

THE GREAT WAR AND ENGLISH AND GERMAN SOCIETY, 1914 - 1929

The Great War in Europe, 1914 to 1918, became an important watershed event in the early twentieth-century. As a result of the War, the major societies of Europe were propelled toward modernity: agrarian and pre-industrial methods yielded to thoroughgoing technological processes, bourgeois and proletarian influences began to replace aristocratic control, and archaic strategies gave way to more sophisticated ideology. Politically, old nation states were broken apart (i.e., Austria-Hungary) and new nation states appeared on the map (i.e., Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). Poland once again emerged as an independent republic after a hiatus of almost one hundred and fifty years. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania also gained their independence from Russia (as a direct result of the Bolshevik Revolution but as an indirect result of the Great War). Political revolutions threatened to bring down the old order in just about every country, and economic upheavals challenged the ability of the proponents of the new surge of industrialism to maintain a viable balance. Militarily, the battered and decimated armies of engagement faced demobilization and the difficult task of reintegration into post-War society. Military leaders began to develop new strategies to align with the new realities of a post-Armistice world defined by a flawed Treaty of Versailles and an impotent League of Nations. But conceivably the greatest effect of the Great War did not come from economic, military, or political consequences. The greatest impact can be seen in the cultural and social changes that came to two major protagonists of the War—Germany of the Central Powers and Great Britain of the Entente Powers.

Nearly thirty percent of the ten million who were killed and the twenty million who were wounded over the course of the War came from these two countries. This impact in terms of

sheer numbers alone, especially in relation to the overall population, proved substantial. The spinoff—with its negative influence on family, the labor force, and leadership—became a nagging reality for each post-War society to face, and even this does not take into account the intellectual and psychological dynamics of such a great loss. These nations witnessed a radical change, so much so that they struggled to hold on to a sense of continuity with the past, a working ethos to function tolerably in the present, and a dynamic spirit to guide them into the future. As victors and vanquished searched for some kind of normalcy, the seeds of dissent and division erupted in various ways to jolt those who already felt disillusioned. But normalcy was not to be found in the reordering of post-War society, because for many the wounds of the War cut too deep.

The cultural and social tradeoffs definitely outweighed any naively conceived benefits that could be derived from the prosecution of the War. Both England and Germany found this particularly true. At the beginning, each nation inspired both civilians and soldiers with heightened notions about duty, honor, and country, that led to a sense of elation for the Germans but almost a crass attitude of playfulness for the English. After the Somme campaign, the English sport of war had long since eroded into bitterness, and German idealism devolved into skepticism. By the time of the Armistice, the quick gains of the Germans on the Western Front in the Summer of 1918 rapidly turned into defeat and disbelief, and this brought a welcome but almost surreal sense of relief to the British. Early memories of the War, from 1920 to about 1925, revealed a great deal of confusion in England about the meaning of the War itself and the role of its participants in post-War society, while in Germany the seeds of division had already blossomed into factious parties and outbursts of violence in a nation that felt betrayed due to the harsh provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. About a decade after the War, the memory of the

War still loomed over the majority of the populace in both countries, as English soldiers felt alienation and German soldiers felt dislocation. Without doubt, the rich variety of thought and emotion in the war-shocked cultures remained multifaceted. But sweeping trends, depicted with such generalizations, showed how each nation's cultural and social life altered as a result of the War. Shifting nuances in the meaning of important ideas like "home" and "home front" further served as suggestive indicators of significant cultural change.

For a variety of reasons, a spirit of optimism permeated the societies of Europe in the early years of the twentieth-century. Even the impending threat of war did not shake belief in the supreme ideological and technological triumph of mankind over the obsolete forces of a bygone epoch. To the contrary, war itself seemed the natural outgrowth of such evolutionary development, a necessary and beneficial achievement of the character of the modern age. But the issue of superiority among the nations could be settled only by actual engagement in battle. The national locus of the evolutionary pinnacle of attainment could be determined only through direct bellicose encounter. Both the Germans and the English were up to the task, as they welcomed the opportunity with initial positive regard—the justification that this conflict would be “the war to end all wars.”

