

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Queering Civil-Military Relations

The Cultural Work of Recognition, Recovery, and Reproduction

Mia Lim Certo

A thesis submitted to the Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Despite spanning a variety of disciplinary approaches, research on civil-military relations (CMR) has not critically engaged with the binary that defines it. Instead, it essentializes 'civil' and 'military' within an oppositional binary that governs research and separates a distinct 'us' from 'them'. Reading these patterns within CMR as a failure of imagination, this thesis identifies a need for critical-theoretical work to queer the civil-military binary.

In denaturalizing the binary, this project identifies cultural work — cultural products and social relations — as the labour which reproduces and sustains it. Empirically, it focuses on American and British cultural work around the 21st century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, understanding queer civil-military identities, including the veteran, as a strategic site for theorising CMR. Portraying a dynamic civil-military-relations-in-the-making, the project centres three types of cultural work: recognition, recovery, and reproduction. Specifically, it analyses military medals and stolen valour, forces charities, and war writing. Such cultural work, which templates social relations, unstably produces civil-military and coheres around figurations of military and civil as *hero and/or victim* and *saved and/or saviour*, respectively. The project's analysis reveals that individuals and discourses which are made to be civil and military in cultural work cannot be accommodated in a binary logic. A queerness emerges that is crucial to the contemporary character of CMR.

The project makes three main contributions. First, in queering civil-military relations it provides a critical-theoretical conceptualization of contemporary CMR to CMR literature. Second, it joins a growing Queer IR literature that deconstructs essentialised subjects and binaries, and so issues a challenge to dominant theories of CMR. Finally, in embracing cultural work, the thesis offers an account of CMR that provides a basis to question the civil-military binary. Putting either 'us' or 'them' aside, what futures can 'us' and/or 'them' identify and enable?

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List of Acronyms

9/11	September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States
ACHFT UK	Andrew Carnegie Hero Fund Trust
AP	Associated Press
CHFC US	Carnegie Hero Fund Commission
CGC	Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (UK)
CGM	Congressional Gold Medal (US civilian award)
CMR	Civil-Military Relations
CMS	Critical Military Studies
ERG	Employee Resource Group
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross (UK)
DOD	Department of Defense (US)
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross (UK)
DSEI	Defence and Security Equipment International, a biennial arms fair
GC	George Cross (UK)
GPMG	General Purpose Machine Gun
IGF	Invictus Games Foundation
MC	Military Cross (UK)
MOD	Ministry of Defence (UK)
MoH	Medal of Honor (US)
NFT	Non-Fungible Token
PTS(D)	Post Traumatic Stress (Disorder)
NHS	National Health Service (UK)
SEALs	Sea, Air, and Land Teams (Special Operations), United States Navy
SOF or SF	Special Operations Forces or Special Forces
UBACS	Under Body Armor Combat Shirt
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
VFP	Veterans For Peace (UK)
VHP	Veterans History Project
VC	Victoria Cross (UK)
VVAW	Vietnam Veterans Against the War
WIS	Wounded, Injured, or Sick

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

'...when it comes to our troops, when it comes to you and your families, as Americans we stand united. We are proud of you. We support you. And we can never thank you enough.'¹

– President Barack Obama, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, 15 December 2014

'Because we in civvy street know, and we must never forget, quite how much you do for us.... Today we support and we celebrate the very best among you, but each and every one of you truly is the best of British.'²

– Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the 2020 Sun Military Awards

'Thank you for your service' slips off the tongue without thought. We stand by the war memorial in silence for two minutes on the second Sunday in November, whatever the weather. Or watch videos of soldiers' homecomings on YouTube and cathartically cry without knowing them. We tear up again over feel-good news reports about resilient veterans who have overcome injury. We drop coins in the hat of the person with a cardboard sign reading 'Vietnam vet'. And our leaders tell us, tell them that we can 'never thank you enough', that they are 'the best of British'. These civil-military relations (CMR) hide in plain sight. Couched in the trappings of tradition and history, they permeate life in ways that encode a binary made to appear unremarkable. The 'us' and 'them', whichever 'side' one might be on, dictate a set of relations that are enacted in codified behaviours. This thesis is animated by a desire to understand why and how the civil-military binary and the relational dynamics it perpetuates persist. It questions whether there are alternative formulations of civil-military relations that might move the conversation away from 'us' and 'them' and, if so, how they might be identified.

¹ 'President Obama Thanks America's Troops and Marks a Milestone in the Afghanistan War', whitehouse.gov, 15 December 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/12/15/president-obama-thanks-americas-troops-and-marks-milestone-afghanistan-war>.

² Boris Johnson Pays Tribute to the Armed Forces with Passionate Speech at The Sun Military Awards, 2020, 2:59-3:23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOWI6UcfsIY>.

This thesis moves towards this possibility by 'queering' the civil-military binary. In using 'queer' as a verb, it seeks to make unfamiliar or strange that which, through years of particular power dynamics, research agendas and conceptual formations, has become stable and reified. In doing so, this thesis is closely tied to the work of deconstruction, engaging with 'categories that are constructed to appear closed or fixed when they are not,' and examines the 'contradictions and instabilities' in this essentialisation and naturalisation.³ It understands CMR as being supported and defined by an understanding which holds 'civil' and 'military' within an oppositional binary. It is the hope that this thesis queers CMR so that may 'provide new perspectives on old questions' and opens possibilities to move beyond the binary.⁴

This thesis does not argue that the categories of 'civil' and 'military' do not exist. Instead, it demonstrates flaws in the reliance of CMR research on an assumed understanding of them as opposites. How can we trust a meaning is shared when it is not discussed? 'Civil' and 'military' exist, but how they are produced in different spheres, times, and media mounts a challenge to the static essentialisation of the terms. While the words 'civil' and 'military' may attract and build communities, which is a positive aspect of maintaining the binary, the insistence on the binary also produces unintended harms including an 'othering' and stilted of the relationship that generates the belief that 'military' and 'civil' people cannot understand each other. Acting in affirmation of the binary is easy, accepted, and indeed sometimes expected. It really is as easy as saying 'thank you for your service'. This project intends to denaturalise the binary out of the belief that it is an undertheorised and crucial concept in CMR as research and lived experience.

For some readers, this project will appear to be primarily concerned about how non-military citizens and members of the armed forces perceive one another. While this is an urgent and timely issue as the US and UK reconcile the legacies of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and continue to sustain military engagement overseas, this thesis also operates on the level of CMR theorisation. This project focuses on the contemporary character of

³ Joan W. Scott, "'The Tip of the Volcano'", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 2 (April 1993): 440, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500018430>.

⁴ Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1075, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376>.

CMR in the US and UK and asserts that the binary is maintained through a variety of labour which operationalises 'civil' and 'military' in consistent oppositional relations. It highlights 'military' as *hero and/or victim* and 'civil' as *saved and/or saviour* as two dominant configurations which are drawn on in processes of instrumental heroization and victimization, intended to be moments of rest in managing 'military' as a figure of unease.

In looking at CMR, this project identifies veterans as a strategic site of analysis for two reasons. First, as figures who were 'military' and now may, once again (or never have stopped being) 'civil', veterans refuse to signify monolithically within the civil-military binary. Simply, they are non-binary figures. However, the language of transition and transformation often applied to serviceleavers portrays a move from one closed sphere to another. Analysing veterans not as liminal figures, but as queer figures, exposes the binary for the conceptual and naturalised construct that it is. Second, veterans as figures of unease that are neither wholly/solely 'military' nor wholly/solely 'civil' sit at the centre of CMR behaviours which create them concurrently as charitable causes, heroes to us all, mentally ill victims/villains, and leaders of commerce and politics. The veteran is, out of anxiety, created and recreated in overlapping and contradictory ways, which have much to tell us about the contemporary character of CMR.

In this project, I choose to use the term and concept of 'civil' rather than 'civilian' for several reasons. First, I want to draw attention to the relationship and continuity between institutional and interpersonal CMR, which I view as entangled. Second, I oppose the connotations of innocence affiliated with the term 'civilian' when drawn in contrast to the 'soldier' or the 'military.' Because the 'civilian' is imagined and researched as proximal non-combatants (and often victims and casualties) in war, the concept of civilian as a mere non-military grouping is somewhat muddied. Though there are examples of using 'civilian' to draw lines in domestic society to demarcate non-military — a recent National Public Radio podcast season 'Home/Front' features conversations across the 'civilian-military divide', abbreviated as 'civ-mil'⁵ — this research elects to use 'civil.' To read the home non-military as 'civilian' enables the erasure of citizens' political agency and responsibility for their

⁵ Gregory Warner, Quil Lawrence, and Justine Yan, 'Rough Translation', Home/Front, accessed 10 June 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/25/1000152982/new-season-home-front>.

military. So, if politics is the link which connects the interpersonal to the institutional, then it is even more essential that this tie be maintained in this analysis.

CMR has been troubled by its ambiguity over whether 'civil' and 'military' refer to institutions or people. It has been understood as both, often in distinct disciplines and analyses. However, this project agrees with assertions that the two are not, should not, and cannot be theorised separately. As McCartney asserts, 'the ways in which a society and its armed forces view and interact with each other can have profound effects on how force is used, on the character, size and legitimacy of the military, and on the experience and commitment of service personnel.'⁶ While this project does not engage with governmental institutions or the military apparatus directly, it understands the 'civil' and 'military' it deals with as socio-political, between people and entangled with politics. To queer CMR then is an attempt to liberate theorization and research from frames of inquiry which offer boundaries, interstices, and overlaps. In denaturalizing the civil-military binary, the project asks what is left? What is enabled?

To insist on a civil-military binary is to order and (re)produce behaviours intended to regulate and police the necessarily theorized boundary between the two. The civil-military binary itself has a strangeness to it in structure and function when held against other binaries conceptually. Saussure, a linguist and a pioneer in semiotics who influenced Derrida, Barthes, and Hall among many others, theorised language as a system of linguistic signs in which meaning is relational. Thus, the concepts we associate with word-signs do not pre-exist but are rather 'purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristics is in being what the others are not.'⁷ Here, we can see gestures toward what would become binary opposition theory. What fell outside the remit of Saussure's work was the power and politics which go into constituting the relations of difference which he identifies as key to linguistic semiotics.

⁶ Helen McCartney, 'The Military Covenant and the Civil-Military Contract in Britain', *International Affairs* 86, no. 2 (March 2010): 412, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00889.x>.

⁷ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 117.

Critically, in theorising deconstruction, Derrida recognised that, rather than being neutral, an opposition (binary) of this kind is more of a 'violent hierarchy' in which 'one term governs the other or has the upper hand.'⁸ As Hall reads Derrida, the dominant pole of the binary 'includes the other within its field of operations.'⁹ If we put this to the civil-military binary, we find an additional strangeness. Which term or pole includes the other? Which has the upper hand in the binary? Is the binary better captured by **civil/military** or **civil/military?**

There is a tension to answering these questions. Civil-military relations, generally, are situated specifically in contexts that are historically rich and vary substantially across time and space. The relations critiqued in this project and the critique sustained in this thesis are themselves situated in a specific context, however this critique of the CMR binary travels and might be adapted to any other context which also naturalises a separation of the civil and the military. Within the tradition developed in this project which focuses on US and/or UK contemporary CMR, in one sense, 'military' is subordinate to 'civil', anchored in institutional civil control of the military apparatus and the knowledge that the military is composed of citizens who do not stop being citizens upon enlistment or commissioning. We might ask which is more dominant in the imagination, with dominant connoting prominence not superiority. In this context, 'military' appears clearer, sharper. If we think of hierarchy as being encoded with the binary, then there is a strong argument to be made that military 'governs' civil. In a binary which is challenged by so many figures – children, spouses, contractors, veterans, cadets/JROTC – a reductionist, but firm manner of drawing the line comes with whether an individual is presently serving in the military. With this definition, it is easier to conceive of someone or something being 'military' than 'civil.' Yet, as the next section demonstrates through autoethnographic reflexive practice, this tidy and straight conceptual division clashes with a messy and queer reality.

1. Queer Foundations

⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 41.

⁹ Stuart Hall, 'The Spectacle of the "Other"', in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, Culture, Media, and Identities (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), 235.

In queering the civil-military binary, it is important first to lay out the queer foundations of this thesis, which have influenced the ways of seeing, thinking, researching, and writing. These foundations are double. First, the section accounts for the origins of this thesis and the positionality from which I write. In doing so, I reflect on the queerness of doing this research as a figure who does not signify monolithically in the civil-military binary. Second, the section lays out the theoretical commitments and basis of the project regarding what it understands 'queering' to be.

1.1. Situatedness/Reflexivity/Positionality, or the Things I Carry

Thinking tidily, I am not military. I would be strictly civil in the strange binary sketched out above. Yet, my identities and experiences with the military and this research overtly challenge the neatness of the conceptual civil-military binary in interesting and critical ways. There is a longstanding tension between researchers and the military, which has been described as a 'military-scholarly divide'.¹⁰ It has caused a wariness for both sides who each produce and use knowledge in ways which comingle and conflict, sometimes with problematic results.¹¹ While studies of the military, which are often sociological, have previously sought to create an objective distance between the researcher and subject, there have also been calls and answers for increased reflexivity in studying the military.¹² I agree wholly with these calls and have come to think of the process of continuous reflection on my positionality as a sort of monitoring of the 'things I carry'¹³ in approaching and

¹⁰ Anna Danielsson, 'Knowledge in and of Military Operations: Enriching the Reflexive Gaze in Critical Research on the Military', *Critical Military Studies*, 20 November 2020, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2020.1835341>.

¹¹ A relevant example of this is the Human Terrain System (HTS), developed by the United States Army, which embedded social scientists with deployed troops. HTS can be traced to: Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson, 'An Organizational Solution for DOD's Cultural Knowledge Needs', *Military Review*, August 2005, 18–21.

¹² Paul Higate and Ailsa Cameron, 'Reflexivity and Researching the Military', *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 2 (1 January 2006): 219–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05278171>; Nick Caddick, Alex Cooper, and Brett Smith, 'Reflections on Being a Civilian Researcher in an Ex-Military World: Expanding Horizons?', *Critical Military Studies* 5, no. 2 (3 April 2019): 95–114, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1345545>; Catherine Baker et al., 'Encounters with the Military: Toward a Feminist Ethics of Critique?', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 18, no. 1 (2 January 2016): 140–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2015.1106102>.

¹³ This phrase is intertwined in my mind with Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, a collection of interlinked short stories about a platoon in the Vietnam War.

conducting this type of research. This section is intended to lay out my reflexive commitments and place me at the edge of the research frame for the reader, just visible enough to lead you into the main scene. This project is one of seeing and this section is intended to situate the reader as to where I'm standing and how I have come to this positionality.

The work of this thesis has been intertwined with reflective practice since its inception. As a young, non-military woman, I have always experienced a certain wariness or curiosity about why I was interested in my research topic. Why was I interested in *this*? Quickly, I learned that a short, unfulfilling way to resolve this line of questioning was to acknowledge that my partner was in the military. This made me make sense, as though my entire research agenda could be justified through a personal relationship. The first years of my research were marked by this and similar interactions which took place in seminars and conferences rooms and a variety of Officers' Messes in the UK as a private guest. I began to consciously think of this bit of knowledge, that I had a personal link to the military, as a sort of card I could reveal to resolve these uncomfortable moments. But I also felt the guilt and the wrongness of doing so. My interest in the subject began long before I met my partner. When I met my partner, he was not yet in the military. Yet the questions would end as if to say, 'Oh, I understand. Now you make sense.' As if, without that connection, I wouldn't have a right to my area of research.

This doctoral thesis has occurred alongside my transformation into a Military Wife — capitalized to emphasize its status as a research group/object/subject — and back again as my spouse joined and then left the British Royal Marines. I empathize with recent work by ex-military researchers on the tension and utility of 'insider-ness'¹⁴, or navigating the position of an 'insider-outsider'¹⁵, concepts which resonate with the liminality I've experienced. It is a curious thing to be a part of that which you study: a Military Wife who, as a figure, refuses to signify as wholly 'civil' or 'military.' In other words, a queer figure.

¹⁴ David Walker, 'Putting "Insider-Ness" to Work: Researching Identity Narratives of Career Soldiers about to Leave the Army', in *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods*, ed. Alison Williams et al., Routledge Handbooks (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 256–67.

¹⁵ Hannah West and Sophy Antrobus, '"Deeply Odd": Women Veterans as Critical Feminist Scholars', *Critical Military Studies*, 12 April 2021, 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2021.1907020>.

Living in this queerness has undoubtedly shaped the queer foundations of my research. I have navigated my research through finding balance, often code-switching in different spaces which is exhausting and occasionally feels as though it borders on being disingenuous. There is a feeling of being a pigeon among foxes and/or a fox among pigeons.

Critical Military Studies (CMS), as a developing body of literature, includes work which begins with an anti-war, anti-military stance in which militarisation, for example, is lamentable and dangerous. Yet this is premised on a notion of separate spheres, incursions and a sanitized civil(ian) who can and should exist entirely apart from the military. My theorization of CMR is in direct opposition to this stream of scholarship, viewing militarisation as interesting and good to think but not inherently damaging, or, lest the accusation be made, positive or valuable. This has created some tension in understanding where and how my research fits within and among peer work. Nowhere did this conflict become clearer than in 2017 when someone in my professional network invited me to participate in an academic conference held at and in protest of the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) Arms Fair in London. The protest-conference was a repeat of an event held at DSEI 2015, which Chris Rossdale wrote up in an auto-ethnographic piece for *Critical Military Studies*.¹⁶ Yet in a clear conflict of interest, identities, and politics, my partner was staying with me that week to participate in the live-action demonstration component of the arms fair. My unwillingness, or perhaps inability to join the protest-conference, which was produced and circulated amongst Critical Military scholars, called my liminality, my insider-outsider status into effect.

This feeling of being between and/or of multiple identities and commitments is critical to the conceptual grounding of this thesis. What should I make of attending a conference panel criticizing the existence and practices of Army Foundation College Harrogate, which enrolls under-18s as 'Junior Soldiers'¹⁷ and then, weeks later, sitting down to a meal with a senior officer who I discovered was AFC Harrogate leadership? If my early

¹⁶ Chris Rossdale, 'Encounters at the Gate', *Critical Military Studies* 3, no. 3 (2 September 2017): 287–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1314633>.

¹⁷ 'AFC Harrogate', The British Army, accessed 9 June 2021, <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-schools-and-colleges/afc-harrogate/>.

dedication to maintaining neutrality was driven by a fierce knee-jerk protectiveness of scholarly objectivity, then the critical reflexivity and queerness which permeate this section and this project are a testimony to the conceptual commitment that queer figures and theory can tell us something valuable about contemporary CMR.

1.2. Situating the Project

The project contributes to and draws upon work within critical IR and Critical Military Studies (CMS) and joins with other Queer IR research in a posited 'queer turn' in the discipline and the social sciences.¹⁸ To build a queer foundation for research, in this case, is to oppose and defy constructed binaries and instead see them as relational or processual. To argue that things are not *either* this *or* that, *either* A *or* B, is not done in blind indifference to the fact that scholars, world leaders, and common people conceive of and treat them as such. I am not arguing that civil and military are not treated as opposites. Instead, I contend that they are not *naturally* opposites. In queering CMR, I am interested in what we gain from looking at the substantive and continual labour that goes into (re)producing and maintaining this binary, these Things. How and why is the civil/military binary upheld in a world of relations that, in many ways, defies this separation¹⁹? I am interested in not only what the truths of what 'civil' or 'military' are, but also what these truths *do*.²⁰ In this sense, this thesis is inherently about power.

I take inspiration from Donna Haraway in looking to the power of conceiving of and terming something as 'in-the-making'²¹, in this case civil-military-relations-in-the-making. While the term is sufficiently long to be unwieldy in the case of this dissertation, it perhaps captures most truly what this project is seeking to do. The challenge in reading Haraway is

¹⁸ Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But Were Afraid to Ask: The "Queer Turn" in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46, no. 2 (January 2018): 220–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829817733131>.

¹⁹ Examples of this are not hard to come by. In a civil-military binary, what is the veteran? What is the military wife? What is the civilian contractor who works and deploys alongside the military?

²⁰ Nicola J. Smith and Donna Lee, 'What's Queer about Political Science?', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 17, no. 1 (1 February 2015): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.12037>.

²¹ Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28–29.

to understand and accept the truly radical way of seeing she offers, a task made difficult not by inaccessible language, but by the shock to the system of her theorizing.²² Haraway's framing of 'something-in-the-making' advances a line of argumentation that is process and power-oriented. It is vibrant, consistent with Bousquet et al.'s martial empiricism and war as becoming,²³ and full of questions. How is something being made? Who is making it? To what end? Cynthia Weber draws explicitly on Haraway's theorization of 'figuration' in framing her monograph *Queer International Relations* (2016), which explores and demonstrates the potential of Queer IR frameworks through how the 'homosexual' is figured as/in relation to 'sovereign man'.²⁴ While this work is inspired by Weber's and contributes to Queer IR, it necessarily follows a different structure and method.

This project is intended to poke at the uncomfortable or awkward questions and inconsistencies which arise from the continuous labour of what it terms the 'figural economy' which maintains the Civil and Military as big-T Things. It centres the question of how the 'civil' and 'military' are reified and the co-constitutive behaviours and practices that are a part of the conceptual maintenance in these relations. It seeks to answer how the civil-military binary comes to appear as natural and refer to distinct domains, with different properties. Addressing how the 'civil' and 'military' of CMR are universalized and made unproblematic across common and academic usage requires delving into what I call 'cultural work.' This term, which is developed in the next section, joins the familiar genre of cultural products with social relations and activities to refer to all manner of labour which is co-constitutive of 'civil' and 'military' as we come to reify them.

This thesis also contributes to and draws on Critical Military Studies. It agrees with work in CMS which 'problematize[s] the idea that a neat boundary can be delineated

²² Haraway identifies as a historian of science. Trained in biology, her work is interested in culture and science and includes companion species (e.g., dogs and other non-human animals), technoscience, and cyborgs. Haraway's work is explicitly feminist and often queer.

²³ Antoine Bousquet, Jairus Grove, and Nisha Shah, 'Becoming War: Towards a Martial Empiricism', *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 2–3 (1 April 2020): 99–118, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619895660>.

²⁴ Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge*, Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 28–33.

between what is 'military' and what is 'civilian' or otherwise'²⁵, but in queering CMR, it moves away from the binary which ensnares even the boundary-pushing work of CMS. For example, the expectations of CMS, voiced in a founding editorial, assert that, 'It is in prioritizing the "in-between" – the neither exclusively military nor singularly civilian – that critical military studies can expose such tensions and problematize military power in its multiple manifestations.'²⁶ Here, the language of the in-between locates the civil and military within a binary opposition. Thus, this project is consistent with the aims and orientation of CMS but makes a theoretical intervention which contributes to and potentially reframes other work in the field which has been developed within a binary understanding of CMR.

2. The Cultural Work of Civil-Military Relations

Our queer foundations, which premise things as being -in-the-making, imply constant cultural work doing the making. Thus, the everyday becomes a logical stage of inquiry. In embracing such a space, practices, and products seriously, I join with others in IR, who have and continue to illuminate why everyday 'stuff' (everything from urinals²⁷ to tourism²⁸) matters and what it can tell us. This thesis is grounded in an understanding of the production and consumption of cultural products which is harmonious with Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding communications model.²⁹ I conceptualize individuals as carrying an amorphous and porous toolbox of previous experiences, identities, and knowledges around

²⁵ Victoria M. Basham, Aaron Belkin, and Jess Gifkins, 'What Is Critical Military Studies?', *Critical Military Studies* 1, no. 1 (2 February 2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2015.1006879>.

²⁶ Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins, 1.

²⁷ Robert A. Saunders and Rhys Crilley, 'Pissing On the Past: The Highland Clearances, Effigial Resistance and the Everyday Politics of the Urinal', *Millennium* 47, no. 3 (1 June 2019): 444–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829819840422>.

²⁸ Debbie Lisle, *Holidays in the Danger Zone: Entanglements of War and Tourism*, Critical War Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

²⁹ The model clarifies the encoding/decoding of meaning in the production/consumption of media products, in the first instance television. For more see: Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse' (Council of Europe Colloquy on 'Training in the Critical Reading of Television Language', University of Leicester, 1973).

with them in everyday life.³⁰ This toolbox is perpetually open, receiving new information and informing the actions and opinions of the individual. There are constant moments of resonance between the world in front of the individual and the 'stuff' of the toolbox, introducing loops of re-presentation and complex layers of meaning. One cannot segregate or separate the thought-world of this toolbox by nation-state. Thus, encountering the concept of war, for example in reading a new article, triggers a call-back within the toolbox that could include everything from the Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* to the US-led 'War on Drugs' to red poppies, IEDs from that film you watched³¹, and the notion from a poem you read in school of the lie that it's sweet and proper to die for your country³².

Here, it's imperative to account for the consumer. I agree with Hall that we, as people, are neither 'cultural dopes'³³ nor 'blank screens'³⁴ to be projected upon. However, there is both an urgency and a fervour to CMR which accounts for the lack of criticality which permits people to think *all* military members are heroes, damaged, or dangerous. After delineating the parameters of this project spatially, temporally, and materially this section conceptualises this power which informs CMR. It identifies the framing of military service as a gift, the ensuing indebtedness which arises, and the 'military' as a figure of unease as three key elements to analysing the cultural work of CMR.

2.1. Parameters of the Project

Civil-military relations are rich and varied across spaces and eras. They are historically and culturally situated in such a way that warrants a similarly deep approach to their research. For clarity, what I lay out here is necessarily specific to what I understand as the contemporary character of CMR in the US and/or UK. While there are commonalities

³⁰ This notion of the stuff we 'carry with us' is an excellent example of what I am writing about. It is a call-back to Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, a short story collection based on the O'Brien's experiences serving in the Vietnam War.

³¹ *The Hurt Locker* (2009), perhaps.

³² This is, of course, a paraphrase of the final lines of Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est,' which Owen in turn borrowed from the Roman poet Horace. For the poem in full, see: 'Dulce et Decorum Est by Wilfred Owen', Poetry Foundation, accessed 26 April 2021, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est>.

³³ Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "The Popular"', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel, History Workshop Series (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 232.

³⁴ Hall, 233.

across conflicts and time periods (for example, the military as being sanctioned agents of lethality and violence), some of the structural differences (e.g., conscription vs. enlistment, proportion of veterans in a population) across history have ushered in their own, different characters of CMR. Thus, theorising a contemporary character of CMR is complementary to work on the changing character of war³⁵ and leaves room for further work on other characters of CMR across history and geographies.

In looking at civil-military relations in both the US and UK, this thesis embraces the notion of the 'Anglosphere' as a space of circulation of products, concepts, and values. The term, which is inherently transnational, also commonly includes Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. However, this thesis applies the term conceptually rather than by the inclusion or exclusion of particular nation-states or the legacy of British imperialism. The Anglosphere, in this sense, includes anywhere and anyone who accesses, engages with, or is otherwise influenced by the circulation of English language cultural products. While these may be in translation (for example, a dubbed or subtitled film), they remain produced by English-speaking cultures and contexts.

The focus on the US and UK in this thesis is explicitly non-comparative and non-comprehensive. The US and UK are merely two Anglosphere localities with entangled social and civil-military relations that are excellent to think with and through. From the experience of being an American, 'military wife' married to a British Royal Marines officer and being an American international student at a British university, my focus is attuned to concepts, figures, and texts (meant here to refer to literary and non-literary works) which travel among and between the US and the UK. The two nations and cultures are bound together by strong ties and the oft-discussed Special Relationship which sees high levels of co-operation across culture, politics, and the military.

Again, here there is a certain level of queering necessary. This thesis argues that there is more to be understood about civil-military relations through examining US and/or UK cases than either US or UK cases separately. Underscoring this is a suspicion about our ability to separate one from the other due to the enmeshing and encoding of meanings

³⁵ See for example: Hew Strachan and Sibylle Scheipers, eds., *The Changing Character of War* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

that rely upon each. Whether this comes in the form of teaching Wilfred Owen First World War poetry in a history classroom in Massachusetts or watching the Oscar-winning *The Hurt Locker* (Best Picture, 2010) in a private home in Dorset, if we take cultural products (including popular cultural products) seriously³⁶, then these entanglements warrant analysis that encompasses and accounts for rather than separates. In doing so, this work opposes methodological nationalism which is problematic in more traditional CMR analysis.

In working with the 'everyday', I specifically agree with Guillaume and Huysmans' conceptualization that, analytically, at its most powerful the everyday takes 'life as abundant, and time as ephemeral'.³⁷ In this spirit, this project is cognizant of its temporal boundaries. It develops its arguments centered on the 21st century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, broadly conceived of. It uses September 11, 2001 (9/11) as the start of this temporal setting because of its strength as a marker in personal and cultural memory and its power to, truly overnight, legitimate and produce identities and politics that led to and permitted the wars themselves. Its endpoint or end marker is less clear. In April 2021, President Joe Biden announced that the U.S.'s final withdrawal from Afghanistan would be complete before the 20th anniversary of 9/11.³⁸ However, this was met with a certain amount of scepticism, particularly from veterans, over *this* withdrawal's significance and power to 'end the forever war'³⁹ as Biden called for.⁴⁰ Seven years prior also felt something like the

³⁶ Within IR, there has been strong advocacy for such an approach to cultural products, power, and the political, much of which overlaps with work on 'Everyday IR'. Of particular interest to this thesis, see for example: Roland Bleiker, ed., *Visual Global Politics*, Interventions (London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2018); James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009); Linda Åhäll, 'Feeling Everyday IR: Embodied, Affective, Militarising Movement as Choreography of War', *Cooperation and Conflict* 54, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 149–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836718807501>.

³⁷ Xavier Guillaume and Jef Huysmans, 'The Concept of "the Everyday": Ephemeral Politics and the Abundance of Life', *Cooperation and Conflict* 54, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 279, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836718815520>.

³⁸ Joe Biden, 'Remarks by President Biden on the Way Forward in Afghanistan', The White House, 14 April 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/14/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-way-forward-in-afghanistan/>.

³⁹ Biden.

⁴⁰ For example, see an article from prominent veteran and writer Phil Klay: Phil Klay, 'Leaving Afghanistan Isn't Enough to End America's Forever Wars', *Time*, 23 April 2021, <https://time.com/5957711/afghanistan-withdrawal-end-forever-wars/>.

end, with Obama calling for the end of U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan⁴¹ and the final withdrawal of British combat troops from Afghanistan in October 2014⁴². But as Biden's 2021 announcement and a coordinated, same-day release from the UK Ministry of Defence and Defence Secretary Ben Wallace on UK troop drawdown make clear,⁴³ troop presence and, in some sense, the forever war has continued. Even now, with the withdrawal complete — a violent splutter of an end — the time bounds for this thesis continue to expand as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan begin to settle themselves in culture, history, and memory.

The project coalesces around cultural work done during the wars, though a considerable amount of time after the initial shock of the conflicts had receded. This production lag between the beginning of the conflict and the production of books, films, and events makes sense: the producers would need time to experience and process the war before making sense and creating something. In the cases of the (veteran) writers, they would need to serve in and leave the military before starting the publishing process, even if they had written while serving. For example, Matt Gallagher kept a blog, titled 'Kaboom', under a pseudonym while serving in Iraq, which later became a book. Yet in looking at this period there is also the sense that this was a moment when consumers were equipped to receive and find meaning in the cultural works. There was an appetite for the events, products, and work of civil-military relations.

The Sun Military Awards, which invite readers to nominate and vote for awards for servicepersons in categories including 'Best Reservist' and 'Hero at Home', were first held in the UK in 2008. The Invictus Games took place for the first time in 2014, though they followed the example and template of the Warrior Games, a similar event held in the United States since 2010. Veterans on Wall Street (VOWS), an 'initiative dedicated to honouring former and current military personnel by facilitating career and business opportunities in the financial services industry' formed in 2011 and has since become a

⁴¹ Danielle Kurtzleben, 'CHART: How The U.S. Troop Levels In Afghanistan Have Changed Under Obama', *NPR.Org*, 6 July 2016, <https://www.npr.org/2016/07/06/484979294/chart-how-the-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-have-changed-under-obama>.

⁴² 'Last British Troops Leave Helmand', *BBC News*, 27 October 2014, sec. UK, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-29784195>.

