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## **“The enemy, that mysterious being”:**

A narrative analysis on the construction of the “enemy” during World War One

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## Abstract

The experiences of rank-and-file soldiers have largely been ignored within conventional peace and conflict studies. This bachelor thesis analyses war memoirs to attain an understanding for how perceptions about the enemy changed during the First World War. The research question has therefore been phrased as follows: How was the enemy initially perceived by soldiers in the first world war, and how was it shaped through interactions? It is conducted through a narrative analysis consisting of qualitative data, collected from war-memoirs written by three European soldiers who took part in the conflict. Firstly, this thesis presents the historical background of the conflict and each author after which relevant literature is described which has studied the construction of the “the enemy”, in relation to war. Secondly, the theoretical framework is introduced, consisting of Social Identity Theory, to study the enemy and an “Everyday” perspective which is utilized to study how interactions shaped the perceptions of the soldiers. The thesis then introduces the methodological framework, which consists of the Narrative analysis as well as the source material and the delimitations. The material is then analyzed, establishing that violent and non-violent engagements with the enemy had differing effects on the perceptions of the soldiers. It uncovers, that while these authors had different ideologies and origins, they developed similar perceptions of the enemy over the course of the war. This research therefore concludes that the perceptions of the soldiers were initially shaped by their preconception but that the nature of interactions during the war, caused them to develop similar perceptions about the enemy, as an actor which should be respected.

9997 words

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

From the state-based wars of the early 20th century to the current day, violent conflict has shaped the modern history of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Despite the continued presence of such hostilities, the nature of these occurrences is constantly changing. The conflicts of the 20th century were fought by conscripted soldiers within hierarchically ordered, territorialized structures of modern states.<sup>2</sup> During the last few years, new disputes have emerged which resemble those of the early 20th century,<sup>3</sup> wars based around geopolitical international policy aiming at increasing the amount of controlled territory.<sup>4</sup> The war in Ukraine, however, has not only been reminiscent of traditional warfare on a geopolitical scale: on the ground, trenches have been dug, creating a stagnant conflict waged in a similar manner to World War 1.<sup>5</sup> Such tendencies necessitate an understanding of traditional warfare within the field of peace and conflict studies.

Although it is relevant to study more general phenomena during conflicts, the war is fought by soldiers on the ground. These combatants continually interact with the enemy and form a perception of them. The image of the enemy can however shift throughout a conflict, raising the question as to how enemies are perceived in micro-practices of war, and how the lived experiences of soldiers change their understanding of the opponent.

This will be conducted within the context of a Narrative Analysis, using Social Identity Theory to observe how the enemy is constructed an “Everyday” perspective to study how the interactions of soldiers on the frontlines, were shaped, using memoirs from the First World War as source material. During World War One, soldiers from multiple countries documented their

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<sup>1</sup> Salomon, Kim. 1900-talets skräckkabinett. In *Katastrofens århundrade, historiska och verkningshistoriska perspektiv*, Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (ed.), 87–108. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB, 2009. 87-89.

<sup>2</sup> Kaldor, Mary. *New and Old Wars, organized violence in a global era*. 3d edition. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013. xi, 1-2 17.

<sup>3</sup> Mead, Walter Russel. The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers. *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 93, no. 3, 2014: 69-74. 69–75.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–74

<sup>5</sup> Tharoor, Ishaan. Ukraines War of Attrition Draws Parallels to WWI. *The Washington Post*. 2023-08-14.

experiences in memoirs.<sup>6</sup> These books can provide insight about how regular soldiers, in a traditional war, perceived their enemy.

## 1.2 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to attain a greater understanding for how the enemy is constructed, through interactions by “Everyday” combatants. To understand how the lived reality of war affects combatants values. Analyzing how the enemy is perceived can also increase understanding of War, providing insights from a grassroots level about how commandants construct their enemies.

The purpose of this thesis is however also to engage with source material, which has generally been ignored within conventional Peace and Conflict Studies. While Memoirs have been included in peace and conflict studies to analyze the perceptions of diplomats and political leaders. The experiences of rank-and-file combatants have however been largely ignored, despite the increased interest for the everyday and the local. There are however multiple war diaries and memoirs which describe the events from the perspective of a participant rather than the general perspective presented by most researchers. Source material which combined with wider research phenomena can provide a more holistic view of peace and conflict studies, because of the increased amount of vantage points.<sup>7</sup>

The study is therefore motivated to contribute to research about how the conception about the enemy is developed through interaction. This is the backdrop and main issue of this thesis, and the research question is as follows:

“How was the enemy initially perceived by soldiers in the first world war, and how was it shaped through interactions?”

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<sup>6</sup> Salomon, Kim. 1900-talets skräckkabinett. In *Katastrofens århundrade, historiska och verkningshistoriska perspektiv*, Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (ed.), 87–108. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB, 2009. 88-90.

<sup>7</sup> Mac Ginty, Roger. Temporality and contextualization in Peace and Conflict Studies: The forgotten value of war memoirs and personal diaries. *Cooperation and Conflict*. Vol. 57, issue. 2, 2021: 191–209.

## 1.3 Historical framework

In this segment, a historical background will be provided which provides context for the First World War and the soldiers whose war memoirs will be studied.

### 1.3.1 World War One

The First World War (1914-1918) was a world-spanning conflict between the Central Powers and the Triple-Entente. The Central Powers were a coalition led by Germany and The Austro-Hungarian empire with support from the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. The Entente originally consisted of France, Russia, and the United Kingdom but other nations joined the coalition including Serbia, and later also countries such as Japan, Italy, and the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Initially, Germany saw successes against both the French and Russians, however after a few months the Western Front stagnated. Trenches were built and the war ground to a halt, while both sides continued to experience large casualties. Italy entered the war in 1915, but their offensive against Austria was a costly endeavor, with large offensive maneuvers which yielded little territorial gains.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3.2 The soldiers who wrote the war memoirs

Emilio Lussu (1890-1975) was born to a rich family in the impoverished village of Cagliari in Sardinia. He was educated in Rome, after which he returned to Cagliari to study law. In the first few months of 1915, Italy was divided between interventionists, who wanted to join the war on the English and French side, and neutralists, who wanted Italy to remain neutral. Lussu and many other students favored intervention, to “liberate” historically Italian territory which Austria controlled, a conquest which was considered necessary to complete the patriotic and democratic project of national unity. Lussu enlisted in May 1915, two weeks after graduating. Italy entered the war ten days after he had joined the Sassari, a brigade consisting of Sardinian soldiers. During the war, Lussu proved himself a capable soldier, being decorated four times for valor. After the war ended, he became a politician. Because of his left-wing politics, he was imprisoned by the Fascist government, which took power during the 1920s. He did however

