

Introduction

Veteran Poetics

Veterans inaugurate the Western canon: the Greek and Trojan warriors of Homer's *Iliad* and the homecoming protagonist of his *Odyssey* are a vocational summons to imaginative literature, whose eternal subject matter is human experience. The veteran has been a charged figure since antiquity. As a social persona, the ex-soldier is a focal point for debate about what a community owes to those who serve it and how that community relates to others; the answers to such questions can shape a nation as much as a village. As a private person – parent, offspring, partner, friend – the former fighter raises and confronts questions that are as personal as they are philosophical: what can be recovered from the past? To what extent do people stay the same over time? What is the value of experience? How can what has happened be communicated to others?

Veterans bring the real world into literature: they are figures at the heart of historical events, active agents in the processes of change. To meet a veteran (I speak as a civilian) is to be confronted with the fact and face of armed conflict – a living synecdoche; de-anonymized and re-individualized former members of the military, each one brings war home in very human terms. Veterans are inescapable reminders of a nation's conduct on the world stage but they also require us to think beyond 'the exceptional, marked event' and into 'the landscape of the mind'.¹ Ex by definition, they embody *having-been-ness*; they do the opposite of soldiering on. Returnees from afar, they live out the age-old connection between seeing and comprehending the world. They pose questions about how gender roles are understood; about parenthood, filiality and spousage. They bring us to reflect on merit, need and desert, on gratitude, debt and reward, on

¹ Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, 'The Double Helix', *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 31–48: 46.

heroism, brokenness and exploitation. They ask us to confront the nature and necessity of our remembering and memorialization.

Central to national life, arousing conflicting reactions from adulation to fear, the veteran has extraordinary potential as a literary figure. But it is as though he – and it is almost invariably a he – has been hiding in plain sight in works of literature, treated as a sentimental or comic character or diagnosed as traumatized or overlooked entirely by critics. This book attempts something different: to illuminate how the figure has been deployed in literature of the age of mass warfare to represent ideas relating to being, knowing and communicating. The literary veteran, I suggest, challenges biographical decorum (the idea that certain things should happen at certain times of life), questions the notion of an enduring self, puts the relationship between the community and the Other under scrutiny, probes the nature of problem-solving, disrupts the discourses of politeness and reason, and expresses the limitations of experientially based knowledge and its transmission.

In view of the last of these, *Veteran Poetics* is, among other things, a book about a later, post-Enlightenment version of modernity.² In Théodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's thesis, Enlightenment leads to totalitarianism, a process 'consummated by means of dictators and wars'.³ That seemingly ineluctable process, I argue, meets an opposing tendency in the temporally unbound, deracinated, unfathoming and unfathomable *xenos* that is the veteran encountered in literary texts of the age of mass warfare. I take the inception of that age – which is ongoing – to coincide with the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars, and later in this Introduction I say more about why the kind of warfare that was waged from that juncture can be considered different to what went before. Here, though, it can briefly be stated that the French Revolutionary Wars, and the Napoleonic Wars that succeeded them, were unprecedentedly intense, massive in scale (in terms both of involvement of personnel and geographical extent) and subject, as never formerly, to high degrees of uncertainty.⁴ The sheer

² The terms 'Enlightenment' and 'modernity' have a wide range of usage. Robert Pippin, for example, uses them 'interchangeably' (*Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991/1999), 4). I am distinguishing here between the modernity that the Enlightenment indisputably inaugurated and a later phase, which I discuss fully in Chapter 5.

³ Théodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (*Dialektik der Aufklärung*) [1944], trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), xii.

⁴ On this last point, see Anders Engberg-Pedersen, *Empire of Chance: The Napoleonic Wars and the Disorder of Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), which I return to later in this Introduction and in Chapters 3 and 5.

numbers of veterans they gave rise to, moreover, had not hitherto been known. Enlightenment led to the production *en masse* of a figure apt to counter Enlightenment, that is.