⁴³ 'Defence Secretary Statement on UK Forces in Afghanistan', *GOV.UK*, accessed 28 April 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-statement-on-uk-forces-in-afghanistan>.

prominent veterans recruiting resource sponsored by HSBC, Goldman Sachs, Citi, Deutsche Bank, and Wells Fargo.⁴⁴

In book form, *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* was released in 2012, followed by its high-profile film adaptation in 2014. The 2010s were a watershed moment when a cadre of (veteran) writers⁴⁵ released their debut works about their experiences in the wars. This included Matt Gallagher's *Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in a Savage Little War* (2010), Phil Klay's *Redeployment* (2014), David Abrams' *Fobbit* (2012), Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds* (2012), and Patrick Hennessey's *The Junior Officers' Reading Club: Killing Time and Fighting Wars* (2009). This pattern is reproduced across more action-oriented, often co-written books, which I develop as 'war porn' in Chapter 6 of this thesis, including *Lone Survivor* (by Marcus Luttrell with Patrick Robinson) in 2007 (with a film following in 2013), *No Easy Day* (by Mark Owen with Kevin Maurer in 2012, and *Outlaw Platoon* (by Sean Parnell with John Bruning) in 2012. Embedded journalists like David Finkel (*The Good Soldiers*, 2009 and *Thank You For Your Service*, 2013) and Sebastian Junger (*WAR*, 2010 and the documentaries *Restrepo*, 2010 and *Korengal*, 2014) also released acclaimed work based on their experiences and the soldiers they met on deployment.

What is interesting about this moment in the 2010s is that the cultural work was concurrently also well and widely received. Following *The Hurt Locker*, which won Best Picture at the 2010 Academy Awards, director and co-producer Kathryn Bigelow released *Zero Dark Thirty*, based on the manhunt of Osama bin Laden, in 2012, which was nominated for (but did not win) Best Picture at the 2013 Academy Awards. Two years later, *American Sniper* followed suit, being nominated for, but not winning Best Picture at the 2015 awards. Klay's *Redeployment* won the 2014 National Book Award. Powers' *The Yellow Birds* was a finalist for the award in 2012. *Restrepo* premiered the opening night at the Sundance Film Festival in 2010 and was nominated for Best Documentary at the 2011

⁴⁴ 'About Us', Veterans on Wall Street, accessed 29 April 2021, <https://veteransonwallstreet.com/who-we-are/about/>.

⁴⁵ I use '(veteran) writers' here to limit confusion. These writers are military veterans, but many have since become writers by craft and would oppose the genre-based pigeonholing that can accompany the term 'veteran writer.'

Academy Awards. Here, we think of consumption as a key moment on the 'circuit of culture'⁴⁶ proposed by, among others, Stuart Hall, a system consistent with Hall's encoding/decoding communications model. That these products were being bought, read, watched, and lauded suggests that there is a great deal of meaning-making taking place within the consumption of this cultural work. Production, consumption, and representation, presented in a co-constitutive, triangular loop in the 'circuit of culture' are key sites that run throughout my analysis.⁴⁷

That many of these pieces of cultural work, which push and pull and re-present and maintain figurations of civil and military, cohere around the same time isn't coincidental. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continuously destabilized and threatened the boundaries of civil and military as cultural concepts. What does it mean for the civil/military binary if the people being targeted are not soldiers? If the people killing civilians in Iraq are not national forces, but contractors from a private military company?⁴⁸ These shocks and threats to commonly generated and held meanings occurred temporally alongside other significant moments of socio-cultural self-reflection: the centenaries of (the start and end of) the First World War and the loss of the Second World War generation. I argue that this destabilization of categories, concepts, and binaries is a key driver of the cultural work generated in and around the 2010s, which arises from a need to tidy and re-produce them.

2.2. The Gift of Military Service

From the rich array of cultural work created in and around the contemporary character of US and/or UK CMR, this thesis theorises how the framing of military service as a gift triggers what it terms the 'civil-military economy of debt', which is formed around a sense of indebtedness and the unrepayable nature of the gift. Looking to the theory of the

⁴⁶ Paul Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman, Culture, Media and Identities* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997).

⁴⁷ See the excellent diagram in: Du Gay et al., 3.

⁴⁸ Here I allude to the 2007 Nisour Square massacre, in which Blackwater Security Consulting contractors killed 14 Iraqi civilians. Four guards were convicted when tried in 2014. However, in December 2020, they were pardoned by Donald Trump, see: Michael Safi, 'Trump Pardons Blackwater Contractors Jailed for Massacre of Iraq Civilians', *The Guardian*, 23 December 2020, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/23/trump-pardons-blackwater-contractors-jailed-for-massacre-of-iraq-civilians>.

gift, this project does not argue that military service *is* a gift, but rather that it is dominantly conceived by 'military' giver and 'civil' receiver as a gift. This difference is crucial, as military service is treated as unrepayable and/or compulsorily recognisable. That recognition may take an economic form (for example military discount schemes), points to a queerness of military service as it is treated. This section reads Mauss and Derrida to theorise how the conceptualization of military service as a gift underpins the civil-military economy of debt.

In her introduction to Mauss's *The Gift*, Mary Douglas writes that 'gift complements market in so far as it operates where the latter is absent.'⁴⁹ In incorporating the theory of the gift in this queering of civil-military relations, this thesis accounts for that which, in CMR, sits outside the simple rules of exchange. If society believed that monetary compensation for military service was sufficient, there would be no need for additional or alternative forms of recognition including medals, parades, or military career transition programs. Mauss's essay is a piece of empirical research centred on the gift as a site of exchange and contracting which holds the giver and the recipient within a set of responsibilities and relations. It is this sense of obligation to reciprocate the gift, which this sub-section develops in this context.

The concept of the gift has arisen alongside the framing of 'military service' and the choice to serve. Crucially, 'service' highlights an elective giving of part of oneself (one's time, body, life) to the country for the sake of itself and its people. This type of service resonates against the concept of sacrifice, held in its extreme as giving up one's life. As both the UK and the US operate all-volunteer militaries, the choice *not* to serve also holds weight. Thus, the person who, when given the choice to *not* serve or, in the words of Mauss 'refuse a contract', still accepts it, benefits from an added sense of 'generosity' in their 'gift'.⁵⁰

The social pressures that drive the need to recognise and demonstrate appreciation for military service as a gift are twofold. First, it arises from the person who receives and benefits from the gift. This person may feel that the giver is serving on their behalf, in their defence, or in their stead (allowing them the freedom to *not* serve). This exerts a discomfiting force. As Mauss writes, 'the unreciprocated gift still makes the person who

⁴⁹ Introduction by Mary Douglas in: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Repr, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2004), xviii.

⁵⁰ Mauss, 94.

has accepted it inferior.⁵¹ In military service, there is little choice over whether someone can receive or refuse a gift, thus it is considered, tacitly, accepted. A lack of reciprocation locates the recipient, in Mauss's terms 'inferior'. Second, the pressure to acknowledge and address the giving of military service also arises from the person who feels that they have given the gift. That military service exceeds other normal jobs in scope and commitment sets it apart. The soldier, in taking on this extra-ordinary labour, may feel 'that he is giving something of himself – his time, his life. Thus, he wishes to be rewarded, even if only moderately, for this gift'.⁵²

The form that this reward or recognition takes might, for different reasons, remain unsatisfactory. Thanking someone for their service has fallen out of favour, perceived by veterans as empty and 'self-serving for the thankers'.⁵³ The speech act can replace other forms of reward or acknowledgement desired by the veterans, like political solidarity. Another mode of response is also found in the market, including discount schemes and hiring programmes. These, while intended as recognition and a way to relieve the inferiority of the receiver also creates and maintains a separateness and a class of people above or apart. Here it is useful to draw Derrida into conversation with Mauss. One of Derrida's key criticisms of *The Gift* is that Mauss neglects to engage with the contradiction between gift and exchange.⁵⁴ For Derrida, there is a tension in the relation between gift and exchange, for a gift must be 'aneconomic'⁵⁵, with no 'reciprocity, return, exchange, counter gift, or debt'.⁵⁶ In CMR, the concept of indebtedness and the actions to relieve it then, reading Derrida, also 'annul[s] the very possibility of the gift'.⁵⁷

Military service may appear as a gift, but it does not function as one on both sides. Actions to relieve debt or 'inferiority' deform the gift given, but what then is left? In reading

⁵¹ Mauss, 83.

⁵² Mauss, 99.

⁵³ Matt Richtel, 'Please Don't Thank Me for My Service', *The New York Times*, 21 February 2015, sec. Sunday Review, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/sunday-review/please-dont-thank-me-for-my-service.html>.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I: Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37.

⁵⁵ Derrida, 7.

⁵⁶ Derrida, 12.

⁵⁷ Derrida, 76.

military service queerly, this thesis makes room for it to be a gift and/or an exchange, for it is conceived of dually. The difference between military service and sacrifice is crucial to this duality. While deaths in military service can be scripted as sacrifices on behalf of monarchy, nation, or citizenry, most military service is, fortunately, not a sacrifice of life. Military service, if viewed as a gift event, evokes questions of what is being given, by whom and to whom. Service is not always sacrifice but is abstracted from it. It is a staging area for sacrifice, a signing on or agreement that draws the giver closer to it and presupposes their consent. Thus, Derrida's work on sacrifice doesn't apply directly to this analysis of military service. He writes that the 'infinite and dissymmetrical economy of sacrifice...integrates the renunciation of a calculable remuneration'.⁵⁸ Conceived of as a gift and tied to sacrifice, military service evokes this same precondition of an inability to count, measure, or reciprocate in a way that rebalances the relationship. But in not *being* sacrifice while being so closely linked to it, it also makes room for the dual social pressures for giver and receiver for recognition and redress. In this sense, conceived of as a gift, military service might be considered a 'bad, poisonous'⁵⁹ gift which puts people in debt. Yet this debt is non-consensual. British and American people are recipients of the gift of military service without the power to refuse it. They are indebted without their knowing consent and the experience of such social indebtedness profoundly shapes the behavioural expectations and patterns of civil-military relations.

2.3. The Civil-Military Economy of Debt

To better understand how the framing of military service as a gift produces particular behaviours, this project draws on two ethnographies: Kenneth MacLeish's *Making War at Fort Hood* and Zoë Wool's *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed*. Both offer intimate and thick analysis of the life spaces and practices of American soldiers and veterans on home soil during and after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This thesis

⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 107.

⁵⁹ Derrida, *Given Time. I*, 12.

highlights what MacLeish calls the 'War Economy'⁶⁰ as a pivotal and organising feature of contemporary CMR, which produces the 'stuff' — both literal things and behaviours — from which the relationship can be read and understood. It terms this a 'civil-military economy of debt'.

In laying out his 'war economy', MacLeish focuses on the soldier's 'gift of death—exposure to death and the wreaking of death on others.'⁶¹ Regardless of whether individual people accept this gift, he writes 'we have accepted the gift already merely by inhabiting a social order that is upheld by violence.'⁶² It is this gift which, for MacLeish and this project, creates an uneasy indebtedness, which must be addressed, but can never be repaid. MacLeish links to Nietzsche's discussion of Christ's crucifixion, which produces a new social order centred on sacred 'guilt and perpetual obligation'⁶³ Such a concept templates an imagining of CMR that this thesis animates. The sacrifice which can never be repaid frustrates capitalist notions of exchange ensuring recurrent efforts to address the debt which do little to alleviate it. In this sense, even using the term 'economy of debt' as this section does, is ironic.

This thesis frames the resultant efforts, both actions and products, to address the debt which MacLeish describes as gratitude acts. MacLeish writes at length about a striking example: an annual barbecue in Waco, TX hosted by a local businessman at his private ranch to honour soldiers and veterans. MacLeish titles this section, appropriately, '"YOU WILL ALWAYS BE 100 PERCENT IN DEBT"' quoting a speaker at the event.⁶⁴ The event is a production of pure American patriotism and Texas pride: cowboys and cowgirls on horseback, a strong at times evangelical Christian presence, and flags covering everything.⁶⁵ Yet it becomes clear that, as MacLeish writes, the civilian guests outnumber the soldiers: 'It is faintly embarrassing. Mr. Rogan has clearly gone to considerable expense and effort with this event, but the idea that there might not be enough soldiers to thank, to

⁶⁰ Kenneth T. MacLeish, *Making War at Fort Hood: Life and Uncertainty in a Military Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), chap. 5. War Economy, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1r2djj.1>.

⁶¹ MacLeish, 186.

⁶² MacLeish, 187.

⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* (1956) as discussed in MacLeish, 188.

⁶⁴ MacLeish, 180–85.

⁶⁵ MacLeish, 180–82.

fill the space in front of his stage and eat his food, makes us a little nervous.⁶⁶ As MacLeish explains, there's the expectation that the Foundation he's arrived with, a civilian guest organization at Fort Hood, will supply soldier attendees for this and similar events to maintain positive and productive relationships with people (and companies) who want to help soldiers.⁶⁷ MacLeish sums up the tension of the day: 'This is something for soldiers, something directed at them' exemplified in a string of mainly non-soldier speakers who take to the stage to thank the soldiers for their service.⁶⁸ While 'there is certainly nothing cynical or false about the hyperabundance of militaristic and patriotic sentiment,' its overabundance, joined with the odd outnumbering of soldiers by grateful civilians, is uncomfortable.⁶⁹ The Foundation is working within the war economy in its own, as a source and supplier of heroes to be celebrated and thanked.

Both MacLeish and Wool discuss the material stuff that comes from the gratitude of individuals and organizations. MacLeish writes of the 'dead-ended commodities' like the hundreds of handmade teddy bears that people had sewn and prayed over before donating them to Fort Hood.⁷⁰ He describes that they would 'drive considerable distances to pick up a fresh shipment of them—not because they were needed, but because they could not be turned down.'⁷¹ Wool picks up on this in her ethnographic work. She writes about the donations that were used and unused:

There was plenty in the storeroom that people did use, however: baby formula and diapers, toothpaste, socks, occasionally a board game. There was food in the storeroom too; we all enjoyed the seemingly endless supply of Girl Scout cookies and bottled water. But the objects that most clearly exhibited others' expressions of patriotic gratitude, the painstakingly crafted red, white, and blue lap blankets and the saddle bags made of down-homey denim that could be Velcroed onto crutches, these things languished in their boxes and bins.⁷²

⁶⁶ MacLeish, 182.

⁶⁷ MacLeish, 182.

⁶⁸ MacLeish, 184.

⁶⁹ MacLeish, 184.

⁷⁰ MacLeish, 203, 204.

⁷¹ MacLeish, 204.

⁷² Zoë Hamilton Wool, *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed*, Critical Global Health (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 114.

The activities and stuff, actions, and products of CMR gratitude acts are united in the disconnect they evince between people (and organizations) that want to demonstrate their gratitude and the people whom they are grateful toward. In this way, they are more for the indebted person than for the soldier. This mismatch is clear in the excess: too many civilians to military in ratio at the barbecue, too many heartfelt, handmade bears. It is also hinted at through the form that the gratitude acts take. As Wool portrays, there are items that are gratefully received – food, toiletries, and other basics. But it's the stuff that she says 'most clearly exhibited others' expressions of patriotic gratitude' which missed the mark.⁷³ In other words, the most personally performative of the stuff serves greater purpose for the giver than the imagined receiver – imagined, in this case because they become dead-end commodities that are never received. In a similar way, it's easy to imagine a long list of things that wounded servicepeople would list higher on their wants than a patriotic spectacle of a barbecue on a ranch. But what the indebted people offer in gratitude is once more performative of their need to give thanks and, in taking this form, once more fails. In a sort of trap, these things which are meaningfully given but not meaningfully received enhance the confusion and tension. In remaining unreceived they are counterproductive: 'far from erasing the debt, [they] help call the debt into being.'⁷⁴ The cycle of the CMR economy of debt continues.

2.4. The Military as a Figure of Unease

Within this economy of debt, the 'military' emerges as a figure of unease. The indebted character of CMR is pivotal in generative because of the tension it introduces. To make civil-military relations a relation of debt creates an imagined debtor and creditor and places an onus upon the former to seek methods of redress and repayment. As this project develops, it is this very pressure and uncertainty which, in conditioning behaviour, sustains the binary in cultural work.

First, the 'military' can be understood as a figure of unease because their role as sanctioned agents of violence and lethality is uncomfortable. The purpose of their

⁷³ Wool, 114.

⁷⁴ MacLeish, *Making War at Fort Hood*, 187.

profession — if it is a profession — and the necessity of killing are linked. Despite design and interpretation which seeks to reframe this (non-lethal weapons, fighting *for* your country and comrades rather than *against* the people you are killing), the military as people are scripted as individuals associated with this fraught, and, outside the military, taboo activity. This first reason coalesces into a question of: *What do we do with them?*

Second, the reading of their role within a narrative of national service⁷⁵ configures an unrepayable debt that nonetheless introduces an urgency to attempting to address it. Within a non-conscription military, as in the US and UK, enlistment and commissioning are viewed as choices. One chooses to serve, or not. This choice is of paramount importance, because the exercise of free will⁷⁶ in electing to join the military divides a population into those who do and those who don't. This separation forms a set of relations based on this choice, in some cases leading to a sense of guilt and/or missing out. As 'The Angry Staff Officer' a US military blogger recalls with frustration, 'If you've been in the military, you've had this conversation before: "Oh, you're in the Army? That's cool, I almost joined up once, but..." Random excuse follows.'⁷⁷ This choice to serve or not draws a hard line in the sand, which elevates the 'military' as those who, through the frame of service, do their duty *for* those who don't. One veteran reflects: 'I served so you wouldn't have to,' a familiar sentiment that has been and continues to be echoed across culture.⁷⁸ This concept of some doing the work on behalf/instead of many produces an additional layer of guilt, for not only are they agents of sanctioned violence and lethality, but they also are doing so on our behalf, so we do not need to. In other words, we owe them so much. This second reason coalesces into a question of: *What do we do with our guilt (of not serving, of having them serve) and our indebtedness?*

⁷⁵ This point is picked up more substantially in Chapter 3.

⁷⁶ Free will mixed with coercive/persuasive recruitment and retention practices as discussed by plenty of people, among them: Matthew F. Rech, 'Recruitment, Counter-Recruitment and Critical Military Studies', *Global Discourse* 4, no. 2–3 (3 July 2014): 244–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2014.909243>.

⁷⁷ The Angry Staff Officer, '"I Would've Served, But..."', *The Angry Staff Officer*, 2 August 2017, <https://angrystaffofficer.com/2017/08/02/i-wouldve-served-but/>.

⁷⁸ Scooby Axson, 'I Fought in the U.S. Army So They Can Kneel', *Sports Illustrated*, accessed 17 May 2021, <https://www.si.com/nfl/2017/09/29/nfl-national-anthem-protests-kneeling>.

These two reasons, which produce the military as a figure of unease, engender a sort of desperation for action that is read within a relations of debt. Because so much is owed to them, the need to try to figure out what to do with them grows. This project identifies this pressure and sense of obligation rooted in indebtedness as the reason why, despite logical challenges, civil-military relations is rife with a lack of criticality that enables painting an 'us' and 'them' in the broadest brushstrokes. It structures its analysis around the relational frameworks of the military as 'hero' and 'victim' and the civil as 'saved' and 'saviour', which it identifies as figurations, images that can be performatively stepped into. Though consumers are certainly not dopes, the appeal of these figurations as places and relations of rest and certainty in dealing with a figure of unease that we *must* try to force to make sense is overwhelmingly tempting. The analysis of this project makes sense of a cognitive dissonance in which we know not all soldiers are heroes/victims but persist in and insist upon a logic which treats them as such. To step into these figurations is to feel useful and sufficiently grounded to begin to try to redress the indebtedness with gratitude.

3. Structure of the Thesis

If we understand culture as the place where meaning is continuously and dialectically (re)made, then it is here that our argument must attend. This thesis is shaped around cultural work not because it is reflective of sentiment and taste, but because it is a locus for analysing where, how, and, ultimately, to what end the labour to maintain the civil-military binary takes place. This thesis proceeds in an additional six chapters, including a conclusion. In *Chapter 2*, I contend that developmental patterns in CMR literature have contributed to an essentialisation of the terms 'civil' and 'military' in an oppositional binary. This binary, which shapes the CMR research agenda and lenses of inquiry prevents theoretical interventions. The chapter asserts that escaping this pattern of development requires denaturalizing the civil-military binary.

This work is taken up in earnest in *Chapter 3*, which, grounding itself in queer theory, queers civil-military relations to understand the binary as constructed and processual. It theorises that the binary is maintained through cultural work within a figural economy of production, distribution, and consumption. Within this, it focuses on the

dominant figurations of 'military' as *hero* and/or *victim* which configure the 'civil' as *saved* and/or *saviour*. I develop the processes of instrumental heroization and victimization as the wielding of these figurations which, in calling on fictions of templated behaviour, seek to relieve indebtedness and unease, but in doing so call the binary into being and work to maintain it.

This queering of CMR, which develops a non-binary logic, is applied over three chapters which focus on particular kinds of cultural work which maintain the CMR binary: recognition, recovery, and reproduction. *Chapter 4* examines the work of recognition, applying the term dually to signify both identification and appreciation. It theorizes valour as a commodity with exchangeable value, linking this commodification to military medals. In building valour as a commodity, this chapter develops it as something that may be stolen. However, in analysing stolen valour (misrepresentation or falsification of military service), this chapter concludes that instrumental heroization has stretched the signifiers of valour as commodity from physical objects to include speech claims, presenting new sociolegal challenges as even the claim of having been 'military' now has exchangeable value. The actions taken against this behaviour, I argue, is best read as work which seeks to protect the commodification of valour and resecure the binary relations it relies upon in the face of the threat of stolen valour as a queering force.

Chapter 5 takes up the cultural work of recovery, centring its analysis on forces charities. It demonstrates instrumental heroization and victimization within the self-presentation of charities, particularly donor appeals, reading charities as products of and participants in the figural economy. It then provides a close analysis of the discourse of the Invictus Games Foundation which accommodates a recovery of the hero in the victim. It argues that this figuration is queer and only viewable when approached within a queer and/or logic of CMR.

Chapter 6 demonstrates the cultural work of reproduction within the commercial production of war writing. It proposes 'war pornography' as a new category of war writing that encompasses products which are marketed on their ability to produce an exhilarating and pleasurable affective Real, sometimes at the cost of truth. It analyses war porn and war literature as foils of each other which, through comparison, can tell us more about how war writing (re)produces the figural economy of CMR. It culminates in an examination of the

controversies, success, and production of Chris Kyle's *American Sniper*, which queers the division of war pornography and war literature.

Finally, the concluding *Chapter 7* asserts that queering civil-military relations is not only necessary for moving beyond the limitations present in CMR scholarship, but also essential to understanding the contemporary character of CMR in the US and UK. These relations constitute a queered field which cannot be captured in binary analysis. It summarizes the contributions of the thesis, drawing together the empirical analyses of recognition, recovery, and reproduction to read them in concert as the cultural work of CMR. Finally, it explores some implications of what this thesis' queering of CMR might enable.

CHAPTER 2

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AS A LITERATURE

1. What are Civil-Military Relations?

In framing the background of this project, this chapter begins by asking a deceivingly simple question: what are civil-military relations? The variety of answers to this question and their origins become the entry point to present and define the problems this project addresses. In doing so, it draws a distinction between civil-military relations as behaviour and civil-military relations as a literature. While this project is oriented around civil-military relations as behaviour, it does so against a background of CMR as a literature, so it is here that this chapter attends. It does so with attention to identifying trends and themes which sustain the binary which this project queers. Yet it is also aware that for CMR literature, this binary is unproblematic: scholars are writing about the civil — often the civilian — and the military and their relations with one another. In highlighting the naturalisation of the binary in CMR, this chapter links it with developmental features within CMR as a literature that have led to theoretical stagnation. In identifying these features as the canonisation of Huntington and Janowitz, the disciplinary divide of political science and military sociology, and binary framings of CMR, this chapter offers an account of CMR literature against which it draws its own queer approach as a project.

The development of civil-military relations can be located within the broader growth of the social sciences. Its 'beginning' can be found in the mid-20th century, a moment Duncan Bell describes as the 'key break' for social sciences which 'happened during (or as a result of) the Second World War.'⁷⁹ Emerging from and within this moment, CMR can be traced across several disciplines including political science, sociology, anthropology, and international relations. Each discipline might answer the question of 'what is civil-military relations?' distinctly. For political science, the term most often refers to the relationship between the government and the military apparatus. In sociology and anthropology, the

⁷⁹ Duncan Bell, 'Writing the World: Disciplinary History and Beyond', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 85, no. 1 (2009): 17.

term is more concerned with interactions between and perceptions of civilians and military persons. In IR, there is a mix of the aforementioned, depending on the theoretical underpinnings of the research. As a literature, CMR has reached a stage of development that demands a reflexive examination of what 'civil' and 'military' are and how they are constituted. Even without academic scrutiny, the terms evoke inconsistent meanings and operate on multiple registers. On the institutional level, each are establishments: the military as an apparatus that deploys and/or applies violence as determined by the political organisation. On the sociological level, the terms are about people and social relations. 'The military' may alternatively be a collective noun (i.e., the members of the military) or a professional organisation. These separate registers can be loosely mapped onto disciplines, particularly political science and military sociology.

Unlike other subjects which have coherent centres and research agendas, CMR is ill-defined and split over a variety of disciplines. Yet while meanings of 'civil' and 'military' vary across disciplines, two commonalities are shared across the CMR literature: one, a structuring of 'civil' and 'military' in an oppositional binary; and two, a tendency to essentialise the terms 'civil' and 'military'. These two commonalities sit at the heart of this account of how these CMR has developed as a literature. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates that 'civil' and 'military' were *made* opposite and critiques how and to what effect CMR research develops and sustains the civil-military oppositional binary.

It is understandable that CMR researchers in their home disciplines rely on implicit, shared understandings of 'civil' and 'military'. These meanings are a kind of definitional currency which enable academic exchange. There is little reason to question why, in a different context or discipline, the terms 'civil' and 'military' take on different meanings. However, such a shared understanding naturalises the terms. They appear as fixed, uncontested. Simply put, we use the term and assume that people know what we mean, that they *also* mean what we mean, and that's all that the words can mean. This essentialisation of the terms fixes them within the oppositional binary. Though essentialism at its most neutral is only a way of categorising and making sense of complexity in the world, the use of the term in this thesis is underscored by critical-theoretical work on the process' potential violence. Barrett describes: 'To be essentialist is to treat objects as if they "have essences or underlying natures that make them the thing that they are" (Medin,

1989), and to treat them as if they have properties that result from these essences.⁸⁰ Phillips identifies the potential effects of such treatment, which can be reductionist and harmful, obfuscating the systems of relations that give rise to a label or categorisation.⁸¹

This chapter narrates how the binary and CMR as a scholarly subject have developed alongside each other through scholarship which essentialises 'civil' and 'military' as opposites. It attributes the binary's persistence to particular patterns of development in CMR, namely the canonisation of early CMR authors and texts, which has been remarked upon by others,⁸² and a subsequent disciplinary division in CMR scholarship which essentialised 'civil' and 'military' in disciplinary echo chambers. It argues that the binary and these essentialised meanings of 'civil' and 'military' as opposites have become determining features of CMR research, compromising and restricting the arena for contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship.

In examining work by Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz, key mid-20th century CMR researchers, this chapter argues that adherence to their theoretical legacies has kettled CMR scholarship within the disciplines of political science and military sociology. It then maps out work that has tried to escape the disciplinary constraints to emphasize that it too maintains the understanding of civil and military within an oppositional binary. The chapter further identifies themes within contemporary CMR scholarship to demonstrate how they are defined and limited by this binary. If CMR scholarship suffers from a failure of imagination which maintains the civil-military binary, then it requires work that denaturalises the binary and proposes an alternative, non-binary theory of CMR.

2. On the Shoulders of Giants: Huntington and Janowitz

Considering CMR as a literature requires some sifting and sorting to bring the field into focus. If, for example, we consider CMR to be about the relationship between state

⁸⁰ H. Clark Barrett, 'On the Functional Origins of Essentialism', *Mind & Society* 2, no. 1 (March 2001): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02512073>.

⁸¹ Anne Phillips, 'What's Wrong with Essentialism?', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 1 (January 2010): 47–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2010.9672755>.

⁸² José Olmeda, 'Escape from Huntington's Labyrinth', in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (London: Routledge, 2013), 61–76.

politics and military organisation, then there may be a basis to begin this history with Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz, favourites of strategic studies. Certainly, some works of military history touch on matters which fall under the umbrella of civil-military relations and might lend support to starting with someone like Thucydides. However, this chapter identifies CMR's origins, as a literature, within a particular socio-political moment and environment which cultivated the growth of the social sciences, in the United States in the peri- and post-World War II era. Therefore, it elects to begin in the mid-20th century with the work of Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz.

In 1941, political scientist and sociologist Harold D. Lasswell authored an article in the *American Journal of Sociology* titled 'The Garrison State', a 'developmental construct' which imagined a world in which the military came to dominate economic and political life within states.⁸³ Lasswell portrays the construct as undesirable for 'the friend of democracy'...who 'will do whatever is within his power to defer it.'⁸⁴ Mass national mobilization for World War II in the US and UK required dramatic shifts in social and political life, and the questions of if and how one might undo and/or temper these changes after the war lingered. This has been explored particularly in research on the mobilisation and demobilisation of women in the war effort which complicates the simple narrative of the war as a turning point for women's liberation.⁸⁵ The social sciences had also been mobilised for World War II more thoroughly than ever before, with researchers, including European émigrés, joining federal agencies to lend their expertise.⁸⁶ So, the post-war era necessarily saw a developing social sciences, particularly empirical social sciences, interested in researching the patterns and problems which surrounded them. Thus, in beginning with the mid-20th century, this chapter asserts that civil-military relations, as a literature, sprouts from a climate of unease around the relationship between the military

⁸³ Harold D. Lasswell, 'The Garrison State', *American Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (January 1941): 455–68, <https://doi.org/10.1086/218693>.

⁸⁴ Lasswell, 467.

⁸⁵ See for example: Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/londonschoolecons/detail.action?docID=1143746>.

⁸⁶ Christian Fleck, *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research*, trans. Hella Beister (Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781849662932>.

and the non-military (the government, the people, industry). The stage is thus set for the entrance of Huntington and Janowitz who, as this section demonstrates, became the giants whose influence and legacies have framed and shaped CMR's development as a literature.

That there is a disciplinary split or multiple 'camps' within CMR is widely accepted, with the categories titled at times as political science/sociology or alternatively 'institutional' and 'sociological'.⁸⁷ Such specialisation is instinctual as researchers and practitioners elect to focus on particular ways of seeing and subjects of study in CMR. Yet it has an unintended result. Though there is some awareness of the other 'side' of the field from within a disciplinary camp, there is little to no cross-camp communication. This chapter agrees with Mackubin Owens' appraisal of US CMR post-9/11 which, in engaging with Huntington and Janowitz also notes the siloing of CMR research into institutional and sociological approaches and interests.⁸⁸ However, from this it asserts that what 'civil' and 'military' mean to CMR researchers is therefore circumscribed by disciplinary lines. Thus, disciplines generate and hold centres of the CMR research agenda, but, in remaining so separate in their interests, generate a false sense of certainty about the meanings of the terms.

The impact of Huntington and Janowitz in CMR is evident in the tendency to begin CMR texts with a discussion of Huntington and/or Janowitz, a pattern so ubiquitous that it has been noted by other academics.⁸⁹ They are touchstones and foundations for their respective disciplines of political science and military sociology when researching CMR. Only by returning to the original texts and tracing the contradictory and obscuring uses of the terms through the evolution of CMR as a research subject can we problematize this essentialisation of 'civil' and 'military'. For Huntington and Janowitz, the 'civil' and the 'military' are, at once, many things. Though, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, common parlance can vary, positioning these works as part of the origin story of civil-

⁸⁷ Olmeda, 'Escape from Huntington's Labyrinth', 63; Vladimir O. Rukavishnikov and Michael Pugh, 'Civil-Military Relations', in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Science & Business Media B.V., 2003), 133; Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 13.

⁸⁸ Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 9/11*.