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<sup>8</sup> Hultdt, Bo. Första världskriget. *National Encyklopedin*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*,

manage to escape to Paris, where he would write several political books and *A Soldier on the Southern Front*, a memoir chronicling his experiences during WW1.<sup>10</sup>

Ernst Jünger was born in the German city of Heidelberg in 1895. His family was middle class, and his father was a successful chemist and pharmacist. In 1913 he joined the French Foreign Legion seeking adventure, however after a failed attempt at escaping the Legion he returned to Germany through the successful intervention of his father and the Foreign Ministry. In 1914 the First World War broke out and Jünger started training in Hannover to enlist in the 73rd Fusilier Regiment. He reached the front in December of 1914. At that point in time the front had stagnated, and trench warfare had been established, while technological development increased the effectivity of modern weaponry. Jünger described his relation to the conflict as one of curiosity and brought with him a notebook to record the events which would transpire during the conflict.<sup>11</sup>

As a storm trooper and lieutenant, Jünger gained renown for his military prowess. During the Ludendorff Offensive of 1918, he led soldiers in small formations, on many occasions successfully breaking through enemy lines. Jünger was wounded 14 times, including being shot in the lung. He was recognized for his achievements and on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1918 the Kaiser personally awarded him the highest honor in the German military, the Pour le Mérite.<sup>12</sup>

When *Storm of Steel* was published in 1920, Jünger served as an officer in the Reichswehr, the armed forces of the Weimar Republic. The book was based on 16 different journals full of notes he had brought with him during the war. On release it garnered positive reviews in the conservative press. It would however be reworked by Jünger six different times. The third edition, published in 1924, was colored by a nationalistic rhetoric which he had embraced following the war, and gave the author a reputation as a representative for the young military generation, supporting revolutionary ideas and espousing retaliatory policy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 263-267.

<sup>11</sup> Neaman, Elliot. *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the politics of Literature after Nazism*. London: University of California Press, Ltd. 1999. 23-25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *I Stålstormen*. Lund: Augusti, 2020. 295,296.



On July 14, 1879, Louis Barthas was born in Homps, in the French département of Aude. He worked as a barrelmaker and owned several agricultural plots used as vineyards. Barthas only received a few years of education, however he ranked first in his classes and continued to read throughout his life. Politically he was affiliated with the syndicalists, however he also considered himself a Christian. By the time the war began in 1914, he was 35 years old and had two children. As a soldier he recorded his experiences in 19 notebooks. The material was not published during Barthas' lifetime, instead being discovered later in a project aiming to highlight forgotten documents. Since his death no biography has been written about the corporal,<sup>14</sup> making Barthas the least known of the authors which will be analyzed in this thesis.

## 1.4 Literature review

There have been multiple studies on perceptions regarding the enemy during the First World War, although the majority of this research has been from the perspective of newspapers, governments and public opinion, rather than that of soldiers fighting at the front.

In 1979 Lawrence Badash, professor of history at the University of California, wrote the article "British and American Views of the German Menace in World War 1", in the journal *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*. In the article Badash studies how civilian scientists and researchers were equated with their country of origin, causing discrimination in both England and The United States. Scientists who had German ancestry were often encouraged to step down from positions within academia. Hugo Müller, a former president of the Chemical Society in England who had lived in the United Kingdom for 60 years, was called a "considerate German" after willingly resigning from his position. Another scientist who was criticized in the newspapers because of his origins was able to salvage his reputation only after his son was wounded while defending England. Badash argues that the negative views regarding Germans was not solely based on fears of divided loyalty, but also on the belief that attitudes and behavior were based around their ethnic origin, a viewpoint which had garnered considerable support after the German invasion of Belgium, a British ally. Before the war, however, Germany had largely been viewed as a culturally significant country similar to the United Kingdom. This

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<sup>14</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015. 37-40, 656. 37-40, 656.

change of perspective would later, according to Badash, be adopted in other countries fighting against Germany, such as Italy and the United States, which held civilians accountable for the actions of their native governments.<sup>15</sup>

In 1993, Eberhart Demm wrote the article “Propaganda and Caricature in the First World War” in the *Journal of Contemporary History*. The article includes discussions on how the enemy was portrayed in Germany and the Western powers. The conflict was portrayed as a cultural conflict by both parties. Italy, France, and England presented Germany and its citizens as a bulwark for militarism and slavery. The Western powers also considered their cultures to be inherited from ancient Greece while they presented their enemy as a continuation of Eastern despotism. Germany on the other hand presented themselves as vigorous and new, while they considered their enemy as antiquated and violent, and their colonial soldiers as cannibals.<sup>16</sup> Following Demm’s reasoning it seems as if neither side despised their enemy, but rather considered them as representatives of despotic or antiquated governments.

In their 1994 article “German ‘Atrocities’ and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers’ Diaries”, historians John Horne and Alan Kramer outline the German perspective on the enemy. Although the purpose of the article was to chronicle the atrocities committed in Belgium during the early stages of the war, it does also include discussion about how regular German soldiers viewed their adversaries. The soldiers who recorded their experiences opposed the actions of combatants who took part in the atrocities, although they did not oppose this on the grounds of the enemy's dignity, but because it was considered undignified and dishonoring for a German to commit criminal acts. Multiple memoirs did however conclude that these actions, although regrettable, were also necessary for the war effort.<sup>17</sup>

The article “Meeting the Enemy” written by the historian Tom Williams in 2020, provides a differing account from the previously mentioned. Williams argues that the British public had viewed the Germans as violent, ruthlessly efficient and antiliberal actors throughout the 19th

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<sup>15</sup> Badash, Lawrence. British and American views of the German menace in World War 1. *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*. Vol. 34, No. 1, 1979: 91-121. 91-93, 95, 98-100, 113.

<sup>16</sup> Demm, Eberhart. Propaganda and Caricature in the First World War. *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 28, No. 1, 1993: 163-192. 175-177.

