

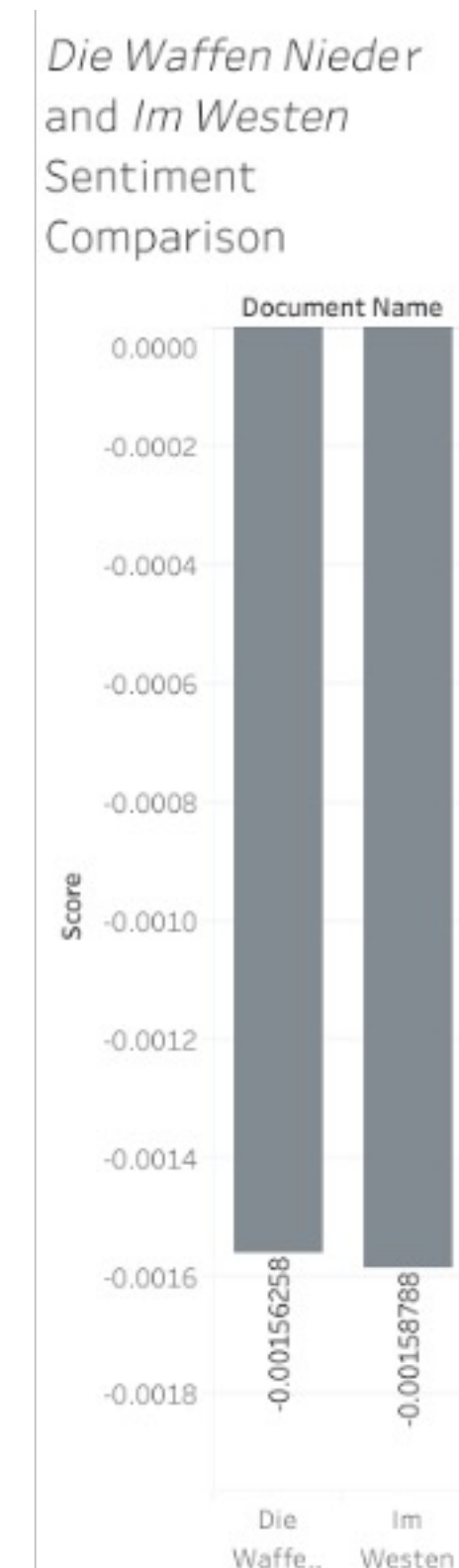
# Antiwar Sentiment in German Storytelling Traditions