The summer of 1914 witnessed “jingoistic crowd scenes” in the major cities across Europe—Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, and London. But the greatest intensity lay at “the matrix of the storm” in Germany. A sense of elation noticeably characterized the German people during that season of “poignancy and mystique.” Modris Eksteins notes that “the massive exhibitions of public sentiment played a crucial role in determining the fate of Europe that

summer.”¹ After the assassination of Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand, news of Russian mobilization met with a certain sense of foreboding. But the almost jubilant cry—*Et jeht los!*—captured the excitement of the crowds, especially in Berlin. Eksteins points out that “all the major decision makers [were] confronted directly by the massive outpouring of enthusiasm from the Berlin public. None of them [had] ever witnessed such demonstrations before. None of them [could] ignore the popular mood.”² Ernst Juenger echoes this idea of jubilation at the beginning of the War: “We had been welded by a few weeks’ training into one corporate mass inspired by the enthusiasm of one thought . . . to carry forward the German ideals of ‘70. We had grown up in a material age, and in each one of us there was the yearning for great experience, such as we had never known. The war had entered us like wine. We had set out in a rain of flowers to seek the death of heroes. The war was our dream of greatness, power, and glory.”³

Comparatively, among the English a light-hearted spirit of sportsmanship marked the phases of mobilization and initial engagement. This seeming playfulness of “the soldier’s troglodyte world” set apart the undertaking as something obsessively absurd with its ironies like “the ridiculous proximity of the trenches to home.”⁴ As Paul Fussell remarks, “In nothing is the

¹*Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 56.

²*Ibid.*, 59-60.

³*The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front* (1929; repr., New York: Howard Fertig, 1996), 1.

⁴Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 64-69.

initial British innocence so conspicuous as in the universal commitment to the sporting spirit.”⁵ This “sporting spirit” came out in analogies that likened aspects of the fighting to popular sports such as cricket and in the integration of sports such as football onto the actual battlefield. Much of the early popular literature on the War championed the cause of the Allies, the English in particular, as so much “wholesome fun.”⁶ Even after the War, the horrific carnage could not dissipate lingering memories of this early, naive playfulness. Siegfried Sassoon recalls his own fanatical zeal for the sport of war, something which gained him the nickname of “Mad Jack” from his men. Over a decade after the War, he appropriately sequenced his fabulous War story—*Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*—after the first volume in his three-part fictitious autobiography, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. In other words, for Sassoon the experience of the War simply followed an earlier stage of his life as just another, but albeit more intense, time of personal growth and sportsmanship. British women, who worked in the munitions industries and played a significant role as warriors on the home front, similarly blended elements of sport and recreation with the drudgery of factory life.⁷ In a real way, they mimicked the experience of the playfulness of the troops in the trenches, something that did not fail to catch the attention of

⁵Ibid., 25.

⁶Ibid., 25-29.

⁷Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 136-143.

the watchful eye of an observant enemy.⁸ But German elation and English playfulness soon gave way to the harsh actuality of an ugly war of attrition.⁹

The stultifying bloodbath called the Battle of the Somme, which began 1 July 1916 and lingered for another five months, rightly deserved the bitter pejorative phrase accorded it by the British troops—The Great Fuck-Up.¹⁰ Even Erich Remarque, who experienced disillusionment soon after combat, recognized the devastating effect of those endless days of hellish barrage: “Had we returned home in 1916, out of the suffering and the strength of our experience we might have unleashed a storm. Now if we go back we will be weary, broken, burnt out, rootless, and without hope. We will not be able to find our way any more.”¹¹ Juenger iterates Remarque’s skepticism when he portrays a new and ugly vision of the conflict. At this point in his memoir, his language oozes with emotion, ruination, and judgment. He kisses chivalry goodbye in light of what he calls “the soul of scientific war,” and he vividly images the relentless artillery as a

⁸During the Christmas truce of 1914, Juenger recalls his exchange with a British officer as “sportsmanlike,” and he remarks, “It has always been my ideal in war to eliminate all feelings of hatred and to treat my enemy as an enemy only in battle and to honour him as a man according to his courage. It is exactly in this that I have found many kindred souls among British officers.” *Storm of Steel*, 52. On the Christmas truce, see Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 95-98.