<sup>17</sup> Horne, John & Kramer, Alan. German “atrocities” and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers’ Diaries. *The Journal of Modern History*. Vol. 66, No. 1, 1994: 1-33. 1-2, 30-32.

century. Williams states that Germanophobia was a widespread phenomenon in Britain during the prewar years, extending to hostility aimed at those selling German food. It was not until British soldiers entered German territory after the war and they started interacting with the local populace that their perspectives became more nuanced.<sup>18</sup>

These articles provide similar perspectives on how the enemy was constructed in Europe during WW1. There does not seem to have been a large difference in attitude between the social strata, but rather a general opinion about the enemy as belonging to an inferior culture. The attributes were ascribed to civilians and combatants alike from the country in question, by institutions, media and on an individual scale.

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<sup>18</sup> Williams, Tom. Meeting the Enemy. *Angles*. Vol. 10, 2020: 1-18. 1-6.

## 2. Theory and Research Design

### 2.1 Theory

This segment will introduce the theoretical framework and explain how it will be operationalized within the analysis. Firstly, a theory will be presented which explains how the “enemy” is constructed. Secondly, a micro-perspective will be introduced, which explains how “Everyday” interactions shape an individual’s or group’s perspective concerning the enemy. Finally, the usage of the two theories within this thesis will be explained, including the utilization of terminology.

#### 2.1.1 The Enemy

A leading theory which can be utilized to explore the nature of the enemy is Social Identity Theory, or “SIT”, which Jim Orford presents in relation to the image of the enemy in his book *On the Warpath: The Psychology of Public Support for Armed Action*. Orford states that SIT is based on the acceptance that identities are constructed around two separate components, the individual and the social. The individual can maintain self-esteem by seeking support from an “in-group”, a collective which can increase their perceived power by diminishing rival “out-groups”. The enemy is therefore socially constructed, out of a perceived collective need. The definition of who belongs to which side of the conflict can however be difficult to determine. Orford presents four different types of social actors which constitute the social. “Far out-groups” initiate the conflict, defining the out-group based on geographical, ethnic, or other generalizing traits. “Close out-groups”, collaborate with the aforementioned category, acting in the conflict. The last two groups, “The traitor” and “The contaminated in-group”, subvert the goals of the far out-group, being located between the “In-group” and “Out-group”. “The traitor” directly opposes the goals of the collective, working with the perceived enemy because of incentives or ideological reasons, while “The contaminated in-group’s” loyalty is put under suspicion because of personal attachments to the “out-group”. These attachments can for instance consist of religious affiliations or relationships which tie them to the perceived enemy.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Orford, Jim. *On the Warpath: The psychology of public support for armed action*. New York: Oxford Academic, 2023. 108-114.

### 2.1.2 “Everyday Peace” and “Everyday War”

This thesis is concerned with how perceptions regarding the enemy changes on a micro-level, a phenomenon which is studied in Roger Mac Ginty’s book *Everyday Peace: How So-called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict*, a study on the capacity of ordinary people to disrupt violent conflict and create “pro-social” relationships. These small actions of peace, termed “Everyday Peace”, have the possibility to scale up, affecting larger outcomes. Mac Ginty argues that these occurrences can be precursors to conflict management, resolutions, and transformation, causing “conflict disruption”. It can for instance occur on the battlefield, when soldiers show mercy to their enemies.<sup>20</sup> Mac Ginty’s analysis does not focus on traditional perspectives such as states and formal institutions, but on the “hyper local” and the relational. This level of analysis creates the opportunity to focus on phenomena which has largely been ignored, such as the individual, the family, and friendship networks.<sup>21</sup>

Mac Ginty provides three concepts which constitute the core of Everyday Peace: Sociality, Reciprocity and Solidarity.<sup>22</sup> “Sociality” occurs when groups interact and form social bonds, and it extends to the shared feeling that there could be a joint goal. “Sociality” can change depending on the circumstances and it manifests itself in different ways depending on aspects such as culture, gender, and race.<sup>23</sup> The second concept at the core of Everyday Peace is “Reciprocity”, referring to actions motivated by a recognition that sharing makes life better. The actions can be both “altruistic” and “strategic”, depending on whether something is expected in return.<sup>24</sup> The third component is “Solidarity”, or the active support for a cause, which occurs when there is a shared identity and a common grievance.<sup>25</sup>

Everyday Peace is concerned with how friendly interactions are shaped, but on the other hand Greta Lynn Uehling argues in *Everyday War: The conflict over Donbas, Ukraine* that the same analysis can be used to study conscious and deliberate practices people do to ensure conflict. These phenomena are termed “Everyday War”, which occurs during violent conflict at an

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<sup>20</sup> Mac Ginty, Roger. *Everyday Peace: How So-called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 2, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-64.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.

intersubjective or relational level, more specifically on the part of civilians and soldiers who ensure conflict in order to foster relationships and a sense of national belonging.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.1.3 Operationalisation

For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of the enemy as a collective construction will be utilized within the analysis. The statements of the soldiers will be tied to the categories presented by Orford, to see how their perspectives regarding the enemy are shaped. In the second segment this will be complemented with an “Everyday” perspective to see if the initial perception changed after interacting with the “out-group”.

This thesis is not directly concerned with “Everyday Peace” or “Everyday war”, but rather utilizes these theories for the structure they provide for the study of the everyday experience of war. They can therefore be employed to study how a soldier's relationship with the enemy is impacted by his interaction with them. The terms will be employed as used by Mac Ginty within his theory of “Everyday Peace”, but also beyond the scope of Mac Ginty’s own research on this topic, since as Uhelin argues, social actions can be shaped in a way which enforces “Everyday War”. Thus, the core concepts within “Everyday Peace” will also be involved in order to see how such social interactions can shape a soldier's perceptions regarding the enemy.