⁸⁹ Thomas C. Bruneau, 'Impediments to the Accurate Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations', in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (London: Routledge, 2013), 14.

military relations warrants a critical evaluation of how the terms are used and conceived of. To do so is to construct a starting point to evaluate how the literature's development essentialised 'civil' and 'military' within a binary. In framing Huntington and Janowitz as the giants upon whose shoulders the literature grew and tracing the subsequent development of CMR research, this chapter does not seek to provide an exhaustive review of their works. Instead, this section targets the authors' inconsistencies in how they treat the 'civil' and 'military' in their most noteworthy work, revealing a lack of semantic interrogation which, as the subsequent section demonstrates, has continued in subsequent CMR work. In returning to Huntington and Janowitz in the first two sub-sections, this narrative calls attention to their semantic inconsistencies, which have been largely erased through subsequent essentialist scholarship in political science and military sociology. The third sub-section argues that an early bifurcation of CMR as a field into the disciplinary camps led to the canonisation of Huntington and Janowitz respectively, which has permitted the undertheorising of the categories of 'civil' and 'military' while continuing to work with them in contemporary scholarship. Finally, the section concludes with an evaluation of the prominence and impact of Huntington and Janowitz on the development of CMR literature with an eye to the perils of the developmental patterns which this section identifies.

2.1. Samuel Huntington

Though Samuel Huntington is best known for his theory of the clash of civilisations which he developed in the 1990s⁹⁰, this chapter returns to his earlier work which forms part of the foundation of CMR literature. Huntington's first book, *The Soldier and the State* (1957), develops a theory of American civil-military relations that focuses on civilian control and the professional military. The book has become a classic in military history, anchoring CMR within political science. As this section illuminates, Huntington jumps between different and, at times, potentially conflicting usages of the terms held together only by their consistent evocation as binary opposites. How can the 'civil' be in one moment clearly

⁹⁰ See, for example: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

'non-military,' and then later treated as a signifier of 'political'?⁹¹ In developing his theory of CMR, Huntington paints with broad brushstrokes which seed the essentialisation of 'civil' and 'military' in their binary. While for much of the text, Huntington relies on implicit definitions of 'military' and 'civil' as military and non-military, respectively, he muddies the waters, at times seeming to locate the dividing line, for they are held as separate, opposites, in other characteristics and concepts.

While Huntington is cognizant of the difficulties in comparing 'military' and 'civil' and the oddity of generating meanings independent of their binary, he does not theorise how to resolve these tensions, instead contributing to their portrayal as opposites through essentialising language. In doing so, he accepts the binary as unproblematic. For example, he laments that, 'it is impossible to assume a continuum stretching from military values at one end to civilian values at the other' but immediately attributes this difficulty to the analytic mismatch: 'The military ethic is concrete, permanent, and universal. The term "civilian" on the other hand, merely refers to what is non-military.'⁹² In doing so, he essentialises the 'military,' emphasising its ethic as unproblematically 'concrete, permanent, and universal,' a statement that warrants defence but receives none. The focus on the permanent and unchanging nature of the ethic erases historical, geographical, and cultural situatedness. He repeats this essentialisation of the 'military,' lamenting the unfeasibility of comparing the 'civilian mind' with the 'military mind' for there are many civilian minds.⁹³ In contrast, Huntington's treatment of 'military' here reduces its minds to solely the professional ethic of the soldier, disregarding personal variation or context.

In relying on the categorisation of 'military' and 'civil' as military and non-military, Huntington set the standard for semantic non-engagement within CMR, with subsequent scholarship also treating 'non-military' as a stand-in for 'civil'. Yet despite accepting and championing such a passive definition of 'civil,' Huntington contradicts himself within the same text. In one instance, he draws the boundary between 'civil' and 'military' as those who fight and those who do not. He describes:

⁹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), viii.

⁹² Huntington, 89.

⁹³ Huntington, 89.

The military man tends to see himself as the perennial victim of civilian warmongering. It is the people and the politicians, public opinion and governments, who start wars. It is the military who have to fight them. Civilian philosophers, publicists, academicians, not soldiers have been the romanticizers and glorifiers of war.⁹⁴

Here, the 'military' is cast as male, the directed, the ones who fight. In contrast, the 'civil' becomes the 'civilian' glorifiers and the arms of civil control that determine the political agenda for waging war. Such categorisation muddles the simple claim of 'civil' as non-military. 'Military man' seems to exclude non-fighters who may be part of the military institution. The 'civil' is not only non-military here, but also political.

This alternate calibration of 'civil' as political reappears in his description of a president, secretary, and military chief. He states that 'civilian and military responsibilities are clearly distinguished, and the latter are subordinated to the former.'⁹⁵ This description of the larger theoretical model of 'civil' control (of the military establishment), crucially casts the 'civil' as political. Though Huntington can articulate defining characteristics of 'civil' and 'military', he wavers between accepting the basic, latent definition of 'civil' as 'non-military' and making further specifications. His signature scholastic contribution which patterns a method of civil-political control over the military establishment suggests that Huntington was aware that the categorisations of 'civil' and 'military' were more complex and subtle than the essentialised forms which have been drawn out of *The Soldier and the State* and continue to function within CMR scholarship in political science. Describing American CMR in the early 20th century, Huntington identifies an 'ideological gap between the military and civilian worlds,' in which 'the arrogance, individualism, and commercialism of American society gave the military the outlook of an estranged minority.'⁹⁶ On one level, this makes sense to a reader. Work on military culture complete with garb and ceremony support the implicit claim that the 'military' and the 'civilian' are separate worlds. But who is it that has been given this 'outlook of an estranged minority'? There is an unaddressed tension of how the 'military' can assimilate and embody both individual and group identity. The theme of the 'military' and the 'civil' being entirely separate cultures is crucial to Huntington's

⁹⁴ Huntington, 70.

⁹⁵ Huntington, 187.

⁹⁶ Huntington, 268–69.

subsequent arguments – for example, that at discordant military and civilian values during the interwar period provoked a sense of moral superiority in the former group.⁹⁷ This strain of Huntington's argument demonstrates that he takes the military/non-military definition and runs with it, building vibrant theory on unsteady foundations. His work, in moving directly to the relationship between two Things, both reifies them and neglects to engage with the subtleties of how the categories are imagined and why. The contemporary, critical reader is left unsatisfied.

2.2. Morris Janowitz

Morris Janowitz was a founding scholar of military sociology best known for his book *The Professional Soldier* (1960) and major contributions to the academy, including founding the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society (established 1960) and its journal *Armed Forces & Society* (established 1974), which remains a significant publication for CMR. As a contemporary of Huntington, Janowitz contributed to the mid-20th century rise of CMR scholarship, anchoring the military sociology CMR research agenda for generations. He is commonly regarded as the founder of military sociology and his legacy has been secured by the enduring institutions that he founded.⁹⁸ Yet, as this section portrays in its analysis of Janowitz's 'sociological' CMR, Janowitz's securing of the 'civil' and 'military' as separate, social groups also tends towards essentialising them as fixed and homogenous.

In *The Professional Soldier*, Janowitz's language constructs the 'civil' and 'military' as bounded social categories in an uneasy relationship with each other. His work, while not building directly on Huntington, was meant to complement it by adding sociological analysis to Huntington's institutional focus.⁹⁹ His focus on image and perception of and between the groups serves to separate 'civil' and 'military' within a binary. However, this section analyses his language and analysis as constitutive in addition to representational. In his attempt to clearly draw the boundaries of 'civil' and 'military' groups, Janowitz

⁹⁷ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 310.

⁹⁸ James Burk, 'Morris Janowitz and the Origins of Sociological Research on Armed Forces and Society', *Armed Forces & Society* 19, no. 2 (January 1993): 167–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9301900202>.

⁹⁹ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), 5.

essentialises the categories through discussion of their perceptions of one another. He describes the military profession's self-image within an American context: 'They have also come to believe that, in some respects, they are superior to the bulk of the population. More secretly than publicly, they hold the self-conception of standard-bearers and conservators or great traditions in a changing social environment. One cannot be average and still fill such a role.'¹⁰⁰ He goes so far as to call such military members' moral superiority a 'traditional outlook.'¹⁰¹ Janowitz's claims are bold, even decades after they were first made, but have the potential to be dangerously misleading. In this reductionist framework, individuals' perceptions are generalised until they are portrayed as the groups' perceptions. Janowitz's 'military' is a single, homogeneous entity. His statement that 'The military profession harbors the belief that they are not adequately recognized, and particularly, not sufficiently appreciated by civilian society,' should make the reader question whether a profession itself can have a belief.¹⁰² The language of 'groups' (used here in the socio-psychological sense) sketch out early manifestations of the 'us'/'them' dynamic omnipresent in contemporary CMR discourse. As with 'us' and 'them,' the argument for cognitive utility is strongly challenged by the essentialising effects such treatment can have.

Like Huntington, Janowitz also relies on the implicit meanings of 'civil' and 'military' as non-military and military. He substitutes the term 'non-military' for 'civil' occasionally¹⁰³ and more subtly, his language conveys an idea that if one is not 'military' then one *must* be 'civil' (i.e., not military). The world that Janowitz sketches is one in which 'civil' and 'military', as a binary, contain and categorise the whole population. He describes the 'military wife' who 'compar[es] her lot with that of her civilian counterpart,' his language creating a sort of distance in its analysis, while failing to provide for wives who may not be neatly 'military' or 'civilian'.¹⁰⁴

Finally, Janowitz's efforts to illustrate the 'civil' and 'military' as distinct is continuously underwritten by the anxieties discussed earlier in this chapter about the

¹⁰⁰ Janowitz, 80.

¹⁰¹ Janowitz, 249.

¹⁰² Janowitz, 227–28.

¹⁰³ For example, he writes: 'The narrowing distinction between military and non-military bureaucracies has not resulted in an elimination of fundamental differences.' See: Janowitz, 33.

¹⁰⁴ Janowitz, 177.

impetus for the development of CMR as a field. For example, he writes of the importance of balancing the political incorporation of military professionals to avoid them acting 'as a leadership group... [which could] transcend the limits of civilian supremacy.'¹⁰⁵ In doing so, he demonstrates an acute awareness of and advocates for maintaining distinctions between the two categories. He describes the salute on the military base as 'a symbol of opposition to civilianizing trends'¹⁰⁶ and observes the increasing 'civilian character of the military establishment'¹⁰⁷ in language which suggests undesirable corrosion of the separate spheres or groups his work details. In the clearest articulation of this idea, in the epilogue to *The Professional Soldier*, Janowitz cautions: 'To deny or destroy the difference between the military and the civilian cannot produce genuine similarity, but runs the risk of creating new forms of tension and unanticipated militarism.'¹⁰⁸ This prizing of the importance of retaining separation between categories is critical to the work which Janowitz pioneered, yet as this analysis has demonstrated, he does so at the cost of rich and messy specificity, instead constituting and essentialising the produced groups and binary.

2.3. Canonisation and Legacy

What is remarkable about such a lack of conceptual engagement and analysis in early CMR isn't that Huntington and Janowitz shied away from doing it themselves. This chapter is not intended to minimise the significance of their respective contributions. For this reason, it has examined the usages of 'civil' and 'military' as terms within their work, rather than tackling their ideas outright. Faced with the criticisms levied here of potential essentialisation and an uncritical use of language, it is entirely likely each would counter that such work lay outside the remit of their research. And they would be correct. It is not that Huntington or Janowitz *should* have done the work implicated in this section. Rather, it remains puzzling that people *still haven't*. Moreover, such a wilful blindness to such matters has become an inherited blind spot in the CMR literature. In discussing the development of CMR scholarship in political science and military sociology, the remainder of this section

¹⁰⁵ Janowitz, 343.

¹⁰⁶ Janowitz, 221.

¹⁰⁷ Janowitz, 32.

¹⁰⁸ Janowitz, 440.

traces how the canonisation of Huntington and Janowitz has determined disciplinary lines and engrained the essentialisation of the 'civil' and 'military'. To effectively demonstrate the prevalence of both the disciplinary divide and conservative scholarship in CMR, the following provides a brief sketch of the trends of each discipline in contemporary research. Though it is not an exhaustive analysis, it argues how such essentialisation is reproduced in contemporary scholarship, creating a need for the critical-theoretical attention that this thesis offers.

Political Science

Fifty plus years past Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*, developments on the political science side of CMR remain conservative in nature. Arguing this isn't intended to downplay the importance of these interventions. Rather, it suggests that the field is so canonised that, just as every text must reference Huntington, any development must be incremental. Many political science CMR works retune or refine Huntington's work, particularly the concept of civil control (of the military profession and force). This trend is so dominant that such adherents have been referred to as 'the heirs of Huntington'.¹⁰⁹ For example, Stevenson suggests a move away from away from Huntington's exclusive emphasis on the Chain of Command and executive branch of the civil-political leadership to include both the legislative and executive leadership in an American context.¹¹⁰ In a similar vein, Herspring conceives of civilian control as generated not through political control, but through a partnership of 'shared responsibility' between the civil and military.¹¹¹ Both Stevenson and Herspring riff off of Huntington's conceptualization of civil control directly and their interventions, while important, are modest in ambition. Even a proposed 'new

¹⁰⁹ Peter D. Feaver, Richard H. Kohn, and Lindsay P. Cohn, 'The Gap Between Military and Civilian in the United States in Perspective', in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, ed. Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 4. They also use the same term, 'heirs', to describe the Janowitz devotees.

¹¹⁰ Charles A. Stevenson, *Warriors and Politicians: US Civil-Military Relations Under Stress*, 1st ed., Cass Military Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 195.

¹¹¹ Dale R. Herspring, *Civil-Military Relations and Shared Responsibility: A Four-Nation Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 1, 5.

conceptualization' of CMR restricts itself by adhering to a traditionalist understanding of CMR through 'the trinity of control, effectiveness, and efficiency.'¹¹²

This brief discussion of the pattern in political science to revert to variations of Huntington's themes is not suggesting that the study of civil control is bad scholarship. But it points to a dearth of theory-building scholarship and political-science-CMR's failure to think outside of the box. It seems that every political-science-CMR scholar must climb their way to stand upon Huntington's (and his successors') shoulders in some tall, but narrow human tower of scholarship. This formation, echoed in military sociology as is discussed next, begs the question of what is being lost within this nexus of canonisation, conservationism, and disciplinary divides.

Military Sociology

Military sociology is well-defined and coherent in its interests in and approaches to CMR research. Following Janowitz, and the institutions and networks he set up, military sociology remains interested in the treatment and perceptions between the 'civil' and 'military' conceived of as separate, distinct social groups. Even amongst acknowledgement that the subject necessitates interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches, the vocabulary of military sociology constantly references this separation and distinctness. Key words such as 'interpenetration'¹¹³ or research that speaks to the relationship between the (implied civil) academician and (military) practitioner¹¹⁴ reproduce the conceptualization of 'civil' and 'military' as separate, bounded things which may make contact with each other. This work maintains this separation even in the face of countless examples of individuals that defy these tidy, spatial categorisations: ex-military academics, policymakers who continue to publish in peer-reviewed journals. However, this language that military

¹¹² Florina Cristiana Matei, 'A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations', in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (London: Routledge, 2013), 29.

¹¹³ Gerhard Kümmel, 'A Soldier Is a Soldier Is a Soldier!?: The Military and Its Soldiers in an Era of Globalization', in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media B.V., 2003), 417.

¹¹⁴ Giuseppe Caforio, 'Introduction', in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Science & Business Media B.V., 2003), 4.

sociology employs is indicative of its proclivity to separate and reify the 'civil' and 'military,' even as it tries to look outside itself disciplinarily for augmented analytical power.

For military sociology, such language's analytical utility exceeds its problematic implications, leading to the replication of linguistic patterns and the continued development of topics of interest which rely on this language. Charles Moskos, a prominent military sociologist who published with Janowitz and led IUS in the late 20th century, focused his research on the relationship between assumedly distinct 'civil' and 'military' spheres. Moskos' body of work spans several decades and persists in placing this distinctness at its heart. His use of the language of 'overlap' to discuss the professionalization of the military and the shift from an institutional to occupational organisational format presupposes the 'civil' and 'military' as distinct, bounded, and often essentialised categories.¹¹⁵ In 1988, Moskos described: 'military forces have never been entirely separate or entirely coterminous with civilian society, but the conception of a scale, along which the military more or less overlaps with civilian society, highlights the ever-changing interface between the armed forces and society.'¹¹⁶ Such language of 'overlap' is suggestive of a trend in military sociology to ask how similar and dissimilar the 'civil' and the 'military' are, positioning them as separate spheres that at times, as in Moskos' 'Postmodern Military,' experience interpenetrability which may be measured and debated.¹¹⁷ In such a way, military sociology offers a question that can be asked *ad nauseum* in varied cultural contexts and times. This language of overlaps and spheres is a logical precursor to the crystallisation of debates around the 'civilianisation' and 'militarisation' arguments, demonstrating the latticework of scholarship built upon the uninterrogated insistence that

¹¹⁵ Charles C. Moskos, 'A New Concept of the Citizen-Soldier', *Orbis* 49, no. 4 (September 2005): 664, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2005.07.010>.

¹¹⁶ Charles C. Moskos, 'Institutional and Occupational Trends in Armed Force', in *The Military: More than Just a Job?*, ed. Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988), 57.

¹¹⁷ Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, 'Armed Forces After the Cold War', in *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*, ed. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.

the categories are distinct and clear.¹¹⁸ Relying on inherited and undertheorised theories of categorisation only in itself perpetuates the reification of the categories.

2.4. Problems with the View

As this section has demonstrated, the development of CMR has been characterised by a lack of critical engagement with the terms 'civil' and 'military' which has been enabled by emulation of canonical research by Huntington and Janowitz and the subsequent disciplinary divides they engendered. From the brief engagement with the sub-disciplines individually, it should also be clear that 'civil-military relations' means different things to different audiences. This can have several unintended consequences. First, that the definitions of 'civil' and 'military' can be cut roughly by disciplinary lines suggests a barrier to cross-disciplinary cooperation, potentially limiting the growth of CMR to a multi-disciplinary rather than inter-disciplinary field. Second, as a term, CMR may cause a great deal of confusion. One solution is to layer additional terms into the area of study. For example, Langston uses 'military-society relations' to talk explicitly about the relationship between the military and civilian public.¹¹⁹ Such efforts emphasize a paradox within CMR: that the field may treat 'civil' and 'military' as clear categories while also acknowledging their inadequacy to specify the subject matter of interest.

CMR is a relatively young literature and the direct influence of canonical figures like Huntington (1927-2008), Janowitz (1919-1988), and Moskos (1934-2008) remains strong and within living memory. This helps to contextualise the modest interventions in political science and military sociology that have been discussed in this section. Conceiving of Huntington and Janowitz as the giants upon whose shoulders the two main streams of CMR research have sprouted alludes to the problems caused by such developmental patterns. Visually, CMR seems to take on the shape of two towers of figures. Standing upon the

¹¹⁸ 'civilianisation' and 'militarisation' will be taken up in more detail in the subsequent section of this chapter.

¹¹⁹ Thomas S. Langston, *Uneasy Balance: Civil-Military Relations in Peacetime America since 1783* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 6.

shoulders of giants, you can see the others below you whose scholarship you have built upon. You have a good view of your subject from high up as well. Pivoting, you may be able to see behind you, or look to the side and see others who gaze upon the same subject as you. However, you cannot know what the perspective is like from two steps to the right of you. And you cannot, unless you find ways to work around the structural constraints that you are a part of. The third section of this chapter is devoted to CMR research which has sought to innovate. However, as it demonstrates, even work which takes up interdisciplinarity and is cognizant of the pitfalls explored in the second section of this chapter cannot escape the logic of the civil-military binary as a basic building block for their theoretical interventions.

3. Innovation in CMR: Escaping the Divides, Maintaining the Binary

The previous section established how the labels of 'civil' and 'military' have become entrenched within the political science and military sociology sub-disciplines of CMR through processes of canonising Huntington and Janowitz and a tendency toward conservationist scholarship. It demonstrated that it is difficult to realise that the fixedness of 'civil' and 'military' within your own discipline constitutes essentialisation. This third section of the chapter argues that even scholarship which consciously seeks analysis outside of the constraints laid down in CMR's developmental history cannot escape from the pull of the canon and the civil-military binary. It first examines the civil-military binary's effects on modes of inquiry in CMR literature, focusing on the concepts of civilianisation, militarisation, and the 'gap' in CMR. It then presents and evaluates interdisciplinary efforts in CMR to overcome some of the challenges of disciplinary divisions. Together, this section identifies challenges in contemporary CMR scholarship which it argues are directly attributable to the developmental patterns discussed here. It does so to contextualise the approach that this project takes in queering CMR, which is oriented toward overcoming some of the limitations on imagination identified in this chapter.

3.1. The Civil-Military Binary and Modes of Inquiry in CMR

To demonstrate the profound effects that the civil-military binary has on the imagination in CMR scholarship, this section identifies and critiques three dominant modes of inquiry in contemporary CMR literature: 'civilianisation' of the 'military', 'militarisation' of the 'civil'/civilian, and the civil-military 'gap'. It understands the first two modes as opposite sides of the same coin, so addresses them together. The three modes of inquiry rely on spatial language which locates the 'civil' and 'military' as separate, bounded things. They speak directly to anxieties of locating these 'things' in relation to each other, as though there is an optimal relationship to be reached in which 'civil' and 'military' are neither too close nor too far away. This section links this spatial language and conceptualization to the binarism of CMR. In doing so, it builds a case for the invigorated critical-theoretical approach offered by this thesis. Denaturalising the civil-military binary creates space to move past the constraints on imagination that have been maintained by the developmental features of CMR explored in this chapter.

'Civilianisation' of the 'Military' and 'Militarisation' of the 'Civil(ian)'

Made possible by the binary-based assumption that 'civil' and 'military' are distinct spaces and groups, the terms 'civilianisation' and 'militarisation' are used in CMR literature to describe the incursion of one sphere into the other. While there have been excellent critiques of militarisation and militarism¹²⁰ in IR, this chapter examines the concept in CMR literature specifically. Many of the criticisms made in this section are consistent with and overlap with work by scholars including Howell¹²¹ and Stavrianakis and Selby¹²², however the

¹²⁰ There is some interchangeability of militarism and militarisation. This project is more consistent with questions of militarism – defined by Stavrianakis and Selby as 'the social and international relations of the preparation for and conduct of, organized political violence' (Anna Stavrianakis and Jan Selby, 'Militarism and International Relations in the Twenty-First Century', in *Militarism and International Relations: Political Economy, Security and Theory*, ed. Anna Stavrianakis and Jan Selby, Cass Military Studies (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.) – than militarisation. However, militarism is not taken up directly in this project or chapter as its orientation differs from the research centred in this project.

¹²¹ Alison Howell, 'Forget "Militarization": Race, Disability and the "Martial Politics" of the Police and of the University', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20, no. 2 (3 April 2018): 117–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2018.1447310>.

¹²² Anna Stavrianakis and Jan Selby, eds., *Militarism and International Relations: Political Economy, Security and Theory*, Cass Military Studies (New York: Routledge, 2012).

effort of this chapter is orientated in a different direction.¹²³ In evaluating militarisation and civilianisation as modes of inquiry in CMR literature, this section demonstrates the binary conceptualizations that accompany them. Spatially, this mode of enquiry draws to mind images of overlap, boundaries, and amoeba-like encroachment, all of which rely on theorising underwritten by the CMR binary which presumes a natural separateness to the categories.¹²⁴ These modes of inquiry can be traced directly back to Janowitz who describes the transformation of the military profession between World War I and World War II: 'It became appropriate to speak of the "civilianization" of the military profession and of the parallel extension of military forms into civilian social structure' due to the 'true interpenetration of the civilian and the military as more and more of the resources of the nation-state [were] used in preparing for and making war.'¹²⁵ Though the terms themselves are neutral, the discursive contexts in which they are employed are normative, suggesting that something is at risk if the, assumedly separate, spheres become less clearly distinct.

Since Janowitz, CMR research on the 'civilianisation' of the 'military' has crystallized around the professionalization of the military. At the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, this discussion within military sociology has been articulated as a shift to a 'Postmodern military' characterized by 'basic format shifts toward a volunteer force, more multipurpose in mission, increasingly androgynous in makeup and ethos, and with greater permeability with civilian society.'¹²⁶ Both the US and the UK have been moving toward this postmodern military organizational model.¹²⁷ Whether from some core changes to the recruitment, maintenance, and deployment of armed forces or the composition of the armed forces themselves — another example of 'civilianisation' includes filling military jobs with civilians (perhaps working on contract — there is a consensus that 'civilianisation' of the

¹²³ This project is interested in different questions than the critiques of militarisation/militarism in IR. This project looks to cultural work not to evaluate the influence of military relations on some theorized, pure civil society — indeed, it questions if the two can be separated—but to interrogate the character of civil-military relations themselves. In some sense, this work almost precedes questions of militarism.

¹²⁴ On this point, I emphatically agree with Howell. See: Howell, 'Forget "Militarization"', 120.

¹²⁵ Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, xi–xii.

¹²⁶ Moskos, Williams, and Segal, 'Armed Forces After the Cold War', 1.

¹²⁷ Christopher Dandeker, 'The United Kingdom: The Overstretched Military', in *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*, ed. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32.

military has indeed happened.¹²⁸ Such a model is characterized by a perceived interpenetrability of the civilian and military spheres, which Ender suggests in envisioning 'a new era of civil-military relations...oriented more toward fusion rather than a fissure between the two spheres.'¹²⁹

It is difficult to identify an example of a time when 'civilianisation' is used neutrally. Even in a description of the evolutions (and increasing interpenetration) of UK military and civilian legal systems, the discourse around 'civilianisation' suggests there is something at risk as 'more and more spheres that were formerly acknowledged as matters of military exemption have become the subject of 'civilianization'¹³⁰ For example, in 2017, former Royal Marine Sergeant Alexander Blackman ('Marine A') was released from prison after the Court Martial Appeal Court at the Royal Courts of Justice resolved to 'substitute a verdict of manslaughter [in the stead of murder] by reason of diminished responsibility.'¹³¹ Blackman had been serving a life sentence after a military court martial convicted him of murder for shooting an injured Taliban insurgent at close range in 2011, an incident captured on another soldier's helmet camera. However, as such an event is read through CMR scholarship of 'civilianisation' of the 'military', the change in ruling and consequence would be understood as a matter of usurpation and loss of military authority to 'civilianisation'.

This normative and spatial language of erosion dominates scholarship on 'civilianisation' of the 'military.' In another example, Downes almost seems to mourn the '[destruction of] the essential mystique of the military profession' through civilianisation since 'The status accorded to the armed forces...depends upon the armed forces being viewed by society...as a distinct and distinctive entity.'¹³² Similarly, Janowitz suggests that the military salute has become 'a symbol of opposition to civilianizing trends,' as though there is something to be defended. This something, as the opposite — the 'militarisation' of

¹²⁸ Dandeker, 36.

¹²⁹ Morten G. Ender, *American Soldiers in Iraq: McSoldiers or Innovative Professionals* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire; New York: Routledge, 2009), 45.

¹³⁰ Marco Fey, 'The Ideal Type of the Democratic Soldier in Britain', in *Democratic Civil-Military Relations: Soldiering in 21st-Century Europe*, ed. Sabine Mannitz, Cass Military Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 63.

¹³¹ *R v. Blackman* [2017] EWCA Crim 190.

¹³² Cathy Downes, 'Great Britain', in *The Military: More than Just a Job?*, ed. Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988), 163.

the 'civilian' — makes clear, is based in the normative and binary notion that the 'military' and 'civil' are, and should be, separate. The process of 'civilianisation' is cast as undesirable or threatening.

As with 'civilianisation,' the discursive context of 'militarisation' in CMR literature reveals a spatial anxiety based in binary logic. While concerns about the 'civilianisation' of the 'military' largely stem from the viewpoint of the military and its supporters, concerns about the 'militarisation' of the 'civil' come from a much wider interest base. Though the term 'militarisation' has been used to discuss the transformation from civilian to soldier in training¹³³ — a necessary process — the application of the idea on a wider, societal level links directly to the anxiety which backed the genesis of CMR in the mid-20th century. Indeed, Lasswell's Garrison State construct can be read as an early, but influential measuring stick for imagining the limits of a 'militarisation' of the 'civilian.' Its echoes can be traced in Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961), which brought the term 'military-industrial complex' into public awareness and warned of the need to 'guard against [its] acquisition of unwarranted influence.'¹³⁴ The body of scholarship which has since sprung up on the 'military-industrial complex' can thus be read as part of the CMR scholarship on the 'militarisation' of the 'civil'.¹³⁵ More recently, the militarisation of civil police forces, including the use of military equipment and tactics, which Salter situates within 'militarisation of cultural production',¹³⁶ has become a significant public policy issue.

The anxieties about militarisation come into even sharper relief in the discourse outside academia. For example, the UK's Troops to Teachers initiative through the Department for Education provided a pipeline for non-graduate serviceleavers to train as

¹³³ Emma Newlands, 'Preparing for and Resisting the War Body: Training in the British Army', in *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience*, ed. Kevin McSorley (London: Routledge, 2013), 35–50.

¹³⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Farewell Address (1961)', OurDocuments, accessed 19 April 2016, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=90&page=transcript>.

¹³⁵ See for example: Jeffrey A. Engel, 'Not Yet A Garrison State: Reconsidering Eisenhower's Military-Industrial Complex', *Enterprise and Society* 12, no. 1 (March 2011): 175–99, <https://doi.org/10.1093/es/khq151>.

¹³⁶ Michael Salter, 'Toys for the Boys? Drones, Pleasure and Popular Culture in the Militarisation of Policing', *Critical Criminology* 22, no. 2 (May 2014): 166, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-013-9213-4>.

teachers in a two-year, employment-based programme.¹³⁷ Though the initiative fell squarely, and explicitly, within an effort to uphold UK Military Covenant, it was framed by critics as an intrusion into the education system by the military.¹³⁸ From an academic perspective, Chadderton frames the initiative within a wider 'militarisation of education.'¹³⁹ Such fears about an incursion of the military into the classroom hits at one of the most sensitive aspects of the 'civilian,' a term which is so often aligned with women and children. However, it also betrays the strength of the normative desire to maintain education as a 'civil', and thus separate space from the potentially encroaching 'military.' In 2018, the programme was replaced by a bursary, situating it among other resettlement opportunities for serviceleavers looking for retraining and careers options.¹⁴⁰

Framed within their discursive contexts, both civilianisation and militarisation suggest discomfort with the idea that 'civil' and 'military' may increasingly (for progress in each seems to move only in one direction) interpenetrate one other. On one hand, these modes of inquiry may be read as attempts to accommodate an evolving system of relations that includes uncategorisable actors like civilian employees of the military establishment. On the other, it reveals how the civil-military binary, in dominating the imagination, has determined modes of inquiry in the CMR research agenda. That civilianisation and militarisation are even subjects of inquiry within CMR suggests a degree of reflexivity that acknowledges the complexity of theorising the 'civil' and 'military' as entirely distinct spheres. However, rather than question if the binary itself requires retheorising, CMR literature has adopted civilianisation and militarisation as processes which can explore these relations and remain compliant with the canonical binary. Civilianisation and militarisation

¹³⁷ 'Troops to Teachers Non-Graduate Programme', University of Brighton, accessed 16 March 2016, <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/courses/study/troops-to-teachers-non-graduate-programme.aspx>.

¹³⁸ Lee Williams, 'The British Army Needs to Stop Targeting and Recruiting Children', *The Independent*, 30 June 2015, sec. Voices, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/british-armed-forces-needs-stop-targeting-and-recruiting-children-10352738.html>.

¹³⁹ Charlotte Chadderton, 'The Militarisation of English Schools: Troops to Teaching and the Implications for Initial Teacher Education and Race Equality', *Race Ethnicity and Education* 17, no. 3 (27 May 2014): 407–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.832937>.

¹⁴⁰ 'New Bursary to Get Veterans into Teaching', GOV.UK, accessed 30 November 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-bursary-to-get-veterans-into-teaching>.

maintain the sanctity of the distinct spheres, even as they capture the dissolution of and threats to the theorising of them through binary logic.