⁹In retrospect, Erich Maria Remarque views the shift away from any positive outlook as immediate: “The first death we saw shattered this belief. . . . The first bombardment showed us our mistake, and under it the world . . . broke in pieces.” *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. A. W. Wheen (1929; repr., New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 12-13.

¹⁰Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, 12. For details, see John Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 94-95.

¹¹*All Quiet on the Western Front*, 294.

“carnival of hell,” an “orgy of destruction.”¹² The Battle of the Somme changed both the face of the War and the face of the men who fought the War. The Somme forever engraved in the souls of the combatants the abysmal nothingness of the struggle, a nothingness from which there could be no return.

From that point forward, the battered and destroyed psyche of the soldier exchanged reality for fantasy, fiction, and oftentimes hallucination. Sassoon aptly relates the surreal mood after retreat from the Battle of Bazentin Ridge: “I had seen something that night which overawed me. It was all in the day’s work—an exhausted Division returning from the Somme Offensive—but for me it was as though I had watched an army of ghosts. It was as though I had seen the War as it might be envisioned by the mind of some epic poet a hundred years hence.”¹³ Soon after, chilling bitterness began to disaffect Sassoon’s stupefied spirit: “I was losing my belief in the War, and I longed for mental acquiescence—to be like young Patterson, who had come out to fight for his country undoubting, who could still kneel by his bed and say his simple prayers, steadfastly believing that he was in the Field Artillery to make the world a better place. I had believed like that, once upon a time . . .”¹⁴

For many, like the erstwhile patriotic Sassoon, the trek toward bitterness evolved over a period of time. But for others, like the truculent Richard Aldington who seemingly condemned the whole affair with no latitude for a worsening progression in the War, the trek began,

¹²Juenger, *Storm of Steel*, 92-110.

¹³*Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930; repr., London: Faber Paperbacks, 1965), 84.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 123.

continued, and ended with deep bitterness. With scathing and blistering cynicism, Aldington scoffs at the travesty of the death of Captain George Witherspoon, the hero of his novel: “The death of a hero! What mockery, what bloody cant! What sickening putrid cant! George’s death is a symbol to me of the whole sickening bloody waste of it, the damnable stupid waste and torture of it. You’ve seen how George’s own people—the makers of his body, the women who held his body to theirs—were affected by his death. The Army did its bit, but how could the Army individually mourn a million ‘heroes’? . . . At dawn next morning we were hot-foot after the retreating enemy, and did not pause until the Armistice—and then we had our own lives to struggle with and disentangle.”¹⁵ To be sure, Aldington’s bitter pessimism highlights the schisms that had begun to work their way into the conscious fabric of English society by the time of the Armistice in November 1918. Likewise Germany, with the pretentiousness of its old aristocratic guard and the avaricious profiteering of the bourgeois elite, could boast no true sympathy for its troops, an important cause of growth in factions on its home front.

Well before the Armistice, though, the dichotomy between the trench troglodytes and their “enemy to the rear” already had developed.¹⁶ But the usualness of such faction between enlisted fighting men and their staff officers intensified due to the extremely harsh nature of the fighting in the trenches and the relative cushiness of the conditions enjoyed by officers behind the lines. Insulated in some measure from the War’s brutality, senior officers doggedly held on to archaic strategies about the prosecution of the War, and this distanced them further from the

¹⁵*Death of a Hero* (1929; repr., London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 35.

¹⁶See Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, 82-90.

common soldier.¹⁷ As feelings of abandonment by their military leaders set in, a genuine acceptance of being at home in the trenches only deepened the already close-knit comradeship of the troglodytes. For Remarque, this represented the quintessential accomplishment of the War in terms of human relations in spite of the War's ugliness: "By far the most important result was that it awakened in us a strong, practical sense of *esprit de corps*, which in the field developed into the finest thing that arose out of the war—comradeship."¹⁸

Out of this close attachment to his fellows in the trenches and the shocking unreality of events at the Front itself, the trench warrior grappled with an illusory perception of lostness about self and the rest of the world, especially what once was known to be home. Remarque's main character, Paul Baumer, says it all too well: "These memories of former times do not awaken desire so much as sorrow—a vast, inapprehensible melancholy. Once we had such desires—but they return not. They are past, they belong to another world that is gone from us. . . . They arise no more; we are dead . . . we fear and love without hope . . . we are burnt up by hard facts . . . we are indifferent . . . we are lost."¹⁹ To the lost soldier, the Western Front in a nearby but disparate country became home, and home itself conversely became like a distant, foreign land. Again, Remarque's Baumer is a good example. At "home" on leave, Baumer is dazed and paralyzed. He feels displaced and disoriented while apart from his comrades and his true home—the Front: "I

¹⁷Disgust of staff officers was also keenly felt by the line officers who fought with the enlisted men in the trenches. See Juenger, *Storm of Steel*, 202.