## 2.2 Research design

### 2.2.1 Method

Since object of study within this thesis is the perceptions presented within three accounts of World War One, a narrative methodology will be implemented as a methodological framework. These memoirs, although written by soldiers who actually took part in the conflict, are still constructed by the authors, forming narratives regarding the events which transpired. The term “narrative” is multifaceted, comprising a wide range of meanings depending on the implementation. In a broad sense it can be described as the everyday practice of storytelling, or as a structure organized by a speaker to impart information to an audience. Narrative research

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<sup>26</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. *Everyday War: The conflict over Donbas, Ukraine*. New York: Cornell University, 2023. 14–15.

is therefore the inquiry into these stories and the meanings imparted by the speaker.<sup>27</sup> This methodology originated in sociology among a group of researchers called the “Chicago School”. During the first half of the 20th century, they collected direct testimonies and observations in realistic conditions. This research drew attention to societal issues and led to methodological innovations, developing into a wide array of research.<sup>28</sup>

Patrick John Lewis, author of “Narrative Research” within the book *Qualitative methodology: a practical guide*, states that the philosophical goal of narrative research is to create a space in which the researcher has the ability to immerse himself in the constructed story. Lewis therefore concludes that such research should be separated from the universal and general, and instead focus on the specific and local.<sup>29</sup>

There are multiple aspects which can be studied when conducting Narrative Research, depending on the source material.<sup>30</sup> This includes aspects such as the events described within the narrative, developments described within the narrative, and the circumstances surrounding the story.<sup>31</sup>

In this thesis, narrative analysis will be employed to study how soldiers develop their perceptions regarding the enemy. This will be done by first studying the general context surrounding each author. Their historical background will partly be included in the first segment of the analysis, together with their perspectives on the enemy at the onset of the war. This, in turn, enables the possibility to study how their perceptions developed during interactions occurring throughout the war. This will be done by studying each instance where the soldier mentions the “enemy” within their war-memoirs. Each interaction that can be used to study their developing perceptions will then be included in the analysis. Mentions of “civilians” from the opposing country will also be included, as they can potentially be identified as enemies.

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, Patrick John. Narrative Research. In *Qualitative Methodology: A practical guide*. Melanie Bricks and Jane Mills (ed.), 161-178. London: Sage publications Inc, 2014. 161.

<sup>28</sup> Bornat, Johanna. Biographical Methods. In *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*. Pertti Alasuutari, Leonard Brickman and Julia Brannen (ed.), 344–356. London: Sage, 2008. 345–348.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, Patrick John. Narrative Research. In *Qualitative Methodology: A practical guide*. Melanie Bricks and Jane Mills (ed.), 161-178. London: Sage publications Inc, 2014. 163-165.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis, Patrick John. Narrative Research. In *Qualitative Methodology: A practical guide*. Melanie Bricks and Jane Mills (ed.), 161-178. London: Sage publications Inc, 2014. 166-167.

<sup>31</sup> Franzoni, Roberto. *Quality Narrative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage publications Inc, 2010. 14-15, 17, 23.

Instances of interaction which only describe actions such as troop movements will be ignored however, as they do not contribute to the understanding of how the soldier viewed the enemy.

### 2.2.2 Source Material and delimitation

The source material which is used in this thesis consists of three war memoirs written by different authors who fought in Europe during the First World War. The German source, titled *The Storm of Steel*, was written by Ernst Jünger, who served as a non-commissioned officer on the western front.<sup>32</sup> Jünger's book was chosen as it is considered one of the most famous biographies written by a low-ranking soldier. The Italian memoir *A soldier on the Southern front*, written by Emilio Lussu who entered the war as a lieutenant,<sup>33</sup> was chosen for similar reasons as the German memoir, as it describes the war from the perspective of an officer who fought at the front.<sup>34</sup> The French book, Louis Barthas' *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Barthas, Barrelnmaker, 1914-1918*, is different from the previous two as the author did not publish his writings. Rather, his notebooks were found after the war and the contents were compiled into a book,<sup>35</sup> which could be beneficial as the source is not affected by the limitations that might be imposed on a published work.

In the article "Temporality and the Contextualization in Peace and Conflict Studies: The Forgotten Value of War Memoirs and Personal Diaries", Mac Ginty argues that including the micro-sociological perspective found within war diaries, in connection with wider phenomena, can provide a more holistic view of peace and conflict. Moreover, the inclusion of often overlooked source material can also be utilized to question binaries and exclusions within peace and conflict studies.<sup>36</sup>

The source material could be considered relevant since the purpose of this thesis is to understand how everyday soldiers perceived their enemy. Although it could be argued that more

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<sup>32</sup> Neaman, Elliot. *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the politics of Literature after Nazism*. London: University of California Press, Ltd. 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 122-124. 264.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>35</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelnmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015. 37-40, 656.

<sup>36</sup> Mac Ginty, Roger. Temporality and contextualization in Peace and Conflict Studies: The forgotten value of war memoirs and personal diaries. *Cooperation and Conflict*. Vol. 57, issue. 2, 2021: 191–209.



memoirs would need to be included to get a generalizable analysis, this limitation is due to the limited scope of this thesis. The material is varied however, originating in different countries and from people with differing backgrounds. As this thesis studies the "Everyday" experience of war and not the general conceptions within society, the limited source material does not provide a hinderance, but rather an opportunity to study the development of perceptions in depth.

Another limitation is that this study utilizes English translations of works originally written in German, French and Italian, which might result in differences of nuance as to the perceptions of the soldiers. This is something to keep in mind, however it is only a minor issue as the same interactions are described.

## 3. Analysis

### 3.1 At the onset

At the onset of the conflict Jünger had not developed his radical nationalistic stances which he would later adhere to.<sup>37</sup> His motivation for joining the conflict was rather to take part in an adventure,<sup>38</sup> a similar motivation as when he joined the French foreign legion in 1913.<sup>39</sup> This lack of ideological reasoning can be seen in the beginning of his memoir. Initially, in the chapter “Orainville” Jünger reflects on his lack of consideration regarding enemies before he reached the front in Champagne. Initially, he describes the sense of the enemy as that of something strange moving beyond his personal sense of control.<sup>40</sup> On his way back to Germany, having received a wound on the frontline, he reflects on his first experience of the war noting that he had not engaged with the enemy, but upon observing the nature of his homeland he remarks that his nation is worth dying for.<sup>41</sup> This indicates that Jünger had no thoughts regarding the enemy before he joined the war, but rather enlisted because he considered war a romantic endeavor. His reflections about Germany as a land worth dying for does however seem to indicate that he had a nationalistic view about the “in-group” at the outset of the conflict. As he had not considered the role of the “out-group” at this point he does not seem to have had either a negative or a positive view about the perceived enemy.

