

GERMANY'S LESSONS FROM THE LOST "GREAT WAR":
PACIFIST ANDREAS LATZKO AND BELLICIST WALTER FLEX

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THE STATUS OF GERMAN LITERATURE ON WORLD WAR I
IN LITERARY HISTORY

Pacifism as a movement suffers from the deplorable fact that the eagerness for war-making hardly ever stops in spite of all good arguments against it. To understand this failure better, it is important to gain a better understanding of how war enters public consciousness, how war is being "sold" so that the public supports it. It is equally important to see how the anti-war stance is being "sold" in a way that does not garner the same level of public support. Many pacifist writers have written against war, but the public has acquiesced to the presence of war in spite of its ever-increasing levels of brutality and dehumanization that would otherwise be considered intolerable. This lack of pacifist success must have to do with the way the war experience has been framed by the pro-war and anti-war sides. To study the conceptual framing of the war experience, we shall consider the literary treatment of World War I by two German authors who wrote about their war experiences while the war was still being fought. In the end, we will have to acknowledge the strong persuasive position of war-affirmative literature because it serves needs of survivors and conforms with traditional religious tenets of sacrifice.

There are several reasons why the German literature on World War I is especially useful for studying how the war experience is represented. For one thing, German literature on World War I is copious.¹ This war may be the most written-about war in history, with reams of literary works written in its course and its aftermath.² These literary works on the war are of high historical interest even if there is limited value in discussing them with "normal" standards of literary quality.³ Their function was a social more than an aesthetic one. German society used such texts to ascertain what it collectively would decide had happened. These texts suggested what

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