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Critical Military Studies Special Issue

War, Wounding and Intimacies

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Introduction

In war and its aftermath, new relationships are forged through acts of wounding and caring for the wounded and for the dead. This special issue focusses on the injured and injuring body as the site at which emerge constellations of hostility and intimacy between, variously, combatants, other military and medical personnel, and civilians. The articles consider unexpected, previously undiscussed war intimacies across several major conflicts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and America. They draw upon a range of materials with an emphasis on visual and material culture, including photographs, sketches, objects, and private and public forms of commemoration, as well as on published and institutional records and on personal documents – letters, diaries, marginalia and annotations.

As the following contributions show, in war and post-wartime daily encounters, key relationships and acts of care often shift from the domestic and local, as day-to-day interactions and treatment of the body, alive and dead, take place between those with no prior connection. This is the case for the American Civil War soldier, examined and treated by staff of the Army Medical department rather than by the local doctor and family, for soldiers undertaking rehabilitative training in British hospitals during and after the First World War, and for the dead soldier of the First and Second World Wars, whose corpse, when identifiable, became a signifier of the state's care for its military instead of being subject to family and local traditions.

As previous work by contributors Ana Carden Coyne (2014) and Jessica Meyer (2009) has demonstrated, wounding is political. As well as the local relationships of power at work around the wounded and the dead in battlefield, hospital, and civilian settings, a nation indicates its position towards the soldier through its treatment of the injured and deceased. Across the geographical and historical range considered by the collection, the war injured became a focus for celebrations of heroism and sacrifice, but also for anxieties about the cost and potential social burden of the disabled soldier. During war a country's care of its able fighting force, its wounded, and its dead is central to morale and recruitment, sending a direct message to serving and potential soldiers about their worth. These articles variously consider forms of value, examining the contexts in which some wounds and deaths were deemed to be of more value than others, and therefore some acts of care and mourning deemed more legitimate.

Articles in this issue also examine the new, powerful affective bonds forged between those whose lives would otherwise have never coincided. During the Crimean War, for example, as Rachel Bates argues, Queen Victoria developed a very personal interest in her wounded troops, and those on opposite sides of conflicts became connected by chance events such as participation in the same battle, as shown by Eve Rosenhaft in her discussion of the example of an American military physician's annotation of a German soldier's published account of the first Battle of Cambri of the First World War. The forging of intimacies between soldiers and healers during the American Civil War and over the course of the First World War results in a secondary effect: the blurring of distinctions between combatants and non-combatants and the unsettling of conventional notions of gender and sexuality. As the articles by Susan-Mary Grant, Jessica Meyer, and Ana Carden-Coyne discuss, these new formations of relationships often involved a reworking of conventional roles, as assumptions about caregiving as innately womanly and maternal were challenged at the same time as ideas about warrior masculinity as aggressive and impervious were strained by, variously, soldiers' empathy with the 'enemy', emotional and physical suffering, disablement and death. For Lucy Noakes, in her examination of burial practices in Second World War Britain, the distinction between soldiers and civilians was further eroded by the effects of aerial bombardment, which led to the redefinition of the homefront as a new theatre of war. As the British authorities sought to put the bodies of dead civilians to use, in a manner commensurate with the co-optation of the dead soldier's body as willing sacrifice in the service of the state, the advancement of intimacy reaches its end point. From here on, in addition to policing the

distinctions between manly warriors and feminized carers, the state must work hard to sustain clear divisions between those who suffer and those on whom suffering is inflicted.

The articles in this special issue are developed from work presented as part of the Passions of War AHRC-funded research network,¹ and they speak to the Network's aspirations to investigate the influence of war on constructions of gender, and how these constructions and practices have, in turn, conditioned the ways in which wars are waged, mediated, felt and understood. The interdisciplinary network participates in and extends a fruitful coming together of thinking on war and militarism with attention to the histories of gender, emotion and tactility. It builds upon work by Scarry (1985), Bourke (1996), Noakes (1998), Burg (2001), Boxwell (2002), Goldstein (2003), Halladay (2004), Rachamimov (2006), Butler (2009), Martin (2011) and Vickers (2013), as well as on the pioneering work of network partners in Belgium and the Netherlands focussing on war, gender, sexuality, and the history of the emotions (GEMS and Amsterdam Centre for Comparative Emotion and Sensory Studies: ACCESS, VU University). Attention to feeling, affective and haptic, runs through the collection, from Queen Victoria's handling of the grapeshot that wounded the men featured in Cundall and Howlett's Crimean War photographs to a grandfather's laying of a coin, the weekly pocket money, on the coffin of his young grandson killed in a school bombing in the Second World War. Collectively these articles show the new thinking made possible by the foregrounding of passion within war, and they seek to inspire more work in the recent field of battlefield emotions.

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¹ Details of this network can be found at: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/english/research/passions-of-war>.

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