

The Mutilated Face of World War I in Portugal

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Abstract

The disabled veterans of World War I take the paradoxical form of the mutilated hero. Portugal's barely consensual participation in the European front of World War I turned disabled veterans into an inconvenient symbol to be neglected in the politically unstable post-war period. From the delay in official recognition to the slow collective mobilization, the disabled prove hard to analyze, whether because of the lack of sources or the difficulty in positioning them in a post-war era eager to celebrate and then quickly forget the vestiges of mutilated victory. This paper seeks to characterize the appearance of these men in public space and their consecration as victims of the state's decision to go to war.

Keywords

World War I; disabled veterans; post-traumatic stress.

Resumo

Os inválidos da I Guerra Mundial instalam-se na paradoxal forma do herói mutilado. A pouco consensual participação de Portugal na frente europeia da I Guerra Mundial fez dos inválidos um rastro incomodo a negligenciar num pós-guerra instável politicamente. Do atraso do reconhecimento oficial à lenta mobilização coletiva, os inválidos apresentam-se como um objeto de difícil de análise, seja pela precariedade das fontes, seja pelo difícil enquadramento num pós-guerra ávido de comemorar e esquecer vestígios de uma vitória mutilada. Procuramos demonstrar, assim, a emergência destes homens no espaço público e a sua consagração enquanto vítimas da decisão de estado.

Palavras-chave

I Guerra Mundial; inválidos; stress pós-traumático.

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Introduction²

What place does the WWI disabled veteran occupy³? Where do these men find themselves and where would they like to go? Disability puts a person in a state of permanent war. If the *serrano* was granted the ability to return to a national and familial home, the disabled veteran had, as compensation for the war, the difficult return to a place lacking the inextinguishable marks of the war experience.

The official count of disabled veterans is strongly susceptible to doubt. How can it be that of more than 100 thousand soldiers, only 1,759 individuals are officially recognized as disabled by war? How can it be that of the approximately 7,000 wounded, only 1,759 retained a recognized disability in a war in which mental or degenerative illnesses, such as tuberculosis, were not immediately visible and diagnosable?⁴

Portugal mobilized about 100,000 men during the war, and, according to the *Livro de Estatística do CEP*, about 1,759 of them were given disability leave.⁵ However, this number becomes hard to accept given the condition of the health services of the Corpo Expedicionário Português (CEP) (it is the European front that provides more information), in which the registers of internment, treatment, and medical leaves are insufficient. The specificity and novelty of the war, too, gave rise to the inability to identify illnesses, principally mental illness, often diagnosed as physical or as *cobardia* (cowardice) or *herança genética* (hereditary). The more frequently recurring illnesses resulting primarily from combat situations were, in descending order, pulmonary, dermatological and venereal, with mental illness appearing only in the ninth place and categorized as mental exhaustion (asthenia), alienation, and epilepsy.⁶

In Isabel Pestana Marques's substantial work on the CEP's experience in the Flanders trenches, we see the conditions of health services at the campaign, the conditions that would create a definitive constraint on the nosological picture that would affect the

² This text is part of chapter III of Silvia Correia's doctoral dissertation, *Políticas da memória da I Guerra Mundial em Portugal 1918-1933: entre a experiência e o mito* (FCSH/Universidade Nova de Lisboa), presented in 2011 and published as a book in 2015. That dissertation was written with the support of the *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia* (SFRH/BD/23735/2005). For a political understanding of the disabled and past combatants, see Correia (2012: 531-551). I thank Vinicius Liebel for the dialogues and contributions.

³ On disablement in World War I, see the pioneering works of Bourke (1996), Cohen (2001) and Reznick (2004). For more information on disablement, see Carden-Coyne (2015).

⁴ Cf. AHM, FO, 006, L, 52, Caixa 906, n.º 5 – *Carta da Direção do Grémio dos Inválidos de Guerra ao Presidente do Ministério*, November 16, 1933.

⁵ Cf. AHM, 1.ª Divisão, 3.ª Secção, Caixa 1401 – *Serviços de Estatística e Estado Civil do CEP*, Livro de Estatística do CEP.

⁶ Cf. AHM, 1.ª Divisão, 35.ª Secção, Caixa 1412 – *Causas de morte no CEP*, May 20, 1919; Marques (2002: 132-136; 380).

men in wartime and inevitably extend into the post-war period. Marques notes that the number of patients exceeded the number of those wounded and that there is a reduced number of mental illness diagnoses. She emphasizes the predominance of diagnoses of common clinical illnesses, deviating from the allies' health services' diagnoses, which identified a number of illnesses that are decidedly associated with trench warfare, such as trench fever, gas gangrene, and dysentery. These are illnesses that require prolonged treatment, for which the poor CEP health services were not sufficient⁷.