This is not the only Enlightenment it is possible to hypothesize, nor the only enlightenment that literary veterans illuminate.⁵ As the texts discussed in this book demonstrate, they reveal the deep love of comradeship, draw attention to the reach of compassion and embody the sadness of things being over. They also lead us, I suggest – particularly in the guise of the ex-combatant who, despite expectations, fails to tell war stories – towards a respectful *not* knowing, which attends to the not said. ‘Veteran poetics’, then, comprise not only what fictional veterans do in and for literary texts, but also a way of reading that registers and values silences. This way of reading has been developed by the theoretical ‘new ethicists’,⁶ among them Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose famous and much-revised essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ cautions against either speaking for the silenced or empowering them to speak in a hostile system, and Judith Butler, who has proposed a conception of ethics ‘that honors what cannot be fully known or captured about the Other’.⁷ In her essay ‘Values of Difficulty’, Butler notes the refusal of Catherine Sloper in *Washington Square* either to promise her father not to marry Morris Townsend or, when her father is dead, actually to marry him.⁸ Her final communication to the bemused Morris, Butler writes, ‘does not take the form of words but rather an extended silence, as if whatever meaning this refusal has for her will not and cannot appear in speech’.⁹ Like Morris, the reader is left ‘exasperated, cursing, staring’.¹⁰ But, despite the frustration, Butler recommends that we refrain from judging Catherine. Instead, we might ‘affirm what is enigmatic [...], what cannot be easily or ever said, what marks the limits of the sayable’.¹¹ The non-storytelling veterans I discuss in Chapter 5 similarly

⁵ As Dan Edelstein writes, ‘the Enlightenment was a heterogeneous phenomenon, to the extent that some historians insist on speaking of it only in the plural’ (*The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010/2014), 3).

⁶ See Dorothy J. Hale, ‘Aesthetics and the New Ethics: Theorizing the Novel in the Twenty-First Century’, *PMLA* 124.3 (May 2009), 896–905: 899.

⁷ Judith Butler, ‘Values of Difficulty’, *Just Being Difficult: Academic Writing in the Public Arena*, ed. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 199–215: 208.

⁸ With her embroidery and refusal of numerous suitors, Catherine is a Penelope-figure, but, unlike Homer’s Penelope, Catherine ultimately protects ‘what we might be tempted to call her autonomy’ (*ibid.*, 208).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

mark the limits of what can be said: noting and affirming those limits are the hallmark of veteran poetics.

Poetics and Veterancy

In positing a veteran poetics, I recognize the distinguished, if largely unacknowledged, role that veterancy – real-life and fictional – has played in the history of literary aesthetics. As English Literature developed as an academic discipline in Britain in the twentieth century, it was profoundly shaped by people who had seen military service. In the First World War these included J. R. R. Tolkien (Second Lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers, combatant in the Battle of the Somme),¹² F. R. Leavis (medical orderly with the Friends' Ambulance Unit),¹³ C. S. Lewis (Second Lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry, wounded at the Battle of Arras),¹⁴ Edmund Blunden (Second Lieutenant in the Royal Sussex regiment, awarded the Military Cross),¹⁵ G. Wilson Knight (motorcycle dispatch rider in the Royal Engineers in Mesopotamia, India and Persia)¹⁶ and Nevill Coghill (Second Lieutenant in the trench mortar division of the Royal Artillery in Salonika and Bulgaria).¹⁷ In the Second World War there was Ian Watt (junior infantry officer, wounded during the surrender of Singapore, prisoner of war in the Far East from 1942 to 1945),¹⁸ Richard Ellmann (member of the US Navy),¹⁹ Raymond Williams (Second Lieutenant, later Captain, in the 21st Anti-Tank Regiment in the Normandy campaign)²⁰ and Richard Hoggart (anti-aircraft gunner in the Royal Artillery in North

¹² T. A. Shippey, 'Tolkien, John Ronald Reuel (1892–1973)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

¹³ Ian MacKillop, 'Leavis, Frank Raymond (1895–1978)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

¹⁴ J. A. W. Bennett, 'Lewis, Clive Staples (1898–1963)', rev. Emma Plaskitt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

¹⁵ Bernard Bergonzi, 'Blunden, Edmund Charles (1896–1974)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

¹⁶ Francis Berry, 'Knight (George) Richard Wilson (1897–1985)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

¹⁷ John Carey, 'Coghill, Nevill Henry Kendal Aylmer (1899–1980)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

¹⁸ Marina Mackay, 'The Wartime Rise of *The Rise of the Novel*', *Representations* 119.1 (2012), 119–43; 120, 119.