Unlike Jünger, Emilio Lussu took an ideological stance at the outset of the war. As a student, he actively supported an Italian intervention against Austria to gain territory and thus finish the democratic and national project of unification.<sup>42</sup> This indicates that Lussu had similar views as Jünger regarding who constituted the “in-group”, defining it along national lines. However, unlike Jünger who treated the war as a romantic endeavor, he did at the onset of the war have a clearer perspective on who constituted the enemy “out-group”, namely the Austrians, who

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<sup>37</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *I Stålstormen*. Lund: Augusti, 2020. 295, 296.

<sup>38</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Neaman, Elliot. *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the politics of Literature after Nazism*. London: University of California Press, Ltd. 1999. 23-25.

<sup>40</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 263-267.

controlled territory which he considered Italian. In his memoir, Lussu does not describe the initial stages of the war, however in chapter “XIX” he does reflect on the views he had regarding the enemy prior to any direct interaction with them, stating that previously he had generally seen the enemy as “mysterious and terrible ghosts”.<sup>43</sup> Thus, he had a similar perspective to that of Jünger when he first arrived at the front, viewing the enemy as a mysterious “other”.

Similarly to Lussu, Louis Barthas had political affiliations, which influenced his relation to the war. He was affiliated with the syndicalists, who fought for workers’ rights internationally.<sup>44</sup> This could have affected how he viewed the enemy at the onset of the war, as he does describe being horrified by the support that other Frenchmen showed for the war. Unlike Jünger and Lussu, Barthas was forced to join the military. Before arriving at the front, he was also critical towards the other soldiers for the disrespectful way in which they spoke about the Germans,<sup>45</sup> stating that the officers should have put an end to it if they had “any sense of propriety or dignity”.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Barthas did not necessarily consider the “out-group” as an enemy, and resisted the narrative of the in-group.

All three authors had different motivations when joining the war. The lack of political motivations on the part of Jünger and Barthas indicates that only Lussu could at the onset of the war be considered as belonging to the far-out group that defines the enemy. Barthas and Jünger could on the other hand be considered to belong to the “Close out group” since they entered the war without any opinions on territorial conquest.

## 3.2 Interactions

The purpose of this segment is to analyze the effect interactions with the enemy had on soldiers. The interactions can be divided into three categories: conventional warfare, close range fighting and non-violent interactions. The division is made because of the different levels of social

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<sup>43</sup> A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of WW1 159

<sup>44</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 51-52.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 52.

contact between the combatant and the enemy, depending on whether they are firing at each other from trenches or engaging in conversation with each other.

### 3.2.1 Conventional warfare

When reflecting on interactions with the enemy within the context conventional warfare, Lussu and Barthas impart respect for the opponent's military capabilities. For instance, in his second notebook Barthas compliments the Germans technical and military capabilities, describing the enemy's equipment as superior and the German defenses as impressive, noting that that the French emulated their trenches.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, in the 13<sup>th</sup> notebook he also remarks that his officers should learn how to take care of their soldiers in a similar manner as the enemy does, arguing that this would increase the chance of survival for rank-and-file soldiers in military engagements.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout *A Soldier on the South Front*, Lussu also presents the enemy as a capable force, reflecting on their capabilities as a group rather than on their character. In chapter VI he describes an Italian captain who states that the true commander of the Italian army was the enemy Austrians because of their military superiority.<sup>49</sup> The enemy was however not presented as better staffed but having had better military equipment: in chapter III Lussu ascribes Austria's territorial gains to their use of artillery, and also highlights a soldier's statement that the mobility of the enemy meant that they could encircle the Italians at any moment.<sup>50</sup>

While Lussu compliments the technological capabilities of the enemy, he also includes criticism of them, for instance an officer's statement during a conversation with the author that war is the same for everyone and that both sides are imbeciles capable of stupid actions.<sup>51</sup> In chapter IV Lussu also includes the reasoning of a lieutenant colonel who states that the Italians and Austrians are just as likely as each other to hit themselves with artillery, and indicates that he agrees with the officer.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 473-475.

<sup>49</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 47-48.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 17-22.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 17-22.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 33, 35.

These interactions indicate that the nature of conventional warfare imparted a sense of respect towards the adversary, a feeling which originated in the enemy's technological and military capabilities. When the enemy out-group was criticized, the same scrutiny was used to scorn the leadership of the authors' own armies. This could be because the soldiers engaged socially within their own militaries, creating grievances.

Ernst Jünger does not reflect about the enemy's technological and military capacity, but rather imparts his philosophical stance, developed during interactions with the enemy. His perceptions regarding the enemy are complex, however, he generally perceived his opponent in what could be considered a gentlemanly fashion. This is best exemplified by the quote by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche which Jünger includes in the chapter "Against Indians": "You must have as your enemies only those whom you hate, but not those whom you despise. You must be proud of your enemy, and then the enemy's success is your success also."<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Jünger personally states in the chapter "Trench Warfare, Day by Day" that his ideal is to eliminate the feeling of hatred altogether, a sentiment he says to have found among many enemies in the British officers corps as well.<sup>54</sup> These two ideas are opposed, however both involve a feeling of respect towards the enemy.

Jünger not only presents the interaction with the enemy as a gentlemanly competition, however. In the chapter "The Somme retreat" he states the necessity of war, as the harshest of all trades, to serve the goal of destroying the enemy, and any action that serves humane feelings can only be allowed if it does not hinder the objective, a statement made in reference to the destruction of all villages along the German defensive line known as the Siegfried line.<sup>55</sup>

Jünger's understanding of other soldiers' brutal mindset regarding the enemy can also be found in other segments of the book. In the chapter: "Trench warfare day by day" he describes how other soldiers bear a personal grudge against an enemy soldier, following the death of a fellow German soldier in combat. Jünger understood the response and did not oppose the soldier's hatred towards the enemy soldier.<sup>56</sup> Jünger also displays a situated feeling of hatred himself

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<sup>53</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 137.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

towards the enemy in the chapter “Douchy and Monchy”, where his negative opinion stems from the great number of casualties the Germans take while laying barbed wire. He states that in those situations they curse the English, and describes them as swine.<sup>57</sup>