Aside from the soldiers' difficult and prolonged repatriation process, the situation was aggravated by the political disinterest in dealing with the mutilated face of war. Most disabled soldiers opted to return home, but the problems inherent to a state of armed conflict and to the specific aspects of trench war persisted, if not increased. In spite of the general demobilization, those mutilated by war remained in the public space demanding reparations. For Antoine Prost, "the demobilized soldiers want to turn a new page, those mutilated by war present a kind of invoice to the State."⁸ For these men, and especially for the victims of war stress, the past refuses to pass, in that "in the traumatic memories the past defines and determines the present actions and thinking of the rememberer, whereas in normal remembering the need of the present determine what is called up associationally from the past" (Leed, 2000: 87). This article seeks, in the face of the manifold limitations on the scope of sources, to account for the universe of past mutilated and/or disabled combat soldiers. Given Portugal's controversial intervention in World War I, the war's end during the time of Sidónio Pais, and the need to quickly forget the experience, justify that the disabled – who were the mutilated face of the war – turned out to be an experience that should be forgotten. The aim, therefore, is to make a social and political history of disability in World War I in Portugal.⁹ To do this, the major difficulties that the disabled faced after the war must be addressed: the difficulty of legal framework; the inadequate process of identification and subsidy; the slowness and bureaucratization of official recognition procedures; and the impracticability of hospital treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Let us examine, then, this flux of difficulties and devote our attention to the legal apparatus.

⁷ Cf. Marques, 2002: 127-136.

⁸ Cf. Prost, 2004: 1088.

⁹ This is in regards to understanding, not only how this group constitutes itself as a social identity and force, but also to looking at the political place claimed and given to the war disabled.

Legal Framework: Between Identification and Subversion

In Portugal, the formal understanding of “disabled” would undergo a lengthy process of narrowing the concept’s meaning. As a matter of fact, there were numerous terms used to denominate these men who did not fit into the formula of a mere former combat soldier; for example, disabled, mutilated, tubercular, and gassed. It was only in 1924 that a decree was published in which the disabled and mutilated would be subject to the same norm. As such, “individuals considered ‘mutilated by war’ are those who suffered anatomical loss, injury to or loss of any organ or any of its functions, as a result of wounds received or accidents suffered while fulfilling service in the campaign; individuals considered ‘disabled by war’ are those incapacitated due to a wound or illness acquired or worsened while performing this same service, and during the time spent in enemy territory as prisoner of war.”¹⁰ By this definition, “disabled” is understood to be a broad term that encompasses all of the categories in question.

The most significant legal formulations, with regard to the disabled soldiers of the Great War, were: Law No. 1:170, May 1921, constituting the first major legal benchmark for invalids; Decree No. 10:099, 1924, reaffirming the former, but with the important specification that the mutilated and disabled were legally concentrated in a single term, the *inválido de guerra* (disabled by war); and finally, Law No. 14:044, 1927, revised in 1929, establishing a comprehensive code of evaluation and assistance.

It should be noted that before these large scale publications in October 1918, pension allocations for a period of five years had already been approved by Sidónio Pais, providing a possible appeal for those to whom, after a year,¹¹ were still not granted benefits, and providing as well the right to use a badge “indicating disability acquired in the campaign, and at the same time recognition and protection for those wearing it.”¹² It is important to note that the law was passed immediately after war-disabled’ refusal to participate in the October 5th parade.¹³ Later, a law published in March 1921 guaranteed

¹⁰ Decreto n.º 10:099 (art. 2.º) – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 210, September 17, 1924.

¹¹ Decreto n.º 4:868 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 217, October 5, 1918. The Ministry of War granted a complementary pension to every soldier mutilated and disabled by the War. This determination was extended to all the Navy personnel; the *Junta* would request a naval physician when a Navy military was to be examined (Cf. Decreto n.º 4:868 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 223, 12 de Outubro de 1918).

¹² Decreto n.º 4:923 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 236, October 30, 1918.

¹³ Cf. “Como se comemoram duas datas. O 5 d’ Outubro e o 5 de Dezembro”, *A capital*, March 19, 1919: 1.

access to public services for all those mutilated in the Great War or equivalent services on the mainland or sea.¹⁴

The first major legal project concerning the disabled, Law No. 1:170, 1921,¹⁵ is the result of work by the *Comissão de Estudo das Condições de Reforma e Pensões Temporárias e Assistência a fornecer aos Mutilados da Guerra* (CEAMG) (Committee for the Study of Reform Conditions and Temporary Pensions and Assistance for the Mutilated at War), appointed by the Ministry of War on 21 October 1919¹⁶. Having among its members some of the most important public figures who fought for the cause of the disabled, such as António Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, Tovar de Lemos, and José Pontes, it sought to “review the legislation concerning those disabled at war, in order to establish the conditions of their retirement and temporary pensions, the assistance to be provided them, and, as such, proceed to examine their re-inspection”¹⁷. The report on the work was peremptory, and “should be put into action in the shortest possible time, as warranted by the situation in which those most gravely disabled find themselves, especially the soldiers, who, discharged from the institutions where they were being treated, cannot meet their more imperative needs with the grossly insufficient pensions they receive.” By institutions, it meant the Instituto de Reeducação dos Mutilados da Guerra de Arroios (Institute for the Reeducação of the War Disabled from Arroios), the only one truly created for this purpose, and one which will be expanded upon further. However, the law would only be published in 1921,¹⁸ being subject to multiple adaptations,¹⁹ including the insertion of soldiers disabled by pulmonary tuberculosis.²⁰ In September 1924, decree No. 10:099 was finally released. This decree would bring together the mutilated and disabled under a single designation – “disabled by war”.²¹ The publication of the decree did not prevent a debate both in government chambers and in the public square, which claimed a constant need for

¹⁴ Lei n.º 1:128 – *Diário de Governo*, I Série, n.º 57, March 18, 1921; Lei n.º 993 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 134, June 28, 1920).

¹⁵ Cf. *Ordens do Exército*, 2.ª Série, n.º 23, October 21, 1919.

