

Abstract (300 words):

This paper traces the tensions between how veterans see themselves versus how theatrical plays present veteran-hood and warfare. It covers three wars, the Peloponnesian War (431-404BCE), the Thirty Years War (1618-1648CE), and the First World War (1914-1918CE). Drawing on primary accounts from soldiers who participated in these wars, I conduct a transtemporal and transnational study of the reasons men have for joining the military and how they restructure those reasons after the war is over. I compare soldier letters, diaries, and historical records to theatrical plays that stage war and returning soldiers. In particular, I am interested in instances where propagandistic and anti-war rhetorics clash. I consider three theatrical sources, Aristophanes' "The Knights" (424BCE), Alessandro Donati's "Ars Poetica" (1631CE), and R.C. Sheriff's "Journey's End" (1929CE). This research shows that the tension between how veterans commemorate themselves versus how civilians commemorate them is a historical trend that has traceable roots to Western Antiquity.

Author Bio:

Anna Rindfleisch is a PhD candidate in English Research at King's College London, UK. Her research interests focus on interwar period mourning literature, gender studies and the transmission of war trauma into the performing arts. She has published on interwar period bereavement, performing veteran grief, and gendered mourning rites.