¹⁸Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 26-27. The quest of the soldiers to maintain this comradeship after the War is a major theme in Remarque's sequel novel, *The Road Back*, trans. A. W. Wheen (1931; repr., New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1958).

¹⁹Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 121-123.

cannot speak a word . . . I can do nothing, I struggle to make myself laugh, to speak, but no word comes, and so I stand . . . miserable, helpless, paralysed, and against my will the tears run down my cheeks. . . . A sense of strangeness will not leave me, I cannot feel at home . . . I am not myself there. There is a distance, a veil . . .”²⁰

Back home, family and friends seemed like foreigners to the trench warriors, and the soldiers themselves became as strangers—distant, withdrawn, and unapproachable. In the most basic ways, the relatives of the soldiers could not relate to their war-traumatized kin. They had no referential framework to even acknowledge much less understand the soldiers’ despicable world, so they were incapable of taking part in any meaningful emotional or intellectual encounter. Official propaganda to some extent led to a lack of understanding about the plight of the trench warriors. But out of a sense of duty, as well as a desire to protect the sensitivities of close relatives (and their own sense of detachment), the warriors often reciprocated such acts of deception.²¹ On a deeper level, though, soldiers at the Front actually exchanged blood ties as a result of their trench experience. By the gore and waste of the trenches, they were literally torn away from their old roots and initiated into the fraternal bloodline of those who had witnessed and survived the haunting specter of Death. They instinctively abandoned old meanings and old realities about life, home, fraternity, and happiness, and many even gave up the desire to recover any value in personhood or life itself.

²⁰Ibid., 157-160.

²¹See Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 181.

As a result, this isolation of the human psyche—both individual and collective—spawned an unbridgeable chasm between home and soldier, past and present, and even between the soldiers themselves. The English could speak of a “lost generation” while the Germans could talk about a “second wave” of soldiers at the Front and “three subgenerations” of youth affected by the War—the young front generation (born 1890 to 1900), the war youth generation (born 1900 to 1910), and the postwar generation (born after 1910).²² And the respite of the Armistice did not alter this situation. To a certain degree, the schisms between soldiers and home front and among the varying generations had been established. The passing aura of relief in England and the disquieting temper of disbelief in Germany that accompanied the days of peace in November 1918 did little to sway the internal turbulence that threatened to undo each nation.²³

The disillusion that immediately followed the War trended toward confusion in England and division in Germany. In England, the nation emerged from the War as a victor, but the old Victorian ethos had been shattered, and prevalent Edwardian loyalties had been abandoned as indefensible. Christopher Isherwood in *The Memorial*²⁴ fittingly describes not one lost generation but at least three lost generations of one extended gentry family who live in a time

²²See Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 42-84, 85-121.

²³The idea of English relief is to be minimized just as the notion of German disbelief should be maximized. The troops who felt alienated and betrayed did not reflect invariably the attitudes of the noncombatants on the home front. See Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 199, 207, 237-238. Compare Juenger, *Storm of Steel*, 316-319.