¹⁶ Cf. AHM, 1.ª Divisão, 35.ª Secção, Caixa 442 – Comissão encarregada de legislação sobre os inválidos do Serviço Militar, Lisboa, March 20, 1920 – Carta ao Chefe da Repartição de Gabinete da Secretaria da Guerra e Anexos (Relatório e Proposta de lei).

¹⁷ AHM, 1.ª Divisão, 35.ª Secção, Caixa 442 – Actas das Sessões da Comissão de Estudo das Condições de Reforma e Pensões Temporárias e Assistência a fornecer aos Mutilados da Guerra, nomeada pela OE N.º 23 (2ª Série), October 21, 1919, Acta n.º 1, November 7, 1919: 1-2.

¹⁸ Cf. Lei n.º 1:170 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 105, May 21, 1921.

¹⁹ The various formulations are stated at: Lei n.º 1:333 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 175, August 26, 1922); Lei n.º 1:400 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 32, February 8, 1923); na Lei n.º 1:464 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 178, August 18, 1923); e na Lei n.º 1:467 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 178, August 18, 1923).

²⁰ Cf. *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, August 21, 1922: 8-9; March 20, 1925: 20.

²¹ Cf. Decreto n.º 10:099 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 210, September 17, 1924.

revisions,²² either of Law n. 1:858²³ or of decree 13:375,²⁴ which again required a reinspection by a special committee of all military personnel considered mutilated or disabled. The Code of the Disabled in its most complete form would be only published in August of 1927 and republished in 1929 with slight changes.²⁵ An extensive document would deal with regulating the identification, evaluation, benefits, pensions for families, and the war disabled apparatus.

Many were critical of the regulations published in the years after the war. In the first issue of *O Mutilado da Guerra*, in January 1925, a complaint is made about Laws 1:170 and 10:099. Despite the text of the 1921 law was considered apt, it was criticized the unequal promotion positions for those who registered their injuries in combat and not in campaign, that is, “a soldier with a 20/100 disability (the minimum), missing a finger, was promoted by two ranks for having registered the suffering he acquired in combat; [...] While another soldier with a more significant disability, i.e. 100/100 (the maximum) receives the same rank, as his injuries are registered while 'campaigning' and not 'in combat'.” As for Law n.10:099, the disapproval it faced was due to the fact that it assigned a disability pension to those injured on the front, and not those suffering from illness resulting from war and whose symptoms would appear only later, “[t]hat is: the soldiers who arrived at the trenches and had the supreme good fortune of being injured lightly and taken out of the hardships of war should be seen and treated with care! The others who had the misfortune of not being wounded slightly, and so had to continue to fight for their country, slowly depleting their body, returning to Portugal tubercular, gassed, and suffering from other grave illnesses, exhibiting misery and pain, these then do not require the aid, nor the care of their fellow countrymen?!”²⁶

Beyond these laws, the disabled had to undergo extremely bureaucratic and dehumanizing evaluation procedures. Above all, the work of the Fifth Office of the Ministry of War, upon which the evaluation committees depended, was problematic. In the

²² On 20 March 1925, congressman António Correia proposed the “revision of all the proceedings referring to those mutilated and disabled by war who are benefited by *Lei* n.º 10:099,” given the need to conduct a full reevaluation of the number of disabled (*Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, March 20, 1925: 25.). He also proposed the inclusion of people “with tuberculosis acquired in campaign during the Great War who were declared as such by the appropriate health board” (*Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, March 20, 1925: 20-21.)

²³ *Lei* n.º 1:858 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 73, April 7, 1926.

²⁴ Decreto n.º 13:375 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 66, March 30, 1927.

²⁵ Decreto n.º 14:044 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 167, August 5, 1927. This was reprinted with minor changes in *Decreto* 16:443 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 138, June 6, 1929. Later, some inclusions would be made by the *decretos* n.º 17:335 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 211, September 10, 1929), which put into effect the *Código de Concessão de Pensões*, and n.º 20:251 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 197, August 25, 1931), among others.

²⁶ *O Mutilado da Guerra*, n.º 1, January 14, 1925: 1-3.

Chamber of the Senate, Procopio de Freitas, rapporteur of the 1924 law, drew attention to the generalizations and abuses committed by the evaluation committees, in that they cling to an interpretation of the law that produces erroneous opinions and that the Minister cannot change. These are opinions based on incomplete clinical records of the campaign, “because everyone who was familiar with the way in which our intervention in the war was carried out, knows that many services were not properly administered, and, according to information provided by competent individuals, I know that clinical records left much to be desired, it being natural that they are sometimes flawed, and there is no reason for these failures to now harm the stakeholders.”²⁷

The Republic, from its beginning, reconciled poorly with the mutilated face of war. The road to earning disability status was burdensome indeed. Since the publication of the first relevant law, the Law of 1921, the disabled were required to present a campaign document and proof of accident for the right to legal protection, which was made difficult given the conditions of health services on the war front. After being evaluated, if the identification and grant were denied, the soldier would have to wait for one year, without earning an income, in order to be able to appeal using the services of a lawyer and a doctor of belonging to the same evaluation committee.²⁸ However, even if he were to obtain a disability pension, its continuity was not guaranteed, since after the first standard, others would be published at the mercy of changes in national policy.