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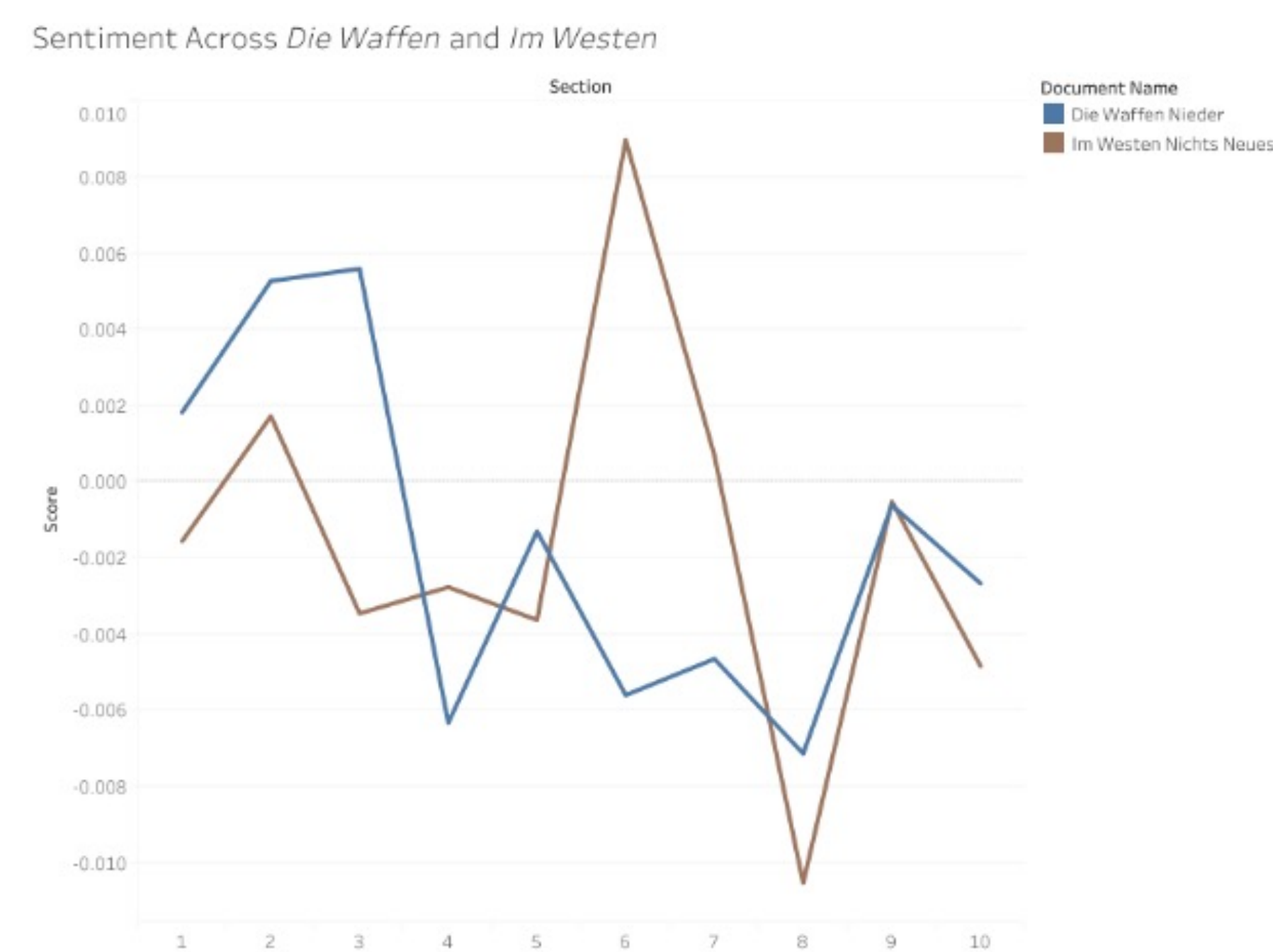
## Corpora

Borchert, Wolfgang. *Draußen vor der Tür*. 1947.  
Remarque, Erich Maria. *Im Westen Nichts Neues*. 1928.  
Suttner, Bertha von. *Die Waffen Nieder! : Eine Lebensgeschichte*, 1889.

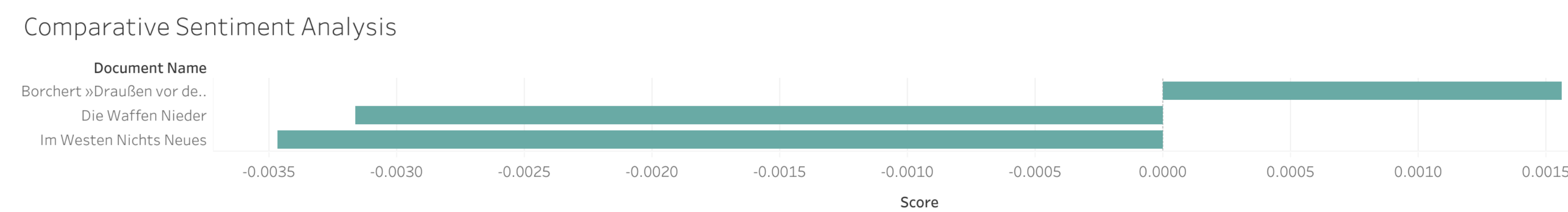
1. Positive/negative overall comparative sentiment analysis between Von Suttner and Remarque.