Lussu describes multiple battles with the Austrians. In chapter III, a soldier curses the Hungarians who he thought responsible for a wound he had attained.<sup>58</sup> The soldiers also celebrate when enemy positions are struck with artillery. They were however not presented as evil or less human, but often as skilled fighters.<sup>59</sup> Unlike Jünger, Lussu objects to the methods employed within his own military structure in relation to the enemy, on multiple occasions describing the officers in the Italian army, instead of the enemy, as incompetent. In chapter X the commanders order an offensive against Austrian positions during which large amounts of Italians died, but remarks that the officers seemed pleased because their actual goal had not been to take the enemy trenches but to attain knowledge about enemy defensive positions. The author criticizes the officers, stating that they could have attained the same information by sending out a few patrols, instead of wasting so many lives.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, in chapter XII he criticizes his own officers for sending out wire cutters into the open, who died without being able to attain any results.<sup>61</sup> In chapter VII he describes both the enemy and the officers in a similar light as in the other segments, for instance noting a general who encourages a soldier to stand in an exposed position. The general describes the man as a hero for getting shot, but Lussu blames the entire incident on the incompetence of the officer and not on the Austrians.<sup>62</sup> In these segments, the enemy is presented not as a malicious actor but rather as a danger that the incompetent officers force regular soldiers to interact with.

Similarly, Barthas is more critical towards the French officer’s corps than the Germans. In the 3rd notebook he states that the officers would have made the same decisions if they were under the direct control of the German emperor, as they drew the soldiers into situations in which they were unnecessarily killed. Moreover, he did not believe the propaganda of the French military command, who stated that the Germans killed their captives.<sup>63</sup> Another French officer is

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>58</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 22.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 67, 113.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>63</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015. 106, 120-121.

presented as unnecessarily violent in the 7<sup>th</sup> notebook as he tries to convince Barthas and other soldiers that it is easy to kill Germans. After having illustrated this in a manner which the author considered overly simplistic, the officer returns to his quarters, after which Barthas describes the officer's attempt at invoking patriotic sentiment as a failure, and considers his rhetoric rather as an attempt to make massacres and throat cuttings seem appealing.<sup>64</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> notebook Barthas also laments the bombing of German positions, referring to them as martyrs,<sup>65</sup> and on multiple occasions he even refers to the weather as an even greater adversary than the Germans.<sup>66</sup> A similar humanitarian perspective is presented by the author in the fourth notebook when he states that a victory in the field could be considered a military success, but that killing is immoral and inhumane,<sup>67</sup> a statement which indicates that Barthas valued human lives on both sides. Although, despite Barthas' negative views regarding the French officer's corps and his sympathy towards people on both sides, defense against the enemy is still presented as positive, as illustrated in the 11<sup>th</sup> notebook where he refers to the soldiers who managed to maintain positions during the German offensive as heroes.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.2.2 Close range fighting

Most interactions with the enemy during the First World War were indirect, however during some instances the soldiers came into closer contact with the opponent. In the war memoirs these interactions are often described in relation to the social as applied within "Everyday Peace" and "Everyday War", including instances of "conflict disruption".

Generally, each soldier presents the interactions with the enemy in a similar light to that of conventional warfare. Jünger's descriptions are respectful, celebrating enemy successes and criticizing failures. Although he might at first sight appear to distinguish between British and French enemies—describing the English as "capable soldiers" in the chapters "Douchy and Monchy" and "The battle of Cambrai"<sup>69</sup> and as "brave men" in the chapter "The Somme

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 556.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 264, 292.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 139

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 396

<sup>69</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 137. 46, 201.

retreat”,<sup>70</sup> while harshly criticizing the retreat of the French as unbecoming of soldiers in the chapter “Regniéville”<sup>71</sup>—these differences are clearly based on his view of what the general responsibilities of soldiers are, rather than ethnic biases. This indicates that Jünger had developed a sense of respect for his opponents and expected them to act in an honorable manner.

Lussu’s attitude towards the enemy in close combat is respectful, his criticisms rather being oriented towards the officers within his own military. In chapter XV Lussu describes how the Italian soldiers were sent out in open advance against the enemy. After a while the enemy stopped firing, yelling at the Italians to stop. Lussu suggests that this was for the Italians to not have wasted their lives in vain. The interaction did not immediately put an end to the advance however, as officers continued to scream at their own soldiers to continue the advance.<sup>72</sup>

Barthas similarly criticizes his own army, but also the actions of the enemy. On the occasions that Barthas criticizes the Germans, he also directs similar criticisms towards his own army, for instance during the battle of Verdun in the 10<sup>th</sup> notebook where he describes how a French soldier shot down an enemy carrying a dying man. A soldier criticized the action, whereupon the shooter justified his action by stating that the enemy would have done the same. Indeed, during the same battle Barthas describes the Germans as committing similar atrocities, referring to both sides as “cannibalistic” and “barbaric”.<sup>73</sup>

“Conflict disruption” can be identified in both “Storm of Steel” and “A soldier on the Southern Front”, as both soldiers described interactions during which an emotional bond was formed with the enemy, causing them to avoid violent engagement.

Lussu’s instance of connection with the enemy is described in chapter XIX. Lussu gets positioned such that he can observe the Austrian trenches. Upon seeing them following a regular schedule and drinking coffee he realizes that they are just like Italian soldiers. When an officer became visible, Lussu aimed at him but was unable to fire. He states that although he is generally able to justify the war morally and politically, and that his duties as a man and citizen

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>72</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 122-124.

<sup>73</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015. 373.



do not conflict with his duties as a soldier, he did however begin to consider the nameless enemy as a human being—whereby killing him would be more akin to murder than war—and argues that killing is justifiable only during a large battle, considering these interactions as mechanical.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Jünger has an encounter with an enemy soldier whom he spares. The occurrence is described in the chapter “The great offensive”: during a fight in an enemy trench, a soldier held up a picture of his family. Jünger, full of rage, still decided not to kill him and moved on fighting others instead.<sup>75</sup>

Neither soldier changed their general image of the Out-group during these interactions. While Lussu realized the enemy’s humanity and refused to kill him during the “conflict disruption”, he did not change his general stance towards violence in war. He rather arrived at the conclusion that killing individuals is immoral.

These interactions indicate that there was greater possibility to form pro-social relationships with the enemy in close range combat rather than in conventional warfare. The general perception regarding the enemy did not change, however. In these instances, the opponent was regarded as respectable not because of their technological means, but because of their humanity. Close range combat could therefore be seen as conducive to a more nuanced human perception regarding the enemy.