Legislation and support emerged late and slowly, through disorganized and poorly defined regulation. The situation was aggravated by the absence of an autonomous official body able to dedicate itself to these issues away from the fluctuations of national politics. Generally speaking, it can be claimed “that the mutilated and crippled need: treatment and equipment; the pension they are entitled to; an immediate job compatible with their physical state and abilities.”²⁹ Above all, it is intended to give a voice to the disabled when decisions are being made about them,³⁰ since “everything has been done without even one disabled soldier being heard, without having their claims, attested to by the rigor of fact, taken into consideration.”³¹

²⁷ Procópio de Freitas, *Diário do Senado*, June 12, 1925: 5.

²⁸ I was not able to study the health boards' exam proceedings because I do not know their whereabouts.

²⁹ *O Mutilado*, n.º 11, January 30, 1921: 3.

³⁰ *O Mutilado*, n.º 11, January 30, 1921: 1.

³¹ Cf. “As reclamações dos mutilados da guerra”, *O Século*, December 5, 1919: 1.

Treatment and Rehabilitation: The Arroios War Disabled Veteran Rehabilitation Institute (IRMGA)

One of the most important initiatives with regard to the war disabled veterans, is the creation of the Instituto de Reeducação do Mutilados de Guerra de Arroios (IRMGA) (The Arroios War Disable Veteran Rehabilitation Institute) on 11 April 1917 by the relief committee for mobilized soldiers of the Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas (CMP)³² (Portuguese Women's Crusade). The IRMGA was organized and directed by captain Alfredo Tovar de Lemos. Once created, it came to dialogue with work done at the Instituto Médico Pedagógico de Santa Isabel, made available to the Ministry of War by its director, António Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, beginning on 22 November 22 1916. The Institute of Arroios was responsible for pedagogical services and Santa Isabel for functional rehabilitation work.³³

With regulation approved in October 1917,³⁴ the Institute was organized into three sections: research and professional orientation; motor skills rehabilitation; and professional retraining in order to allow the mutilated or disabled to resume their prior profession, or one compatible with their injuries, for which there were a variety of workshops and primary school classes (83% of the men were illiterate). If prosthetics were needed, they were fitted at the Institute itself. As they underwent rehabilitation, the disabled received a salary that went as high as 20 cents a day, the same amount given for participation in the military campaign. The Institute's revenue came from CMP funds, hospitalized patient pensions, grants, donations, inheritances, and benefactor bequests, among other resources.³⁵

The IRMGA concretized, in Portugal, the European model of treatment, rehabilitation, and social integration of disabled veterans. Fulfilling this task, however, was limited by multiple alterations in its administration as well as in its statutes under national policy. Tovar de Lemos confessed that “the Rehabilitation of Disabled Veterans initiative could not escape suspicion of politics, and the work had to be stopped after we went through some tough times because of [...] ignorance of the Institute's purpose, an aloofness toward the subject, etc., in short, ill wishes” (Lemos, 1919: 9). In the years 1917 and 1918,

³² The *Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas* (CMP) took its first steps in March, 1916. Its statutes were published in *Diário do Governo* in July 13, 1916 (Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas [*Estatutos*, 1917: 16]).

³³ Cf. Casa Pia de Lisboa (1917).

³⁴ Cf. Portaria n.º 1:113 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 175, October 11, 1917.

³⁵ Cf. Lemos (1919).

the institute's custody and operation were at the center of some public discussion, suffering significant regulatory changes.³⁶ Indeed, on 8 January 8 1918, hospital institutes run by CMP were placed under the authority of the Ministry of War,³⁷ returning to the hands of the CMP only in March 1920³⁸ and running for merely one more year.

Confronted with the Ministry of War's publication of Order No. 103 in 1921,³⁹ which suspended the activities of the Arroyos Institute as a center for treatment and rehabilitation of disabled war veterans, the reactions were immediate. On a front page, the April 26 edition of the *Diário de Lisboa* opens with the title "The Mutilated," in which dismay is clearly expressed. The question is evident: "How can one comprehend that the government, through the Ministry of War, could so brutally resolve the matter of the mutilated, practically discarding them as if they were parasites enjoying chewing up public money? Why hasn't the Parliament taken a moment to pause its sad fights in order to approve the project that, for better or worse, takes care of the material situation of those mutilated?" It could be said it is because "the work toward benefiting the wounded, aside from its early stages, when it was supported by the hearts and donations of Portuguese women, was not born under a lucky star. The official intervention suffocated it, paralyzed its development. We could be the product of generous ideas and sentiments, a perfect collaboration of sympathy and selfless efforts for this has become a surly and unpleasant thing, formalistic and regulatory, against which the scant devotions still fighting to conserve a drop of tenderness could do nothing."⁴⁰

In addition to this list of criticisms is the following, by the general Gomes da Costa: "I understand that the country's obligation is to find a place for these men. That these soldiers should not have to be dependent on anyone, or worse: on the dire condition of begging. For the sake of the honor of this country and army, the matter should have been resolved long ago! [...] They say the government will place some disabled veterans in Instituto Runa. Do you know what Instituto Runa is? It is a convent for the old ... as if men in the prime of life could be cloistered or kidnapped!"⁴¹

³⁶ By way of the *Decreto n.º 3:751* in January, the Ministry of War determined that the *Instituto Médico-Pedagógico da Casa Pia de Lisboa* should start working as *Instituto dos Mutilados de Guerra* (*Diário do Governo*, Iª Série, n.º 12, January 15, 1918); the *Portaria n.º 1:398*, 11 June 1918 approves the statute of the *Instituto Militar de Reeducação dos Mutilados de Guerra*.