²⁴*The Memorial* (1946; repr., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). This section on Isherwood is adapted from a seminar discussion led by Nancy E Rupprecht, History 6030: Seminar—Historical Readings and Criticism, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, 13 November 2001, personal notes of David W Fletcher, Manchester, TN.

warp and grope their way through the decade of the twenties with little purpose and no hope of any substantial change. The old Victorian guard is senile and spent, the middle-aged survivors—both female and male—cannot shake off the skeletons of the past, and the youth suffer from multiple neuroses. From Isherwood’s perspective, England is a lost society that cannot recover after so great a shock as the War. The former props of the nation—the Empire, the Monarchy, and Christianity—symbolized in the Memorial Cross in every English hamlet, have eroded so that they are all but useless. As part of that society, his characters are incapable of any positive development or true personal intimacy, since they are unable to put the failed past behind them.²⁵

In England, this perception and actuality of a failed past initially silenced the voices of those who suffered the most. The pain was too great for rational thought, just as the violent memories were too severe and too recent for intelligible speech. Ten years later, though, veterans of the War began to write about the experiences that they had suppressed a decade earlier.²⁶ But by then, they felt displaced and no longer an important part of society. Wohl observes how many of them, especially those of the privileged class, related their sense of alienation: “Embittered silence broadened the rift between the civilians and the soldiers. And out of this trauma produced by the shattering of the dream of victory and this estrangement from the civilian population arose a new poetry, and ultimately a new literature, which represented the fate

²⁵Isherwood sees all of them as victims of the War, something that “ought never to have happened.” *Ibid.*, 294.

²⁶This was true in both England and Germany.

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of the English generation of 1914 in radically different terms.”²⁷ To a large extent, the soldiers and the people of England never recovered fully from this alienation which resulted in inevitable changes in twentieth-century English society—its passage to the modern age.

After the War in Germany, the fighting did not stop but only internalized, since the new Weimar Republic proved unable to maintain political stability. The herculean efforts expended during the War sapped the country’s energies, and fears about the negative provisions of the Treaty of Versailles served to exasperate the people’s paranoia. The difficulties associated with returning a demoralized army to its homeland, especially a Fatherland alien and hostile to its warriors, magnified the nation’s problems. As political parties multiplied and radical factions strengthened, violence erupted in a series of about 375 political murders from January 1919 through June 1922.²⁸ With their leadership fighting and fragmented, the populace also began to break apart, and this led to fear, isolation, and unrest. War reparations predictably aggravated economic woes and frustrated sincere efforts toward national recovery. Hans Fallada’s *Little Man, What Now?* centers on this declining economy—perilous for the petty bourgeoisie—in a fledgling Weimar society wracked by internal squabbles and escalating tensions among

²⁷Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, 95. Compare Wohl’s treatment of *Testament of Youth* by Vera Britain, *ibid.*, 111. Note Woollacott’s discussion about the negative effects of demobilization on the women munitions workers, i.e., their displacement, alienation, and reaction, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, 105-112. Also see Aldington’s dedicatory preface to Halcott Glover in his *Death of a Hero*. Aldington’s work in its entirety is an indictment of English society and his strong feelings of detachment from it.

²⁸These were mostly victims from the political left. E. J. Gumbel, *Vier Jahre Politischer Mord*, cited in Evelyn Anderson, *Hammer or Anvil: The Story of the German Working-Class Movement* (London, 1945), 87, excerpted by Rupprecht, History 6030: Seminar, MTSU, 6 November 2001, class handout.

socialists, fascists, and communists. But quite conspicuously, Fallada unveils the rooting of poisonous seeds from the Nazi movement, whereby dissenting groups and undesirable minorities like the Jews become disadvantaged and persecuted.²⁹

From Remarque's perspective, the road back for the soldiers is filled with frustrations and failure. For the war-trodden, even the dearest things of youth cannot be reclaimed, so there is nothing to look forward to: "Suddenly I am conscious of the nameless sadness of Time that runs and runs on and changes, and when a man returns he shall find nothing again. . . . I have knocked at the doors of my youth and desired to enter in there . . . Surely . . . something of it must remain? I attempted it again and again, and as a result made myself merely ridiculous and wretched.—But now I know, I know now that a still, silent war has ravaged this country of my memories also. . . . Time lies between like a great gulf; I cannot get back. There is nothing for it; I must go forward, march onward, anywhere; it matters nothing, for I have no goal."³⁰ Sadly, those who fight as comrades during the War have allowed the nation's internal convulsions to divide them, so that they thrash "at one another's throats—Social Democrats, Independents, Spartacists, Communists! And in the meantime the other fellows are quietly potting off what few real brains they have among them, and they don't even see it!"³¹ With no possible return to youth, no help from comrades, and no confidence in the Fatherland, Remarque's veterans feel detached, cut off, and dislocated. In Remarque's crushing conclusion, Lieutenant Ludwig Breyer, the voice of the

²⁹*Little Man, What Now?* trans. Eric Sutton (1933; repr., Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1983). Hans Fallada is the pseudonym of Rudolph Ditzen.