### 3.2.3 non-fighting interactions

There are multiple instances of non-fighting interactions with the enemy described within the war memoirs. These meetings are varied, ranging from conversations with enemy civilians to informal contact with the enemy trenches.

Barthas’ non-fighting interactions are defined by the creation of “pro-social” relationships, enhancing his understanding of the enemy as fellow victims of the war. One of these interactions takes place when the trenches were flooded:

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<sup>74</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 159-163.

<sup>75</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 220.

The next day, December 10, at many places along the front line, the soldiers had to come out of their trenches so as not to drown. The Germans had to do the same. We therefore had the singular spectacle of two enemy armies facing each other without firing a shot. Our common suffering brought our hearts together, meted our hatred, nurtured sympathy between strangers and advocacies. Those who deny it are ignoring human psychology. Frenchman and German looked at each other, and saw that they were all men, no different from one another. They smiled, exchanged comments, hands reached out and grasped; we shared tobacco, a canteen of coffee or pinard. If only we spoke the same language!<sup>76</sup>

Despite the language barrier, a German soldier stood up and held a speech in German, after which he made his intentions clear by breaking his rifle against a tree. Soldiers on both sides thereafter started singing the Internationale. According to Barthas the sympathy waned after the incident, although some soldiers did maintain contact with the Germans. This was, however, not appreciated by the officer who wanted to sentence a soldier who had visited the enemy for treason.<sup>77</sup> During the following year a similar interaction occurred between French and Germans. The defensive positions were close to each other, but despite their proximity neither side attacked. During this incident the section chief spoke with the enemy and both sides began exchanging supplies. The officers once again wanted to put an end to these interactions. Barthas did however view the interaction as positive, even stating that anyone who valued humanity over patriotism would agree with him. Barthas went as far as stopping another soldier from throwing a grenade against the Germans, in order to maintain the trust and friendly relationships which had been established.<sup>78</sup> When an officer confronted him about fraternizing with the enemy, he denied the accusation, knowing that it would be considered treason.<sup>79</sup>

These two examples of non-fighting interaction indicate how Barthas' perceptions about the enemy changed through pro-social relationships. At the onset of the war he was respectful towards his opponent, however during these later instances he came to develop a bond with the enemy, which encompassed each core concept of Everyday Peace. Firstly, Barthas' interactions were shaped by solidarity, as he shared with the Germans a common political goal as illustrated by their singing of the Internationale, as well as a grievance against the circumstances of the

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<sup>76</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015. 268.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 268–272.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 436–441.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 539–543.

war. He also engaged in reciprocity, as the soldiers exchanged supplies with each other. Lastly, he displayed sociality as he formed a social bond with the enemies. This culminated in Conflict disruption as he hindered a fellow soldier from throwing a grenade against the enemies. The war was however maintained by the officers, whose presence forced Barthas to continue fighting, despite his newfound perception of the enemy as fellow men.

Neither Lussu nor Jünger form such “pro-social” relationships with the enemy soldiers. Both do however engage civilly when interacting with enemy soldiers. Lussu took good care of a captured man who they thought was an enemy, and wanted to display kindness when in a dominating position.<sup>80</sup> In “The battle of Cambrai” Jünger similarly describes the events which transpired after capturing an enemy officer. The enemy refused to provide information to Jünger about the position of his soldiers, a refusal that was respected. They parted ways shaking hands and they reassured the officer that the German army will treat him well.<sup>81</sup> In the cases of Jünger and Lussu, these interactions do not seem to have shaped their perceptions about the enemy, although they did treat them in a civilized manner, indicating that violent interaction had not made them regard the enemy in a negative light.

Unlike the other two soldiers, Jünger spent most of the war fighting in occupied territory. Therefore, he had a greater amount of interaction with enemy civilians. These exchanges with French civilians are described extensively, ranging from observances to developing friendships.

Most times they are mentioned, they are presented within the context of the ongoing conflict without a deeper reflection. In the first chapter, “Orainville”, Jünger describes the local population in a French town as uneasy and unkempt.<sup>82</sup> In the chapter “Douchy and Monchy” Jünger describes the civilians as a group whose continued presence made it difficult to find dwellings for the local soldiers in the French province of Artois. These reflections are brief and only provide limited insight regarding how Jünger viewed civilians.

Jünger did however also describe in depth his interactions with certain civilians. In the chapter “Overture of the Somme offensive” he recounts an interaction with a 17-year-old girl, whom

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<sup>80</sup> Lussu, Emilio. *A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of World War I*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2014. 24.

<sup>81</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Storm of Steel*. 3d edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929. 198.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.

he interacted with in a flirtatious manner, referring to a trip to her home as a romantic excursion.<sup>83</sup>

Jünger reflects about a longer interaction with the local populace in the chapter “Langemarck” in which he describes his stay in the city Cambrai. There he was quartered with a French couple—the jeweler Plancot-Burlon and his wife—who provided him with food and spent the evenings drinking tea with him and playing games.<sup>84</sup> Later during the war, as described in the chapter “My Last Storm”, Jünger received a letter from the couple along with a tin of milk and the only melon their garden produced,<sup>85</sup> prompting Jünger to state: “I must not let slip this opportunity of saying that I found many an example among the French civilian population of that internationality of the heart that every decent man and educated soldier ought to uphold”.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, Jünger formed “pro-social” relationships with the local French population, and his interactions also shaped his perception regarding the out-group as a group of people capable of exemplary kindness, an impression he could only form after having experienced kindness from the local population. His romantic interaction also indicates that he did not consider the war as opposed to the formation of deeper emotional contact. These interactions with the local population are however not conflict disrupting, as Jünger maintained his ideals relating to warfare.

In these instances of non-violent interaction, each author seems more capable of forming pro-social relationships than during long distance combat. Such interactions also shaped both Barthas’ and Jünger’s conceptions of the out-group. In the case of Barthas this resulted in the formation of new perceptions about the enemy, more specifically a direct example of conflict disruption as illustrated by his experiences of personal connection with the enemy. Jünger’s perception of the enemy, unlike that of Barthas, did not change, however he did form lasting bonds with French civilians.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 63–65.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 143–144.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 265.