³⁷ *Decreto n.º 3:742 – Diário do Governo*, Iª Série, n.º 6, January 8, 1918.

³⁸ Cf. *Lei n.º 959 – Diário do Governo*, Iª Série, n.º 59, March 23, 1920.

³⁹ The *Ordem* 103 would most likely have been published by April 1921, as stated by the press and the legal statute of May (*Lei n.º 1:160*), though no source that could prove this was found.

⁴⁰ "Os Mutilados", *Diário de Lisboa*, April 26, 1921: 1.

⁴¹ "O nosso inquérito: Palavras do Sr. General Gomes da Costa", *Diário de Lisboa*, April 28, 1921: 1.

To calm things down, and possibly as a response to these complaints, in May of 1921 the *Diário do Governo* announced a cost of living assistance award for disabled veterans, singling out those who had been discharged from the Arroios Institute or its counterparts, before or after the arbitration of the definitive disability pension.⁴²

During a visit by the evaluation committee to the Institute in 1921, the final verdict was given: the institute failed in its mission. Although the sources we have are merely reports of the activity of the same Institute and press, the Institute's action can be determined to have been positive. Perhaps its political dissent was frowned upon by some governments. As a matter of fact, the disabled in its custody will have been those most quickly identified, treated, and reintegrated. Maybe, the Institute incapacity lay beyond its control, since much is due to the reticence of the disabled veterans to continue being "on duty", far from their families and the possibility of changing their lives, being guaranteed a job as compensation for their disabilities (some abandoned the revalidation process in order to get jobs).

Grouping and Mobilization: The Public Face of Disability

From parliamentary discussion to legislative regulation, the disabled were at the center of the main debates around veterans in the years immediately following the war. Many veterans returned to their lands and families, dispersing them with the possibility of a strong political movement of contestation.⁴³ However, those who had been to the poor treatment and rehabilitation centers reinforced the many public calls for attention, presenting an "invoice" to the Portuguese State and outlining a collective locus for claims.

In 1925, the formation of the Portuguese League of Disabled War Veterans was announced in *O Mutilado da Guerra – Órgão da Liga Portuguesa dos Mutilados da Guerra* (The Disabled of War – Journal of the Portuguese League of Disabled War Veterans), the first and only known issue.⁴⁴ It is only in January of 1926 that the disabled war veterans' first public and collective act takes place: the realization of the First Congress of the Mutilated and Disabled War Veterans with the presence of the Minister of Agriculture and representatives of the Ministry of the Navy and War.⁴⁵ At this meeting, major issues concerning the disabled are discussed. On the one hand, this exposes the discrepancy

⁴² Cf. Lei n.º 1:160 – *Diário do Governo*, Iª Série, n.º 91, May 2, 1918.

⁴³ For a political understanding of the disabled and veterans, see Correia (2012: 531-551).

⁴⁴ *O Mutilado da Guerra*, n.º 1, January 14, 1925.

⁴⁵ "Mutilados e Inválidos de Guerra", *A Guerra*, July 1, 1926, ano 1, n.º 7: 12.

between the number of disabled veterans recognized by the government, about 1,535, and those spoken of by Congress, about 1,800.⁴⁶ On the other hand, it lays the foundations of an organization that should be “made up of retired military personnel protected by Statute No. 1:170, Decree No. 10:099 or any other piece of legislation that especially regarded those mutilated and disabled by war, an association to be called the *Associação dos Inválidos e Mutilados de Guerra Portugueses* (Association of the Portuguese Disabled and Mutilated by war).”⁴⁷

Despite these transactions, it is only at the end of the First Republic that the collective reaction of the disabled becomes more visible and, subsequently, official, upon the statute publication of the *União dos Inválidos de Guerra* (Disabled Veterans Union), in 1933.⁴⁸ The legal formalization of associations for disabled veterans occurs essentially after this year, due to the centralized nature of the new political reality, which will alter entirely the way in which World War I, the combatants, and the disabled will be framed in the ideological and social scene of the *Estado Novo*.⁴⁹

Correspondence from 1933 between the management of the *Grémio dos Inválidos de Guerra* (Disabled War Veterans Guild) and the Ministry of the Interior⁵⁰ sums up the list of complaints recurrent among the disabled veterans. This contestation should be highlighted, given the determination that there should be further revision to regulate the already highly regulated situation of the disabled veterans, carrying out a survey of health and economic conditions.⁵¹ The disillusionment and fatigue were evident after “a situation was considered final; a situation obtained through very rich documentation and careful screening by a

⁴⁶ Cf. “I Congresso dos mutilados inválidos de guerra”, *A Guerra*, ano 1, n.º 2, February 1, 1926: 13-19.

⁴⁷ “Mutilados e Inválidos de Guerra”, *A Guerra*, July 1, 1926, Ano n.º 1, n.º 7: 4.

⁴⁸ Although veterans’ collective visibility is something mostly from Estado Novo, the larger discussion about disabled indentification, support laws, and pensions is from the First Republic.

⁴⁹ The already mentioned associations are formalized in 1933: the *Grémio dos Inválidos de Guerra* is authorized to use a small flag with the national color at public acts (Portaria n.º 7:613 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 144, June 29, 1933); and statutes of the *União dos Inválidos de Guerra* are published (*Diário do Governo*, II Série, n.º 291, December 14, 1933). It is believed that they were already acting before that, but no confirming source could be found.