³⁰*The Road Back*, 192-193.

³¹*Ibid.*, 212.

veterans, bemoans: “Think of it! A generation annihilated! A generation of hope, of faith, of will, strength, ability, so hypnotised that they have shot down one another, though over the whole world they all had the same purpose!”³²

This psychological derangement without doubt held true for veterans of the War from every country. Their readjustment, or lack of it, certainly changed the face of Europe for the modern era. The overall proclivity centered on repression or, as Eksteins suggests, a “denial of repression,” so that “the twenties, as a result, witnessed a hedonism and narcissism of remarkable proportions.”³³ But other tendencies detailed by Eksteins proved to be prominent in the changing mood and mentality of the post-War, modern epoch. Veterans who gravitated toward literary catharsis agreed to bury the ugly memories, at least for a time. Official and regimental histories, as well as memorials and tributes, preponderated but soon were shelved or forgotten. Few joined the newly founded veteran’s organizations, and ex-soldiers swelled the ranks of the unemployed. Rising discontent meant the demise of “the war’s political stewards and military politicians . . . [who] were all soon forced into frustrated retirement or opposition.”³⁴ The political spectrum polarized as the liberal left gained ground, but this pushed the conservative right to dangerous extremes. The War ultimately took its toll in the form of a spiritual crisis, which became “a crisis of values” of the mass psyche: “The mind has indeed been cruelly wounded . . . It doubts itself profoundly. The inevitable partner of that doubt was flight, a flight from reality . . . [a]

³²Ibid., 215-216.

³³*Rites of Spring*, 256.

³⁴Ibid., 254.

craving for newness . . . in what was regarded by radicals as the bankruptcy of history and by moderates as at least the derailment of history.”³⁵ The Great War therefore created a vacuum for the reconstruction of the world as modern–cynical and skeptical, uprooted and hopeless. This modern culture became the legacy that both England and Germany took into the next decade, as they faced the certain prospect of another global conflict.

³⁵Ibid., 257.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldington, Richard. *Death of a Hero*. 1929. Reprint, London: Hogarth Press, 1984.

A bitter, scathing repudiation of traditional English society in light of the Great War. Aldington develops both “a jazz novel” and “a memorial to a generation” in his development of the life of his main character George Winterbourne. Winterbourne escapes from the Edwardian gloom of his rural home to the chic excitement of Soho, where he marries and also enjoys a mistress. He rejects his traditional upbringing but only to suffer an ironic fate very much based on traditional institutions and ideologies, death against a barbaric enemy in the bloody trenches. In this novel, Aldington mounts a ferocious attack on British hypocrisy and pretense as well as a pungent invective against the senseless waste of warfare.

Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

An aesthetic approach to the Great War, the memory of the War, and its lasting effects on western civilization in the twentieth century. Eksteins explores the intense, violent drama of the War in the midst of a larger histrionic setting, an overall drama that indelibly leads to *weltweit Katastrophe aber Fortschritt*. Eksteins attempts to show the staggering convergence of strikingly similar—yet not without their variations—desires, goals, and outcomes that led to, impinged on, and succeeded the bellicose rites of spring that the nations of Europe enacted from 1914 to 1918.

Ellis, John. *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

A brief, thematic overview of trench warfare during the Great War. Ellis examines the design of and conditions in the trenches, strategies and tactics used by the soldiers to prosecute the War, and attitudes—positive and negative—that compelled the soldiers to sustain the fight or, contrarily, to give up. Amply illustrated, this work is an excellent introduction to that aspect of World War I that created a “community of martyrs,” a “brotherhood of the damned.”

Fallada, Hans. *Little Man, What Now?* Translated by Eric Sutton. 1933. Reprint, Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1983.

