

The politics of wounds

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Résumé ou extrait : This book explores military patients' experiences of frontline medical evacuation, war surgery, and the social world of military hospitals during the First World War. The proximity of the front and the colossal numbers of wounded created greater public awareness of the impact of the war than had been seen in previous conflicts, with serious political consequences. Frequently referred to as 'our wounded', the central place of the soldier in society, as a symbol of the war's shifting meaning, drew contradictory responses of compassion, heroism, and censure. Wounds also stirred romantic and sexual responses. This volume reveals the paradoxical situation of the increasing political demand levied on citizen soldiers concurrent with the rise in medical humanitarianism and war-related charitable voluntarism. The physical gestures and poignant sounds of the suffering men reached across the classes, giving rise to convictions about patient rights, which at times conflicted with the military's pragmatism. Why, then, did patients represent military medicine, doctors and nurses in a negative light ? This book listens to the voices of wounded soldiers, placing their personal experience of pain within the social, cultural, and political contexts of military medical institutions. The author reveals how the wounded and disabled found culturally creative ways to express their pain, negotiate power relations, manage systemic tensions, and enact forms of 'soft resistance' against the societal and military expectations of masculinity when confronted by men in pain. The volume concludes by considering the way the state ascribed social and economic values on the body parts of disabled soldiers through the pension system

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