⁵⁰ Cf. AHM, FO, 006, L, 52, Caixa 906, n.º 5 – Carta da Direcção do Grémio dos Inválidos de Guerra ao Presidente do Ministério, November 16, 1933.

⁵¹ Cf. Decreto n.º 21:990 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 294, December 16, 1932: “Considering that it is public knowledge that the disabled veterans are in good physical condition for the activities that they perform, their official designation as ‘disabled’ is not in accordance with reality. [...] I deem it right to decree as law the following: Article 1. In each military command, at the *Governo Militar de Lisboa*, the *Comandos Militares da Madeira e dos Açores*, and at the colonial governments, committees will be permanently appointed; they will be charged with conducting an investigation into the situation of all the disabled veterans residing in their areas, regardless of their rank; for that, they can request of any administrative authority or public office the information they deem necessary.”

series of boards, in a manner not expected by the law of any of the countries participating in the Great War.”⁵²

This, then, is an extremely controversial and undefined universe in which there is a raging struggle to find a place in the postwar context, where the speed of a new era sought to annihilate the remnants of war and, even more so, its “mutilated” face.

The Limits of the Norm and the Heterogeneous Identity

The time-consuming and limited normative conception of “disabled” in the Portuguese post-war period led to an ambiguity, reflected in this research, about what is actually meant by “disabled.” George L. Mosse identifies the disabled as “those who were thought to menace society’s defined as ‘outsiders’, on the margins of established society, was in direct opposition to the ideal manhood, the foil to which such ‘outsiders’ represented in mind and body. Such men were nervous, ill-proportioned, and, above all, constantly in motion” (Mosse, 2000: 102).

Within the heterogeneous universe of what is enshrined as *disabled*, those mutilated were the first to be recognized by the norm, as the disabled would only earn the designation of disability when above 50% of incapacity, including also those who had been gassed but not the tubercular, since the requirement was a limitation of movement, which was verifiable only in the terminal stage of the disease. The situation worsens, in fact, when the mutilation is not visible, as is the case for those gassed, tuberculous, or suffering from post-traumatic stress. In short, there was a universe of differences that unequivocally hindered the disabled veterans’ consecration under the law, as well as in the public space and as a collective identity. I will consider here this multiplicity in the heterogeneity of its manifestations. Let us examine, within the limits of the investigation, the cases of those disabled by tuberculosis and post-traumatic stress.

Susan Sontag, in an analysis of the use of disease as a political metaphor, presents tuberculosis as “disintegration, febrilization, dematerialization; is it a disease of liquids – the body turning to phlegm and mucus and sputum and, finally, blood – and of air, of the need for better air” (Sontag, 1978: 13). Marked by a long and slow attrition, the tubercular patient is relegated, much like those who are “mad” or victims of shell shock, to the social margin, to a kind of exile. For Sontag, in madness and in tuberculosis “there is

⁵² AHM, FO, 006, L, 52, Caixa 906, n.º 5 – Carta da Direcção do Grémio dos Inválidos de Guerra ao Presidente do Ministério, November 16, 1933.

confinement. Sufferers are sent to a ‘sanatorium’ (the common word for a clinic for tuberculars and the most common euphemism for an insane asylum)” (Sontag, 1978: 35-36). Relegated to the margin, the consumptive soldier and the victim of post-traumatic stress disorder take time to be recognized politically and socially.

Beginning on 20 October 1917, services by *Assistência a Militares Tuberculosos* (Assistance for the Tubercular Soldier) become subordinate to the Ministry of War, with the creation of the *Comissão de Assistência aos Militares Tuberculosos* (Assistance Commission for Tuberculosis Military),⁵³ responsible for

studying and proposing the necessary measures for mitigating the precarious situation of the military personnel who have contracted tuberculosis or aggravated their injuries due to the constant fatigue they were subjected to during military service, whether in France, overseas or in the metropolis, many of whom, due to insufficient documentation or other reasons unknown to those affected, were not considered to have the legal conditions for granting the retirement pension (Article 6.).

This commission was also responsible for treating and hospitalizing in appropriate institutions; propose monthly pensions; acquire funds; propose the research and technical developments to support the fight against the disease; among other responsibilities.⁵⁴ In the Commission regulation, the limits of identification were evident for the victims of tuberculosis – for a long time, they would not be acknowledged as disabled by war. The situation changes when, under the 1924 law, for the first time, the tuberculous are integrated into the status of disabled: all those who, in addition to physical injury, are carriers of disease acquired or aggravated in the campaign⁵⁵. Nevertheless, this definition was profoundly limited by the lack of proof of injury required by the evaluation committees, and by the fact that visible injury occurs only in the final stage of the disease. Invisibility collided with the limits of medicine. In a letter from the Director of the Disabled Veterans Guild to the President of the Ministry, the situation was described: "there are disabled soldiers, in greater numbers those who have proven to have contracted tuberculosis in campaign, who did not receive a single cent from the State, since they, poor and ignorant as they are, did not apply in time for

⁵³ Decreto n.º 14:957 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 21, January 25, 1928.

⁵⁴ Portaria n.º 2:299 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 113, June 1, 1920. Published again in June 30, 1920 (*Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 136).