Describes the drama, mystique, and harsh realities of life for commoners in Germany, especially Pomerania and Berlin, during the difficult years of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933). Fallada [pseudonym for Rudolph Ditzen] shows the effect of the convergence of these powerful events on his two main characters, Johannes Pinneberg and Emma Moerschel, who marry, start a family, and find their lives disrupted by economic and political turmoil. Overall, the work develops the rise of Emma from proletarian to petty bourgeois status, and the consequent fall of Johannes from the petty bourgeoisie (employed) to the proletariat (unemployed).

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Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

An important study of the connection between the Great War and the ironic expressions of its modern memory. Fussell draws primarily on the British experience of World War I and the ways that literature has remembered the war—its conventions and myths. He also touches on the impressions of the trench experience by various authors. Fussell combines aspects of Northrop Frye’s literary criticism, the creative memoirs of key British veterans, and common myths about World War I. As a work of literary phenomenology, Fussell’s study is unsurpassed, but he does not provide a careful contextual or chronological study about the relation of the War to historical memory.

Isherwood, Christopher. *The Memorial*. 1946. Reprint, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

An intriguing look at the effects of the Great War on English society in the 1920s from the limited perspective of one extended gentry family. Isherwood describes three lost generations of this family who cannot overcome the devastating effects of the War. Isherwood intends this experience to be quite general, since England after the War is a lost society that cannot recover from so great a shock. True, the nation emerged from the War as a victor, but the old Victorian ethos was shattered, and prevalent Edwardian loyalties were abandoned as indefensible. As part of that destroyed society, Isherwood’s characters are incapable of any positive development or true personal intimacy, since they are unable to put the failed past behind them.

Juenger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front*. 1929. Reprint, New York: Howard Fertig, 1996.

A persuasive and realistic memoir of Ernst Juenger’s service as a storm trooper with the 73rd Hanoverian Fusiliers during the Great War. His chronological and thorough development of his involvement in the War bears an almost romanticized experience: “Time only strengthens my conviction that it was a good and strenuous life, and that the war, for all its destructiveness, was an incomparable schooling of the heart.” Nevertheless, the book portrays the battles in the bloody trenches of Northern France and Flanders with “unflinching honesty and graphic narrative force.”

Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Translated by A. W. Wheen. 1929. Reprint, New York: Ballantine Books, 1982.

The classic novel about the Great War from a German perspective. Remarque recounts his belief in the War’s destructiveness through the eyes of Paul Baumer and his schoolmates. In this way, Remarque effectively captures the senselessness and the inhumanity of the War as evidenced by its devastation of an entire generation of Germany’s youth.

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_____. *The Road Back*. Translated by A. W. Wheen. 1931. Reprint, New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1958.

Remarque's sequel novel to *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In this story, the German soldiers who return home try to maintain the comradeship that held them together during the War. But the divisive spinoffs of the War in German society are too far gone, and they too are torn in their affections and behaviors toward each other and their Fatherland.

Sassoon, Siegfried. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. 1930. Reprint, London: Faber Paperbacks, 1965.

The second part of Sassoon's fictionalized autobiography after *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* and before *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*. Sassoon details his own experience in the effects of the Great War on the character of Lieutenant George Sherston. The young officer at first is optimistic about the purpose of the War, but soon after the Battle of the Somme he becomes disillusioned. By the close of the War, he loses hope completely and finds a bit of solace in an antiwar stance. In this way, Sassoon illustrates how strong feelings of skepticism replaced the utopian idealism of Edwardian society in the lives of most veterans of the War.

Wohl, Robert. *The Generation of 1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

An attempt by the author to "rescue the generation of 1914 from the shadowland of myth and to restore it to the realm of history." Wohl develops a collective biography of prominent social and political intellectuals and shows their contribution to generational thought in Europe from the period 1880 to about 1920. He produces a balanced and thorough narrative on the influence of key thinkers in France, Germany, England, Spain, and Italy. Wohl's study reveals the impact that the notion of a generation of 1914 made on the self-consciousness of erudite Europeans in the first third of the twentieth-century.

Woollacott, Angela. *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.

An examination of the experience of women munitions workers in Great Britain during the Great War. Woollacott centers her study on women who worked in various capacities, as both skilled and unskilled labor, for government and private munitions industries. She highlights the fact that these women played an indispensable wartime role, since they greatly outnumbered women employed in any other wartime activity in Britain during the war.