The 'Gap' in CMR

As with 'civilianisation' and 'militarisation', the civil-military 'gap' has become a prevalent mode of inquiry in CMR which demonstrates the continued dominance of the civil-military binary and its unintended harms for scholarship and social relations. This section uses 'language of the gap' to refer to the concept of the civil-military 'gap', though terms like 'divide' or 'gulf' are also used in the literature. In all forms, which rely on spatial language, the gap as a mode of CMR inquiry configures questions of how it can be 'bridged', 'closed', or otherwise mitigated, as though it is a type of dysfunction. For example, Feaver, Kohn, and Cohn, understanding the 'gap' to be a cultural one of 'values or attitudes', are concerned that it may impair civil-military cooperation and national security.¹⁴¹ This remains consistent across the literature, feeding into scholarship which is concerned with 'crises' in CMR.¹⁴² Whether the language of the 'gap' appeared first in academic literature or in the public arena (whether among or outside the armed forces) is unclear. However, it remains a dominant mode of inquiry and conceptualization inside and outside scholarship. The 'gap' introduces a sense of distance. It reifies the categories of 'civil' and 'military' and pushes them apart, configuring them in an oppositional binary. The pseudo-metaphorical language of the 'gap' is convenient and accessible to all. Even if someone is not quite sure what 'civil' or 'military' are, the 'gap' tells them that the two are distinct and separate. This quickly becomes the dominant narrative in discourse.

In its prevalence, the gap has shifted from being a theoretical tool to a real, measurable thing in scholarship and public opinion. For example, citing a 2008 Populus poll, Fey notes that, 'the majority of people think that there is a gulf between Army and nation and 78 per cent of those expect this gulf to widen further.'¹⁴³ This tendency has only

¹⁴¹ Feaver, Kohn, and Cohn, 'The Gap Between Military and Civilian in the United States in Perspective', 1.

¹⁴² Deborah Avant, 'Conflicting Indicators of "Crisis" in American Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 3 (April 1998): 375–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9802400303>.

¹⁴³ Fey, 'The Ideal Type of the Democratic Soldier in Britain', 49.

grown in the contemporary era, with the literature attributing the expansion of the gap' (and anxieties around it) to the movement to an all-volunteer force and the subsequent narrowing of demographic representation.¹⁴⁴ The 2011 pre-Veterans Day issue of *TIME*, 'An Army Apart,' examined the rift between American military and society. Explaining an oft-recalled statistic, the issue explains: 'Think of the U.S. military as the Other 1%--some 2.4 million troops have fought in and around Afghanistan and Iraq since 9/11, exactly 1% of the 240 million Americans over 18.'¹⁴⁵ In 2008, less than half of British people polled identified with 'know[ing] the armed forces well' or 'a fair amount about them.'¹⁴⁶ Similarly, only 7% of people aged 17-24 polled had a family member serving in British armed forces.¹⁴⁷

The language of the 'gap' is an important mode of inquiry in assessing and trying to assuage the anxieties of contemporary CMR, but it walks a dangerous line of undermining itself and its implicit goals of closing or bridging the gap. The spatial language of the 'gap' as a mode of inquiry must separate in order to, perhaps, unite or bridge, but there are unintended harms in this separation which reify both the 'civil' and the 'military'. The risks lie in othering, a refusal or hesitance to engage, and an obscuring of the system within which the 'military' is a part of the 'civil.' All persons reified into the 'civil' and the 'military' are citizens. The distancing may be convenient for those who do not wish to associate with the political application of violence or the trope of the alienated, misunderstood veteran. The gap language enables them to say that the Other is 'over there.' Yet this distancing in the trappings of spatial language becomes a crutch to delay productive engagement on the cultural level.

When picked up on a cultural level, the language produces anxiety and enables othering. Recently, the perceived existence of a 'gap' (which, through behaviour, makes the 'gap' real) has bolstered fears that the civilian and the serviceperson can no longer understand or engage with one another productively. For example, Alex Horton, a US

¹⁴⁴ Eliot A. Cohen, 'Civil-Military Relations', *Orbis* 41, no. 2 (March 1997): 180, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387\(97\)90061-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387(97)90061-2).

¹⁴⁵ Mark Thompson, 'The Other 1%', *Time*, 21 November 2011.

¹⁴⁶ Davies, Q., Clark, B. and Sharp, M. 2008. *Report of Inquiry into National Recognition of our Armed Forces*. London in Fey, 'The Ideal Type of the Democratic Soldier in Britain', 49.

¹⁴⁷ Lindsey A. Hines et al., 'Are the Armed Forces Understood and Supported by the Public? A View from the United Kingdom', *Armed Forces & Society* 41, no. 4 (October 2015): 693, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X14559975>.

veteran and writer suggests that the conversation between the civilian and the (ex)servicemember has been stilted by the pedestalling of veterans, by treating them specially or differently and, in turn, making them other.¹⁴⁸ Roy Scranton, a veteran, writer, and academic, remembers such a feeling, confessing, 'I've found the moral authority imputed to me as a veteran gratifying and am reluctant to give it up...I walk down Sixth Avenue carrying my dirty little war like a card I hand over for credit.'¹⁴⁹ His comment illustrates a sense of veteran exceptionalism that can arise from pedestalling. In addition to this process of pedestalling I would add an argument that 'piety', a term used in Holocaust Studies to mean 'a mystification of "something we dare not understand,"' may also function as an oppressive, gagging force between a civilian and a veteran.¹⁵⁰ This piety may be enacted on both the civilian and serviceperson levels. For example, Phil Klay, arguably one of the most successful veteran-writers from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, equates the civilian's 'I could never imagine what you've been through' with the veteran's 'You wouldn't know, you weren't there.'¹⁵¹ Such sentiment is pithily embodied in the joke in which a veteran asks, 'How many Vietnam veterans does it take to screw in a light bulb?' The answer: 'You wouldn't know, you weren't there.' Both non-starters impede productive discussion between civilians and veterans. Discomfort, embarrassment, and shame colour the gap, reifying the categories that create the space in the first place.

Only made possible through the maintenance of the CMR binary, which portrays 'civil' and 'military' as separate and opposite, the gap stirs an anxiety that it cannot address adequately. Taken up culturally, the 'gap' has become a signifier for how out-of-touch the two imagined categories are. That the language of the gap may only aggravate the socio-political issues it seeks to resolve exemplifies the effects that restrictive and conservative binary logic has had on the CMR research agenda.

¹⁴⁸ Alex Horton, 'Help Veterans by Taking Them Off the Pedestal', *The Atlantic*, 10 November 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/11/putting-veterans-on-a-pedestal-isnt-helping-anyone/281316/>.

¹⁴⁹ Roy Scranton, 'War and the City', *The New York Times*, 3 September 2010, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/war-and-the-city/>.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford, eds., *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film*, Teaching the New English (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 2.

¹⁵¹ Phil Klay, 'After War, a Failure of the Imagination', *The New York Times*, 8 February 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/opinion/sunday/after-war-a-failure-of-the-imagination.html>.

3.2. Interdisciplinary CMR Scholarship

Recognizing some of the ills that accompany the disciplinary division in CMR, some researchers have attempted to meld approaches from political science and military sociology. This work is united by a belief that the sociological and institutional cannot be held apart, artificially, if scholarship is to take account of CMR, in full complexity as a system. While this project is sympathetic to such interdisciplinary work in principle, the research itself often demonstrates the conservationist scholarship detailed above and the pervasiveness of Huntington and Janowitz as the governors of the field's imaginative boundaries. There is a growing awareness of academic conservatism within CMR literature, but the field at large remains unable to grow away from the canonical texts, theories, and approaches. This chapter agrees with critics, like Olmeda, who laments the disciplinary divide as 'a sort of ghettoization,'¹⁵² and his contribution's title 'Escape from Huntington's Labyrinth' humorously sketches out some of the frustration that scholars feel in observing the trends developed in this section. Work which advocates more complex approaches that blend disciplinary concerns use language which draw from the dominant canons.

It is not difficult to read these interdisciplinary efforts as combinations of Huntington and Janowitz, not much further along in development than Janowitz's conception of how his own work joined with and complemented that of Huntington. This thesis supports understanding CMR as a system that researchers cannot grasp fully when separated into parts. Disciplinary boundaries can work to support this kind of separated analysis. However, merely combining disciplinary approaches can fall short of the mark. In this sense, this thesis remains critical of work like that of Rukavishnikov and Pugh¹⁵³ which, even while attempting to transcend the issues of disciplinary parameters, again demonstrates a trend toward conservationist scholarship and the seeming inescapability of Huntington and Janowitz.

In tracing the disciplinary patterns of CMR through contemporary scholarship, this thesis agrees with critics who have commented on the lack of theoretical innovation in

¹⁵² Olmeda, 'Escape from Huntington's Labyrinth', 67.

¹⁵³ See, for example: Rukavishnikov and Pugh, 'Civil-Military Relations'.

CMR. As this section demonstrates, escaping disciplinary constraints does not suffice when done with the same theoretical basis rooted on the shoulders of Huntington and/or Janowitz. In this, it agrees with Owens' assessment that 'most recent attempts to reconstruct the theoretical edifice of civil-military relations constitute refinements of the two [institutional and sociological approaches] rather than providing a new theoretical alternative.'¹⁵⁴ To this, this critique adds that a combination of the established approaches also does not constitute the necessary intervention necessary for theoretical innovation. Even though interdisciplinary scholarship has much to contribute to CMR, there is a curious resistance to theoretical work which deviates from the canon, leading to what Bruneau laments in his own critique as 'little accumulation of useful knowledge' and 'minimal conceptual development.'¹⁵⁵ This chapter contends that this reluctance or barrier is a result of the developmental features of CMR as a literature, which in its over-reliance on Huntington and Janowitz and disciplinary bifurcation has permitted the civil-military binary to remain unchallenged.

4. Towards a Queered CMR

In writing this account of CMR as a literature, this chapter has identified developmental patterns which conserve the canon, divide the field and prevent innovation in scholarship. It has linked all three of these to the essentialisation and maintenance of the civil-military binary. Two questions emerge from this frank assessment, which are addressed in this conclusion. First, what is achieved through maintaining 'civil' and 'military' in a binary? And second, how does CMR move past the limitations imposed by its own development?

The first question is tied to confronting why the binary has been maintained in CMR scholarship, even when faced by challenges to its logic, including military contractors, veterans, and military partners. The key to its persistence and the answer to this question is that the system and theory which holds 'civil' and 'military' in a distinct binary offers some benefit which has guaranteed its perpetuation. These benefits are numerous. Holding the

¹⁵⁴ Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 9/11*, 26.

¹⁵⁵ Bruneau, 'Impediments to the Accurate Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations', 14.

'military' as separate and distinct allows for a sanitisation of the 'civil'. It distances the morally challenging and often messy work of combatants from non-combatant citizens, some of whom oppose war and embrace this distinction. The binary, in spatially situating 'civil' and 'military' separately, also can be read as a product of a discourse which identifies and positions authoritarian, militarist states as Other, not the exceptional and liberal-democratic Self. The concept of separation and opposition in the civil-military binary enables this logic, becoming a narrative lens which makes national mobilisation or war preparation palatable to secure the political will of citizens. For the military organisation, the binary holds the military apart from the civil, maintaining a distance which is harnessed to generate morale and cohesion. The specialness of the military, for the military, is directly linked with their holding themselves apart and a self-awareness that they operate under different rules and systems from 'civil' society. The binary is a conceptual tool which supports logics, identities, and behaviours that people and organisations find desirable. However, being desirable is not the same thing as being accurate, and many of the above ideas, enabled by the binary, come apart under scrutiny.

The second question leads us to the work of this thesis which is to denaturalise the binary. If CMR is suffering from a failure of imagination outside the binary logics laid down by the likes of Huntington and Janowitz, then the field urgently requires a reinvigorated, critical, and engaged re-theorisation of the categories of and relationship between 'civil' and 'military' in CMR. To do so would be an intervention that models and urges re-evaluating the language, orientation, past and future of CMR research.

In evaluating the literature of CMR, this chapter locates this thesis simultaneously within and apart from historical and contemporary research. It is interested in the same relations and anxieties which drove the creation of CMR, but approaches them, deliberately, not from upon the theoretical shoulders of the canon. This project conceives of 'CMR' as polysemic, with multiple meanings that are correct and commonly used. In this sense, it doesn't set out to determine which meanings of CMR are 'correct' or draw boundaries around what is or isn't CMR research. Rather, in embracing CMR as polysemic, this project accounts for the multi- and sometimes inter-disciplinarity of the subject. It argues for the productive richness of understanding CMR, broadly, in a way which unifies rather than divides.

In doing this work, the project is sympathetic to scholarship which has pressed the questions of the relationship between civil and military as opposition, particularly Kinsella's genealogy of the civilian.¹⁵⁶ However, in centring the civil-military *binary*, it draws upon queer theory to 'queer' or make strange the binary. As the next chapter develops, queering CMR provides a way to understand the contradictions and complexity of civil-military relations that goes beyond ideas of spheres and gaps. It reimagines the process of 'persistent and constant, imperfect and provisional iteration'¹⁵⁷ which Kinsella theorises in her performative analysis of the civilian and combatant as a whole system rather than moments. Most significantly, it proposes a way to move out of the developmental stickiness of CMR and conceive of CMR not through boundaries or along continuums, but in a way that denaturalizes the binary, its logics, and its products.

¹⁵⁶ Helen Kinsella, *The Image before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction between Combatant and Civilian* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2011). See 6-7, 16, 143, and 196.

¹⁵⁷ Kinsella, 196.

CHAPTER 3

QUEERING CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

1. Queer

While the preceding chapter traced the development of CMR literature and exposed a need for critical-theoretical innovation in research, this chapter moves to queer civil-military relations to address this lacuna. Analytically, I develop two figurations of the 'military' as *hero and/or victim* and the 'civil' as *saved and/or saviour*. I understand these figurations as part of a figural economy, which (re)produces CMR as a binary. However, to draw the queerness more clearly into focus, this binary is underwritten by a heteronormativity which labours to maintain the figurations as distinct. Both hero and victim are permissible, paired as they are with saved and or saviour in relations which conform with the heteronormative gendered pairing.¹⁵⁸ This heteronormativity is augmented by a heterosexist hegemony in which there is a comfort in the relations because they are hetero. However, the queer figuration formulated in this project, that of 'military' as *hero and/or victim* and the 'civil' as *saved and/or saviour*, is a threat to a CMR predicated on a relations of indebtedness. As a binary, civil and military are made to appear 'normal' because they create a set of relations which appears to relieve the unease of CMR based in the giving and taking of life. Thus, I assert, any formulation of CMR which denaturalises this binary through deviant, perverse noncompliance, or queerness, is a threat to that system of binary and relational maintenance. Civil/military as a nonbinary is queer.

In queering CMR, the project also indicates the 'normal', that which must be protected. In this dissertation, I argue that in seeing queerly we might understand the normative stickiness, that is attractiveness, of figuring the C/M as hero-saved, victim-saviour and why perverse, queer relations are a threat to the maintenance of the relational system based in indebtedness. This chapter proceeds in several parts which understand questions

¹⁵⁸ There is generous scholarship which foreground the concepts with which this project theorises the heteronormativity of contemporary civil-military relations, in particular, see: Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1 November 1993): 17–32, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17>; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, 2014; Judith Butler, 'Against Proper Objects', *Differences* 6, no. 2+3 (1994): 1–26.

of method, theory, and practice as co-constitutive. The chapter explicitly engages in reflexive practice in developing its conceptual toolkit and exposing the theoretical underpinnings of the project. As a first move, this section engages queer theory and its interests and commitments, particularly within IR. It attends to the ways in which queer(ing) is understood within the project and reflects on its approach out of an understanding of the ethical stakes and responsibilities of queer scholarship. Finally, it engages with Cynthia Weber's critique of appropriative 'queer' work to situate the project within queer thought and queer IR and create space for its discussion of method in the subsequent section.

1.1. Queer, Queer Theory, and the Project

In thinking and researching queerly, we must clarify what is meant by queer and queer theory. In its radicality, queer defies definition. Indeed, 'its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics.'¹⁵⁹ As what we think of as queer theory has grown, it has reflexively doubled down on its commitments to radicality and identified an existential tension around any stable (and thus closed) definition or other structurally determined constraint.¹⁶⁰ For some, this has extended to a reluctance to even use the term 'queer theory'.¹⁶¹ With such an existential conflict around definitions, as others have suggested¹⁶² it is perhaps easier to write a history of queer as an analytic and point to the scholarship and activism it grew out of, than it is to say what queer theory, definitely, *is*. Several excellent texts do just this, linking its rise to the early 1990s and poststructuralist

¹⁵⁹ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁶⁰ See: Annamarie Jagose, 'Feminism's Queer Theory', *Feminism & Psychology* 19, no. 2 (1 May 2009): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509102152>; David M. Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2–4 (23 September 2003): 339–43, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17.

¹⁶¹ As Berlant and Warner pronounced in 1995, 'The danger of the label queer theory is that it makes its queer and nonqueer audiences forget these differences and imagine a context (theory) in which queer has a stable referential content and pragmatic force.' See: Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, 'Guest Column: What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?', *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (1995): 344.

¹⁶² Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash, eds., *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 7.

approaches to thinking through and with identities and social relations.¹⁶³ The work of Teresa de Lauretis, who convened a conference and edited a special issue of *differences* 'Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities' in 1990 and 1991 respectively can be credited with the term's entrée to academia.¹⁶⁴

The term's growth around this period outstripped expectations and its own development as a community and substantive area of work. As Berlant and Warner remarked in 1995, 'Queer is hot.'¹⁶⁵ To find, retrospectively, the foundations of what queer theory would grow into, became a task to explain how two 'founding' texts of queer theory were both published in 1990 (*Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler and *Epistemology of the Closet* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick).¹⁶⁶ As others have noted, it is also necessary to tie queer theory, in nascence and evolution, to activism, particularly around HIV/AIDS in the early 1990s and later the fight for marriage equality.¹⁶⁷ The roots of queer theory also must be traced to the work of lesbian and POC feminists interested in destabilizing and deessentialising, including Audre Lord, Gloria Anzaldua, and Angela Davis. Though queer theory rose in some tension with feminist approaches, particularly early concerns that framed it as something which succeeded and indeed superseded feminism,¹⁶⁸ both have flourished in their own and often interwoven ways. The relationship between queer theory and feminist theory has been described as 'braided together in ongoing relations'.¹⁶⁹

The sense of radical open-endedness and fluidity that is essential to queer and doing queer work makes it difficult to pinpoint a productive description. Holman Jones and Adams go so far as to describe queer theory as 'a shifting sensibility rather than a static

¹⁶³ Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Jagose, *Queer Theory*; David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Esteban Muñoz, 'What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?', *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 1–17.

¹⁶⁴ Teresa de Lauretis, 'Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities An Introduction', *Differences* 3, no. 2 (1 July 1991): iii–xviii, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-3-2-iii>.

¹⁶⁵ Berlant and Warner, 'Guest Column', 343.

¹⁶⁶ For this point and an excellent, approachable discussion of queer theory, see: Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', 341.

¹⁶⁷ See: Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 93–96; Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, 'Queer Nationality', *Boundary 2* 19, no. 1 (1992): 155, <https://doi.org/10.2307/303454>.

¹⁶⁸ Biddy Martin, 'Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias', *Diacritics* 24, no. 2/3 (1994): 104, <https://doi.org/10.2307/465167>.

¹⁶⁹ Jagose, 'Feminism's Queer Theory', 164.

theoretical paradigm.¹⁷⁰ Amidst such a commitment to fluidity and against foreclosure, it is necessary to locate the guiding thread within queer thought which this project takes up. In this sense, this section intends to locate the strands of thought and interlocutors in queer scholarship, theory, and IR which this thesis envisions itself within.

Browne and Nash described their approach to working and creating space for non-proscriptive engagement with 'queer' in which they 'asked each author to enunciate clearly their own understanding of 'queer' within their research.'¹⁷¹ Drawing on this, I want to distinguish what I understand as 'queer'. In this project, I draw on a tradition and meaning which emerges from the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, particularly her oft-quoted commitment that queer might refer to: 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.'¹⁷² At the same time, it is impossible to draw on queer as a concept without acknowledging the term's use as a slur and its relation to lesbian, gay, bi, trans, nonbinary, and other identities, sexualities, and genders. From Sedgwick, this project also moves in its syntactical formulation towards queer as a verb. In this sense, it understands 'to queer' as 'to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, to camp up – heteronormative knowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them.'¹⁷³

This project acknowledges and centralizes the growth and evolution of queer in its approach. While queer theory found a foothold in the humanities early on, with work tied to the critique of literature and film, the interests enabled and umbrellaed by queer theory have grown to span work across the social sciences, particularly LGBT Studies and Gender Studies. Yet queer theory also holds its own identity separate and distanced from any one discipline (and thus its disciplining forces). Its relationship with sexualities or the lives of people who refuse to signify monolithically in sex and/or gender has enabled a broadening

¹⁷⁰ Stacy Holman Jones and Tony E. Adams, 'Autoethnography Is a Queer Method', in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 204.

¹⁷¹ Browne and Nash, *Queer Methods and Methodologies*, 9.

¹⁷² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor and Francis, 1994), 7.

¹⁷³ Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, vi.

of scholarship and its entrée into International Relations, broadly conceived. Differentiating between these interests in scholarship, Richter-Montpetit notes that LGBT Studies often centres LGBT human rights whereas Queer Theory 'is animated by a commitment to the radical contingency of the term "queer"'.¹⁷⁴ In doing so, Queer Theory has much to converse with that which may, at first, not appear to be based in sexualities. This is evident in tracing the evolution of the relationship between queer work and IR.

While scholars working in IR have used queer lenses or analysis for several decades, the 2010s saw a recognition and naming of such work in a 'queer turn'¹⁷⁵ and what has increasingly become known as Queer IR. Much of this has cohered around work by Cynthia Weber, who published her monograph *Queer International Relations* in 2016 and co-edited a forum in *International Studies Review* vol. 16, issue 4 (2014) with Laura Sjoberg. The work that hangs together as Queer IR is interested in a variety of subjects, from IR theory and knowledge¹⁷⁶, nationalism¹⁷⁷, intimacy¹⁷⁸, photos from Abu Ghraib¹⁷⁹, and the WPS

¹⁷⁴ Richter-Montpetit, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But Were Afraid to Ask', 223.

¹⁷⁵ For an excellent and succinct article on Queer IR, see: Richter-Montpetit, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But Were Afraid to Ask'.

¹⁷⁶ J. Samuel Barkin and Laura Sjoberg, 'The Queer Art of Failed IR?', *Alternatives* 45, no. 4 (1 November 2020): 167–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375421989572>; Cynthia Weber, 'Why Is There No Queer International Theory?', *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 1 (March 2015): 27–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066114524236>.

¹⁷⁷ Weber, *Queer International Relations*.

¹⁷⁸ V. Spike Peterson, 'Towards Queering the Globally Intimate', *Political Geography* 56 (1 January 2017): 114–16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.01.001>; V. Spike Peterson, 'Family Matters: How Queering the Intimate Queers the International', *International Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (December 2014): 604–8, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12185>; Peterson, 'Towards Queering the Globally Intimate'.

¹⁷⁹ Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Empire, Desire and Violence: A Queer Transnational Feminist Reading of the Prisoner "Abuse" in Abu Ghraib and the Question of "Gender Equality"', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (1 March 2007): 38–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740601066366>.

agenda¹⁸⁰, to the 'terrorist'¹⁸¹, the 'Afghan male'¹⁸², postcoloniality¹⁸³, borders¹⁸⁴, and failure¹⁸⁵. There has also been queer work on the military.¹⁸⁶ Surveying the field for the forum, Rahul Rao described two themes in Queer IR scholarship as first, that which is interested in sexuality, gender, rights, and international politics, and second, that which mobilises queer theory to 'illuminate aspects of international politics not immediately related to gender and sexuality'.¹⁸⁷ It is within the latter category that I imagine and position this project.

1.2. Why Queer(ing)?

To some point, the deessentialising work of queer approaches might appear difficult to discern from other poststructuralist scholarship. Put another way, it may be tempting to ask why this project has centred queer theory as opposed to, for example, feminist theory. It is, surely, not some kind of inevitability. It is also futile to insist that queer theory came before I began to engage with the problematic of the thesis. However, in clarifying 'why queer theory' I want to present two complementary explanations. The first relies on what

¹⁸⁰ Jamie J. Hagen, 'Queering Women, Peace and Security', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 92, no. 2 (2016): 313–32; Jamie J. Hagen, 'Queering Women, Peace and Security in Colombia', *Critical Studies on Security* 5, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 125–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2017.1294835>.

¹⁸¹ Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹⁸² Nivi Manchanda, 'Queering the Pashtun: Afghan Sexuality in the Homo-Nationalist Imaginary', *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2 January 2015): 130–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2014.974378>.

¹⁸³ Rahul Rao, *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality*, Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190865511.001.0001>.

¹⁸⁴ Laura Sjoberg, 'Queering the "Territorial Peace"? Queer Theory Conversing With Mainstream International Relations', *International Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (December 2014): 608–12, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12186>.

¹⁸⁵ Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11sn283>.

¹⁸⁶ Federica Caso, 'Sexing the Disabled Veteran: The Homoerotic Aesthetics of Militarism', *Critical Military Studies* 3, no. 3 (2 September 2017): 217–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2016.1184420>; Jesse Paul Crane-Seeber, 'Sexy Warriors: The Politics and Pleasures of Submission to the State', *Critical Military Studies* 2, no. 1–2 (3 May 2016): 41–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2016.1144402>.

¹⁸⁷ Rahul Rao, 'The State of "Queer IR"', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 2018): 141, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-4254531>.

sort of questions and subjects are centred in doing queer work. The second relies on reflexivity in thinking through how we as people and scholars are informed and inflected by our worlds and educations.

In taking a deconstructive approach to understand the power which anchors the civil-military binary, this project's analytical and theoretical thrust is intimately tied to understanding queer work as a 'deconstructive strategy'¹⁸⁸ and queer as 'a tool to analyse the construction of normativity'¹⁸⁹. I take seriously the act of queering, which I understand, drawing on Peterson, as ""making strange" what appears as "normal" or the "natural order of things"¹⁹⁰. In this, queer work offers something specific and distinct from other poststructuralist approaches, including feminist work, and in doing so is attuned to interrogating the practices and powers which constitute and secure particular 'truths', especially around identities. As Jagose wrote in 1996: 'Queer is not outside the magnetic field of identity. Like some post-modern architecture, it turns identity inside out, and displays its supports exoskeletally.'¹⁹¹ Put another way, 'queer theory (also) asks us to consider what 'truths' do—that is, it asks: "What gets to be constituted as "truth" and what are the material effects of this?"¹⁹² This project uses queer theory not in a disavowal of other approaches, but in acknowledgment of and gratitude toward a tradition of thought and theory moves made in queer work specifically.

To reflect on how I came to queer theory is the twin to considering how queer theory came to me. Only in retrospect can I appreciate how institutions and cultures of thought can influence scholarship, even very subtly. The earliest roots of this project can be traced to my undergraduate at Amherst College (2009-2013). The institution was and remains supportive of veterans, offering opportunities for non-traditional and transfer students who have served in the military. It is the setting for a character of Phil Klay in his short story collection *Redeployment*. Paul Rieckhoff, an alum and founder of Iraq and

¹⁸⁸ Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, 52.

¹⁸⁹ Jacek Kornak, 'Judith Butler's Queer Conceptual Politics', *Redescriptions* 18, no. 1 (November 2015): 71, <https://doi.org/10.7227/R.18.1.4>.

¹⁹⁰ Peterson, 'Towards Queering the Globally Intimate', 114. See also: Peterson, 'Family Matters', 604.

¹⁹¹ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 132.

¹⁹² Smith and Lee, 'What's Queer about Political Science?', 56.

Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), inaugurated my first year with a lecture on his war experiences and activism. In my academic transcript I find linkages to the study of war, culture, literature, memory, and suffering which twine together the threads I pick up in this project empirically.

Yet, in considering me and queer theory more deeply, I can only relay and reflect upon more facts I came across in my research. During my time at Amherst, I majored in English. I have often viewed my undergraduate degree as an oddity for a doctorate in International Relations, so I was stunned to come across strong links between queer theory and my alma mater, particularly its English department. It was there that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick taught her first lesbian and gay critical theory class in 1986.¹⁹³ While at Amherst I had the privilege of being supervised and taught for several years by Judith Frank, who was extremely patient in our fiction writing workshop. Frank, known for lesbian and gay fiction, was friends with Sedgwick and is mentioned in her essay 'Queer and Now'.¹⁹⁴ The good-to-think details continue: Biddy Martin, an interlocutor of Butler's, became president of Amherst in 2011; other important queer work has also been produced out of the Amherst College English Department by Michele Barale. In hindsight, my undergraduate education was heavily flavoured by poststructuralism and an openness towards queer thought and ways of seeing. In noting this educational history and experience, I do not mean to produce the centrality of queer theory to this work as an inevitability or a product of predetermination. Instead, I wish to remark on the formulation of ontological positions which form epistemologies and in turn shape methodology and method.

1.3. The Ethics of Queer Work

This project was energized by an emergent 'Queer IR' in the mid-2010s which spoke intimately to the issues and concerns of the problematique and the production of binaries, particularly the work of Cynthia Weber.¹⁹⁵ Like Weber, I draw on the work of Sedgwick in shaping my analytical approach detailed in this chapter and deployed across this thesis.

¹⁹³ Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Sedgwick, 12.

¹⁹⁵ Richter-Montpetit, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But Were Afraid to Ask', 226.

However, prior to developing the methodology of this project, it is imperative to engage with Weber's position on what I understand as the ethics of doing queer work.

In *Queer International Relations*, Weber is explicit about her commitments to queer and her refusals first to 'reduce "queer" to only that which is antinormative' and second, to 'disconnect queer from any consideration of sexes, genders, and sexualities and from those bodies that refuse/fail to signify monolithically.'¹⁹⁶ With this in mind, she describes a problematic encounter with another scholar, a 'white, heterosexual, cismale, poststructuralist IR professor' who, using Foucault, but failing to engage with sexuality, gender, or sex, claimed, "'My work is queer'"¹⁹⁷. Weber describes how she and 'another self-identified queer person and queer studies scholar' experienced discomfort and felt that the work was 'an appropriation of the term queer and of the thinking space that comes with it'¹⁹⁸. At length she outlines what is required, for her, to claim to do queer work:

I cannot claim to be doing queer work if I have no genuine interest in those who refuse/fail to signify monolithically in terms of sexes, genders, and sexualities...I cannot claim to be doing queer work if my evocation of the term queer closes down possibilities for critical thinking and practice in relation to nonmonolithic sexes, genders, and sexualities. I cannot claim to be doing queer work if I do not analyze how any evocation of the term queer is itself always made through a particular expression of power on behalf of some kind of intimate, national, and/or international politics.¹⁹⁹

Weber links the story of appropriative scholarship to Sedgwick's idea that 'what it takes—all it takes—to make the description "queer" a true one is the impulsion to use it in the first person' and argues: 'To me, this particular claim by Sedgwick expresses a naiveté about power relations. For not everyone uses queer in the first person in the same way, to empower the same 'truth'.... this is why I insist on linking queer to analyses of nonmonolithic expressions of sexes, genders, and sexualities.'²⁰⁰

Engaging with Weber's position here, I agree with the importance of doing queer work in a way which is non-reductive and non-appropriative. However, whilst appreciating

¹⁹⁶ Weber, *Queer International Relations*, 14.

¹⁹⁷ Weber, 15.

¹⁹⁸ Weber, 15.

¹⁹⁹ Weber, 16.

²⁰⁰ Weber, 15–16.

and analytically following Weber's own commitments in doing queer work, this project understands the ethics of queer work as including scholarship which does not situate sexualities at the centre of their analysis. While like Weber, I am wary of interpreting Sedgwick's claim regarding 'queer' and the first person too generously, in this project, I want to develop a method which engages with this idea seriously and deeply. I believe there are ways of working which can be informed by and contribute to queer theory and thought that draw to the fore questions of who can do queer work, what can be studied queerly, and how to do so responsibly. In the following section, I develop 'seeing queerly' as a method and tie it to these important questions. In doing so, I agree with Weber's overall pronouncement that there is no hard and fast regulation of who can and cannot 'do' queer IR and set about doing the work she recommends for people who use the word 'queer' to ask: 'On whose behalf am I deploying this term, and what are the practical political effects of my deployment? Also, how, in particular, does my deployment of queer affect those who refuse/fail to signify monolithically in relation to sexes, genders, and sexualities?'²⁰¹

2. Seeing Queerly as Method

Inspired by other work on queer methods²⁰², including Weber's 'queer intellectual curiosity'²⁰³, this section explores the contours of what it terms 'seeing queerly' as a research method. It anchors this practice in identifying and working from a queered position, which highlights the potential for contributions from queer scholars, broadly conceived. By 'queered position', I refer to Honeychurch's description:

A queered position requires an ontological shift comprehensively resistant in its exceptions to dominant normativity. A queering of standpoint in social research is a vigorous challenge to that which has constrained what may be known, who may be the knower, and how knowledge has come to be

²⁰¹ Weber, 17.