### 3.3 Summary of findings

Throughout the interactions described in the memoirs, each soldier arrives at similar conclusions regarding the enemy despite their ideological differences at the onset of the conflict. During instances of long-range-warfare, both Lussu and Barthas describe the enemy as technologically capable. Jünger also reflects on the role of the adversary, and presents his philosophy based on the idea that the enemy should be treated with respect. The perspectives of each soldier during close-range combat and non-violent interactions reflect a similar civility, providing the possibility of both a more nuanced view on the enemy, as well as instances of conflict disruption. This respectful perception of the enemy seems to have been shaped in the everyday interactions with them rather than by the ideologies of the combatants' respective governments, and vastly different types of interactions with the enemy nonetheless shaped the perceptions of the soldiers in a similar manner. The interactions did however not cause Jünger and Lussu to reconsider their view of the enemy entirely; the war was still formed in opposition to an out-group. However, everyday interactions humanized the opponent, whom they had not reflected about prior to the war.

## 4 Discussion

This segment will discuss the conclusion of the analysis in relation to the theoretical framework. Firstly, the development of the soldiers' perspectives will be compared and discussed. Then, the theoretical framework will be evaluated. Lastly, this will be brought together for a consideration of possible further research on the topic.

Each of the three soldiers studied within this thesis had different perspectives regarding the enemy at the onset of the war. Their ideologies also differed, as did their identities and conceptions regarding the in-group which dictated how they should relate to the conflict in general. Despite these differences, they did develop similar relationships to the perceived enemy during the war.

Since the soldiers had different nationalities and values, it could be concluded that their similar perceptions about the enemy originated in their shared experience of trench warfare. Regardless of their origin, each combatant used similar military equipment, lived in trenches, and fought on behalf of nation states. This reality would also be evident for the soldiers because of their uninterrupted interactions on the stagnant front, a sense of shared reality that can further be exemplified by the continual artillery barrages, such as described by Lussu,<sup>87</sup> or the solidarity forged by soldiers during the flooding in Barthas's account<sup>88</sup>. This indicates that the everyday experience of soldiers during war is shaped by the broader technological and social dimensions of conflict, which forge a shared reality and everyday experience that shapes their construction of the enemy.

This would explain why the image of the enemy in these soldiers' narratives did not align with those presented within the "literature review" segment, since their perceptions were largely affected by their interactions on the battlefield rather than by the narratives espoused by the state. Only John Horne and Alan Kramer's article "German 'Atrocities' and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers' Diaries" reflects a similar conception of how soldiers construct the enemy as the dynamic found within the diaries, that is, an understanding

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<sup>87</sup> A soldier on the southern front: the classic Italian memoir of WW1 33, 35

<sup>88</sup> Barthas, Louis. *Poilu: The World War I Notebooks of Corporal Louis Barthas, barrelmaker, 1914-1918*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015. 268–272.

on the part of combatants about the occasional necessity of violence in tandem with an underlying sense of respect towards their adversaries.<sup>89</sup> This could be due to the similarities between the source material used within this thesis and that of their article, reflecting the lived reality of soldiers rather than that of civil society, as analyzed for instance within Badash's research.<sup>90</sup>

The idea of the necessity to implement violence as described by the German combatants in Horne and Kramer does however share more similarities with Jünger rather than with the other soldiers. This could indicate that there are wider cultural aspects which determine a soldier's relation to conflict, which this thesis has not been able to study due to its emphasis on the usage of material stemming from different countries. While there might be cultural aspects which could not be researched within the scope of this thesis, the micro-perspective does shed light on the impact of everyday interactions on the construction of the enemy, this being the purpose of the thesis.

The relevance of interactions to form an understanding of the enemy indicates the value of "Everyday Peace" and "Everyday War", when studying the experiences of soldiers. It does not only highlight the human ability to form social bonds with or against the opponent but also the effect that different types of conflict have on the combatants, since a conflict during which soldiers would engage more would create greater opportunity for relationships to form. This could however both escalate and deescalate the conflict, but within the scope of this thesis, it seems to have a general effect of creating opportunities for "Everyday Peace".

During the war, each soldier developed a respectful and nuanced image of their adversary. These everyday actions do not however seem to have changed the general conception about the war. Neither Jünger nor Lussu opposed the war because of experiences with their enemies, and Barthas opposed the war from the beginning. Within the context of this thesis, the everyday perspective was therefore unable to explain escalation or deescalation of the conflict on a larger scale. The theory therefore has its limitations, but it is still useful to attain a greater

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<sup>89</sup> Horne, John & Kramer, Alan. German "atrocities" and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers' Diaries. *The Journal of Modern History*. Vol. 66, No. 1, 1994: 1-33. 1-2, 31.

<sup>90</sup> Badash, Lawrence. British and American views of the German menace in World War 1. *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*. Vol. 34, No. 1, 1979: 91-121. 91-93, 95, 98-100, 113.

understanding for the lived reality of soldiers, for instance providing insights into the image of the enemy.

While there are wider phenomena which this study is not able to explore because of its limited scope, it was still able to identify similarities in how soldiers' perceptions developed in relation to everyday experiences of war. This indicates the strength of the theoretical framework as an explanatory model to study how perceptions regarding enemy can change in war.



## 5 Conclusions

This thesis has employed a micro-sociological perspective to study developing perceptions regarding the perceived enemy in war-memoirs. This has been done by using a theoretical framework created to study specific experiences, namely everyday peace and everyday war. The figure of the enemy has also been defined using social identity theory. A narrative method has also been employed to conduct the study, taking into account changing attitudes forged during interactions and the context surrounding each of these instances. This was done in order to answer the research question “How was the enemy initially perceived by soldiers in the first world war, and how was it shaped through interactions?”

Through the analysis and discussion, this research question has been answered, the conclusion being that all three soldiers’ perceptions at the onset of the war differed: Jünger and Lussu had not considered the role of the enemy, and while Lussu still had defined the “out-group”, Barthas on the other hand rejected the in-group’s definition of the enemy, not wishing to engage in violent interaction with them at all, as he respected them. During the war, however, these perceptions developed through interactions, the impact depending on the type of interaction: while each soldier attained respect for the enemy during conventional warfare, they did not consider their humanity until they engaged with them in more direct ways. More specifically, pro social relationships could only be forged when the soldiers interacted more directly, nuancing their understanding of their opponent.

The everyday experience of soldiers can therefore illustrate how social and military engagements influence the combatants’ understanding of their enemy. This could be implemented to further study how soldiers’ perceptions develop during modern military engagements, providing insight which could be useful during peacebuilding efforts.

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