¹⁹ John Kelly, 'Ellmann, Richard David (1918–1987)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

²⁰ Dai Smith, 'Williams, Raymond Henry (1921–1988)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition.

Africa and Italy).²¹ There is much valuable work to be done on revealing the connections between these figures' veterancy and their literary thinking – Marina Mackay's article on Ian Watt sets a sterling example²² – and there is insufficient space to do more than point to some resonances here. But one can mention, for example, Lewis's experience of trench camaraderie – 'a kind of love between fellow-sufferers' – and his claims for the role of 'the mutual love of warriors' in helping to render the conventions of courtly love acceptable;²³ Tolkien's 'taste for fairy-stories', which was 'wakened by philology' but 'quickened to full life by war';²⁴ what Leavis witnessed as an ambulance orderly and his commitment to discerning organic, vital morality in literature ('[w]e forget, when Leavis invokes "life"', wrote his former student Howard Jacobson, 'that its quite literal opposite is death; that when he began reshaping what was meant by English literature he was pulling matter out of the fire');²⁵ and the apparent connection between Williams's sense of losing his 'full human perspective' in war and his life-long project to uncover 'structures of feeling'.²⁶ Mackay has gone much further in Watt's case, persuasively arguing that experience of 'war's characteristic involuntary collectivities' accounts for his emphasis, in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), on the eighteenth-century novel's advancement of individualism.²⁷ Watt 'knew more than most', writes Mackay, of the 'struggle for survival in the bleak perspectives' that Defoe portrayed; '[l]ittle could have qualified him better to speak of them than his experience as a prisoner of war'.²⁸ Though the reactions to combat service in the work of these literary critics are varied, what shines through them all is a predilection for lucidity (which can come via myth or realism), an aversion to rhetorical pettifoggery and a commitment to the values inherent in comradeship. While it's true that war can make literary criticism seem irrelevant – as Ezra

²¹ John Ezard, 'Richard Hoggart Obituary', *Guardian* (10 April 2014), www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/10/richard-hoggart.

²² See also Kate McLoughlin, 'New Impressions XVI: *The Great War and Modern Memory*', *Essays in Criticism* 64.4 (October 2014), 436–48, on the American veteran critic Paul Fussell.

²³ C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of my Life* (London: Fontana, 1955/1959), 152; C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), 9.

²⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 109–61: 135.

²⁵ Howard Jacobson, 'Howard Jacobson on Being Taught by F. R. Leavis', *Telegraph* (23 April 2011), www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8466388/Howard-Jacobson-on-being-taught-by-FRLeavis.html.

²⁶ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 57; Williams coined the phrase 'structures of feeling' in *Preface to Film* (1954) and developed it throughout his work.

²⁷ Mackay, 'The Wartime Rise of *The Rise of the Novel*', 124.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

Pound suggests in his excoriation of *bellettrism* in ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ (1920) or, more practically, as Vera Brittain made clear in her decision to switch from English Literature to History when she returned to Oxford after nursing in the First World War²⁹ – the work of these scholars, critics and theorists ensures that veterancy runs through literary studies, driving methodologies, forming canons, shaping syllabuses.

Complementing the influence of real-life veterans on English Literature as a discipline is the role that certain key fictional veterans have played in critical theorizings. In his classic work of criticism, *The Wound and the Bow* (1941), for instance, Edmund Wilson, himself a First World War veteran,³⁰ argued that the ancient Greek story of Philoctetes, possessor of an invincible bow and irreparably injured in the Trojan War, is the story of creative endeavour: ‘genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together’.³¹ The bow is nothing without the wound, that is – and vice versa. But it is another fictional veteran from antiquity who has most inspired philosophico-critical thought – Homer’s Odysseus. Scholars have turned to the *Odyssey* for support for a variety of ideas and approaches: Piero Boitani to illustrate the proximity of poetry and history in *The Shadow of Ulysses* (1991) and Jonathan Shay to illuminate post-traumatic stress disorder in *Odysseus in America* (2002), for instance – two examples that demonstrate the range of application. Four *Odyssey* readers in particular merit special attention, given the significance of their ideas to this book. Erich Auerbach, Théodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Emmanuel Levinas – all Jewish, all deracinated by the Nazis (the first three forced to flee Germany, the last held in a Prisoner of War camp near Hannover)³² – were in exile themselves when they contemplated Odysseus’