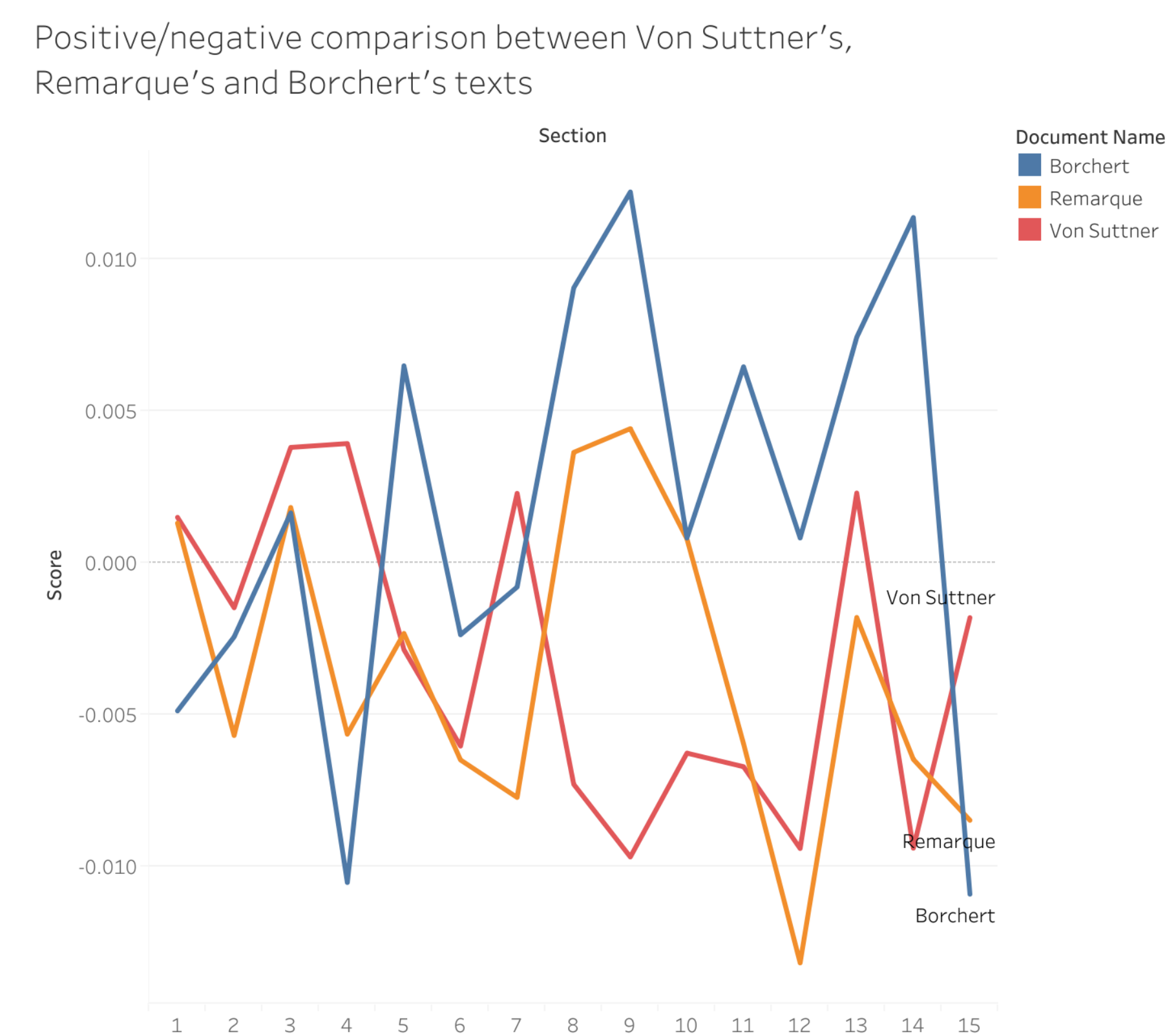
2. Positive/negative segmented comparative sentiment analysis between Von Suttner and Remarque.