²⁰² Browne and Nash, *Queer Methods and Methodologies*.

²⁰³ Cynthia Weber, 'Queer Intellectual Curiosity as International Relations Method: Developing Queer International Relations Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks *', *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1 March 2016): 11–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12212>.

generated and circulated, ... [and] queers participate in positioning themselves through both authoring and authorizing experience.²⁰⁴

The section is oriented towards questions of the relationship between theory and method and understands them as consistent and continuous in this case. Engaging with Greenway's 'methodological anarchism', Heckert offers 'methodology as a practice of becoming-queer', which has, for them, 'involved continually learning to let go of borders: between theory and data, researcher and researched, hetero and homo, right and wrong.... This is never finished, accomplished, achieved – those favoured words in a society of control. Becoming queer is always in process – experienced only in the present, in presence'.²⁰⁵ It is within this sort of understanding of queer scholarship that 'seeing queerly' as method emerges.

Seeing queerly demands the acknowledgement and embrace of a queered position through reflexivity. This is in line with what Haritaworn describes as 'my queer sensibility, that hard-to-locate space in your gut which recognises certain rare timbres and laps them up and echoes them on'.²⁰⁶ Yet it takes up this queered position as fundamental in shaping ways of seeing, ways of researching. While not outrightly autoethnographic, seeing queerly is rooted in an understanding of the method as centring 'the politics of knowledge and experience'²⁰⁷ also important to (queer) autoethnography. The viability of seeing queerly rests upon the stance that particular ways of being and knowing in the world enable particular ways of doing research and that this particularity is valuable, especially when brought to queer work whose analytical power denaturalises the binaries amongst and against which queerness emerges. In this sense, seeing queerly grows out of other queer

²⁰⁴ Kenn Gardner Honeychurch, 'Researching Dissident Subjectivities: Queering the Grounds of Theory and Practice', *Harvard Educational Review* 66, no. 2 (8 February 2010): 342, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.66.2.322km3320m402551>.

²⁰⁵ Jamie Heckert, 'Intimacy with Strangers/Intimacy with Self: Queer Experiences of Social Research', in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 43.

²⁰⁶ Jin Haritaworn, 'Shifting Positionalities: Empirical Reflections on a Queer/Trans of Colour Methodology', *Sociological Research Online* 13, no. 1 (1 January 2008): 2, <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.1631>.

²⁰⁷ Holman Jones and Adams, 'Autoethnography Is a Queer Method', 199.

work which understands theorising as 'a social practice...' shaped as much by one's own 'participation in various social practices'²⁰⁸ as the writings of theorists or philosophers.

To bring 'seeing queerly' into focus as a method, the remainder of this section is structured around a series of questions which move through the ethical considerations of doing queer work, correctly highlighted by Weber. One, what are the ethical concerns around doing queer work? Two, do you have to be 'queer' to work with queer thought? Three, (how) can queer theory be brought to bear on non-sexual subjects, responsibly? And four, what might work from a queered position and 'seeing queerly' look like, as in the case of this project?

I understand the ethical concerns around doing queer work as those alluded to by Weber in her critique. As with any tradition, product, or concept which grows within and out of marginalised identities and experiences, 'queer' is at risk of appropriation, even with no ill-intent. In scholarship, ideas of how to engage with queer scholarship without appropriation revolve around questions of who is doing the research and what are they researching. In this sense, I follow researchers like Crane-Seeber who maintains that 'queer theory generates insights into fields of power relations beyond the immediate lives of queer people.'²⁰⁹ In undertaking the reflexive work of considering why I draw on queer theory, I hold space and responsibility as the person doing this research.

To transition to the second question – do you have to be 'queer' to engage with queer work – requires us to reflect on issues of identity, the policing of conceptual and disciplinary boundaries, and the potential for allyship. In short, I uphold that one does not need to be 'queer' to engage with queer work. Yet, I also acknowledge a caveat that queer thought is likely to resonate with and edify scholars and people who have, in some sense, experienced the world while signifying non-monolithically. This can look like many things, some outside the direct report of sexualities. In thinking through who queer affects, it is clear that the significance of the concept resonates beyond those who might identify as queer in terms of sexuality. Consistent with this, Dilley describes: 'anyone can find a queered position (although some might have a better vantage point than others) such a

²⁰⁸ Heckert, 'Intimacy with Strangers/Intimacy with Self: Queer Experiences of Social Research', 50.

²⁰⁹ Crane-Seeber, 'Sexy Warriors', 44.

position is not dependent upon one's sexual orientation or predilections, but rather upon one's ability to utilize the (dis)advantages of such a position.²¹⁰

Queer centres a refusal of closedness. In insisting on openness, it refutes any policing of boundaries which might dictate who can and cannot work with it in scholarship. Yet, with concerns around appropriative scholarship, there must be reflection on how allyship might look for queer theory.²¹¹ The openness of 'queer' is not to be taken lightly, lest the resultant work be extractive and exploitative, as seems the case with the example Weber gives. In opposition to this, what Weber anchors her interpretation and view on what queer work is hinges upon its subject of interest. Namely, it requires consideration of the power around and politics of sex, gender, and/or sexualities. This is certainly one way to limit and discourage appropriative scholarship. However, there is scholarship which claims to be queer which does not do this kind of work. It is to this strand of queer work which our third question attends.

While Weber's example portrays a poor way to do queer work which does not centre sex, gender, or sexuality, this project holds space for ways that queer theory might be brought to bear, responsibly, on non-sexual subjects. Broadly, in their edited volume on queer methods and methodologies, Browne and Nash assert that "'Queer research' can be any form of research positioned within conceptual frameworks that highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings and resulting power relations."²¹² In Sedgwick's words, this includes work which 'spins the term ['queer'] outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all.'²¹³ The possibility for such work is upheld by several scholars,²¹⁴ though the degree to which they must include (hidden) engagement with sexualities remains a point for discussion.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Patrick Dilley, 'Queer Theory: Under Construction', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 12, no. 5 (October 1999): 469, <https://doi.org/10.1080/095183999235890>.

²¹¹ For an example of such work on allyship, see: Meghana Nayak, 'Thinking About Queer International Relations' Allies', *International Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (1 December 2014): 615–22, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12188>.

²¹² Browne and Nash, *Queer Methods and Methodologies*, 4.

²¹³ Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 4.

²¹⁴ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 99; Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, vi.

²¹⁵ For example, Weber acknowledges Queer IR work which 'analyzes less obviously sexualized and queered IR figurations', see: Weber, 'Queer Intellectual Curiosity as International Relations Method', 12–13.

In affirming that work on non-sexuality-based subjects and binaries can be queer, this project looks to work which has questioned how queer work might evolve and how Queer IR might engage with queer theory on non-sexual topics of study. Here, I draw on Halperin's prediction that to renew the 'radical potential' of queer theory requires 'reinventing its capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not yet been thought.'²¹⁶ It is in this sense that I appreciate and conceptualise work in Queer IR which has been described as 'loosening queer theory's attachment to the sexual subject.'²¹⁷ However, it is critical to also understand such works' relation to queer. As Wilcox articulates, for Queer IR, 'the object of study is not necessarily the identities or individual sexual practices of particular individuals. Queer IR challenges heteronormative assumptions in IR theory by arguing that certain actors in global politics can be read as queer.'²¹⁸ This is the move that I seek to emulate in queering civil-military relations in this chapter and project.

2.1. From this Queered Position

To highlight what seeing queerly as a method translates to practically, I reflect on how my queered position has influenced the research in this project. I understand my queered position on several levels, all based in matters of identities in which I cannot signify monolithically. I was born in South Korea and transracially adopted to the United States, growing up and into a name which reads as 'white' against a face which does not. I have been thought of and treated me as a foreigner in my own country. Koreans read me as Korean-but-not-Korean. I am a naturalised US citizen who has lived in the UK since 2013, long enough that my vocabulary, mannerisms, and cultural lexicon have been permanently altered. I have been asked, with my changeable accent, if I went to an international school. I am married to a now-veteran, but once was a Military Wife, inflected by the American and/or British concepts of what that meant. Within that, I have occupied the fringes of the military institution and spaces: staying on base, visiting and sitting through visitor nuclear

²¹⁶ Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', 343.

²¹⁷ David L. Eng and Jasbir K. Puar, 'Left of Queer', *Social Text* 38, no. 4 (1 December 2020): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-8680414>.

²¹⁸ Lauren Wilcox, 'Queer Theory and the "Proper Objects" of International Relations', *International Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (1 December 2014): 613, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12187>.

safety orientations at HMNB Clyde (Faslane), and spending weekends receiving the Scottish Highlands or Dartmoor for military exercises. I too can profit from military discounts when purchasing anything from running shoes to a car. Yet, as I noted in the introduction to this project, I have lived this identity alongside and enmeshed with that of a researcher working in what can be a pro-peace or anti-militarism area of study. While not 'military' strictly, I did not, in my years as a military partner while writing this project, feel entirely 'civil' either.

The conflicts and snags in identities, which reinscribe a sense of not belonging, constitute my queered position from which I see queerly, attuned to seek out and think with other queer resonances. This practice translates to seeing queerly as method and the remainder of this section will highlight how this queered position has shaped the actual work and materials of the project. In this sense, this section links the work of this thesis with the epistemological commitments that accompany the queered position I embody, particularly that knowledge is produced socially and that I, as researcher and knower, am also produced discursively. From this queered position and subjectivity, I inhabit not only multiple subject-positions, but also the and/or of them.

Methodology, Method, and Empirical Focus

In this project, my queered position greatly informed the decision to look at the US and/or UK in a distinctly non-comparative manner. This approach is taken not to supplant work done on national cultures and geographies, but rather to complement it. It believes that there are products and meanings which travel and circulate between cultures. To hold a space for empirical analysis beyond the national level, as this project does in looking to the 'anglosphere' and the US and/or UK, will empower a stronger account of how these figures are produced and resonate in meaning. Such an analysis also speaks to the increasingly interconnected world in which English-language cultural products, particularly films and texts, are circulated globally. 'Soldier' or 'military' holds a meaning that is nation-specific and/or nation-agnostic. By this I mean that the image or concept holds a meaning that is *not* anchored in a particular geography, alongside the meaning which resonates along lines of the specific relationship between a citizen and their national military force. It is with this doubly-coded and non-monolithic understanding of meaning that this project understands the figures of 'civil' and 'military' to be produced in nationally-grounded

and/or ungrounded ways. So, to analyse the US and/or UK is to find a way to capture this duality.

Critically, looking at the US and/or UK is not asserting that the two CMR cultures are the same. However, beyond the shared language there are commonalities in the contemporary CMR landscape which support the approach this project takes. For both countries the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were the defining military conflict of the early twenty-first century. As allies with common history, the two are often described as having a 'special relationship' which, militarily, equates to high levels of interoperability and interaction. Both nations have struggled with legacies of trauma and allegations of misconduct with military operations after World War II, including the Vietnam and Korean Wars and The Troubles, which, being within living memory continue to inflect meanings in CMR. Critically, while both have had forms of compulsory service in the past, they operate presently as all-volunteer forces. Both offer educational opportunities in exchange for or complementary to serving in the military. Looking at the contemporary era, many similarities crop up in the civil-military space as well, including targeted hiring programmes for veterans starting new careers and initiatives like the Invictus Games for wounded, injured, and sick soldiers and veterans.

At the same time, it is useful to acknowledge and highlight key differences between the UK and US, including provisions for veterans healthcare²¹⁹, the significance of the military and military service in politics and for politicians²²⁰, laws around gun ownership²²¹,

²¹⁹ In the United States, this is administrated and delivered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which is intended as a one-stop portal to learn about and make use of benefits for soldiers, veterans, and dependents. This functions in terms of healthcare in the context of the United States' privatised healthcare system in contrast to the UK's National Health Service. In the UK, a veteran receives healthcare through their local NHS trust.

²²⁰ Within commentary on American politics, the 'military vote' appears as a topic for discussion. The military service of candidates is often of interest, particularly for presidential hopefuls and other high-profile politicians.

²²¹ Laws vary state to state, but the right to keep and bear arms was established and encoded in the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. What this means in the contemporary era is a point of continuous debate. Laws which regulate the possession and purchase of firearms in the UK are much stricter, with several prohibited classes of weapons.

and the form and shape of various military branches²²². This project's focus on US and/or UK does not dismiss these differences but thinks in a space that asks what scholarship might be produced through an approach which takes their entangled cultural elements alongside their differences. This practice is shaped by an understanding and valuing of the queer space of *and/or*. It acknowledges the analytical limitations of such an approach and forgoes deeper, historical situatedness or thicker cultural description and its rewards. It does so to hold space for what queer work might be able to tell us about subjects which are often approached comparatively.

Seeing queerly also shapes other decisions around the project's language, conceptual framing, and selection of material. There are moments in this project in which I describe an object or subject as 'queer' or 'queered'²²³. What is meant by this is not an argument that they *are* queer, essentially, nor that they *should* be viewed as queer. Rather, this is the method of seeing queerly in process. Figures, subjects, objects and relationships are 'queered' through this process which this project upholds as theoretically and conceptually useful for denaturalizing the civil-military binary. To move from 'queer' as a passive adjective toward 'queer' as an action ('to queer'/'queered') highlights the analytical process of the project and method.

In looking at empirical materials, the interests and efforts of this project were not to map the contours of CMR to generate a better understanding. Rather, in looking at where and how civil-military relations are produced, maintained, and reproduced, the strengths of seeing queerly lay in identifying dissonant figures and behaviours, which problematise the way CMR is understood, often as a binary. These figures and behaviours, through being queered in this analysis, might be understood as not signifying monolithically in the binary, and so in a deconstructive manner enable an analytical focus on how and why 'civil' and 'military' are constructed and maintained in a binary. Given, then, the wide array of CMR

²²² With enormous differences in population between the US and UK, it is unsurprising that their militaries follow suit. However even the same 'type' of military branch can vary substantially in composition and purpose. One example is the United States Marines Corps (USMC) and the British Royal Marines, which share a name but diverge in use and form. While the USMC is a fully self-contained fighting force of 200,000, encompassing everything from Special Forces to dentists, the Royal Marines are a specialist force of 7,000 commandos.

²²³ While efforts have been made to switch most of these usages of 'queer' to the clearer 'queered', a few errors may remain.

sites and activities, the choice to look at recognition, recovery, and reproduction stems from a nexus of my ontological, epistemological, methodological, and methods-related commitments and limitations. Working from a queered position relies upon a relationship between the knower and the known in which the knower occupies a position which allows closeness and/or distance, familiarity and/or strangeness. Leaning into this way of knowing has framed both my material selection and organisation.

This queer method also shapes the empirical focus and materials selection of the project. While there are many individuals, films, charities, and organisations which operate in CMR activities and cultural work, the analytical focus of this project highlights materials and cases which both illustrate the phenomena it's interested in and challenge the binary it's denaturalizing. While the project was designed to support fieldwork and interviews (and would have benefitted greatly from that), the pandemic forced a pivot toward materials which could be accessed online, a thread which carries across the empirical chapters. While the work on reproduction had already been completed, recognition and recovery grew out of what materials were available and central to the cultural work of CMR. The three types of work dominated US/UK discourse around the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Military medals and awards, imposter/poser soldiers, military charities and initiatives, and popular books and films cover a wide swathe of how 'military' (and thus, I would argue, 'civil') came to be 'known' in the post-9/11 era. Together they demonstrate that this cultural work is spread widely and engages people and organisations from across society. This method of selection links together the highest military honours, major military charities, and films and books which are analysed in subsequent chapters. In selecting the Invictus Games Foundation or *American Sniper*, I focused on prominent CMR actors, products, and organisations in the post-9/11 era in the US and UK, which when seen queerly might demonstrate that the civil-military binary and its figurations exist at the very centre of CMR popularly conceived of and produced.

In method, seeing queerly translates to reading closely and highlighting essential details for analysis that might be otherwise escape notice. While I take an inductive approach to research, seeing queerly recognises queer resonances, in this case against the civil-military binary. As an example, for *Chapter 5*, I researched military charities generally to gain a sense of their self-presentation and conceptualisation, but also entered with the

experience of having volunteered for SSAFA's Bereavement Support Groups and a wariness of some marketing and messaging which stemmed from my experience as a military partner interacting with some of them. Thus, in reading the landscape of military charities, I was particularly attuned to the power of language and the relations it configures. The themes I identify in the naming and self-presentation of military charities are based in the relations they produce and emerged from a general survey of the landscape, seen queerly.

'Military' as Male: Gender and a Limitation of this Project

Considering the project and the materials it engages with in seeing queerly, it is imperative to reflect on where women are and are not in this narrative and why this may be a limitation of the method within this project. While there are glimpses of women, in references to spouses, the overt 'Military Wife' research category, and participants in the Invictus Games, women are largely absent(ed) in engaging with military medals, stolen valour and veteran-writers. The empirical stuff of this project focuses on cases, organisations, and examples which are good-to-think and in the thick of cultural work. They are central to it. The intention and strength of seeing queerly was to highlight and subvert the fragility of the civil-military binary through these individuals and activities which occupy substantial space in the binary. However, this process of selecting materials did not prioritise or account for gender diversity. In never intending to be representative, the few sustained cases of writers or intrigue around military medals do not involve women. While there are some structural factors at play – women are underrepresented in the military generally and (in respect to military medals) some roles, particularly combat and teeth arms, remain effectively all-male – it is critical to reflect on this project's lack of representation of 'military' women.

The project, in analysing the cultural work, products, and persons of CMR, also reproduces the 'military' as male because this is what is overwhelmingly produced socially. As Caso notes, 'the aesthetics of militarism banks on the stereotype of the white male soldier.'²²⁴ Certainly, many of the subcultures and phenomena I examine are heavily, sometimes apparently exclusively, male. While women do exist in these spaces and worlds,

²²⁴ Caso, 'Sexing the Disabled Veteran', 218.

in seeing queerly, I actively prioritised ones which highlighted different dimensions of a particular phenomenon over a concerted effort for diversity. While I do stand by the cases and individuals selected here, it is hard to balance this unintentional absenting against a perhaps normative and personal discomfort with the complicity of this project in doing so. I do not believe that this is a damning limitation for seeing queerly as a method but it signals a need for growing the method to include practices which invite participation and shared learning, which were not available due to the pandemic. I will not resolve this tension within this work (nor do I think it can be so long as 'military' is produced as male), but these questions should continue to be asked in reflecting on the production of knowledge and in the reading of this thesis.

Knowledge Production and Research Practices

Reflecting on seeing queerly as method requires further attention to the production of knowledge and reductive and 'extractive' research practices, which benefit the researcher and neglect the people and communities which are researched. Gaudry links this with academia and publishing, which produce research for certain audiences, often excluding the participants themselves.²²⁵ He notes that in this kind of extractive scholarship 'the context, values, and *on-the ground* struggles of the people and communities that provide information and insight to the researcher' are lost.²²⁶ These concerns around extractive scholarship have sprouted discussion and debate in IR about how scholars can lessen the violences of scholarship, when considering the people and communities who are damaged or abandoned in extractive practices. Critical scholarship on the military and CMS are attentive to the challenges and ethical concerns of doing research with and on the military, with calls for considering research methods and knowledge production.²²⁷ Articles

²²⁵ Adam J. P. Gaudry, 'Insurgent Research', *Wicazo Sa Review* 26, no. 1 (2011): 113, <https://doi.org/10.5749/wicazosareview.26.1.0113>.

²²⁶ Gaudry, 113.

²²⁷ Caddick, Cooper, and Smith, 'Reflections on Being a Civilian Researcher in an Ex-Military World'; Sarah Bulmer and David Jackson, '"You Do Not Live in My Skin": Embodiment, Voice, and the Veteran', *Critical Military Studies* 2, no. 1–2 (3 May 2016): 25–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2015.1118799>; Baker et al., 'Encounters with the Military'; Rachel Woodward et al., 'The Possibilities and Limits of Impact and Engagement in Research on Military

feature explicit engagement with these issues as part of their own methods sections in publications, often in a critical and reflexive mode.²²⁸ This reflects the common grounding shared by many of the researchers and myself that 'knowledge is produced in specific social circumstances'²²⁹ and that 'social researchers are necessarily embedded in their work'²³⁰. The remainder of this section seeks to grapple with questions around responsible research practices and knowledge production in seeing queerly. As much of the concerns within CMS converge around working with veterans and the communities they belong to, this will be highlighted in the discussion. Though this project works with 'military' rather than 'veteran' explicitly, it does incorporate experiences of ex-servicemembers which warrants this attention.

I agree with the critical perspective expressed by Welland (among others) that work on war often approaches war abstractly and without ample attention to the people involved.²³¹ Such a tendency resonates with Victoria Basham's reflection that 'a lot of work in IR....seems somehow devoid of people'²³² These critiques contextualise work in CMS and IR, including by Welland, which study the experience of war as embodied, everyday, and affective and, in doing so, restore and centre people.²³³ Similar 'embodied' approaches have been taken by a number of scholars to studying war and the military.²³⁴ This project

Institutions', *Area 52*, no. 3 (September 2020): 505–13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12629>; Swati Parashar, 'What Wars and "War Bodies" Know about International Relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 4 (1 December 2013): 615–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.837429>; Christine Sylvester, 'War Experiences/War Practices/War Theory', *Millennium* 40, no. 3 (1 June 2012): 483–503, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829812442211>.

²²⁸ As in, for example: Julia Welland, 'Feeling and Militarism at Ms Veteran America', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23, no. 1 (1 January 2021): 58–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2020.1858719>.

²²⁹ Higate and Cameron, 'Reflexivity and Researching the Military', 220.

²³⁰ Higate and Cameron, 223.

²³¹ Julia Welland, 'Joy and War: Reading Pleasure in Wartime Experiences', *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (July 2018): 438–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210518000050>.

²³² Baker et al., 'Encounters with the Military', 141.

²³³ Welland, 'Joy and War', 438–39.

²³⁴ Amanda Chisholm and Joanna Tidy, 'Beyond the Hegemonic in the Study of Militaries, Masculinities, and War', *Critical Military Studies* 3, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 99–102, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1328182>; Marsha Henry, 'Problematizing Military Masculinity, Intersectionality and Male Vulnerability in Feminist Critical Military Studies', *Critical*

highly values this work and, while it does not take an embodied approach itself, joins in efforts to add people and the everyday into how we think about and produce knowledge around the military and war.

Looking further to CMS highlights that even work which includes people can be criticized for *how* the research treats, represents, and does or does not contribute to the lived experiences of the people studied. Caddick, Cooper and Smith note that 'veterans are often talked *for* and *about* by various interested parties (e.g. charities, academics, media, policymakers) proclaiming to speak on their behalf and thus, potentially, offering up *secondhand truths* about their lives.'²³⁵ Similarly, Bulmer and Jackson express being 'troubled' by representations of 'the veteran' which objectify them, linking their frustrations with the limitations of academic practice.²³⁶ Such objectification, which Schrader has criticized as failing to recognise veterans as subjects and political agents,²³⁷ can further been understood as 'one of a series of violences'²³⁸ against veterans, highlighting the consequences of this kind of research practice. Thus, to draw together other insights from CMS, scholarship (regardless of intention) may participate in producing and circulating archetypes of hero and victim,²³⁹ attention to the 'teeth'²⁴⁰ to the exclusion of the 'tail' of

Military Studies 3, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 182–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1325140>; Bulmer and Jackson, '"You Do Not Live in My Skin"'; Kevin McSorley, ed., *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203081419>.

²³⁵ Caddick, Cooper, and Smith, 'Reflections on Being a Civilian Researcher in an Ex-Military World', 98.

²³⁶ Bulmer and Jackson, '"You Do Not Live in My Skin"', 26.

²³⁷ Benjamin Schrader, 'The Affect of Veteran Activism', *Critical Military Studies* 5, no. 1 (2 January 2019): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1334300>.

²³⁸ Aggie Hirst, '"Videogames Saved My Life": Everyday Resistance and Ludic Recovery among US Military Veterans', *International Political Sociology* 15, no. 4 (9 November 2021): 486, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olab018>.

²³⁹ Sarah Bulmer and Maya Eichler, 'Unmaking Militarized Masculinity: Veterans and the Project of Military-to-Civilian Transition', *Critical Military Studies* 3, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 168, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2017.1320055>.

²⁴⁰ The 'teeth' arms are those who engage directly with the enemy. While Tidy (see note below) uses the term 'tail' for the opposite, others use the term 'REMF' (Rear Echelon Mother Fucker). In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, 'FOBBIT' a portmanteau of 'FOB' (Forward Operating Base) and 'hobbit', also came into circulation. Both are used with pejorative humour.

the military,²⁴¹ and an overemphasis on PTSD²⁴². To prevent and resist this, authors call for working directly with veterans and 'to explore and to listen carefully to veterans' perspectives of war²⁴³ as well as consider veterans as agents²⁴⁴ rather than objects. Drawing this together with methodology, it is unsurprising that many scholars use interviews²⁴⁵ and ethnography²⁴⁶, which offer opportunities for thick and individual engagement with veterans in a way which resists essentialisation or reductivism.

Though this project agrees with these critiques of how knowledge about the military and war are produced, in seeing queerly, it uses methods which do not (in this thesis) directly engage with 'military' and/or 'civil' individuals. In doing so, I offer the following discussion of this project against the background of the above engagement with extractive research and studying the military. I structure my reflections around three points: the researcher-researched relationship, the flows of information in/out of the project, and the responsibilities to the communities that this research focuses on. These reflections are offered not to answer or resolve and thus foreclose. Rather they think through and with these complex questions around researching the military with reference to the method and approach of this project.

In analysing literature which engages with the researcher-researched dynamic, my queer sensibility is piqued. Much of the critical reflexivity modelled by various authors

²⁴¹ Joanna Tidy, 'The Gender Politics of "Ground Truth" in the Military Dissent Movement: The Power and Limits of Authenticity Claims Regarding War', *International Political Sociology* 10, no. 2 (1 June 2016): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olw003>.

²⁴² Schrader, 'The Affect of Veteran Activism', 65; Shir Daphna-Tekoah and Ayelet Harel-Shalev, 'The Politics of Trauma Studies: What Can We Learn From Women Combatants' Experiences of Traumatic Events in Conflict Zones?', *Political Psychology* 38, no. 6 (2017): 952; Bulmer and Jackson, '"You Do Not Live in My Skin".

²⁴³ 'Beyond Binaries: Analysing Violent State Actors in Critical Studies', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 10, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2017.1329783>.

²⁴⁴ Hirst, '"Videogames Saved My Life"', 488.

²⁴⁵ Schrader, 'The Affect of Veteran Activism'; Aggie Hirst, 'Wargames Resurgent: The Hyperrealities of Military Gaming from Recruitment to Rehabilitation (Forthcoming)', *International Studies Quarterly*, 2022; Ayelet Harel-Shalev et al., 'Drawing (on) Women's Military Experiences and Narratives – Israeli Women Soldiers' Challenges in the Military Environment', *Gender, Place & Culture* 24, no. 4 (3 April 2017): 499–514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2016.1277189>.

²⁴⁶ Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Wool, *After War*; MacLeish, *Making War at Fort Hood*; Ken MacLeish, 'Churn: Mobilization–Demobilization and the Fungibility of American Military Life', *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 2–3 (1 April 2020): 194–210, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619889469>.

pertains to their own position in the insider-outsider relationship, which often maps directly onto 'civil' and 'military'. The progression of this project has required continual work to understand myself and my work within the researcher-researched framework, which operates outside the possibility for so-called scholarly objectivity. In moments I have shied away from speaking about my work with people I know in the military, for fear of exploiting them. Never did I want friends or my partner to feel as if they were being 'studied'. Yet I was made or 'disciplined' to make sense in academic settings when I revealed I had a military connection. I offered some of these reflections in a conference paper at ISA 2018, where I spoke to the tension in knowledge production and the squeeze of identities that comes with being a researcher and part of the community that you research. Since my partner left the military, I have also volunteered to be 'researched' as a military spouse, incorporating this experience in my growing consciousness of my position within this complex and queer matrix of relations.

Returning to extractive research, it becomes crucial to think about the flows of information in and out of the project. Here, I must acknowledge that this project, like others, has been significantly shaped by the pandemic, which affected the flow of information into it. Notably, it has produced an absence within this project which sits pointedly against the above recommendations from CMS literature: a lack of interviews and fieldwork. Though Basham mentions that 'fieldwork is still somewhat of an anomaly in IR'²⁴⁷, working and being in and with the military community with felt urgent for this project in a way that resonates with the concerns around studying the military. This urge was difficult to reconcile with a pandemic world which shrunk from unfamiliar human contact. Earlier versions of this project contained ideas for participatory methods, including Veterans Town Halls, which could encourage mutual learning. However, delivering this project to the criteria and timeline required rethinking what empirical material I could access to analyse the binarization of 'civil' and 'military' and the power which naturalises it. In focusing on cultural work (product and activities) which maintain 'civil' and 'military' as a binary, I join with scholarship on the military which does not centre interviews, including that of Dyvik

²⁴⁷ Baker et al., 'Encounters with the Military', 141.

and Welland, who analyse a web archive of military tattoos.²⁴⁸ Where possible, I have critically incorporated stories and voices of servicemembers and veterans, but acknowledge that these are refracted through additional lenses of media, art, and space.

Considering the reverse flow of information involves questions of how this project has been written up and will be shared. As others have noted, the publication of research and other academic practices of communication 'require a particular academic voice'.²⁴⁹ Though difficult to resist, I have always approached writing with an emphasis on accessibility, enjoyment, and clarity. My imagined-reader, I realise upon reflection, is often not only a non-expert academic, but a non-expert generally. It is difficult to achieve this against the form of the doctoral dissertation, but it is something I believe is better to fail, trying in than not attempt at all.

The outflow of information also involves who accesses and benefits from it. Incorporating this with considering my responsibilities to the military community, I want to trouble this idea and boundary-ing of the community I research as separate from me, the researcher. This project grew from a sense that the 'civil' and 'military' were produced as profoundly out of touch with each other, something which my queer positionality highlighted. As a queered position allows, the 'military' community is one that I strongly identify with and feel a sense of belonging to. Here, researcher-positions like that of the 'critical friend'²⁵⁰ are unavailable to me: I am already too close, too inside the 'military' to have this distance. It is more difficult to identify my responsibilities to the community I have researched because I am some part of it. This is distinct from a claim to 'understand' or 'know' the military, which I could no more claim some sort of mastery over than any other identity category I belong to. However, this question can be asked more easily with reference to the veterans community, from which I have more distance.

Here, my responsibility spans two related lines of enquiry: is this community an audience for this research and how might my research help? To the first, I answer yes. I am,

²⁴⁸ Synne L. Dyvik and Julia Welland, 'War Ink: Sense-Making and Curating War through Military Tattoos', *International Political Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1 December 2018): 346–61, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/oly018>.

²⁴⁹ Bulmer and Jackson, '"You Do Not Live in My Skin"', 30.

²⁵⁰ Woodward et al., 'The Possibilities and Limits of Impact and Engagement in Research on Military Institutions', 507.

oddly, at the phase when people, including veterans, have begun to ask to read this project. I look forward to their feedback and am happy to make it available to them. I do want to engage the veterans community more formally, as well, and I have developed plans for speaking with corporate employee resource groups (now 'transitioned' to civilian employment). I also will seek out workshops and events with academic and non-academic participants. In thinking about theoretical moves this project makes, I have considered how members of the 'military' might object to the language and theory of 'queer' developed in this chapter. However, I believe that these ideas can be made accessible, given a burgeoning awareness (though not necessarily acceptance) of LGBT and gender-based concepts and issues. To the second line of enquiry, I am eager to engage on these ideas to better understand how this project and following research might help the communities it considers. But without having done this outreach and mutual learning work, it seems that pronouncing what *my* scholarship can do for the 'researched' community would only reproduce elements of extractive research practice which the project has tried to resist in its method of seeing queerly.