⁵⁵ Cf. Decreto n.º 10:099 – *Diário do Governo*, I Série, n.º 210, September 17, 1924.

the pension to which they are entitled. Many have died; some are waiting for their turn to receive the scant aid allowed by the dwindling resources of the Ministry of War's Committee for the Assistance for the Tubercular Soldier.⁵⁶

Another form of invisibility is that of the soldier who is a victim of mental illness. Becoming better understood after World War I,⁵⁷ war neurosis, as coined by Freud, is also known by several names, such as shell-shock, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and war fatigue, among others. This disorder is, according to Eric Leed, a “historical illnesses in the sense that they are rooted in particular contexts, times and places: the trenches across northern France between December 1915 and March 1918” (Leed, 2000: 1). Difficult to identify by virtue of its invisibility, in some cases, it leaves the victim held in the grip of the past; “the neuroses of war transcend the context of their generation, continuing through some kind of inertia to frame the perceptions, judgments and behaviour of those who suffer from the past” (Leed, 2000: 1). Post-traumatic stress disorder results in a victim's inability, after being subjected to an extreme traumatic situation anomalous to his or her normal life (for example, war) to report this experience using existing narrative formulas. It is a present absence of narrative, since the past trauma becomes unnarratable, preventing progress (Quintais, 2000). In Portugal, little has been said about the illness in the context of the Great War, with most studies of this kind focusing on the colonial war.

Dealing with PTSD means to face the limits of the historical sources, whether in the archives or in the press. Those that exist are in large part from the period after 1931 or the campaign period, as preciously noted. In 1917, at the opening of the Instituto Médico Pedagógico de Santa Isabel to disabled veterans, its director emphasized the importance of having the “psychically disabled” be “carefully selected at a neuro-psychiatric center and from there distributed to hospitals, asylums, their homes or special wards. For many, being put in ordinary psychiatric services could be detrimental, influencing both their spirit and the public's spirit.”⁵⁸ There is, too, correspondence between the *Liga dos Combatentes da Grande Guerra* (League of Combatants of the Great War), family or local military units, and the *Direção Geral de Assistência* (General Directorate of Aid) used in the referral of former combatants to hospital units compatible with the illness usually dubbed “schizophrenic psychosis” or “depressive mentalpsycho-neurosis alienation.” Despite the fact that placement of these men in public psychiatric units was not conducive to recovery because

⁵⁶ AHM, FO, 006, L. 52, Caixa 906, n.º 5 – Carta da Direção do Grémio dos Inválidos de Guerra ao Presidente do Ministério, November 16, 1933.

⁵⁷ Cf. Peter Barham (2004); Mosse (2000: 101-108); Lerner (2003); Leese (2002) e Leed (1979).

⁵⁸ Casa Pia de Lisboa (1917: 45).

the disease involves moments of lucidity, there was no initiative to create a psychiatric unit restricted to the military and designed to treat these cases. The soldiers were hospitalized in common psychiatric units such as at the Hospital S. João de Deus (Barcelos), Hospital de Alienados do Conde de Ferreira (Misericórdia do Porto), Hospital Miguel Bombarda (Lisbon), and the Casa de Saúde do Telhal (Mem Martins), where most of the alienated soldiers were gathered, in order for there to better control and specially monitored aid.⁵⁹ In 1936, the report of the League of Combatants of the Great War provided the first account of the “alienated” 28 men, and in 1937 the number almost doubled, at 58 identified cases.⁶⁰ This considerable increase in the space of a year could be interpreted as conscientiousness when dealing with these individuals who, until that date, would not be classified in any legal framework identifying the disabled. Ultimately, this presented a mutilated face of war that could not be displayed in the national celebrations of the war effort, contrary to what would take place with soldiers who had suffered more visible, physical injuries.

Final remarks

The research done on the disabled war veterans in Portugal, in their multiplicity of identities, has shown itself to be limited.⁶¹ The intention was to tackle the public universe occupied by the disabled veterans through revision of the legislation, analysis of the relevant institution, and survey of the scarce and belated unionizing movement. In the words of Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, one of the greatest activists for the cause of the disabled veterans in Portugal, the situation presents itself as heterogeneous:

As a rule, our mutilated soldiers can belong to one of two groups: 1) those who excessively want to return to their land to live as freely as possible with their pensions; 2) those who excessively want to settle into the urban environment to live off of their pension and wages, employed in public service jobs. The former hardly subject themselves to educational systems,

⁵⁹ Cf. AHM, FO, 006, L, 45, Caixa 896, n.º 7-8 – Reforma da Lei n.º 1:170 (1937-1966); ANTT, MI, Secretaria-Geral, Livros 37, 38, 39 (19128-1929): these refer to several hospitalization requests for mentally disabled soldiers.

⁶⁰ Cf. LCGG, *Relatório da Gerência de 1936* (1937), mapa n.º 12; LCGG, *Relatório da Gerência de 1937* (1938), mapa n.º 10.

