were risking their lives on the battlefield, the women were taking care of their respective countries and their homes. The women fought against the

government's rationing tactics and propaganda to make sure that the family members who stayed at home were adequately fed in a time when food shortages frequently occurred. Much of the German propaganda pertaining to food addressed the "irrationality, weakness, vulnerability, and associated lack of patriotism" in women.[86] Berlin women, and middle to lower class women in particular, suffered to place food onto the table. Historian Belinda Davis explains the value in women of lesser means and they were also represented as:

> the front-line soldier in the inner economic war fought in the streets of the capital city and throughout Germany. She did not fight against her fellow consumers – indeed, she was a symbol of their collective victimization. Rather she fought against the merchants and rural producers who had chosen profit over patriotism, as contemporaries styled it, largely by virtue of standing in line.

Women of lesser means had undergone a series of trials and tribulations such as "collective victimization." Berlin women would spend long hours "standing in line" for meager food rations in order to feed her household. For Berlin women, they were

> faced with dread the daily task of trying to feed themselves and their families, frustrated by new measures that failed to treat the lack of access, angered by the increasingly rancorous interactions with merchants…resolutely defending…for food they might not even procure.[87]

During wartime, it is reasonable to encourage civilians to ration food and essential commodities; however, the hungry women and some men waited in longstanding queues not even certain if they were going to be able to receive sustainable food rations. This

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[86] Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 40.
[87] Ibid., 64.

was beyond rationing; this was essentially starvation. The main concern for the poorer

population of Berlin was not necessarily to contribute to the war effort; rather, focus on

issues of subsistence, or lack thereof. It was especially difficult for women to feed her

family when The Turnip Winter of 1916 hit. Bread and eventually potatoes, essential

sources of food for Germans, became exceedingly scarce during the winters of the Great

War. Berlin's local rationing centers struggled to supply its own civilians due to wartime

scarcity.

Enough was enough for German civilians, and social reform was in order. Rather

than further tolerating the breakdown of the food distribution system, "a coalition of

particular interests–local bureaucrats, trade union leaders, women's groups, and favored

consumers–laid the groundwork for the nation's remarkable social cohesion in the face of

total war."[88] The food shortage and the unfair criticisms towards housewives through

government propaganda gave an outlet for the women of Berlin to backlash and demand

for heavy market regulation as well as more board welfare services.

The Great War also allowed for the "splendid women" to take shape. Many

women took after more active roles during the war. While most of the able-bodied men

were training for the war or were already on the battlefield, women presided over the

men's vacancies in the workplace. In Britain, the female role in wartime became distinct

because:

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[88] Keith Allen, "Bread Rationing and the First World War in Berlin, 1914-1923," *Journal of Social History* 32 (1998): 371.

> With conscription and the implementation of the Munitions
> Acts, which eased restrictions on unskilled labor, 1916 saw
> the increasing replacement of male with female workers at
> home. The surprise of seeing women in munitions factories,
> as conductors on trams, as police constables, and in a
> variety of other activities that required efficiency, strength,
> and masculine dress startled people and resulted in
> tremendous public interest in women's roles and extensive
> praise for the "splendid women" who were making it
> possible to carry on at home.[89]

During wartime, women replaced men in the workforce, thus shifting the view of women to a more productive and contributive light. Women proved that they were capable of producing munitions, guns, shells, explosives, aircraft, and other war accessories for the war front, while still being able to manage life back at the home front. The women who had filled these roles convinced the public that they had just as much "efficiency, strength, and masculine dress" as any man had. They showed that even though much of the male population had gone off to war, civilian life would perpetuate uninterrupted.

Women took over the workplace and contributed to social and political reform on the home front, while also keeping the home fires burning. Women nursed the wounded soldiers back to health, and were also responsible for feeding her family in time of scarcity. The roles of women diversified during and after the war:

> Women were at first confined to traditional roles –
> symbolizing the values being fought for, the recreation of
> the warrior, and the nurse – but soon took over men's work,
> including hard physical labour (and some skills thought

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[89] Nicoletta F. Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, 158.

> beyond them, tending the sick within earshot of the
> battlefield, and even wearing uniforms…[90]

The Great War gave women the opportunity to experience the exhilaration of war near the battlefield as well as maintain solidarity at home. The Great War reinforced traditional female and maternal roles, while also giving many women the opportunity to join the workforce.