3. Figural Economy: Commodification of CMR

With these tools and methods in mind, the civil-military identity binary comes into focus as something given form through action. In the same way that the world may treat a person differently for gender identity, age, or (dis)ability, the identities of either civil or military (thus a binary) structure social relations. There are military/veteran employee resource groups (ERGs), which parallel work done in other ERGs dedicated to more thought-of workplace minority identities including women or Black employees. A military ID is a gateway to discounts on everything from sushi to legal services for divorce, airport lounge access, and tickets to pop concerts. Some of these discounts are extended to military spouses and families as well. Even the very calendar annualizes opportunities for the performed salience of the civil-military identity binary: who does what on Memorial Day/Veterans Day/Remembrance Day? Who wears a poppy and why? The key point is that common social practices exist which encode the civil-military identity binary with stakes and value. Who qualifies or is identified or indeed identifies themselves as military or civil

matters for these interactions. That they do is conspicuous, for it is difficult to think of another professional or vocational affiliation which operates similarly.

In reflecting upon the rise of 'the gender object of choice' (homo/heterosexuality) as the dimension of 'genital activity' which has become 'sexual orientation', Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick illuminates a number of other possible dimensions including preferences for acts or numbers of participants which one can imagine being included under the umbrella of 'sexual orientation'.²⁵¹ Sedgwick's illumination of the constructedness of the term 'sexual orientation' and its alignment with homo/heterosexuality (above other options) mirrors the thinking I bring to the civil-military identity binary. If being in the military were a mere career or profession, then one might expect similar lines to be drawn around other jobs. We might see tendencies to parcel off the population into groups: people who are educators or athletes or public/civil servants and people who aren't. But this isn't the case. These relationships and binaries are not set up because they are not productive. What use is there to marking out who does one type of work for society (even on the behalf of all those in the society) in these cases? This line of reasoning indicates an understanding of the civil-military identity binary as constructed and unusual, which leads us to question: what about the 'military' is so special or different that it enables a structuring of social relations about who is and who isn't a part of it? Why the 'military' and not another profession or form of service? Thinking laterally, a corollary might be the healthcare profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. Frameworks of risk and essential labour altered the calculus of importance in separating out healthcare workers as a valuable professional and social category to be honoured, though many would prefer political solidarity to applause.

In both cases, relations of debt are formed around a sentimentalisation of the profession which elevates and frames work in the language of gift and sacrifice. This conceptualization, which immediately separates society into *those who are* and *are not* soldiers/healthcare professionals, maintains the salience of these binary relations on the interpersonal level. Pressed into action, *those who are not* may revert to gratitude acts which miss the mark. One might thus expect the salience of the civil-military identity binary

²⁵¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, Updated with a new preface (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1990), 8.

to only function in times of conflict when sacrifice and risk become realities rather than hypotheticals. However, the civil-military binary is doubly strange for its omnipresence. As the remainder of this section develops, the binary is supported by a stickiness around particular figurations of 'civil' and 'military' which appeal because of the clarity they offer amidst the anxiety of indebtedness and the military as a figure of unease.

The strangeness of the civil-military binary teases out the question: if the binary is so strange and so muddied, then *how does it persist?* This thesis structures the answer to this question by conceptualizing and analysing two figurations of the 'military' as 'hero' and 'victim', which dominate and structure contemporary CMR. It is the social relations that are templated by these figurations which naturalise a civil-military identity binary.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to laying out the framework with which this thesis interrogates *how* the civil-military binary persists, based in the idea that the civil-military binary is continually maintained through a variety of cultural work. I conceive of this cultural work through the framework of an economy which operates as an interlinked system of production, distribution, and consumption. However, whereas the most familiar sort of economy concerns itself with wealth, I argue that the CMR economy trades in figurations. Developing Auerbach's figural interpretation, Haraway defines 'figurations' as 'performative images that can be inhabited'²⁵² and figures as 'fictions that collect up the people in a story that tends to fulfilment'²⁵³.

In this thesis, I assert that the dominant figures circulating in the CMR economy are that of *hero and/or victim and saved and/or saviour*. While these figures are certainly tropic, I turn to Auerbach for his distinguishing between tropes and figures. He writes:

...trope is the more restricted concept, referring to the use of words and phrases in a sense other than literal; figure, on the other hand, is a form of discourse which deviates from the normal and most obvious usage. The aim of a figure is not, as in all tropes, to substitute words for other words... Basically all discourse is a forming, a figure, but the word is employed only for formations that are particularly developed in a poetic or rhetorical sense²⁵⁴

²⁵² Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse*, 11.

²⁵³ Haraway, 44.

²⁵⁴ Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, vol. 9, *Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 25–26.

In the case of CMR, this discourse is developed and circulated through an economy, whose figures configure and constitute essentialised relations. These figures and the relational dynamics they produce maintain the civil/military binary. What then is the aforementioned 'stuff' through which these figures are produced?

Specifically, this analysis looks to read valour, forces charities, and war writing as CMR commodities. While capitalism gives a template of producers and consumers which can be roughly mapped onto this commodification and figural economy, this queered analysis understands the transactional parties and roles of producer and consumer as non-binary: the consumer of today is the producer of tomorrow. Capitalism, through spectacle, tokens, and mass consumerism, enables these transformations. The Invictus Games sells tickets. Help for Heroes sells sweatshirts. Some war writing sells the Real, at the cost of the truth. And the consumer reads the book, and goes to the event, and takes home a sweatshirt and makes sense of it all and goes about their political, personal life, voting, and thinking, and socialising their meanings into the world. It is through this cultural work, this continual recognition, recovery, and reproduction, that commodification becomes the partner of the reification of the CMR binary.

If culture is the place where meanings are forged, shared, and shaped, then commodification is the process through which the binary is essentialized. Here I draw on Barthes' understanding of semiology and myth as a meta-language. Building on Saussure, Barthes' additional level of analysis provides a richer and more complex reading of languages (understood by both him and I to exceed linguistic languages and include discourse, media, popular culture, etc.). While Saussure's original semiology operated on the level of language to explore the relationship between signifier, signified, and sign, Barthes adds myth as a meta-language (Figure 1), operating in a dialectic way which conceives of the original sign as both meaning and, as part of a second level of analysis: form. As form, the original sign takes the place of signifier and corresponds with a new signified (or 'concept') in a new sign, called 'signification.'

[This diagram, which maps Barthes' explanation of myth as meta-language, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation or individual.]

Figure 1. Barthes' diagram of myth as meta-language²⁵⁵

Barthes recognises myth as a 'language'²⁵⁶ and a 'system of communication'²⁵⁷ which, while having a historical foundation, 'transforms history into nature'²⁵⁸. This deprivation of history is specific and sits at the heart of the puzzle about why contemporary CMR has become reified into behavioural patterns based in figurations of the hero/saved and victim/saviour.

As Barthes writes:

...myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made. The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences.²⁵⁹

I assert that commodities in the figural economy of CMR operate symbiotically with myth. Significations of the commodities serve to strengthen the myth with which other significations are created. With myth operating as a meta-language, the tools with which people 'read' and consume the 'texts' are both products of and productive of essentialisation.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I focus on sites of conceptual reification and maintenance for the figurations of 'civil' and 'military,' blending Donna Haraway's interpretation of figuration (which, in turn, draws of Auerbach's *figura*²⁶⁰) with Stuart Hall's cultural theories of representation and communication. These sites — recognition, recovery, and reproduction — are identified as types of cultural work, which together join in a process of myth and binary generation and maintenance. The figural economy of CMR maintains this binary through creating essentialized representations. These representations take the form of figures, who through their tropic power act performatively to configure patterns of relations.

²⁵⁵ Adapted from: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York, NY: The Noonday Press - Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972), 113.

²⁵⁶ Barthes, 10.

²⁵⁷ Barthes, 107.

²⁵⁸ Barthes, 128.

²⁵⁹ Barthes, 142.

²⁶⁰ Auerbach, 'Figura'.

Both these figures and the relations they template are fictions: they differ from the reality, accuracy, and nuance of the strict truth. But the narratives that animate the fictions enable a sense of resolution, a nod to Auerbach's fulfilment arc which powers the Western Christian semiotics of figural interpretation²⁶¹. This resolution is made possible by the relief which encompasses the configured relations. These relations, which stem from the figurations, resolve the military as a figure of unease. The military is made to signify within a binary, which locates the responsibilities of the civil and military as co-dependent opposites.

I focus on two prevalent and dominant figurations of the military as the hero and the victim, character tropes which are explored in more detail in the following sub-section. As figures rooted in myth, literature, and culture, both are accompanied by narratives which, in shaping their civil counterpart, resolve in comfortable and familiar expected behaviours. If the military is figured as 'hero', then the will to knowledge of it as 'hero' configures the civil as 'saved.' If the military is figured as 'victim', then the will to knowledge of it as 'victim' configures the civil as 'saviour.' However, since the 'hero' and 'victim' are figures and thus 'fictions' then it is necessary to denaturalise and uncover the processes through which they are created. This theory identifies what it terms 'instrumental heroization' and 'instrumental victimization' as the processes in which 'hero' and 'victim' are inscribed. In using the term 'instrumental,' this theory attributes the impetus to heroize or victimize to a pressure to resolve the unease in CMR which stems from framing military service within a narrative of service, gift, and indebtedness. Both processes offer an opportunity to fulfill the social dynamics of this relationship in fictions which appear to address debt and thus relieve the unease. However, as with the figures, the relations are also a kind of fiction, and the danger of this figural economy lies in favouring the impression of resolution over genuine engagement.

3.1. The Hero and The Victim

Both the 'hero' and the 'victim' are familiar character tropes which have been widely used across disciplines. The terms, and moreover the concepts, of the hero and victim can

²⁶¹ Auerbach, 53. Also: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R Trask, Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 73–74, <https://hdl-handle-net.gate3.library.lse.ac.uk/2027/heb.09353>.

be traced to literature and drama, with contemporary definitions which hearken back to Classical mythology. At first glance, the 'hero' and the 'victim' read as clumsy opposites. One active, the other passive. One to be praised, the other pitied. While it's clear at second glance that more accurate opposites would be something like 'villain' and 'perpetrator', the conceptual tendency toward a binarism of hero/victim remains active.

Scholarship on the military and veterans often uses and/or critiques the essentialisation of these types.²⁶² While they exist alongside others, including 'villain' and 'charity case', they are commonly discussed separately as standalone analyses or together to the exclusion of other tropes in literatures as various as criminology²⁶³ and defence studies.²⁶⁴ McCartney's work frames the public image of the British soldier through three lenses: the hero, victim, or villain.²⁶⁵ Stretching the concept of soldier further, the tropes have also been used in analyses of and publications about the treatment and perceptions of child soldiers.²⁶⁶ This section's critique draws energy from scholars, like Bulmer and Jackson, who argue that these reductive representations fail to account for the complex lives of the people they describe.²⁶⁷ The tropes, in their pervasiveness, present a challenge to move beyond in research, as noted by Harel-Shalev et al.²⁶⁸ and Tidy²⁶⁹. However, the intervention of this section is to highlight that the representation of them often continues along a binary

²⁶² Scott Parrott et al., 'Hero, Charity Case, and Victim: How U.S. News Media Frame Military Veterans on Twitter', *Armed Forces & Society* 45, no. 4 (1 October 2019): 702–22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18784238>; Jon Robert Adams, *The Soldier-Hero in Contemporary American Culture* (University of Virginia Press, 2008), <https://www-jstor-org.gate3.library.lse.ac.uk/stable/j.ctt6wrmwk>; Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (Routledge, 2013).

²⁶³ Ross McGarry and Sandra Walklate, 'The Soldier as Victim: Peering through the Looking Glass', *The British Journal of Criminology* 51, no. 6 (2011): 900–917.

²⁶⁴ Helen McCartney, 'Hero, Victim or Villain? The Public Image of the British Soldier and Its Implications for Defense Policy', *Defense & Security Analysis* 27, no. 1 (1 March 2011): 43–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2011.557213>.

²⁶⁵ McCartney.

²⁶⁶ Ewa Stańczyk, 'Heroes, Victims, Role Models: Representing the Child Soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising', *Slavic Review* 74, no. 4 (ed 2015): 738–59, <https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.4.738>; *Redress, Victims, Perpetrators or Heroes?: Child Soldiers before the International Criminal Court*. (London: Redress Trust, 2006).

²⁶⁷ Bulmer and Jackson, "You Do Not Live in My Skin", 27.

²⁶⁸ Harel-Shalev et al., 'Drawing (on) Women's Military Experiences and Narratives – Israeli Women Soldiers' Challenges in the Military Environment', 503.

²⁶⁹ Tidy, 'The Gender Politics of "Ground Truth" in the Military Dissent Movement', 100.

either/or logic. In this, it is closest to critiques in CMS which problematize the 'polarizing frames which emphasize heroism or victimhood'²⁷⁰ in studying and representing the military and veterans.

Scholarship outside IR has demonstrated the necessity of challenging this separation of the two tropes, and to a lesser extent the binary construction of the hero and victim as opposites. Within social psychology, transactional analysis accepts that individuals may hold multiple roles concurrently and switch roles.²⁷¹ Other work spread across disciplines including communications and gerontology has used the hybrid role of 'hero-victim' (or victim-hero, hero/victim, victim/hero) to capture this sense of dual embodiment.²⁷² However, a focus often remains on the transition between victim and hero or vice versa, tying analysis into a binary either/or logic. Like the work this thesis is doing, some research outside IR has begun to look beyond these character roles in implicitly or explicitly queered ways. In their narrative analysis of non-positional leadership in academia, Juntrasook et al. work in a naturally queered logic despite their non-engagement with queer theory, describing the hero and/or victim plots discussed in interview.²⁷³ Wright, writing on the intersection of crime, media and culture, focuses on mothers bereaved through murder as victim-heroes who are 'characterised by his/her suffering and by his/her actions of retribution in an effort to redeem the virtue of his/her loved one or of themselves'.²⁷⁴ Working explicitly with queer theory and the 'victim/hero binary', Allen's examination of representations of LGBT students' experiences in schooling within social justice literature

²⁷⁰ Bulmer and Eichler, 'Unmaking Militarized Masculinity', 168.

²⁷¹ Stephen B. Karpman, 'Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis', *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* 7, no. 26 (1968): 39–43.

²⁷² See, for example: Yanping Liu and Gertina J. van Schalkwyk, 'Constructing a Hero–Victim Identity through Reminiscing: A Phenomenological Study on Rural Chinese Elders', *Ageing & Society*, 2021, 1328–48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X20000860>; Edward Alwood, 'The Spy Case of AP Correspondent William Oatis: A Muddled Victim/Hero Myth of the Cold War', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (1 June 2010): 263–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769901008700203>; Sarah Wright, '"Ah ... the Power of Mothers": Bereaved Mothers as Victim-Heroes in Media Enacted Crusades for Justice', *Crime, Media, Culture* 12, no. 3 (1 December 2016): 327–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659015623597>.

²⁷³ Adisorn Juntrasook et al., 'Unpacking the Narrative of Non-Positional Leadership in Academia: Hero and/or Victim?', *Higher Education Research & Development* 32, no. 2 (April 2013): 201–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.643858>.

²⁷⁴ Wright, '"Ah ... the Power of Mothers"', 331. Emphasis original.

moves toward thinking through the binary toward a queered understanding of LGBT 'that is neither victim nor hero, nor some combination of both.'²⁷⁵

This chapter takes such work into account to move beyond the exploration of hero and victim as separate or hybrid analytical tools to read CMR. Instead, it approaches both the 'hero' and the 'victim' as generated and generative. It locates both as productive (and produced by) certain 'civils' — the will to knowledge of the military as *hero*, *victim*, or *hero and/or victim* configures the civil alternately as *saved*, *saviour*, or *saved and/or saviour*. Though there are other tropes that are associated with the military (e.g., the 'villain'), this chapter argues that it is the figurations of hero/victim, saved/saviour and the systems of relations that they configure which are dominant and essential to understanding contemporary, queered CMR.

This chapter develops these figurations in the following two sections. The first looks at the hero figuration of the soldier, sifting *what* constitutes a hero from *who* constitutes a hero and introducing the concept of 'instrumental heroization' to illuminate the continuous feedback loop of the hero/saved relationship. The second turns to work similarly with the victim figuration of the soldier and the victim/saviour relationship. Establishing these figurations lays the conceptual groundwork for the analysis of the cultural work in *Chapters 4, 5, and 6*. As they demonstrate, the queer inextricability of the hero/victim and thus saved/saviour figurations necessitate non-binary theorisation of CMR.

4. Figuring Military as 'Hero', Civil as 'Saved'

David Masciota, a cultural critic and writer, pointedly suggests: 'Put a man in uniform, preferably a white man, give him a gun, and Americans will worship him.'²⁷⁶ Masciota is not wrong. There is something that rings true in what he says. Military history is rife with stories of verifiable heroes. Consider Audie Murphy, who received the Medal of

²⁷⁵ Louisa Allen, 'Picturing Queer at School', *Journal of LGBT Youth* 12, no. 4 (2 October 2015): 367–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2015.1077766>.

²⁷⁶ David Masciota, 'You Don't Protect My Freedom: Our Childish Insistence on Calling Soldiers Heroes Deadens Real Democracy', *Salon*, 9 November 2014, https://www.salon.com/2014/11/09/you_dont_protect_my_freedom_our_childish_insistence_on_calling_soldiers_heroes_deadens_real_democracy/.

Honor in World War II for singlehandedly turning the tide in a battle and saving his company by holding a solo position on a burning tank destroyer for an hour until his ammunition was exhausted. Murphy later played himself in the film *To Hell and Back* based on his autobiography. More recently, in June 2012 in Afghanistan, Lance Corporal James Ashworth crawled along a low wall in the middle of a firefight to target the sniper his platoon had been tasked with confronting. 'His total disregard for his own safety in ensuring that the last grenade was posted accurately was the gallant last action of a soldier who had willingly placed himself in the line of fire on numerous occasions earlier in the attack.'²⁷⁷ For this he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross (VC).

It is easy to read about the feats of these heroes, for each received the highest-level military honour for valour in his respective country and was recognised by his peers and national community in a public, historical fashion. But there are many others, recognised with less prominent awards or not recognised at all, who have been heroic in battle. Yet despite the great concerted, bureaucratic effort of governments to measure and reward the heroism of a selected few, contemporary CMR in the US and UK demonstrates a persistent tendency and perhaps social pressure to automatically equate a soldier with a hero. This section illuminates this tendency and reads it as a figuration, in which the will to knowledge of the soldier as hero in turn configures the civil as saved. To do this, it first demonstrates the automatic and total heroization of the soldier before questioning what and who makes a hero. It looks to definitions and awarding bodies and selection criteria for civilian and military heroism honours and awards, highlighting the importance of sacrifice and danger to the self. Finally, against these stringent processes, the section draws the flat equivalence of soldier with hero as a process it terms 'instrumental heroization', which is powered by the will to knowledge of the 'military' as hero and the 'civil' as saved.

4.1. Soldier = Hero

It is difficult to capture the extent to which the association between soldier and hero has been made to appear natural. From the UK's Help for Heroes, which describes itself as

²⁷⁷ Recorded in *The Gazette: Official Public Record* (London Gazette), issue 60455, pp. 5735-5736, 22 March 2013, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/60455/supplement/5735>, accessed 16 February 2021.

'the leading charity for the Armed Forces community'²⁷⁸ to HeroBox, a US organization that invites donors to 'Sponsor a Hero'²⁷⁹ (deployed service member) and send them care packages ('HeroBoxes'), the term 'hero' appears frequently in the military and veteran charity/non-profit landscape. The word is central to children's books that depict military parents, including *My Dad's a Hero* and the *Hero Mom* and *Hero Dad* set.²⁸⁰ The back cover of *Superheroes' Kids: When Dad is Deployed* describes, 'Our military men and women are real-life superheroes, especially to their families.'²⁸¹ Commercially, Merica Made, a retailer offering US-made patriotic apparel and accessories, offers several designs targeted at military wives and girlfriends, including a shirt with the slogan 'YOU CALL HIM HERO I CALL HIM MINE' printed in camouflage letters.²⁸² Items ranging from keychains to baby onesies and yard signs which express similar representations of military service members as heroes are widely available. On Etsy, a popular global e-commerce site focused on handmade, custom, and vintage products, a key word search for 'soldier hero' produces 2,948 results at the time of writing.²⁸³ The effect, if engaged with the military/veterans sector in any capacity, even research, is thoroughly numbing, not dissimilar from semantic satiation: the feeling of saying a word repeatedly until it loses meaning. This inundation of messaging from charities, corporations, paraphernalia, and other cultural products that soldier = hero is baffling when one looks at the matter critically. It becomes clear, when held up against other measures of heroism, both military and civilian, that the persistence of this equivalency is rooted in something that defies objectivity.

²⁷⁸ 'UK Armed Forces & Military Veterans Charity | Help for Heroes', Help for Heroes, accessed 27 August 2020, <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/>.

²⁷⁹ 'Sponsor a Hero', HeroBox, accessed 27 August 2020, <https://herobox.org/get-involved/sponsor-hero>.

²⁸⁰ Rebecca Christiansen, Jewel Armstrong, and Jen O. Robertson (illustrator), *My Dad's a Hero* (Tarentum, PA: Word Association Pub., 2007); Melinda Hardin and Bryan Langdo (illustrator), *Hero Mom* (Las Vegas, NV: Amazon Children's Publishing, 2013), <https://archive.org/details/heromom0000hard>; Melinda Hardin and Bryan Langdo (illustrator), *Hero Dad* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2010).

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²⁸² 'You Call Him Hero T-Shirts', Merica Made, accessed 27 August 2020, <https://www.mericamade.com/design/147848-you-call-him-hero>.

²⁸³ 'Soldier Hero', Etsy, accessed 27 August 2020, https://www.etsy.com/market/soldier_hero.

That this figuring of the soldier as hero has been deeply naturalized in society and is continuously reinscribed through cultural production and activity has been explored across time and space in academia for several decades. Dawson's *Soldier Heroes* explored the centrality of imagining the soldier (of empire) as hero to internalized masculinities in Britain.²⁸⁴ Picking up similar threads, Adams's *Male Armor* analyses representations of the American soldier-hero and masculinities from World War II through Operation Iraqi Freedom in literature and film.²⁸⁵ There has been significant contemporary research on the soldier as a hero figure from scholars working on security, defence, and military, often with emphasis on the effects and ramifications of this trope.²⁸⁶ Adding to this, important work on war commemoration and remembrance, which often involves connotations of heroism, fleshes out the expanse of scholarly engagement with the soldier and veteran as heroes.²⁸⁷

A 2018 YouGov poll surveyed attitudes toward the 'troops' in the United Kingdom, United States and Germany. In the US, 50% of respondents felt that 'All those serving in our armed forces should be described as heroes, whatever their role and experience.'²⁸⁸ 32% of British respondents agreed. In Germany, this was only 15%. The survey also asked about other criteria for calling people heroes. 7% of British people surveyed thought that only those serving in combat roles should be described as heroes (vs. 9% in US and 7% in Germany). 11% of Britons surveyed felt that only those who had seen combat should be called heroes (vs. 7% in the US and 12% in Germany). A significant 31% of British people

²⁸⁴ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*.

²⁸⁵ Adams, *The Soldier-Hero in Contemporary American Culture*.

²⁸⁶ For example see: Yuval Feinstein, 'The Thin Line between "Crazy" and "Hero": Exploring the Multiple Statuses of US Veterans in a Work-Therapy Program', *Armed Forces & Society* 41, no. 1 (1 January 2015): 3–22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X13507054>; McCartney, 'Hero, Victim or Villain?'; Kristian Frisk, '"But When I Tell Them about Heroes, Then They Listen": The Soldier Hero and Transformations of the Danish Welfare State', *Acta Sociologica* 60, no. 2 (1 May 2017): 176–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699316679489>; Katharine M. Millar, '"They Need Our Help": Non-Governmental Organizations and the Subjectifying Dynamics of the Military as Social Cause', *Media, War & Conflict* 9, no. 1 (1 April 2016): 9–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635215606867>.

²⁸⁷ Ted Harrison, *Remembrance Today: Poppies, Grief and Heroism* (London: Reaktion Books, Limited, 2012); Victoria M. Basham, 'Gender, Race, Militarism and Remembrance: The Everyday Geopolitics of the Poppy', *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no. 6 (2 June 2016): 883–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2015.1090406>.

²⁸⁸ 'Are the Troops Heroes? Americans, Britons and Germans Feel Very Differently', YouGov, accessed 26 February 2021, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2018/09/25/are-troops-heroes-americans-britons-and-germans-fe>. YouGov. Subsequent statistics in this paragraph are also drawn from this poll.

limited this further, believing that only servicepersons who had 'performed particularly brave acts' should be called heroes (vs. 17% in US and 16% Germany). Finally, some felt that no military personnel should be called heroes (6% UK, 4% US, and a significant 30% in Germany). Some respondents didn't know or choose a response (12% UK, 12% US, and 20% Germany). What is astonishing from this data and can be read as evidence of the blind heroization discussed in this section is that more people in the UK and US felt that *all* military servicepersons should be described as heroes, regardless of roles and experience (32% UK and 50% US), than felt that only those who had demonstrated particular bravery in action should be called heroes (31% UK, 17% US). If a 'hero' is called a hero for what they do, then what is it that soldiers are doing to *all* be heroes?

The thought experiment goes: 'If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?' Following, if someone acts heroically, but no one recognizes it, are they a hero? Both questions bring to light the difference between the neutral objectiveness of observation and the subjectiveness of perception. As psychologists Rankin and Eagly assert, 'heroism, like many other social phenomena, is not an intentional act so much as a social construction that reflects the motives and ideologies of observers.'²⁸⁹ In the case of heroism, this question of *what* and *who* makes a hero is central to our project of denaturalizing CMR. What is an unsung hero, who in being recognized as 'unsung' becomes somehow sung? How have we come to a situation in which all soldiers are heroes to be celebrated?

This sub-section challenges and denaturalizes the automatic association between soldier and hero. It seeks to strip away the trappings of affect and present an understanding of the relationship between soldiers and the people who call them heroes. This sub-section pursues these questions by examining both civilian and military awards for heroism in the US and UK. It looks to these awarding bodies as gatekeepers which arbitrate who and who is not created a hero for historical and cultural record. By looking at the measures of objectivity each uses to evaluate candidates and cases, the section excavates some constructed consensus about what makes a hero in society, in one sense. In doing so, it

²⁸⁹ Lindsay E. Rankin and Alice H. Eagly, 'Is His Heroism Hailed and Hers Hidden? Women, Men, and The Social Construction of Heroism', *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1 December 2008): 414, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00455.x>.

highlights the light cognitive dissonance which knows heroes to be rare and exceptional but also knows all soldiers to be heroes.

The analysis of the criteria used to evaluate and distinguish cases of civilian and military heroism that warrant commendation weaves together the concepts of personal and vital stakes with superhuman courage, even if only for a singular day, moment, or act. It does so to triangulate some cultural consensus over who the exceptional and rare hero is in the contemporary social order. The analysis examines awarding bodies of heroic awards, both civilian and military, to demonstrate the efforts to identify heroes. It reads these processes as rigorous but imperfect.

Civilian Heroism

This importance of risk to the self in creating and recognizing heroes is echoed in looking at selection and eligibility criteria for civilian awards for heroism. This section illuminates that not all heroes are soldiers, a conceptual corollary to 'not all soldiers are heroes'. This section looks at two related organisations in the US and UK: the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission (CHFC US) and the Andrew Carnegie Hero Fund Trust (ACHFT UK). Both foundations were set up by Andrew Carnegie in the early 20th century after he was inspired by stories from the 1904 Harwick Coal Mine Disaster in Pennsylvania, which killed 179 people and is still ranked as the 9th most deadly coal disaster in the United States.²⁹⁰ Similar Carnegie affiliated funds were set up in nine other European countries.

The foundations were born from the same effort to recognise civilian heroism and provide financial assistance to people who are injured (or, in case of death, to their dependents) in attempting to save another person's life. Notably, people in the military and other service/rescue professions are ineligible except in very rare cases.²⁹¹ Recognition comes in slightly different form depending on the organisation. The CHFC US, which covers

²⁹⁰ 'Coal Mining Disasters: 1839 to Present', The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), accessed 10 September 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/statistics/content/coaldisasters.html>.

²⁹¹ Exceptions may be made for people deemed to be acting well above their professional duties, as was the case for Allyson Powell, a Massachusetts State Trooper, who rescued a driver from a burning vehicle. See: 'Hero's Grant Donated', *Carnegie Hero Fund Commission* (blog), 7 August 2012, <https://www.carnegiehero.org/heros-grant-donated/>.

both the United States and Canada awards a physical Carnegie Medal and fixed monetary grants of \$5,500 (USD) with additional discretionary scholarship assistance if eligible.²⁹² In 2019, the Commission awarded 73 medals for 59 total acts.²⁹³ The ACHFT UK recognises individuals in a Roll of Honour, an illuminated book which remains at their museum in Dunfermline, Scotland. It also offers financial support, if necessary. In 2019, the ACHFT UK recognised 6 people, with an additional three cases awaiting active investigation.²⁹⁴

The criteria for nomination, drawn from the organisations' reports and websites, are summarised in the table below. Eligibility conditions pertaining to evidence type, location, and reporting time have been excluded to focus solely on the 'hero' criteria.

Carnegie Hero Fund Commission (USA/Canada)	Andrew Carnegie Hero Fund Trust (UK)
<p><i>The below are excerpted from the CHFC US website page 'Award Consideration Process'.</i></p> <p>'The rescuer must have rescued or attempted the rescue of another person.'</p> <p>'The rescuer must be a civilian who knowingly and voluntarily risks his or her own life to an extraordinary degree. Members of the armed services and children....are ineligible for consideration.'</p> <p>'The act of rescue must be one in which no full measure of responsibility exists between the rescuer and the rescued, which precludes those whose vocational duties require them to perform such acts, unless the rescues are clearly beyond the line of duty...'</p>	<p><i>The below are excerpted from the ACHFT UK Trustees 2019 Annual Report.</i></p> <p>'Heroic acts performed in the saving of property are not recognised as falling within the scope of the Trust, which extends only to the saving or attempted saving of human life.'</p> <p>'The purpose of the Carnegie Hero Fund UK is to recognise acts of civilian heroism by those over the age of eighteen...'</p> <p>'The heroic act must have been voluntary and have involved risk to the rescuer's life. In some occupations the ordinary discharge of duty involves risks, and such risks cannot in general be regarded as voluntary; but once the ordinary requirements of duty have been exceeded a case is eligible for consideration.'</p>

Table 1. Summary of CHFC US and ACGFT UK 'hero' fund criteria.

²⁹² '2019 in Review', Carnegie Hero Fund Commission (blog), 20 April 2020, <https://www.carnegiehero.org/2019-in-review/>.

²⁹³ '2019 in Review'.

²⁹⁴ Andrew Carnegie Hero Fund Trust, 'The Carnegie Dunfermline & Hero Fund Trustees 2019 Annual Report', Annual Report, 2019, 21.

Source(s): 'Award Consideration Process', Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, accessed 13 March 2021, <https://www.carnegiehero.org/nominate/investigative-process/>; Andrew Carnegie Hero Fund Trust, 'The Carnegie Dunfermline & Hero Fund Trustees 2019 Annual Report', 25.

Within these criteria, we begin to see that for both foundations, the core characteristic which marks heroes is the voluntary assumption of danger to their own lives in the act of attempting to rescue another person. Put another way, the individual's actions must express a willingness to sacrifice their own life to save someone else. The number of individuals that both organisations recognise, as mentioned above, is low, which can be attributed to the rarity and of these sorts of actions.

The CHFC US is open about their work and the fact that they actively seek out and pursue potential cases. The similarities between a 1912 *Harper's Weekly* article on the organisation and one released by the *New York Times* in 2019 are marked, given that more than a century separates them. From the manner of hearing about potential cases (news clipping bureau/Google News alerts) to job histories of investigators (largely news journalists), little seems changed.²⁹⁵ For the larger argument of this section, it's also useful to note the CHFC's awareness of the overuse of the term 'hero'. The recent *New York Times* profile revealed that investigators often use Google Alerts for phrases (e.g., "died saving" or "rescued") to find leads, but that 'hero' is a particularly unproductive search term for their work.²⁹⁶

While the CHFC US and ACHFT UK offer only a limited sense of civilian heroism and how some people and organisations seek to take the measure of a person's actions, examining them is important because it suggests that the hero question, free from the military establishment, rests on the saving and (potentially) sacrificing of life. Over a century ago, the *Harper's Weekly* article highlighted just this:

...in attempting to reward heroism, the Commission had first to define heroism. Here is what constitutes heroism in the eyes of the Carnegie Commission: A hero is one who actually jeopardises his life to save another, and who does it regardless of the

²⁹⁵ An exception is that, as the *Harper's Weekly* article reports, as of 1912, the Commission awarded gold, silver, and bronze medals for corresponding percentages of heroism. Thus, the investigator needed to establish which honour, if any, was appropriate in a case.

