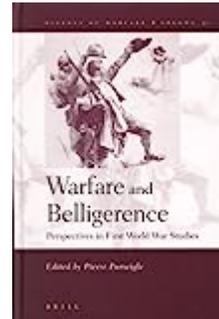




Pierre Purseigle, ed. *Warfare and Belligerence: Perspectives in First World War Studies*. Leiden: Brill, 2005. xiv + 418 pp. \$184.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-14352-4.



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Published on H-German (February, 2006)

The Reverberations of “Total War”

The field of First World War studies continues to produce exceptional examples of interdisciplinary scholarship. It is safe to assume that scholars generally accept the notion that the First World War marked what Michael Geyer termed a “rupture in civility” (cited on p. 1). The opening shot in a century scarred by industrialized killing, genocide and extremism of all sorts, the First World War naturally lends itself to innumerable avenues of scholarly inquiry. Some brilliant examples of this scholarship are found in this edited collection of articles produced by members of the International Society for First World War Studies.

Editor Pierre Purseigle is faced with the unenviable task of writing an introduction for a volume presenting topics ranging from tactical innovations to literary movements and civil rights. Purseigle stresses the interdisciplinary nature of the book and proceeds to write a convoluted historiographical essay explaining the relationship between “warfare” and “belligerence” in the context of total war. Purseigle uses Stephani Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker’s concept of “war culture” and Michael Geyer’s familiar argument concerning the “militarization

of Europe” to introduce belligerence as a historical concept. War culture is defined as a “system of cultural supports that allows populations to adapt to and perpetuate conflict” (p. 19). Belligerence, according to Purseigle, “refers to the cultural dispositions toward the prosecution of war which constituted the matrix of collective and individual behaviors that made up the wartime mobilization.” Purseigle adds that belligerence is “the process of negotiation that accounts for individual and collective adaptations to the war and underscores the conditionality of consent” (p. 18).

The articles in *Warfare and Belligerence* represent the many ways in which total war influenced every conceivable aspect of society. The issue of consent is important in distinguishing between willful actors in the conflict and faceless victims. Granted, this distinction is hard to make and many actors are also victims, but the persons addressed in the book are independent actors. The articles in *Warfare and Belligerence* are a mix of social history and military history, prime examples of the “new cultural history” of the First World War. The book comprises fourteen chapters written by scholars from the United

States and Europe. Each article is of high quality and includes a full bibliography in addition to endnotes. This apparatus is extremely helpful for those seeking primary sources. The articles are loosely organized around military subjects, political and social activism, literary subjects, and memory.

Prolific military historian Dennis Showalter begins the volume by describing the different ways in which Britain, Germany and France attempted to break the stalemate on the Western Front. Showalter is on familiar ground when discussing the dynamics of military cultures and how tactical solutions reflected the mentality of the officer corps that produced them. Vanda Wilcox takes a close look at military discipline in the Italian army in light of the disastrous defeat at Caporetto in 1917. Wilcox writes a revealing narrative about the vagaries of the military's judicial actions concerning various disciplinary crimes; she concludes that discipline problems had more to do with demoralization and the summary nature of Italian discipline than fear of combat. Patrick Porter compares the experience of German and English military chaplains, especially their changing attitudes about the war and their attempts to reconcile its unprecedented destruction with their faith. In addition to capturing the differences between nationalities as well as Anglicanism and Lutheranism, Porter highlights similarities among chaplains seeking to justify sacrifice. In yet another interesting comparative study, Heather Jones relates how different home fronts reacted to the arrival of enemy prisoners of war (POWs). Jones states that attitudes toward the "enemy" on home soil were influenced by the degree of stress experienced on the home front, the success of the government's propaganda machine and the fortunes of war at the time of the POWs' arrival.

Chapter 5 traces the growth of the French Catholic and social activist, Marc Sangnier. Aid Barry places Sangnier firmly inside of a Catholic "war culture" in France. Sangnier was an officer as well as official propagandist during the war. The highlight of his war experience was pleading France's case before the papacy. Paul Mulvey relates the plight of British Liberalism during the war through the biography of Josiah C. Wedgwood. Mulvey shows how, even during a life and death struggle with Germany, political instinct guided Wedgwood through the changing fortunes of war. In one of the few essays focusing on the United States, Jennifer D. Keene analyzes the experience of African-American soldiers, especially veterans, with the mostly white authorities in charge of administering disability and bene-

fits. Keene reveals how difficult it was for African Americans to receive even the most basic health care state-side because of a combination of institutional weakness and racism. Keene notes that protests by African Americans "laid the groundwork for postwar activism and succeeded in keeping army officials on edge throughout the war" (p. 220). Keith Graves details the involvement of British veterans in creating communal associations and altering the dynamics of town life and politics. Increased demands by veterans and government fears of a new activism inevitably followed.

Several articles in *Warfare and Belligerence* investigate the academic and cultural repercussions of the First World War. Nicolas Ginsburger details the career of American geographer Douglas W. Johnson in the context of America's emergence as a world power during the course of the First World War. Ginsburger suggests that geography emerged as an independent discipline in the United States by virtue of its contributions during the war and its utility during the Peace of Versailles. Elizabeth Fordham examines academe more generally by focusing on the First World War careers of historians R. W. Seton-Watson and Ernest Denis. Fordham concludes that war was embraced by some academics as an opportunity to push reform and open up new fields of study; it also inspired a more international approach to the world. Nicolas Beaupré compares the growth of new literary genres in France and Germany and interrogates the validity of a literature "born of the war" (p. 324). The principal subject here is the emergence of the soldier-writer and his cultural influence in France and Germany. Leonard V. Smith writes a fascinating article on the female readers of a noted French soldier-writer, Henri Barbusse. Smith analyzes letters written to Barbusse by women and suggests the act of reading his famous memoir helped women "bridge the experiential gulf between themselves as women and soldiers in the trenches" (p. 354).

The final two chapters concern memory and the First World War. Leen Engelen analyzes the representations of the war in Belgian silent films, particularly the portrayal of the German enemy and the occupation. Not surprisingly, Belgian hatred of the Germans and bitterness at Belgium's perceived slight after the war shines through in films that portray the Germans as sub-human barbarians. Elise Julien compares the different attitudes and policies of the capital cities of Paris and Berlin regarding establishing memorials. While the French pursued an active program befitting a victor nation, Weimar Germany was the uncomfortable legacy of the war and

its government struggled to come to grips with defeat. Germany was divided over whether the government was even legitimate.

Warfare and Belligerence is a valuable book for scholars interested in the next generation of scholars to build upon the work of Michael Geyer, Annette Becker and others. Pierre Purseigle describes the book accurately

when writing in the introduction that it is “an individual contribution to the running dialogue between sub-disciplines within the field of First World War studies” (p. 18). The articles in this collection remind us that military historians and social and cultural historians are best served by sharing ideas, sources, and arguments with one another. The result is cutting-edge scholarship.

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Citation: Brian Crim. Review of Purseigle, Pierre, ed., *Warfare and Belligerence: Perspectives in First World War Studies*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. February, 2006.

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