Working on Diplomacy

One of the biggest opponents of Article 231 was none other than British economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). Keynes pointed out the major flaws of the reparations clause. It was pure political strategy to demand an unspecified sum from Germany. Having an unspecified amount of reparations made it so that the victorious nations could make a mockery of Germany for instigating the international war. Keynes argued that it was economically disastrous, not just for Germany, but for each country to which Germany was indebted. Keynes considered the war-torn countries, especially France, and it was clear that they had wanted compensation for the damages that Germany had inflicted. Keynes also understood that by putting Germany in such heavy debt and blame would ruin potentially Germany:

> Apart from other aspects of the transaction, I believe that
> the campaign for securing out of Germany the general costs
> of the war was one of the most serious acts of political
> unwisdom for which our statesmen have ever been
> responsible.[91]

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[90] Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain Since 1880* (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press LTD, 2000), 95.

[91] John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of The Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 146.

He argued that in order for Germany to pay the debts, the Allies should set a financially

feasible penalty, which would allow the currency to be circulated rather than the currency

be discontinued once Germany had run dry.

Keynes' economic plan, had it been implemented into the treaty, would have

ideally kept Germany from spiraling into complete economic disaster while still capable

of paying off the reparation demands. Keynes' economic plan would have had political

and diplomatic benefits as well. Keynes envisioned his plan to create a more prosperous

Europe as well as dispel any spiteful regards that the European powers would hold

against one another. He believed that by issuing America's financial assistance, Europe

would have been in a better state, politically and financially:

> I still believe that before the main Conference, or very early
> in its proceedings, the representatives of Great Britain
> should have entered deeply, with those of United States,
> into the economic and financial situation as a whole, and
> that the former should have been authorized to make
> concrete proposals on the general lines (1) that all
> interallied indebtedness be canceled outright; (2) that the
> sum to be paid by Germany be fixed at
> $10,000,000,000…(5) that the ex-enemy Powers should
> also be allowed, with a view to their economic restoration,
> to issue a moderate amount of bonds carrying a similar
> guarantee.[92]

Keynes recognized that the treaty would maintain or create more tension between the

European powers, and potentially instigate future conflict. Keynes' version of the

reparations proposal would allow the enemy powers to have a say in their financial output

for reparations. It did not make sense for the victorious states to conjure a large war fee

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[92] John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of The Peace,* 147-8.

solely on the basis of their respective damages. For an economist, Keynes was very diplomatic.

German Stabilization

Germany implemented a revaluation movement designed to make good of the financial losses of hyperinflation.[93] In light of the currency crisis, the monetary law of August 1924, the German government exchanged of each old paper 1 trillion mark note for every one new Rentenmark. In reaction to the stabilization of the currency through the issuance of the new Rentenmark, the unemployment problem became even more severe. The employment rate dropped to 71.8 percent in December 1923.[94] What happened was that after the stabilization, businesses were short of functioning capital, rendering them cash-flow insolvent.

During the process of stabilization, the German government paid for limited reimbursement to bank deposits, although, many people withdrew their deposits during the hyperinflation. Germany also returned back to the gold standard, but became dependent on the stability of the international gold standard. By 1928, the deflationary monetary policies of the two largest compliers of gold standard: the United States and France, forced deflation and economic depression on Germany.[95]

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[93] Wolfgang Chr. Fischer ed., *German Hyperinflation 1922/23: A Law and Economics Approach* (Lohmer-Cologne: Eul Verlag, 2010), 82.
[94] Charles E. Butler, Lewis E. Hill, Stephen A. Lorenzen, "Inflation and the Destruction of Democracy: The Case of the Weimar Republic" (Association for Evolutionary Economics: Journal of Economic Issues, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1977) 301.
[95] Robert L. Hetzel, "German Monetary History in the First Half of the Twentieth Century" (Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, 2002), 12.

The war guilt clause and the demands for German reparations cannot be primarily responsible for the hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic. Historians and economists argue about the myth of reparations. Great War historian Niall Ferguson points out that it was Germany's irresponsible fiscal and monetary policies that led to the severe depreciation of the Mark. One of the ways in which Germany could have avoided hyperinflation was through more thoroughly designed taxes, which would in return raise better revenue:

> Webb has calculated that, if the revenues from income tax
> had not been eroded by renewed inflation after mid-1921,
> the real deficit (net of debt service) for the period July 1920
> to June 1921 would have been just 4 percept of NNP).[96]

Higher taxes on consumption would have been relatively easy to collect. But instead of utilizing a thorough fiscal plan of taxation, Germany blamed the injustices on the war guilt clause.