²⁹ Brittain accounted for the change by saying that she now believed it was her job ‘to find out all about it’ and prevent it happening again (*Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900–1925* [1933] (London: Virago, 2008), 431).

³⁰ Wilson served as a nurse and, later, as a translator with the US Army in France during the First World War (Jeffrey Meyers, *Edmund Wilson: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 33–9). ‘In general, I loathed the Army,’ he wrote (quoted on 32).

³¹ Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* [1941] (London: Methuen, 1961), 259.

³² Erich Auerbach, born in Berlin in 1892, fought with the German Army in the First World War and took refuge from the Nazis in Istanbul, where, at the Turkish National University, he wrote *Mimesis* (1946/1953) (René Wellek, ‘Erich Auerbach (1892–1958)’, *Comparative Literature* 10.1 (1958), 93–5; 93). Max Horkheimer, born in Stuttgart in 1895, moved to New York in 1934 and returned to Germany in 1948/9 (J. C. Berendzen, ‘Max Horkheimer’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/horkheimer/>). Théodor Adorno, born in Frankfurt in 1903, left Germany for America in 1938, returning in 1949 (Tom Huhn, ‘Introduction: Thoughts Beside Themselves’, *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–18: 1, 2). Emmanuel Levinas, born in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1906, studied at the University of Strasbourg and was drafted into

nostos,³³ his return home to Ithaca. It would have been understandable if it had reinforced in them a desire for a similar safe return to the familiar, but it did the opposite, stimulating instead ideas about the nature of being based upon acceptance of incompleteness, risk-taking and love of the Other.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, working out their theory as to why the Enlightenment led to the death camps, Adorno and Horkheimer saw the whole process unfolding in the *Odyssey*. In packed, meticulous sentences, each one compacting a philosophy, they explain that the *nostos* was a return to kingly domination of territory: back in Ithaca, Odysseus could sleep with a 'quiet mind', knowing that servants were ready to chase away thieves and wild animals.³⁴ Enlightenment was just that – sleeping easy: the mastery of nature in the form of scientific knowledge that, finding doubt its anathema or 'paralyzed by fear of the truth', had only one reaction to what was foreign to it: relentless eradication.³⁵ Levinas takes the idea further. Contrasting Homeric odyssey with Abrahamic errand, the journey home to the familiar with the journey out to the unknown,³⁶ he hypothesizes at the outset of *Totality and Infinity* (1961) a 'metaphysical desire' for 'a land not of our birth, for a land foreign to every nature, which has not been our fatherland and to which we shall never betake ourselves'.³⁷ For Levinas, the untroubled sleep of Odysseus in Ithaca would be delusional at best, at worst its own form of bondage, for '[f]reedom consists in knowing that freedom is in peril'.³⁸ Better the 'truly human' state of Abraham, whose tent remains open to all-comers, than the palace in lock-down.³⁹

Like Levinas, Auerbach also drew inspiration from the contrasting stories of Odysseus and Abraham. In the middle of the episode in which

the French army in 1939, serving as an interpreter of Russian and German. He was taken prisoner in 1940 and spent most of his captivity in a camp in Fallinpostel (Simon Critchley, 'Emmanuel Levinas: A Disparate Inventory', *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xv–xxx: xv, xix).

³³ *Nostos* (homecoming) is derived from *νέομαι* (return home) (Marigo Alexopoulou, *The Theme of Returning Home in Ancient Greek Literature: The Nostos of the Epic Heroes* (Lewiston, ON: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 1).

³⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, XIII.

³⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (*Totalité et Infini: essai sur l'extériorité*) [1961], trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2007), 103. See also Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), 44, 67, 68.

³⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 33–4; see also 103, and Peperzak, *To the Other*, 44, 67, 68.

³⁸ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 35.

³⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings* (*Quatre lectures talmudiques*, 1968; *Du sacré au saint: cinq lectures talmudiques*, 1977), trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968/1990), 99.

Eurycleia, washing her disguised master's feet, recognizes him from the scar on his thigh, Homer interpolates the story of the boyhood boar-hunt in which Odysseus acquired the original wound. Auerbach opens his classic work *Mimesis* (1946) with a section called 'Odysseus's Scar', in which he presents the interpolation as evidence of the 'fully externalized form' of Hellenic literature.⁴⁰ Unlike Hebraic literature that, as instanced by the story of Abraham and Isaac, can 'indicate thoughts which remain unexpressed', the Homeric style, for Auerbach, 'knows only a foreground, only a uniformly illuminated, uniformly objective present'.⁴¹ Auerbach is analysing literary aesthetics rather than, as Adorno, Horkheimer and Levinas, ideas of ethical being. But the fully externalized literary mode has this in common with the ontological refuge in the familiar: it is a form of safety. For all four thinkers, albeit loosely, the arc described by the *Odyssey* is shorthand for mastering reality by nothing less than attempting to know everything about it.

The *Odyssey* also informs *Veteran Poetics*. I begin each chapter except the last with a vignette from the epic, drawing on it to illuminate points about the *curriculum vitae*, interaction between the community and the Other, problem-solving and the inhospitality of talking too much. But the subject of my last chapter lacks antique precedent. In my reading, the unfathomable veteran of mass warfare finds no ancient avatar in the easy-sleeping Odysseus. Rather, as already suggested, he is an impediment in the onward flow of the Enlightenment's 'dissolvent rationality'.⁴² In this case, it is the absence of Homeric parallel that makes the point most forcefully. In using vignettes from the *Odyssey* in the first four chapters, my methodology is both less ambitious and messier than what T. S. Eliot had in mind when, referring to the manipulation of the parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), he declared 'the mythical method' to be a means of 'controlling' and of 'ordering' an 'immense panorama of futility and anarchy'.⁴³ What I am attempting to do is closer to Rita Felski's characterization of actor-network theory as 'trudg[ing] like an ANT', alert to 'intricate ecologies and diverse micro-organisms', thinking 'temporal

⁴⁰ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II, 7. In a section also titled 'Odysseus's Scar', Terence Cave provides an alternative reading to Auerbach's, arguing that '[r]ecognition reaches back most often to painful or problematic narrative events hidden in the past': '[t]he crisis of the adolescent [Odysseus] is re-enacted in the crisis of the middle-aged man' (*Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988), 22, 23).

⁴² Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 6.

⁴³ T. S. Eliot 'Ulysses, Order and Myth' [1923], *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 175–8: 178.

interdependency without telos, movement without supersession', noticing the past in the present and vice versa.⁴⁴ So, rather than the paradigmatic, 'controlling' deployment of Homer that Eliot discerned in Joyce, I offer echoes and inter-connections. Hence, it is important to note that when I quote from the *Odyssey* it is from the 1946 translation for Penguin by E. V. Rieu. Emile Victor Rieu served in the Maratha Light Infantry during the First World War and translated the *Odyssey* during the Second while serving as a Major in the Home Guard, completing the first draft 'as France fell' and revising it to the accompaniment of 'the sound of V1 and V2 explosions and the crash of shattering glass'.⁴⁵ In this volume, Odysseus is a veteran's veteran; the *Odyssey* a veteran's text. The joint work of Homer and Rieu traverses *Veteran Poetics* like Odysseus the voyager: persistent, interfering, infuriating, inspiring.