²⁹⁶ Caity Weaver, 'What Makes an American Hero? (Or a Canadian One?)', *The New York Times*, 12 December 2019, sec. Style, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/12/style/carnegie-hero-fund.html>.

consequences to himself. In short, the Commission has adopted as its own this biblical standard that a man shall be willing "to lay down his life for another."²⁹⁷

While a contemporary writer might use a term or framing device other than 'biblical' to describe the standard upheld by the CHFC US, it's clear that this insistence on self-sacrifice or sheer selflessness is a firm a foothold in the definitional landscape for 'hero.'

In examining civilian heroism and the CHFC US/ACHFT UK, this sub-section has developed a counterpoint to the more familiar and obvious military heroism which is considered below. It did this to emphasise that the military does not hold a monopoly on heroism and that heroes are created and recognised outside of military contexts. At the same time, it draws attention to self-sacrifice as a pivotal criteria in identifying heroism, which is reiterated in the following discussion of military heroism.

Military Heroism

For this research, military decorations are interesting because they are a highly visible and visual, historical, and cultural way of creating and recognizing a 'war hero.' These medals are commonly presented in ceremonies, with the highest honours being presented at investitures by monarchs and presidents. Many US states offer special license plates for recipients of the top awards, creating an interesting situation in which you may know nothing about the person driving in front of you except that they're a decorated veteran, a hero. Medals also travel: they are worn, displayed, bought, and sold as explored in *Chapter 4*, and their 'use' is comingled with cultural memory, history, and social capital. It's important to note that while awards and honours exist to recognise participation in particular campaigns, being wounded in combat, and duration of service, this chapter focuses on medals awarded for valour and gallantry. While there are differences between the meanings of valour, gallantry, and heroism, this project reads the honours as acting as meaning markers which create an individual as a war hero. In this sense, that award criteria may be structured around 'valour' or 'gallantry' rather than 'heroism' in the choice of words is not important. The effect of the granting of the awards, as the highest levels of military recognition for this type of behaviour, remains the same. A hero is produced.

²⁹⁷ Lewis Edwin Theiss, 'The Sleuth and the Hero', *Harper's Weekly*, 6 January 1912, 9.

In presenting a close reading of the criteria and conditions for the top honours in the US and UK, this section analyses the coded language which conditions the elevation of a chosen few above their peers. It examines the awards processes for members of the US and UK Armed Forces. Both have a hierarchy of awards to recognise varying levels of individual bravery. However, this section will only consider the criteria for the highest honours, respectively the US Medal of Honor (MOH), available in three variants for each branch of the armed forces, and the UK Victoria Cross (VC). The introduction to JSP 761, the official guide for Honours and Awards in the UK Armed Services, opens with a quotation from Winston Churchill: '...a distinction is something which everybody does not possess. If all have it, it is of less value.... The task of drawing up regulations for such awards is one which does not admit of a perfect solution. It is not possible to satisfy everybody without running the risk of satisfying nobody.'²⁹⁸ It is this difficulty and imperfect effort toward making more objective something as subjective as bravery or gallantry that makes for a worthy area of examination, for it demonstrates an awareness that not all deserve to be elevated above their peers. Not all soldiers are heroes.

The official US Army regulation pertaining to military awards, AR 600-8-22, describes the Medal of Honor as:

...awarded by the President of the United States in the name of Congress to a person who, while a member of the Army, distinguishes himself or herself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his or her comrades and must have involved risk of life.²⁹⁹

In direct contrast to this lengthy explanation, the British JSP 761 is brief in its description of the conditions for the VC, merely quoting that it is awarded for '...most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion

²⁹⁸ Ministry of Defence, 'JSP 761: Honours and Awards in the Armed Forces', October 2016, 1-1, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/honours-and-awards-in-the-armed-forces-jsp-761>.

²⁹⁹ Department of the Army, AR 600-8-22: *Military Awards*, 5 March 2019, 57-58, https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=1003738.

to duty in the presence of the enemy.³⁰⁰ This particular quotation, presented without attribution, is reproduced across official channels including governmental guidance, museum collection descriptions, and the Monarch's website. In all instances, it is deprived of context.³⁰¹ The quotation's provenance can be traced back to The Royal Warrant of 22 May 1920 in which King George V clarified the award's conditions originally laid out by Queen Victoria in the Royal Warrant of 29 January 1856. Queen Victoria established the honour with an eye toward recognising individuals regardless of rank, military branch, or longevity of service, to distinguish 'those who by their valour particularly signalised themselves [and] remain undistinguished from their comrades.'³⁰² In its original form, the conditions had been vague, merely that 'the Cross shall only be awarded to those Officers or Men who have served Us in the presence of the Enemy, and shall have then performed some signal act of valour or devotion to their Country,' with a further mention of 'conspicuous bravery.'³⁰³ However, in the most recent Royal Warrant concerning the VC (22 May 1920), King George V wrote, 'It is ordained that the Cross shall only be awarded for most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.'³⁰⁴

A careful examination and comparison of the two statements of criteria and/or conditions produces an interesting insight: the words 'hero' and 'heroism' are noticeably absent. To give context to this absence, the nine royal warrants concerning the VC include only one mention of the term, describing the potential to award the VC to an entire unit in a

³⁰⁰ Ministry of Defence, 'JSP 761: Honours and Awards in the Armed Forces', 1A-1.

³⁰¹ For example, see: 'Medals: Campaigns, Descriptions and Eligibility', GOV.UK, accessed 11 September 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility>; 'Victoria Cross Recipients', National Portrait Gallery, accessed 11 September 2020, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person-list?grp=1300&displayNo=60&page=1>; 'The Queen Hosts a Reception for The Victoria Cross and George Cross Association', The Royal Family, 15 May 2018, <https://www.royal.uk/queen-hosts-reception-victoria-cross-and-george-cross-association>.

³⁰² Queen Victoria, 'Royal Warrant of 29 January, 1856', WO 98/1, The National Archives, Kew, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C2601766>.

³⁰³ Queen Victoria, 'Royal Warrant of 29 January, 1856', WO 98/1, The National Archives, Kew, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C2601766>.

³⁰⁴ King George V, 'Royal Warrant of 22 May, 1920,' reproduced in: Cmdt. Jan Ploeger and Capt. F. J. Jacobs, 'Victoria Cross Awards', *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 3, no. 2 (1973): 47.

collective 'performance of an act of heroic gallantry.'³⁰⁵ US Army regulations interestingly use 'heroism' in the criteria for several lower tier honours for valour below the MOH.³⁰⁶ However, to set the linguistic choices of the military regulations aside – for it lies outside the scope of the present argument – reading the guiding criteria for the MOH and VC alongside one another reveals similarities and differences. Both highlight that any eligible act must be done in the presence of the enemy. Both stress the necessity that the act of 'bravery' be 'conspicuous' and contain other language ('pre-eminent' and 'distinguish the individual above his or her comrades') that underscores the exceptionality, even amongst other military members, that an eligible individual must have exhibited. Differences between the criteria are also clear. The VC conditions are brief and vaguer, allowing for three slightly different scenarios indicated and separated by the word 'or.' The MOH criteria is more narrowly focused, with deviation, again signified through the word 'or,' only permitted regarding the precise configuration of the engagement with the enemy.

Crucially, the MOH conditions repeatedly emphasize the element of 'risk to life' as essential for award eligibility. In contrast, the VC mentions 'self-sacrifice' as an eligible act but does not explicitly engage with the concept of risk to life as a compulsory qualifier.

These criteria help bring in to focus the type of war hero that is produced by military honour systems: someone who has done something brave in the presence and against an enemy, which distinguishes them from their compatriots (and the regular dischargement of their duties) and likely carried some level of risk to their own life or self. Both the amount and tenor of these criteria uphold the hero as something rare and exceptional, and, explicitly, not every soldier. As this juxtaposition of military and civilian awards that create and recognize heroes has demonstrated, this quality is agreed upon and thus can be taken as a consensus-based working definition of 'hero'.

Thus far, this section has demonstrated an automatic equivalence between soldier and hero which is perpetuated across cultural products. In presenting and reading military and civilian awards which create and recognise heroes within culture and history, this chapter has shown that this understanding persists alongside the contradictory awareness

³⁰⁵ Ploeger and Jacobs, 49.

³⁰⁶ Department of the Army, AR 600-8-22: *Military Awards*, 72–74.

of heroism as something which is rare and exceptional. The question then becomes one of why and how this cultural cognitive dissonance operates.

4.2. Instrumental Heroization

Considering the figuration of the soldier as hero within this project of civil-military relations, it becomes crucial to locate and conceptualise how and why the civil is produced. In doing this work, this section argues that the will to knowledge of the soldier as 'hero' in turn configures the civil as the 'saved'. This relational dynamic of hero/saved produces a self-sustaining feedback loop of gratitude, service, and indebtedness, which lays the groundwork for the flat and automatic equivalence between soldier and hero. This project reads this process, which it terms 'instrumental heroization,' as a key CMR behaviour that is produced from the civil-military economy of debt as theorised by both MacLeish and Wool.

This thesis attributes the persistence of the narrative which maintains all soldiers are heroes, even while knowing few soldiers are heroes, to a behaviour best read as a gratitude act within this economy. It calls this behaviour 'instrumental heroization' to capture the action and contextualize it as serving a purpose for the giver, but not the recipient. Instrumental heroization is characterized by an insistence by the non-military to blanketly heroize (often resistant) military servicepersons. It lays bare the charade of interactions driven by relations of unredeemable, and often unwanted, indebtedness described previously. Instrumental heroization is marked by an overuse and/or inappropriate use of the word 'hero' by a non-military actor. It is related to what Kelly calls "" hero"-fication', which he portrays as a strategic process that strengthens militarism.³⁰⁷ However, it is distinct because, framed as a gratitude act, it shares the characteristic of benefitting the giver more than the resistant receiver. Its analytical utility lies as unifying behaviour which makes sense of much of the stuff and actions within the figuration of the soldier as 'hero'. It is this process of production of the gratitude act, the will to know and produce the soldier as hero, which in turn configures the civil as saved.

³⁰⁷ John Kelly, 'Popular Culture, Sport and the 'Hero'-Fication of British Militarism', *Sociology* 47, no. 4 (1 August 2013): 722–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038512453795>.

Instrumental heroization can be understood as another of these gratitude acts, like a barbecue or a handsewn teddy bear, which constantly re-presents the indebtedness of those who do not serve to those that do. Specifically, as Millar identifies, citing copy from the American Legion, 'the heroic agency' of the soldiers derives from their *decision* 'to put their lives on the line in defense of their country – and their fellow citizens.'³⁰⁸ In one sense, in considering soldiers generally as heroes, we are honouring this original choice to serve and nothing more. However, this level of abstraction is problematic when it encounters other definitions of 'hero' created and defended within the military and outside it. As this chapter has demonstrated, the military maintains its own system for recognizing heroism and thereby 'creating' heroes. In particular, as Franco et al. note, the 'willingness to take conspicuous, bold action in a way that sets one apart from his already brave peers' is valued.³⁰⁹ Additionally looking to civilian awards and assessments of heroism with the Carnegie foundations reinforced the centrality of selflessness or risk to life to sifting heroism from bravery or other prosocial acts. However, instrumental heroization maintains a wilful blindness to these indicators that heroes are rare and exceptional.

In instrumental heroization, which is disinterested in the service details, roles, or acts of heroism that an individual may have performed, the soldier, *all* soldiers are heroes. The individual who is thanked for their service becomes a metonym, standing in for whole of the military. The individual who thanks them is created as a representative of the 'civil' who did not serve. And the interaction calls into being the relations of unrepayable indebtedness. In his documentary 'What makes a hero?' for the BBC, David Botti, a video journalist and USMC Iraq veteran, describes what happens when someone thanks him for his service:

I get snapped out the moment and there's this intense flood of memories about what it meant to serve: the good times, the hardships, what it meant for my family. I think of the Marines I knew who didn't come home. And I realise I'm expected to respond, but what do I say? I want to do those memories justice, but that would mean sitting

³⁰⁸ Millar, '"They Need Our Help"', 17. Millar cites a webpage on the website of the American Legion, which has since changed. However, the phrasing of 'put their lives on the line' is still commonly used across the website.

³⁰⁹ Zeno E. Franco, Kathy Blau, and Philip G. Zimbardo, 'Heroism: A Conceptual Analysis and Differentiation between Heroic Action and Altruism', *Review of General Psychology* 15, no. 2 (1 June 2011): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022672>.

down and talking for hours with a stranger. But then *that* feels like I'm not doing all those intense memories justice and I feel guilty. Then, I feel ungrateful.³¹⁰

Here, Botti tacitly acknowledges a reluctance to respond to the question sincerely and deeply, suggesting an awareness that the statement of gratitude involves larger structures than the interaction itself. He doesn't think sitting down for a lengthy conversation with the tanker is the appropriate response, but he realizes he's expected to respond in some way.

Instrumental heroization does not accurately reflect or honour heroism. It is best understood as a gratitude act, which makes sense of the pushback against it partly as rejection or nonreceipt of the act consistent with other 'stuff' produced in the CMR economy of debt. Simply put, calling all soldiers heroes is not what soldiers want in acknowledgement of their service. Repudiation by military or ex-military persons often takes the form of op eds in newspapers and popular military-centric sites which speak to a non-military audience, entreating them to desist.³¹¹ These are often published around Veterans Day, Memorial Day, or Remembrance Day, revealing an anxiety over how the US and UK at large should and does recognise the holidays. In one, William J. Astore, a former US Air Force lieutenant colonel, writes 'Whether in civilian life or in the military, heroes are rare — indeed, all too rare. Heck, that's the reason we celebrate them. They're the very best of us, which means they can't be all of us.'³¹² He goes on to illuminate the negative impacts of empty heroization including engendering a wilful blindness to the destructiveness of war and the potential prolonging of conflicts.³¹³

This tension over heroization is consistent with the different understandings that non-forces and forces individuals bring to understanding heroism, even that which is rooted in assessments of courageous, lifesaving acts. Sebastian Junger, a prominent American journalist and author, embedded with Battle Company, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd

³¹⁰ *What Makes a Hero?* (BBC), pt. 3:21-3:51, accessed 30 August 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-34698246>.

³¹¹ See, for example: Don Gomez, 'When "Hero" Rings Hollow', *At War* (blog), 13 June 2011, <https://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/13/when-hero-rings-hollow/>; Horton, 'Help Veterans by Taking Them Off the Pedestal'; Mike Stajura, 'Heroism Is for War Movies, Not Veterans', *Time*, accessed 28 August 2020, <https://time.com/109785/memorial-day-veteran-hero/>.

³¹² William J. Astore, 'Every Soldier a Hero? Hardly', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 2010, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-jul-22-la-oe-astore-heroes-20100722-story.html>.

³¹³ Astore.

Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in the Korengal Valley, in 2007 and 2008. The place became deservedly known as the Valley of Death and American forces abandoned their outpost there in 2010.³¹⁴ In his book *War* on his experience in Korengal with the troops, Junger reflected, 'Civilians understand soldiers to have a kind of baseline duty, and that everything above that is considered "bravery." Soldiers see it the other way around: either you're doing your duty or you're a coward. There's no other place to go.'³¹⁵ In this sense, whatever honour that instrumental heroization tries to even superficially address doesn't translate for the intended soldier and veteran recipients. From their perspective, why would doing the job they signed up for amongst people they care about be grounds for being called a hero?

Logical Challenges to Instrumental Heroization

In addition to clear and consistent rejection of instrumental heroization by the intended recipients, there are several logical challenges to the behaviour. That instrumental heroization persists is indicative of the urgency of the perceived obligation of the 'saved' to demonstrate and make steps to repay the debt to the 'hero.' To return to our previous discussion of awarding bodies and criteria for civilian and military heroism, we know that military service alone does not suffice to make a hero. Our awareness and consensus on who and what makes a hero leads us to the acknowledgement that self-sacrifice (or great risk to the self) is a critical component of identifying a hero. Yet the dissonance of knowing this alongside participating in instrumental heroization persists, despite the logical challenges identified here including an awareness of other motivations for military service, the widening of instrumental heroization to include spouses and children, and resistance to heroization voiced by veterans.

The first logical challenge which instrumental heroization overcomes is based in the argument that in terming the military 'heroes' we are honouring the history of service and the willingness to sacrifice oneself. This logic makes possible a conceptualization of all

³¹⁴ Alissa J. Rubin, 'U.S. Forces Close Post in Afghan "Valley of Death"', *The New York Times*, 14 April 2010, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/world/asia/15outpost.html>.

³¹⁵ Sebastian Junger, *War* (New York: Twelve, 2010), 211, <https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=3A1B8A96-9F53-495B-947B-840847ECCB69>.

soldiers = heroes. Yet, it is overly general to presume that people solely join the military to serve. Research on the topic yields clues that service is not the final word on enlistment. Hall outlines four reasons: family tradition, benefits (financial concerns, social mobility), alignment with the warrior identity, and escapism.³¹⁶ Looking particularly at women, Mankowski et al. note that their participants were motivated by opportunities (for skill development, training, financial support for college, travel and adventure) and/or calling (patriotism, family tradition).³¹⁷ While these reasons can exist alongside a desire to serve, these motivations to join the military indicate another level of inaccuracy in instrumental heroization. If we are arguing for using the word 'hero' based on honouring the intention of service, then if the intention is not there, we cannot honour it. The persistence of instrumental heroization overcomes an awareness that a desire to serve and a willingness for self-sacrifice are *not* the only reasons for joining the military.

A second logical challenge to instrumental heroization comes in examining just how far the behaviour has penetrated discourse around the 'military', broadly conceived. That the heroization of 'military' has been extended beyond the servicemember must be questioned, for is a military spouse a hero? What about a military child? That instrumental heroization persists despite this broadening equivalence of hero with 'military' signals its attractiveness as a behaviour. While people directly in the military and people adjacent to it (spouses, families, children) may make sacrifices which should be recognised and adjusted for, making them 'heroes' does nothing to address the indebtedness between those who serve (conceived here broadly, for a military family in some senses also serves) and those who don't. The instrumental heroization of children of military personnel provides a particularly good-to-think example of the emptiness of this figuration of military as 'hero' and civil as 'saved'. For children there is no element of choice or decision to be part of the military if their parent serves. Obviously, children of military personnel are not *in* the military, yet reading these children as 'military children' who are part of 'military families'

³¹⁶ Lynn Hall, 'The Importance of Understanding Military Culture', *Social Work in Health Care* 50, no. 1 (January 2011): 4–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2010.513914>.

³¹⁷ Mariann Mankowski et al., 'Why Women Join the Military: Enlistment Decisions and Postdeployment Experiences of Service Members and Veterans', *Social Work* 60, no. 4 (October 2015): 315–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swv035>.

with (non-serving) 'military wives/husbands', provides a platform to view them through the lens of instrumental heroization.

What is interesting here is that instrumental heroization is partly performed and supported by the military establishment. Frain and Frain look at everyday militarism of children of US servicepersons in their recent article. The article is both insightful and creative in its approach, analysing eight military children's books alongside more traditional scholarly materials. In centring the experience of these children from a psychotherapeutic angle, their focus is understandably quite different from this project, but the materials and questions are provocative. One book, *Little C.H.A.M.P.S — Child Heroes Attached to Military Personnel*, is intended to help children cope with moving. However, its suggestions, to 'smile even when you are sad, scared or worried'³¹⁸ promote the stoicism of the child hero at the cost of the emotional expression and wellbeing of the child. Instead, the military is focused on enhancing resiliency, as evidenced in their family resilience programming.³¹⁹ Frain and Frain conclude that, "The military considers both the children and parents as heroes for their service and creates a barrier to expressing emotions while devaluating their experiences and frustrations."³²⁰ I argue that we should take seriously this heroization of children by the military. If we do so, then the military makes a child a hero out of a similar indebtedness or responsibility. If the military is the one who may take the child's parent(s) away and place them in danger or force the family to move regularly, then there is a complex obligation to justify, explain, and care. In making the child a hero, the military capitalizes upon children's natural aspiration to be like their parents, other 'heroes', and frames their hardships as a kind of sacrifice. In turn, a child may try to cope to do their part to support their parents and maintain a positive and coherent homefront. Through their instrumental heroization, children are treated as an asset that requires attention to support the overall war readiness effort. Yet this strain of instrumental heroization persists despite a logical awareness that so-called 'military' child is not a hero by any cultural definition.

³¹⁸ Sylvia C. Frain and Betty Frain, "'We Serve Too!': Everyday Militarism of Children of US Service Members', *Childhood*, 6 May 2020, 9, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220914709>.

³¹⁹ Frain and Frain, 2.

³²⁰ Fink and Fink, 2012, p. 3 quoted in Frain and Frain, 10–11.

Finally, academic and popular discourse has demonstrated some resistance to instrumental heroization, but it remains insufficient to overturn the dominance of the gratitude behaviour act. An interaction between two organisations on opposite sides of the political spectrum is a prime example of instrumental heroization and the push against it. For Remembrance Day 2018, *The Express*, a right-wing British newspaper published an article titled 'BRITAIN'S SHAME: Only THIRD of Britons would describe every UK soldier as a hero.'³²¹ As is clear from the title, the article laments that only 32% of people polled indicated that all UK military personnel should be called 'heroes' regardless of experience.³²² Interestingly, the article was released following David Botti's *What Makes a Hero?* (BBC) documentary and makes passing reference to it and its portrayal of veterans as feeling uncomfortable being called heroes.³²³ The article was picked up on by the Peace Pledge Union, a British pacifist organisation, which 'welcomed the news' from the poll, conveying representative Symon Hill's belief that 'heroism implies morality as well as bravery' – indicative of the PPU's view that military servicepersons may lack morality.³²⁴ While the interaction does demonstrate that people object to instrumental heroization, the PPU seems more likely to champion some sort of movement toward instrumental anti-heroization rather than a simple stop to the rampant behaviour.

With recent US and UK social memory and experiences configured around and through instrumental heroization and the soldier as 'hero', it is useful to recall that this is neither constant nor natural. In proposing instrumental heroization, this thesis focuses on the contemporary character of CMR, rather than analysis that is replicable across locations, circumstances, and eras. The YouGov poll, for instance, demonstrates different attitudes across countries, with the US and UK being more like each other than Germany. As another example of this, in thinking about post-Vietnam War popular sentiment toward and

³²¹ Rebecca Perring, 'BRITAIN'S SHAME: Only THIRD of Britons Would Describe Every UK Soldier as a Hero', *The Express*, 3 November 2018, sec. UK, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1039914/remembrance-day-2018-sunday-armed-forces-war-hero-poll>.

³²² The poll that the article describes is the same analysed previously in this chapter: 'Are the Troops Heroes?'

³²³ Perring, 'BRITAIN'S SHAME'.

³²⁴ 'British Soldiers Are Not All Heroes, Say Majority of the Public', Peace Pledge Union, 4 November 2018, <https://www.ppu.org.uk/news/british-soldiers-are-not-all-heroes-say-majority-public>.

figurations of ex-servicepersons, Karl Marlantes speaks of the possibility that now 'the pendulum may have swung just too far' and comments that 'now everybody's a hero instead of a villain. That's not true either.'³²⁵

I argue that the inclination toward instrumental heroization as a social phenomenon is not voluntary. Rather, it is a behaviour produced by the failure of imagination which maintains and naturalises the civil/military binary. In this, I agree with MacLeish, who posits that 'The traffic of value and obligation that actively produces the debt as permanently, a priori unpayable is set up by the way that soldiers and civilians are figured as opposite kinds or categories.'³²⁶ The figuration of military as hero is only one example of such a figuring. It is with this in mind that the following section generates another oppositional civil-military relation, that of the military as 'victim' and the civil as 'saviour'.

5. Figuring Military as 'Victim', Civil as 'Saviour'

An *NPR* article discusses a peculiarity of US military active-duty healthcare vs. veterans' benefits, the former of which covers in-vitro fertilization and the latter of which does not.³²⁷ It tells the story of Matt Keil, a soldier who was paralyzed from the neck down, and his wife who struggled to have children after his injury. A commenter asks: *'I am concerned about the children. If the parents need subsidies for housing, the father won't be working (and possibly suffers from PTSD) how will the children's needs be met? Is Mom going to have a full time job and take care of the disabled man AND raise the children by herself?'*³²⁸

Another reader responds to the comment: *'There's nothing about PTSD in the story, by the way.'*³²⁹ The second commenter is right. Without any evidence, the first commenter assumed that Matt Keil might suffer from PTSD, based on the available information: that he

³²⁵ Karl Marlantes interviewed in David Botti, *What Makes a Hero?* (BBC), 2:12-2:17, accessed 30 August 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-34698246>.

³²⁶ MacLeish, *Making War at Fort Hood*, 188.

³²⁷ 'For Fertility Treatment, Wounded Veterans Have To Pay The Bill', *The Impact of War* (NPR, 17 February 2016), <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/02/17/467073198/for-fertility-treatment-wounded-veterans-have-to-foot-the-bill>.

³²⁸ 'Abbi Baily' commenting on Lawrence, 'For Fertility Treatment...'.

³²⁹ 'Sanpete in Utah' responding to 'Abbi Baily' in Lawrence, 'For Fertility Treatment...'.

was paralyzed from being shot by a sniper in Iraq.³³⁰ In an act of further speculation, the commenter linked potential PTSD with the insinuation that he would not be a fit parent. This exchange portrays both a tarring of a combat veteran with PTSD and a pushback against the act which comes, apparently, out of nowhere. This section begins from this question: how and why does the figuration of the military as a 'victim' configure CMR and the civil as the then 'saviour'? The example of the comments on the *NPR* article portrays the result of the internalisation of this figuration. The relationship which creates the healthy saviour civilian-citizen and the mentally ill victim veteran is stepped into without hesitation. In figuring the soldier as 'victim' and the civil as 'saviour', CMR enables an excision of illness from 'healthy' society, makes an object of an individual, able to be pitied, mourned, healed, and cast aside.

This section discusses the figuration of the military as 'victim.' It begins with detailing three types of victimhood which are associated with the soldier as victim: victims of physical and mental injury, victims of the state, and victims of the narrative. It then turns to explore instrumental victimization as the counterpart process to instrumental heroization. It asserts that instrumental victimization is a fiction powered by the will to knowledge of the 'military' as victim, which, in configuring the 'civil' then as saviour templates relations which relieve the unease of the civil-military economy of debt.

5.1. Soldier = Victim

While previous scholarship in other disciplines has explored 'military victimhood' as a conceptual framing,³³¹ this section builds on this work to explore some of the nuances in soldier = victim. The discourse of the soldier as victim moves more subtly than that of soldier = hero. It operates in a variety of media. Headlines which report soldiers who have died in war as 'victims'³³² may not be immediately recognisable as cultural work which configures relations, simply because any report of such a loss of life is lamentable. In some sense, the soldier is a victim, and we are predisposed to understanding them as one. However, such language crumples under scrutiny, for how can a soldier, killed during a

³³⁰ 'For Fertility Treatment, Wounded Veterans Have To Pay The Bill'.

³³¹ McGarry and Walklate, 'The Soldier as Victim'.

³³² McGarry and Walklate, 904.

conflict with an enemy combatant, be a victim? Would the enemy combatant, should they also die, be a victim of the British or American military?

In generating soldier=victim, the key question becomes what are the soldiers victims of? As this section develops, the tendency to equate soldier with victim lies in a relational understanding of victimhood, which blots out the specifics and realities of military service. While the equivalence of soldier as hero is backgrounded by a socially-held understanding of heroism based in risk to the self, the automatic association of soldier as victim is grounded in several types of victimhood. Separated here for clarity, these types of victimhood co-exist, and any or all may be held in mind simultaneously.

Victims of injury

Victimhood by injury, including both physical and mental injury, is a common way of figuring the military as 'victim'. This type of victimhood is reinforced through prevalent imagery of veterans who have experienced injury in fora including charity appeals and Paralympic sport. Figuring the 'military' as victim through injury operates through the focus on these stories and narratives, which crowds out other non-victim stories. This may generate a skewed perception in which the injured veteran becomes the norm and mental template for figuring 'military'.

However, the move from injured veteran to 'military' as victim-by-injury requires additional unpicking. Critically, the purpose and tone of the stories which cover injured veterans often tends towards the sentimental. The storytelling evokes feelings ranging from pity to inspiration. Here, this reading of the representation of the veteran overlaps with work from disability and crip theory. The discussion of the figuration of 'military' as victim by injury is taken up in a sustained manner in *Chapter 5*. The discourse of soldier = victim is less showy than that of soldier = hero. However, the discourse of soldier = victim is intimately linked with that of soldier = hero. The same charities which claim soldiers as heroes, also asks an implied 'civil' to help them.

The line of reasoning which enables the leap from individual soldiers as victims by injury to the flat *soldier = victim* is further encouraged by the discourse of organisations which seek to aid the forces community. Speaking at Brookings Institution for the release of the 2016 Military Family Lifestyle Survey, Eric K. Fanning, then Secretary of the Army,

described a need for change in the how we conceptualise and treat behavioural health, saying: 'We are at the point where we pretty much accept that anybody who serves and goes into combat, everybody, 100 percent, is going to come back with PTS'.³³³ It is impossible to tell if Fanning uses 'PTS' here as part of a movement to drop the 'D' and normalise PTSD as an injury rather than a disorder, or if he is referring to normal reactions to trauma which may not need intervention. However, his use of the acronym, regardless of precise intent, already medicalises and marks an injured veteran. To say that *all* combat veterans will 'come back with PTS' is a significant statement, which, given his status, reverberates across common social understandings of 'military' as victim.

Victims of the state

The mental steps which pattern 'military' as victim also are drawn in conceiving of the 'military' as victims of the state. In this type of victimhood, the soldier is drawn as an individual who lacks agency in contrast to the military as an institution and the government who together determine how and where military force should be applied. The soldier is curiously sanitised of their choice to serve (in which they knowingly acquiesced to the role and structure of the military institution) and drawn as having no say in their service. The victimhood of the 'military' in this case separates the 'military' individuals from the institutions and power which control them. The soldier/veteran is made a victim through their obligation to the military and lack of control over their own circumstances. This can take several forms in which the state and the soldier are held separate conceptually despite the all-volunteer militaries and the choice to serve which is so important to contemporary civil-military relations. In an unpopular conflict, a person may support the 'troops' but not the military intervention itself, imagining the soldier as a victim of the state who has put them, wrongly, at risk.

The 'military' also becomes victim of a state which has made errors which effect the wellbeing of the soldiers. For example, the quality, availability, and distribution of body

³³³ 'The All-Volunteer Force at a Crossroads: The Military Family and Veteran Connection', Brookings, 18 November 2016, 23:43-23:53, <https://www.brookings.edu/events/the-all-volunteer-force-at-a-crossroads-the-military-family-and-veteran-connection/>.

armour during the Iraq War has been narrativized as being substandard in all aspects.³³⁴ Later reporting suggested that 80% of the marines who died from upper body injuries in Iraq might have survived with additional armour.³³⁵ For British forces, supply issues came under heavy scrutiny when linked with fatalities like Sgt. Steven Roberts who was killed in Iraq three days after he was ordered to give up his 'enhanced combat body armour' due to shortages.³³⁶ The case yielded headlines which framed Roberts as a victim of the state, one of many 'soldiers sent to the slaughter'.³³⁷ This failure to provide resulted in a reading of the soldier, particularly the injured or dead soldier, as a victim of the state's ineptitude. This is evidenced in the creation of this soldier as a cause and resulting charitable efforts which sought to fill the need. Bake Sales for Body Armor, an initiative supported by Veterans for Peace, sold real and virtual printable cookies to raise funds to privately buy and send body armour and other equipment to individual soldiers during the Iraq War.³³⁸ A similar organisation, Troops Direct, delivers soldiers 'critically needed items that they request for their safety and for mission success'.³³⁹ Addressing procurement and supply issues with the government and military, they describe themselves as an organisation that is 'able to be there for the men and women when others may let them down.'³⁴⁰

The final form of victim-of-the-state comes in the perception that the state may turn against and wash its hands of its soldiers after they leave the military. This is evidenced

³³⁴ United States Government Accountability Office, 'Defense Logistics: Actions Needed to Improve the Availability of Critical Items during Current and Future Operations', April 2005, 75–81, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-05-275.pdf>; Sam Jones, 'Troops Sent to Iraq without Sufficient Body Armour, Chilcot Inquiry Told', *The Guardian*, 1 February 2010, sec. UK news, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/feb/01/iraq-inquiry-body-armour>.

