



Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933

Lisa M. Budreau

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The United States lost thousands of troops during World War I, and the government gave next-of-kin a choice about what to do with their fallen loved ones: ship them home for burial or leave them permanently in Europe, in makeshift graves that would be eventually transformed into cemeteries in France, Belgium, and England. World War I marked the first war in which the United States government and military took full responsibility for the identification, burial, and memorialization of those killed in battle, and as a result, the process of burying and remembering the dead became intensely political. The government and military attempted to create a patriotic consensus on the historical memory of World War I in which war dead were not only honored but used as a symbol to legitimize America's participation in a war not fully supported by all citizens.

The saga of American soldiers killed in World War I and the efforts of the living to honor them is a neglected component of United States military history, and in this fascinating yet often macabre account, Lisa M. Budreau unpacks the politics and processes of the competing interest groups involved in the three core components of commemoration: repatriation, remembrance, and return. She also describes how relatives of the fallen made pilgrimages to French battlefields, attended largely by American Legionnaires and the Gold Star Mothers, a group formed by mothers of sons killed in World War I, which exists to this day. Throughout, and with sensitivity to issues of race and gender, **Bodies of War** emphasizes the inherent tensions in the politics of memorialization and explores how those interests often conflicted with the needs of veterans and relatives.



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