More: it is – except as regards the final chapter – *knowing*. What it means for a text to know has been best articulated by Seamus Heaney who, citing the final chorus of *Doctor Faustus*, the opening lines of *Paradise Lost* and the whole of Wallace Stevens's 'The River of Rivers in Connecticut', identified an 'affective power' that 'has not to do simply with [an] author's craft' but that 'comes from a kind of veteran knowledge which has gathered to a phonetic and rhythmic head, and forced an utterance'.⁴⁶ Throughout *Veteran Poetics* the affective power of the *Odyssey* wells up, except, as indicated, in the last chapter, on whose subject – the unfathomable – the well runs dry. And if the *Odyssey* is a veteran text, another kind of textual veterancy belongs to the reader. Reading is not the same as fighting in a war or being in the army, but its processes of accumulating knowledge, growing familiar, making personal investment, following direction, encountering difficulties, repeating certain actions, testing hypotheses, waiting in uncertainty, becoming skilled in recognition, persisting over time, making gains, suffering losses and emerging changed endow it with qualities that veterancy shares.⁴⁷ The likeness between the reader and the war veteran is metaphorical and, to preserve the special quality of having been at war, I treat it with the lightest of touches in this book,

⁴⁴ Rita Felski, 'Context Stinks!', *New Literary History* 42.4 (Autumn 2011), 573–91: 577.

⁴⁵ P. J. Connell, 'Rieu, Emile Victor (1887–1972)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press 2004), online edition; www.us.penguingroup.com/static/pages/classics/history.html. The *Odyssey* was the first Penguin Classic.

⁴⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Dylan the Durable? On Dylan Thomas', *Salmagundi* 100 (Fall 1993), 66–85: 76.

⁴⁷ Textual veterancy is acknowledged in Margot Norris, *Virgin and Veteran Readings of Ulysses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010/2011).

drawing on it principally to illuminate the sense of *having come through* on which interpretation of a text can depend.

Both real-life and fictional veterancy generate poetics, whether in the form of providing a metaphorical vehicle for philosophical ideas or shaping literary thinking or suggesting a model for textual behaviour or readerly experience. But what – or who – exactly is a ‘veteran’? In the following section I give a definitional history of the term.

The Meaning of ‘Veteran’

The word ‘veteran’ comes from the Latin *vetus*, meaning ‘old’, which is itself related to the inferred Proto-Indo-European *wetos-, meaning ‘year’.⁴⁸ In theory, therefore, it is possible to become a veteran simply by growing older⁴⁹ – I’m veterating as I’m writing this; you’re veterating as you’re reading it – and, as will be seen in Chapters 3 and 5, this aspect of veterancy is key to the literary deployment of the figure to express epistemological ideas based on experience accrued over time. The related and more familiar usage – ‘One who has long experience in military service; an old soldier’ – is first recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as occurring in 1509, in a reference in Stephen Hawes’s *The Pastime of Pleasure* to ‘the noble veterane syr Consuetude’.⁵⁰ ‘Consuetude’ is an old word for ‘habit’ or ‘custom’, both dependent upon the accumulation of time: hence the noble knight’s name matches his military status. The *OED*’s next recorded instance combines these senses of combat service and temporal extension: in *The Remaining Medical Works of that Famous and Renowned Physician Dr. Thomas Willis* (1681), ‘Veterans’ are defined as ‘Old Soldiers, or any thing that hath served long in a place’.⁵¹ A report in the *Post Boy and Historical Account* for 6–8 August 1695 refers to the ‘Veteran Forces’ of the King of Sweden, a usage that seems to denote experienced soldiers, as opposed to aged or former servicemen.⁵²

By the end of the eighteenth century – the beginning of the period with which this book is concerned – the word ‘veteran’ is appearing with

⁴⁸ ‘Veteran, n. and adj.’, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press), online edition.

⁴⁹ The *OED*’s second definition is ‘One who has seen long service in any office or position; an experienced or aged person’ (‘Veteran, n. and adj.’, 2, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press), online edition).

⁵⁰ ‘Veteran, n. and adj.’, ta., *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press), online edition.

⁵¹ Thomas Willis, *The Remaining Medical Works of that Famous and Renowned Physician Dr. Thomas Willis* (London: T. Dring, 1681), unpaginated.

⁵² Anonymous, ‘Lisbon, July 5th 1695’, *Post Boy and Historical Account* (Gale-Cengage 17th–18th Century Burney Newspaper Collection).