Dawes Plan of 1924 & Young Plan of 1928

The Dawes plan of 1924 was created in order to alleviate some of the financial burdens that the Treaty of Versailles imposed on Germany. There was careful consideration of Keynes' *Economic Consequences of Peace* and his recommendations in both the Dawes plan and the Young plan. The Dawes plan in 1924 reduced the reparations to annual payments of 2.5 billion marks per year, and the Young plan in 1928 would reduce the amount to a mean of nearly 2 billion reichsmarks per year over

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[96] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*, 429.

the course of 59 years.[97] One of the major decisions of the Dawes Plan was to allow

Germany to regain full control over the Ruhr region, as well as restructuring the

Weimar's national back: the Reichsbank. This was a slight relief to Germany due to the

fact that Germany had dropped the gold standard at the brink of World War I, and the

government demanded from the Reichsbank practically unlimited lender-of-last-resort

until the tail end of hyperinflation in 1923.[98] However, it also meant that the

Reichsbank would remain under Allied supervision and largely dependent on foreign

affairs, which were not entirely stable yet.

The hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic was primarily due to excessive

reparation demands, but there could have been ways in which Germany's financial

health could have been relieved. The Treaty of Versailles was an offensive contract and

it was politically fueled by bitterness and greed. The combination of the war guilt

clause and Germany's poor fiscal policies were partially mitigated by the Dawes plan

of 1924 and later on the Young plan of 1928.

The Great War and Its Legacy

The value in personal accounts of World War I has never been more important

to the more wholesome documentation of the Great War than it is in contemporary

times. Life stories help piece together what life was like during a period of devastation

and revolutionary events. It is critical to analyze the war from top to bottom, and

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[97] Roger B. Myerson, "Political Economics and the Weimar Disaster" (Mohr Siebeck: Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics, Vol. 160, No. 2, 2004) 196.
[98] Jean-Philippe Touffut ed., *Central Banks as Economic Institutions* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008), 24.

further flesh out the system of representation of the war and its participants. In the beginning of the 1970s, the French society seized the value of life stories and influenced a deluge of historians to seek out diaries and unpublished letters to by "providing a paradoxical and posthumous flourishing of new witnesses of the war."[99] It is essential to not only get the insight of the experience from above such as from generals, authoritative figures, government personnel, but also to extract the experiences from the bottom such as the veterans, medical personnel, and civilians who have sacrificed part or all their lives to the international cause of the Great War.

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[99] Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99.

Conclusion

The Great War changed the course of history for the fallen, the broken, and the resilient. It was a time period that caused massive destruction of human lives, but it was also a time that fostered compassion and ushered in modernity. The fallen soldiers had fought the war courageously until the bitter end. They had entered the war for the glory of 'King and Country' in mind, but when it came to physically being in the war, glory was nowhere in sight. They suffered through mud, blood, and gunfire only to find peace in death. The world had lost an entire generation of youth by the grips of war. The broken soldiers had also bought into the idea that their enlistment would bring them glory for 'King and Country' and did not fight the war any less courageously. The broken soldiers survived four years of hell, and returned home realizing that the war had darkened their youth. Their memories plagued their minds with their fallen comrades and horrific images of the battlefield. The war had created an entire generation of youth condemned by the relics and memories of the international war.

What was most riveting about the Great War was that it was a rupture making the onset of modernity. The medieval virtues of war gradually faded as the cold reality of the war allowed the soldiers to understand that war is war, nothing less and nothing more. The traditional 'For King and Country' theme had run its course, and the façade of war was finally unveiled. This shattered people's outlook of the war; however, it was necessary. The loss of the many lives in war was no longer celebrated as a symbol of sacrifice. The fallen and broken soldiers were able to convey to the public via writing

that the war experience they had gone through was not as glorified as it was initially expected. There was bloodshed, putrescence, and shrapnel. The romantic and propagandized portrayal of war was a myth for the fallen and the broken. This myth assuaged and enthused those who so willingly enlisted their lives, not as sacrifice, but for futility. The realization of this lie gave way to a different perception of how modern warfare would be, and how it would affect the broken soldiers of "The Lost Generation."

Amidst all the desolation and disillusionment, the Great War was not entirely without benefits. There were silver linings in each negative aspect of the war. Some men saw the glory of war, may it be for their personal enthusiasm or for the virtue of their country. Some men refused to give in to the romance of the war and saw the war for what it was: a necessary obstacle to overcome in their lives. Threads of compassion were woven through the disillusioning narrative of the Great War, as medical personnel were able to heal and comfort the soldiers holding onto dear life. Women were given the opportunity to work outside the boundaries of their homes, as well as keep the house fires burning. Women had the responsibility and opportunity to contribute to the war effort. As much as the Great War was rife with disenchantment and destructive of human lives and mentalities, there were components of the war that were filled with zest, opportunity, and the coming of modernity.

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