3. Positive/negative overall comparative sentiment analysis between Borchert, Von Suttner, and Remarque.



4. Positive/negative segmented comparative sentiment analysis between Borchert, Remarque, and Von Suttner



Scan hear me talk more about this project and please reach out with questions!  
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## Overview

In my dissertation, I analyze responses to suffering across the last 200 years of German storytelling across multiple mediums. German history includes a wide variety of narrative reactions to violence. I include a few patterns here from my research using sentiment analysis, which complimented, guided, and often redirected my reliance on traditional close readings. I first completed a comparative sentiment analysis of two antiwar texts: Bertha von Suttner's *Lay Down Your Arms (Die Waffen Nieder!*, 1889) and Erich Maria Remarque's *All is Quiet on the Western Front (Im Westen Nichts Neues*, 1928). I then compared the iconic "rubble" text *The Man Outside (Draußen vor der Tür*, 1947) by Wolfgang Borchert to examine how sentiment trends across three time periods differ across these famous war texts (pre-WWI, between WWI and WWII, and post-WWII). Using these texts as representative of larger trends, I argue that before World War I, German antiwar literature relied on emotional activism created by negative sentiment whereas thereafter, characters are led by rational compassion surrounded by the chaos of war and a sense of futility. After World War II, narratives often direct audience attention toward victim characters rather than perpetrators or even bystanders. This pattern of lopsided attention toward victims carries weight not only in German narratives immediately following these global wars, but also in contemporary storytelling practices and memorializations of conflict as an audience is drawn toward those in pain, producing positive empathetic responses.

## Methods

With the program Visual Studio, I formatted and coded each of the three corpuses. I used the top 300 and lowest 300 positive words in the German sentiment dictionary from Hedonometer, with English and pandemic-related words removed as they would not appear in texts from these time periods. The program Lexos performed a content analysis (relative frequency of negative and positive words in relation to each other) while Tableau created the visualizations of overall sentiment comparisons as well as the segmented images.

## Results

The overall differences between the two pre-WWII is slight (see Figure 1). Remarque's text has an only slightly lower negative sentiment score than Von Suttner (-.00159 and -.00156). Both texts reflect negative sentiment overall, with antiwar messaging predictively relying on more negative words than positive ones to share these narratives of war. However, by breaking the texts into ten segments as with tracking specific words (Figure 2), we see a more detailed sentiment comparison between the two texts. Remarque includes higher moments of positive words but also lower negative words, ending with lower negativity while Von Suttner begins and ends with higher positive sentiment. Figures 3 and 4 reflect greater positive sentiment in Borchert's text, though also reveals greater volatility in two large negative dips in the segmented analysis (Figure 4).

## Takeaways

The two popular pre-WWII antiwar texts contain similar levels of overall negative sentiment, though Remarque's text contains greater positive/negative variation. Von Suttner's novel follows Martha, a woman not physically engaged in combative war but affected by the widespread domestic harms caused by war and perceptive to those occurring on the front. Her activist-centered narration includes increasingly negative sentiment in describing the violence of war. In the antiwar tradition of the early twentieth-century, war would-be heroes like Remarque's soldier Paul became bystanders and victims of the chaotic war machine, surviving or dying entirely by chance and watching others condemned to the same fate. Greater affective volatility adds to the chaotic violence depicted in the novel.

Comparing a third text suggests a possible shift in sentiment patterns directly following World War II. *The Man Outside* directs our attention to those in pain and shows higher positive sentiment, which I interpret as higher degrees of compassion directed toward the traumatized war veteran protagonist. On a more general level, the higher frequency of positive sentiment in *The Man Outside* suggests victim-narratives might rely on more positive words to convey the need for help. Alternatively, such hero narratives as in *Lay Down Your Arms* and bleak antiwar narratives as in *All is Quiet on the Western Front* incorporate negative sentiment to highlight the horrors of war. This project could be expanded to increase sample size of antiwar texts from each era to learn more about each era's reliance on negative and positive sentiment.