⁶¹ Considering the limited number of sources about treatment, evaluation, integration, and pensions, my conclusions are restricted to those the limits. In a certain way my conclusions are guided by the available sources, such as published legislations (and some archival sources about those publications), parliamentary debates, press and secondary sources. Hence, some specificities such as distinguishing treatment and support for African versus European troops are impossible to deeply check.

and I believe that, whenever they are willing, they should be employed in the state or county rural and industrial services, close to their hometown. The latter, on the other hand, can be subjected to educational systems; more than accept it, they ask for it (as with those who anxiously sought a career as a postal worker). Nowadays, in retrospect, it seems that the issue can be stated as follows: the pension should be raised, and access should be facilitated to public positions for those who wish for them, and are able, giving them preference always.⁶²

Finally, where should we situate the disabled veteran? What is the public and political space occupied by this figure in Portugal? Contrary to France, where associations for the disabled were first formed, establishing a group consciousness, such was not the case in Portugal. The rise of a unionizing movement, visible beginning in the 1930s, shows how late it was before the disabled veteran recognized to himself the right to a public voice.

Within the framework of the postwar period and of a conflict that demands to be forgotten, the disabled seek to resignify their position from beggars of state charity to an appreciation of their sacrifice, their disability a positive attribute, gained in the service of the homeland. More than monetary compensations, their wish was for moral recognition. They longed for the “bounty of the heroic sacrifices given in honor of the glorious combat, so that Portugal could take pride in keeping its honorable place among the allied nations.”⁶³

The display of injury as a positive value derives from the necessary overcoming of individual and collective trauma. Joy Damousi understands that the “[d]isabled men had to find another language of self and identity, one which would expose but downplay the extent of their wounds and afflictions. They found this language in their plea that their difference be seen as positive rather than a disadvantage, and in their claim to a heroic citizenship where their disabilities would be honored.”⁶⁴ This is how the first issue of the newspaper *O Mutilado* presented the disabled:

They don't have academic degrees, nor honorific ones. They don't have more than an average education, and some don't have even that. They have neither wealth nor political influence. They have only a few badges to adorn

⁶² Casa Pia de Lisboa (1917: 89-90), de Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, “Serviços Pedagógicos”, *A capital*, August 18, 1920.

⁶³ “I Congresso dos mutilados inválidos de guerra”, *A Guerra*, ano 1, n.º 2, February 1, 1926: 13-19.

⁶⁴ Damousi (1999: 85-102).

the chest of the loyal Portuguese they are. Badges! War crosses! Some awards recognizing their bravery, discipline, military pride, sacrifices, heroism! That is what we have. Is it little? Yes, it is little. We notice that in comparison [...] It is little. It is almost nothing but it will be enough to make us hear our voice of the sacrificed who call out for justice. It is not alms that we ask for, not alms. It is necessary. This is what we have come to demand of the conviction conceded to us. That is our program.⁶⁵

Would this group movement be responsible for the formulation of a particular image of the war, differing from the dead, those immortal and consensual heroes? Men who return are not immune to changes, seeking to shape a new identity which integrates their injuries, transforming loss and anger in political activity, claiming their place in the center of the construction of public memory of the conflict. A “paradoxical position” deeply shook the world of the disabled veteran, to the extent that “his body, which in wartime had been heralded as the icon of nationhood and manhood, exalting Victorian values of heroism, chivalry and glory, was now considered an anachronism, belonging to a premodern world. [...] The injured and the limbless became invisible in the masculine rhetoric of heroism and sacrifice.”⁶⁶

The process of recollection seeks, as such, to consolidate the myth of war experience,⁶⁷ as a nation regenerated by the sacrifice of the dead. While the war is described as a glorious sacrifice, those disabled by it do not enjoy the same role as protagonist: over the years, the memory of the trauma is annihilated in the name of concordant and homogenizing commemorative processes. According to Modris Eksteins, “to lose the recognition of their specific contribution from public commemoration would mean they would endure another loss: that of relinquishing *their* special place in the memory of war, at a time when others are trying to forget, repress or rewrite war” (Eksteins, 1989: 254-256).

In a universe of celebrations of the war experience, it becomes desirable to consecrate for a sacrifice the anonymous dead to which the state may assign the desirable qualities of a model citizen. There is a dissociation between the reality of the disabled veteran, who seeks support, work and livelihood, and the image of a commemorative process in which such a man could cause damage by the display of his injuries and his longings. While these symbolized the sacrificed nation for some, for others they

⁶⁵ *O Mutilado*, n.º 1, July 30, 1920:1.

⁶⁶ Cf. Damousi (1999: 89).

⁶⁷Cf. Mosse (1990:7).

represented the excesses of an era best forgotten. After all, for these men the war was a memory ever present in their body and mind. The disability is a mark that persists, an indelible legacy.

The legacy of the Mutilated
 When the war was over,
 one of the boldest highlanders
 of the small village,
 the one who, upon leaving, most animated
 the broken spirit of the boys,
 barely containing the cascading blood in each vein;
 when the war was over and he could, then, even though tired
 smile again, the sun of our land,
 I will go to them, minus one arm
 one “War Cross” added
 What a day, Lord... What a day
 of joy, this day of arriving...
 -- As if in a procession
 the people, coming to meet him, filled the road.
 And he found himself surrounded by highlanders,
 looked-at with awe, with wonder,
 until the months became years,
 and ours became oblivion ...
 Rural worker,
 left arm gone, once used
 - was now a useless part of the pair
 The poor mutilated fellow! ...
 And to add yet more torment,
 - As if the suffering were slight
 Forced inaction brought upon him
 Always a dogged and violent cough
 to shake it all - like a wind of death, the passage of a typhoon!⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Silva Tavares, “A herança do mutilado,” *A Guerra*, Ano 1, n.º 3, March 1, 1926: 1.

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