³³⁵ Michael Moss, 'Pentagon Study Links Fatalities to Body Armor', *The New York Times*, 7 January 2006, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/07/politics/pentagon-study-links-fatalities-to-body-armor.html>.

³³⁶ 'Kit Delays Led to Soldier's Death', *BBC News*, 18 December 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6190337.stm>.

³³⁷ 'MPs' Expenses: Soldiers Sent to the Slaughter - Sgt Steven Roberts', *The Telegraph*, 24 September 2009, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newtopics/mps-expenses/6229112/MPs-expenses-soldiers-sent-to-the-slaughter-Sgt-Steven-Roberts.html>.

³³⁸ Angela K. Brown, 'Soldier's Wife Holds Fundraisers for Body Armor for Troops', *Plainview Herald*, 10 February 2006, sec. News, <https://www.myplainview.com/news/article/Soldier-s-wife-holds-fundraisers-for-body-armor-8504427.php>.

³³⁹ 'We Supply 2021', Troops Direct, accessed 7 February 2022, <https://www.troopsdirect.org/wesupply/>.

³⁴⁰ 'Home Page 2021', Troops Direct, accessed 7 February 2022, <https://www.troopsdirect.org/>.

both in the delayed investigation and prosecution of crimes and the treatment of soldiers-veterans in what MacLeish refers to as the 'churn' of 'mobilisation-demobilization' in which 'the state has to find its fighters, get rid of them, and know where to find them again.'³⁴¹ Such a process produces violence against the soldier-veteran as the state strives towards these marks without consideration for the individuals. Recent concerns surrounding 'legacy investigations' into British soldiers' actions during Operation Banner in the Northern Ireland conflict³⁴² and individual cases which have emerged from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In April 2021, Jonny Mercer MP was relieved of his role as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans. Mercer, a former Army officer who served in Afghanistan, drew attention to legacy investigations in his resignation letter which he published on Twitter. He attributes the investigations to 'a changing of the political tide' and laments that 'we have abandoned our people'.³⁴³ Detailing the unjust process he describes it as 'asking our Veterans in their seventies and eighties to relive, through endless reinvestigations and inquests, into events often more than fifty years ago.'³⁴⁴ In understanding the actions of the state as a betrayal of the idealised soldier/state relationship, such narratives generate the soldier as a victim of the state.

Victims by/of narrative

Soldiers can also be drawn as victims by or of cultural narratives, two distinct patterns of victimhood which develop through processes of cultural memory. To demonstrate these two types of victimhood, this section offers two examples. It engages with cultural memories of homecoming for Vietnam War veterans as a case of generating the soldier as victim *by* narrative. It then asserts that efforts at counternarrative to the historical myths of the First World War address a victimhood *of* narrative, in which military leadership was wrongly represented in historical interpretation and culture.

³⁴¹ MacLeish, 'Churn', 197.

³⁴² Catherine Fairbairn et al., 'Investigation of Former Armed Forces Personnel Who Served in Northern Ireland', Research Briefing, 2 July 2022, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8352/>.

³⁴³ Johnny Mercer, 'I'm Sorry to Have Been Relieved of My Responsibilities in Government Tonight. <https://T.Co/AWai59fVhE>', Tweet, @JohnnyMercerUK, 20 April 2021, <https://twitter.com/JohnnyMercerUK/status/1384572401179144193>.

³⁴⁴ Mercer.

The circulation of myths around the relationship between the soldier, state, and home culture during the Vietnam War can be read as a tool through which the soldier has been created as victim. In particular, the stab-in-the-back myth which attributes the defeat to a betrayal by the left, the media, and the anti-war movement, which undermined the soldiers and the war. The myth created the soldier and military as a victim of politics, who, otherwise would have been able to achieve victory. As Kimball demonstrates, the myth developed out of a right-wing political recasting of the war, which while never dominant, nonetheless was influential.³⁴⁵

Closely tied to this concept of betrayal of the soldier, another narrative arose which creates the veteran as victim by narrative. In his book on the cultural memory of the Vietnam War in America, Patrick Hagopian describes the 1980s emergence of 'a sentimental and personalized discourse in which the key idea was that veterans had been misjudged and misunderstood by the public' and civilian society which 'reject[ed] and vilif[ied] them because of their association with an unpopular war'.³⁴⁶ Hagopian contends that framing the veteran in this way structured subsequent responses, focused on healing the veteran and society, which this thesis understands as a kind of saviour, results-orientated behaviour.

Lembcke's work on the myth 'spitting image' in which the Vietnam era soldier is welcomed home by being spat on by someone opposed to the war unites the stab-in-the-back discourse with the sentimental wounded/healing narrative.³⁴⁷ However the resultant feelings of shame which accompany the spitting image remain despite the research which situates the image as an unprovable myth as opposed to a ubiquitous encounter for a veteran. It is with this national cultural guilt in mind that scholars have read the controversy

³⁴⁵ Jeffrey P. Kimball, 'The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War', *Armed Forces & Society* 14, no. 3 (1 April 1988): 433–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X8801400306>.

³⁴⁶ Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing*, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 18.

³⁴⁷ Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

over the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and, decades later, the triumphalist narratives and practices of homecoming for soldiers from the Gulf War³⁴⁸.

Narratives generate characters and meaning in civil-military relations. Just as the soldier may be made victim in a narrative, they just as easily may become the victim of a narrative. This type of victimhood predominately arises in hindsight, after time has permitted the establishment of a narrative. Often it is only illuminated by efforts at counternarrative, as in the cases of British soldiers in the First World War. The history of the First World War has been criticised for its characterisation of the armed forces and the representation of military leadership. This narrative, commonly associated with the phrase 'lions led by donkeys', portrays the waste of good, brave soldiers at the hands of incompetent generals. Critics, including Brian Bond, assert that the narrative's dominance has permeated popular culture and literature (this is developed further in *Chapter 6*), becoming a kind of myth.³⁴⁹ Generating the soldier as a victim of cultural narrative places an onus upon any would-be saviour to right and rewrite the story. In the case of the First World War, subsequent scholarship on the historiography the conflict recognises the maligned leadership as a sort of victim of the popular narrative which has incorrectly characterized them.³⁵⁰ In looking at historical interpretation and the cultural work around generating meaning and understanding around the war, this scholarship seeks to redeem the victim from the narrative.

5.2. Instrumental Victimization

When held against facts and reason, the persistence of the equivalency and understanding of soldier as victim evidences an impulse to produce and embrace the fiction and figure of the 'victim' instrumentally. In counterpoint to 'instrumental heroization' developed above, this thesis proposes 'instrumental victimization' to describe the process

³⁴⁸ David Fitzgerald, 'Support the Troops: Gulf War Homecomings and a New Politics of Military Celebration', *Modern American History* 2, no. 1 (March 2019): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/mah.2019.1>.

³⁴⁹ Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁵⁰ Brian Bond, ed., *The First World War and British Military History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

in which the will to knowledge of 'military' as victim configures the 'civil' as saviour. However, while the processes appear at first glance opposite, they are two sides of the same social behavioural impulse: the need to find pathways toward addressing the indebtedness stemming from conceptualising military service as gift. The victimization developed here, which identifies the soldier as victims of varying types, is instrumental in that its utility for the giver outstrips that for the recipient.

While it seems counterintuitive to read victimization as a type of gratitude act, this thesis roots instrumental victimization within the civil-military figural economy. The will to knowledge of the military as *victim* configures the civil as *saviour*, a figure and fiction accompanied by sets of behaviours that are templated and predictable. These actions of saviourism assuage the anxiety of military as a figure of unease because they move toward trying to relieve indebtedness. These actions could include advocacy or charitable giving, as explored in more depth in *Chapter 5*, but it is also evidenced in the overzealous protection of the perceived *victim*. For example, in participating in the research ethics approval process with my university, a concern from the ethics committee was that my interview work was 'quite likely' to 'get into potentially traumatic memories of military service, even if the questions do not directly ask about them.' Their response was preoccupied by this potential risk despite several factors and some common sense. Of the people and organisations I sought to interview, the vast majority had no military service experience. The interviews were not about combat experiences and unlikely to touch on them even incidentally. I had provided an appendix of interview questions in applying for research approval which indicated as much. However, it seemed that their concerns stemmed from the same perceptions and biases that this dissertation is interested in unmaking: that veteran = combat veteran = traumatised and/or living with PTSD.

Speaking in defence of the flattened 'military' as victim is instrumental victimization, which locates the 'civil' as an ally, a champion, a saviour. Crucially, this isn't to argue that mental or physical injury isn't 'real' or a challenge for servicepeople as individuals or community. But it speaks to the oddity that while the military produces a minority of injured veterans, socially the perception exists which make this minority a majority. This impression stunningly spans experts and non-experts alike. While the knowledge and awareness of mental or physical injuries among the ex-service population may come from a place of

good intention (and even in opposition to a narrative of infallible heroism), the shift to identify 'all' or, inaccurately, most veterans as kind of victim moves the relations toward the prefabricated templates of the figurations established in this theory. The saviour, who figures the 'military' as victim, is charged with an actionable brief: to save. And the simplicity and surety of this call to action is sufficiently alluring to, at times, evade logical scrutiny.

Logical Challenges to Instrumental Victimization

Just as, statistically, every soldier can't be a hero, every soldier can't be a victim. That instrumental victimization persists despite a base level awareness of a flattening of 'military' into 'victim' once again speaks to the anxiety over 'military' as a figure of unease. The allure of instrumental victimization (and instrumental heroization) is in its alignment with the urgency of obligation to redress the indebtedness in civil-military relations. Instrumental victimization patterns behaviour and resolves 'military' and 'civil' in figures which alleviate the anxiety. It is a relational system so attractive in its proscription that it enables a wilful blindness to logical challenge.

While the three types of victimhood explored above each produce a particular kind of 'saviour', this section approaches the logical challenges to instrumental victimization with a focus on soldiers as victims of physical and mental injury as its primary example. To do this, it returns to the story of Matt Keil, the veteran whose family had sought out fertility treatment after an injury left him paralysed. A commenter had assumed, without any input, that Keil might suffer from PTSD – a leap powered by the same logic which underwrote the response of the research ethics committee. Such a slip in reasoning persists, even faced by the logical challenges to such instrumental victimization.

For the calculus of soldier = combat veteran = PTSD victim, or even combat veteran = PTSD victim to reflect reality, several statistics would need to be different. First, most service personnel would have to be serving in deployed combat roles and engaging with battle. Then another majority of these individuals would have to be developing PTSD. All evidence stands to the contrary. One US public media campaign, *Veterans Coming Home*,

estimated that 40% of active-duty U.S. military personnel never deploy.³⁵¹ Of the 60% who do deploy, only 10-20% will deploy to combat zones.³⁵² Many of these people are support personnel (e.g., mechanics, engineers, chefs). While some of these people may experience enemy engagement of some variety, they are not tasked with combat making this sort of exposure incidental. Of the then small minority who do deploy in combat roles, how many are at risk for combat-related trauma? While PTSD is not the best measure for trauma, which may occur without resulting in PTSD, it is a recognisable and thus useful metric in this case. Historically, the prevalence of combat-related PTSD has been low: 4-17% for US Iraq War veterans and 3-6% for UK Iraq War veterans.³⁵³ A more recent and local study found that the prevalence of probable PTSD was elevated amongst ex-serving combat role regulars (17%) versus serving combat role regulars (6%) amongst UK military personnel.³⁵⁴ Neither percentage indicates a majority.

However, despite the reality that only a small percent of the military is at risk for combat-related PTSD (or even traumatic memories more loosely), the perception remains that veterans are likely to experience psychological disorders. For example, a 2014 UK study noted that, 'the widely held assumption that former Service personnel are, as a group, disproportionately likely to experience mental illness compared to the population as a whole is not supported by the evidence.'³⁵⁵ Yet cultural representations of the military in the media continue to reinforce the idea of the veteran as an ex-combat soldier who suffers from PTSD. And readers continue to internalise and parrot this conceptualization of the soldier as victim, locating them, perhaps, as saviour. This is the cultural work which underpins and explains the response of the research ethics committee and the commenter on Matt Keil's story.

³⁵¹ 10% of the US Military Sees Combat. What Does the Other 90% Do?, accessed 25 February 2021, <https://youtu.be/lB9ukB5rUTA>.

³⁵² 10% of the US Military Sees Combat. What Does the Other 90% Do?

³⁵³ Lisa K. Richardson, B. Christopher Frueh, and Ronald Acierno, 'Prevalence Estimates of Combat-Related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Critical Review', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 44, no. 1 (January 2010): 4–19, <https://doi.org/10.3109/00048670903393597>.

³⁵⁴ Sharon A. M. Stevelink et al., 'Mental Health Outcomes at the End of the British Involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan Conflicts: A Cohort Study', *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 213, no. 6 (December 2018): 690–97, <https://doi.org/10.1192/bj.p.2018.175>.

³⁵⁵ Lord Ashcroft, 'The Veterans' Transition Review', February 2014, 111, <http://www.veteranstransition.co.uk/vtrreport.pdf>.

6. Toward Analysing Cultural Work

This chapter has worked to queer CMR to conceptually frame the empirical analysis taken up in this project. It developed and discussed the queer theory and methods which this project draws on in its analysis and has mapped out the dominant figurations of military as 'hero' and 'victim' and civil as 'saved' and 'saviour'. It argued that their magnetism and power must be read through a lens of instrumentalism to account for the flattening and logical lapses that feature in contemporary CMR. The theory lays a foundation from which our analysis might see queerly. I lean into this phrasing, not because it is pithy, but because this project takes seriously a queer potential in civil-military relations. In denaturalizing the binary between civil and military and theorising a figural economy which operates in the commodification of CMR, this project recognises that the binary is created in cultural work. Yet in seeing queerly, it opens the possibility that what is constructed is not a binary at all. In sustaining and bringing to bear the argument that civil-military relations has a queerness within it, the project also recognises that the 'poles' themselves, the hero-victim-military and the saved-saviour-civil might they themselves be nonbinary. These potentials on both levels are explored in the empirical analysis of the following three chapters.

In wielding the figurations of hero and victim, saved and saviour, the project recognises and highlights entanglements which are best represented in queer and/or logics. In this sense, the project pursues the possibility of the will to knowledge of military as *hero and/or victim* and the configuration of civil as *saved and/or saviour*. The project develops across three key sites in the civil-military figural economy: recognition (Chapter 4), recovery (Chapter 5), and reproduction (Chapter 6). The trio of sites contribute to and shape the contemporary character of CMR and their analysis highlights several types of cultural work done which maintain the civil-military binary. Through them, the thesis sketches out how commodification acts as the partner of reification. In mapping this process, it also outlines the spaces and possibilities for disruption which might move civil-military relations away from the indebtedness that characterises the contemporary US and/or UK context.

CHAPTER 4

RECOGNITION: VALOR AS COMMODITY

[This photograph, 'Memorial Day U.S. Marine Veteran' by Adam Nadel, Associated Press, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation or individual.]

Figure 2. 'Memorial Day U.S. Marine Veteran'. Photograph by Adam Nadel, Associated Press, 27 May 1996. AP 96052701366.³⁵⁶

'Roni DeJoseph, of the Brooklyn borough of New York, who identified himself as a U.S. Marine veteran who fought in Vietnam, pays honor to a friend as he visits the Vietnam Wall Experience, a traveling replica of Washington Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall, following Brooklyn's 129th consecutive Memorial Day Parade in New York Monday, May 27, 1996. (AP Photo/ Adam Nadel)'³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Accessed 12 October 2020, apimages.com/metadata/Index/Associated-Press-Domestic-News-New-York-United-/3f73bcb8f8e6da11af9f0014c2589dfb.

³⁵⁷ The image and caption were included by *The Mercury News* in a photo gallery that accompanied: Michael E. Ruane, 'Families Leave Ashes at Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Creating a Dilemma', *The Washington Post* (Circulated by *The Mercury News*), 11 February 2018, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/02/11/families-leave-ashes-at-vietnam-veterans-memorial-creating-a-dilemma/>.

1. The Commodification of Valour

Embracing the queering of CMR developed in the previous chapter, this chapter begins the empirical section of this thesis which centres on three key sites of the civil-military figural economy: recognition, recovery, and reproduction. It understands these sites as comingled, with multiple types of activity taking place at each. However, in sifting and sorting the cultural work done around the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this thesis is also attentive to history and time. Though not strictly linear, these sites can also be conceived of as steps in the process of making sense of the military as a figure of unease, which drives the civil-military cultural work this thesis is interested in. This chapter focuses on the first site/step: recognition. It plays with the term, exploiting the double meaning of 'recognise' to interrogate the critical relationship between identifying the military and showing appreciation of it/them.

Let us consider the photograph (Figure 2) which precedes this chapter. We recognise: a Vietnam veteran in combat fatigues weeps, pressing his face and hand against the names of the fallen soldiers etched on the reflective panels of the replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial ('The Wall') in Washington D.C. *How do we recognise this?* The fatigues are a clear sign, featuring a variety of military pins and flashes. The photograph was taken in 1996, making the man in the photo approximately the right age to be a Vietnam veteran. His posture is full of emotion, an escalation of form from other photographs of people visiting the memorial. Many photos of the memorial show people touching The Wall, in prayer, pain, or memory. The reflective surface, etched with names, invites tactile engagement. It is common to create rubbings of the name of a loved one with charcoal and paper. DeJoseph, the man in the photo, like many others, is touching the wall, not with his hand, but with his face held in an expression of grief. The photograph is haunting, inviting the viewer in to feel the coolness of the Wall, the texture of the names against our hands, against our faces. But it also holds itself and the viewer apart from the veteran. He is alone and without comfort, in perpetuity. Turning to the caption, we notice something curious: it describes DeJoseph as a someone 'who identified himself as a U.S. Marine veteran,' rather than 'a U.S. Marine veteran' outright. The why behind this caption and the why behind

DeJoseph's behaviour are linked by the cultural work of recognition which creates and maintains valour as a commodity.

This chapter is interested in the commodification of valour, though it acknowledges a wider spread of behaviours that commodify the military generally and military heroes specifically. This behaviour can be read as the cultural work of recognition, relating to both the identification of 'military' visually and the affirmative dynamic of an appreciative orientation toward military persons. Endorsements and media opportunities abound for heroes, including book or film deals with little regard for the veracity of the story or the skill of the writer (this is explored in more detail in *Chapter 6*). Military-inspired physical fitness experiences, ranging from residential boot camps to recreational assault courses and personal training programmes, extol and celebrate the military, fit body as aspirational. If one wishes to look 'military' or just follows the trends, camouflage patterns and surplus clothing makes dressing 'military' accessible, for a price. The market itself is not military or civil but operates as a site of purchase of 'military', and perhaps, as this chapter explores, valour.

The chapter's analytical approach links the commodification of valour with the incentivisation of military impersonation/misrepresentation, a behaviour commonly referred to as 'stolen valour'. For this reason, it elects to first examine military medals as physical tokens to which this behaviour was originally linked, regarding the inappropriate wearing of military uniforms and decorations. If medals are a physical example of the commodification of valour, then the chapter's subsequent examination of stolen valour demonstrates a dislocation of value from the physical object to the speech act. While there are numerous examples of the commodification of valour³⁵⁸, this chapter focuses on military medals and stolen valour to presents an account that links them together. While it represents the cultural work of recognition in military medals as a kind of gratitude act, it attributes stolen valour's rise to this kind of gratitude act which has been greatly expanded through the indebted character of CMR and the process of instrumental heroization. Stolen valour is identified and read as a threat to the functionality of the commodification of valour, insofar

³⁵⁸ The monetization of the fame which some high-profile veterans have achieved might also be read as a commodification of valour, for example.

as it serves civil-military relations. While physical tokens of valorous acts and the accolades that came with them produces a simple relation of the true, recognised, and laudable military hero with the appreciative civil saved, stolen valour introduces bad faith into the formula.

The term 'stolen valour', brought into public consciousness by the U.S. Stolen Valor Acts of 2005 and 2013, can be traced to B.G. Burkett's self-published book *Stolen Valor*, written with journalist Glenna Whitley.³⁵⁹ The book uses the term 'stolen valour' to describe how fake Vietnam war veterans and the media produced unfavourable representations of the veteran in society (as ill, dangerous, criminal, homeless), which damaged the lives, experiences, and legacies of genuine veterans including himself. It is a single-minded but long-winded (at nearly 600 pages) effort that chronicles years of Burkett's experience identifying and exposing phonies, with the authors focusing on a staggering number of cases, including DeJoseph. Burkett dates the camouflage jacket to the 1980s, well after the Vietnam War, and flags up discrepancies in the patches and pins that DeJoseph wears.³⁶⁰ Having searched military records, he concludes that DeJoseph is not a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, or any other service branch.³⁶¹ Burkett notes that he contacted the media about this misrepresentation, leading the Associated Press to alter the caption for future use.³⁶² However, the photograph has continued to make the rounds in the media: a 2018 article on The Wall features a gallery which includes the photograph of DeJoseph alongside images of other visitors and veterans at the memorial.³⁶³

The story of this photograph of DeJoseph weaves together threads of the cultural work of civil-military recognition. A person, in dressing and behaving a certain way, becomes recognisable as a veteran. They are captured on camera by the media and their image is shared across the country to be recognised by a variety of readers. Despite what we know about DeJoseph, some resonating truth is captured in the photograph — people

³⁵⁹ B.G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History* (Verity Press, Inc., 1998).

³⁶⁰ Burkett and Whitley, 586.

³⁶¹ Burkett and Whitley, 586.

³⁶² Burkett and Whitley, 672n981.

³⁶³ *The Washington Post*, 'Families Leave Ashes at Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Creating a Dilemma', *The Mercury News*, 11 February 2018, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/02/11/families-leave-ashes-at-vietnam-veterans-memorial-creating-a-dilemma/>.

recognise a veteran mourning his fellow soldiers — which outstrips factual accuracy, permitting the image to endure with minimal amendment. Valour, prized and traded as a commodity, at times defies logic, as in the case of the photograph of DeJoseph, due in large part to the support of maintenance labour performed by the cultural work discussed in this chapter.

The first half of this chapter analyses the commodification of valour through the military medal systems of the US and UK, as well as social behaviour around medals including collecting and protest. In doing so, it establishes that medals as objects of recognition (identification and appreciation) have a value which is underwritten by valour. This chapter embraces Marx's assertion that 'A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.'³⁶⁴ The work of this chapter elucidates the labour of recognition which produces valour as a commodity. In utilising the term 'commodity', this analysis leans into Marx's critique of political economy and is consistent with other contemporary scholarship which brings Marx's analysis of commodities to bear in interdisciplinary work.³⁶⁵ A commodity, then, is something which has value in society and thus can be exchanged.³⁶⁶ This thesis identifies military medals and decoration systems as a site which commodifies valour. The medal or decoration becomes a physical object or token of recognition which acknowledges the recipient and becomes a way to recognise and identify him or her. It also produces a clear narrative of relations, drawing on the figuration of military as hero and configuring the civil as saved.

Reading valour as a commodity drives the second half of this chapter and its analysis of stolen valour as a social phenomenon which draws in perpetrators, accusers, and the law. This chapter argues that instrumental heroization has dislocated the commodification of valour from physical objects and symbols to speech itself. As instrumental heroization has led to the flattening of identities and the conceptual leap that *all* servicepersons are heroes,

³⁶⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887), 47,

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf>.

³⁶⁵ For example, see: Robin Truth Goodman, *Gender Commodity* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

³⁶⁶ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, 30.

the value of valour as a commodity has been transferred to underwrite the exchangeable worth of simply being ‘military.’ In this sense, while the concern previously, evidenced in sumptuary laws around the wear and use of military uniforms and decorations, lay in impersonation by appearance, the concern of the contemporary era has grown to include impersonation in speech act.

The cultural work of recognition, which commodifies valour, has responded to this change through the recognition of and work against stolen valour as the second part of this chapter explores. That ‘stolen valour’ exists in this sense is only made possible through a system of cultural labour which commodifies valour. It is only because valour has exchangeable value that it can be stolen. No longer confined to physical objects, valour has been deformed as a commodity which underwrites the value of merely being ‘military.’ People have always lied about military service, but the anxieties revealed through the response to stolen valour — pushes for legislative change and stolen valour hunting — suggest a new heightening of the stakes. Stealing valour as a commodity threatens the cultural work of recognition, which relies on the sets of privileges and benefits accorded to ‘military’ people to ease the indebtedness of contemporary civil-military relations. If we are mis-recognising people who are pretending to have served in the military and cannot identify imposters to limit the fraud, then the civil-military relations predicated upon a binary and oppositional figurations is imperilled. The chapter thus reads stolen valour hunting as a behaviour which attempts to resecure the civil-military binary amidst the queerness introduced by stolen valour.

2. Valour as a Commodity: Military Medals

Medals are an ideal subject of analysis for this chapter on the work of recognition because they speak to the duality encompassed in the term. They are a form or token of recognition backed by the government and military to commend individuals for notable acts of service. They are also a visual sign when worn or displayed, even in non-military settings. People see medals, or other bits of military dress or iconography, and recognise ‘military’ in them.

This thesis reads medals as queer objects, which refuse to signify monolithically. They are public and/or private, markers of personal and/or collective memory, heirlooms, and historical artefacts. This queerness accounts for the difficulty in analysing military medals and adequately accounting for their complexity. While others have recognized medals as a combination of state-created value and a social currency³⁶⁷, this chapter goes further, looking at medals as queer objects to enable a richer, more layered understanding of them. Crucially, how they are read and understood has far-reaching implications for organizing social and civil-military relations. Are medals compensation or a form of payment? Or does their very existence serve to mark something unrepayable? What types of value back medals? And, if fake medals devalue real medals, on which level do they do so? The answers to these questions are intimately connected with civil-military relations, as medals are queer objects which move across society, through legislation, investiture, adornment, commerce, and social life. They are, at once, many things, which sometimes may conflict with each other.

How we theorize CMR is critical to reading medals as it delineates the 'world' or 'worlds' within which the medals are to be analysed. For example, Taussig-Rubbo, addressing the topic within a law journal, asserts that the 'value of a medal is transformed as it is taken from the military to the civilian world.'³⁶⁸ In the military 'world', Taussig-Rubbo argues, medals are visible, wearable symbols which function as a sort of currency and organize relations among military persons.³⁶⁹ But in the 'civilian world', the medals' meaning 'becomes more diffuse and out of focus' as fewer people have the knowledge of how to read and recognize them.³⁷⁰ Taussig-Rubbo does well in his analysis of the relation between medals and money and their respective systems of value, advocating for a reading which encompasses moments when these 'forms of value interpenetrate' or are 'kept separate'.³⁷¹ However his very language of incursion and space speak to an awareness and patrolling of borders between things, even as he explicitly tries to steer clear of such boundaries. His

³⁶⁷ Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, 'The Value of Valor: Money, Medals, and Military Labor', *North Dakota Law Review* 88, no. 2 (2012): 283–320.

³⁶⁸ Taussig-Rubbo, 306.

³⁶⁹ Taussig-Rubbo, 303.

³⁷⁰ Taussig-Rubbo, 306.

³⁷¹ Taussig-Rubbo, 291.

analysis gestures toward the complexity of medals but is restricted by binary language and theory which keeps 'worlds' and systems of value necessarily distinct. Embracing medals as queer objects overcomes these limitations.

The concept and practice of military decoration is longstanding. Roman *dona militaria* (military decorations) encompassed several wearables, including *phalerae*, decorative metal discs that could be attached to and displayed on a leather chest harness by soldiers.³⁷² Soldiers in Middle Kingdom Egypt are believed to have worn shell pendants inscribed with royal cartouches as some sort of military decoration.³⁷³ The social value of these and other objects which distinguished military service and/or acts of bravery is obvious. In identifying and then marking individuals' accomplishments in a way that was wearable, the granter recognised the individual in a way that was readable by other people, even us today. The physical military decoration made concrete the loose, abstract ideas of bravery associated with soldiers. It highlighted select individuals and announced their worth without the need for words. The physical military decorations were, and are, symbols which hold a communicative value. In a Roman context, the most prestigious *dona militaria* (grass and oak crowns) were not crafted from precious metals, but from 'intrinsically worthless materials'³⁷⁴ demonstrating this separation of communicative and symbolic value from any sense of material, or, in the case of metal, bullion value.

Yet the histories of medals and decorations shows the doubleness of these objects, which while holding communicative, social value also had material value, which might be exploited through sale or other use. For example, Pliny 'lament[ed] that Roman soldiers melt[ed] down the rewards of valor to make objects of luxury.'³⁷⁵ In a 1643 warrant

³⁷² Valerie A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

³⁷³ While the understanding of these and other objects, including fly iconography, is contested by some researchers, institutions displaying these objects concur on their links with military accomplishment. See, for example: 'Pectoral and Fly-Shaped Beads | Middle Kingdom', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed 6 August 2021, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/591372>; Morgan Moroney, 'Egyptian Jewelry: A Window into Ancient Culture', American Research Center In Egypt, accessed 6 August 2021, <https://www.arce.org/resource/egyptian-jewelry-window-ancient-culture>.

³⁷⁴ Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service: Ideologies of Discipline in the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 198.

³⁷⁵ Phang, 198 and 198n266.

establishing what became known as the Forlorn Hope medal, Charles I directed that: 'no soldier at any time do sell, nor any of our subjects presume to buy, or wear, any of these said Badges, other than they to whom we shall give the same.'³⁷⁶ A surviving Forlorn Hope medal in the British Museum's collection is made of silver and gold³⁷⁷, suggesting they would have been sellable or tradeable. Yet the warrant's regulations over the exchange of the medals seems targeted at preserving their communicative and symbolic value. The medal was created out of an awareness that the soldiers were 'not looked upon according to their merited valor and loyal service.'³⁷⁸ The warrant asked that leadership write up deserving soldiers so 'that care may be taken to reward their deservings and make them specially known to all our good subjects.'³⁷⁹

A logical fallacy of contemporary military medals is why they exist and what they recognise precisely, as part of being a soldier is, potentially, putting yourself in life-threatening situations and facing them bravely. If medals recognise acts which are 'beyond the call of duty' in terms of bravery, then where does this call of duty end, precisely? Taussig-Rubbo illuminates the enlistment document, in the case of the US, the DD Form 4/1, as a status contract, more like a marriage certificate than an employment contract.³⁸⁰ Signing up to serve in the military extends beyond the realm of traditional employment. It is a giving over of the self. Yet, that the medal system exists, to cherry-pick cases of valour and note, suggests that some actions exist beyond the scope of this already demanding status contract. Taussig-Rubbo identifies this 'surplus' as 'valor, sacrifice, and heroism.'³⁸¹

While some researchers looking at military medals from other disciplinary backgrounds portray them as significant for the military because they 'encourage[] heroism and thereby ensure [the military's] institutional investment,'³⁸² this analysis strongly

³⁷⁶ Stanley C. Johnson, *Chats on Military Curios* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1915), 113, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/48366/48366-h/48366-h.htm>.

³⁷⁷ Thomas Rawlins, *Forlorn Hope*, 1643, Coins and Medals, M.9082, The British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_M-9082.

³⁷⁸ Johnson, *Chats on Military Curios*, 113.

³⁷⁹ Johnson, 113.

³⁸⁰ Taussig-Rubbo, 'The Value of Valor', 304.

³⁸¹ Taussig-Rubbo, 305.

³⁸² Ramya Kasturi, 'Stolen Valor: A Historical Perspective on the Regulation of Military Uniform and Decorations', *Yale Journal on Regulation* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 443.

disagrees. Critically, it is both cynical and misguided to imagine that, in the moment of doing something brave (and often foolhardy), people have military decorations on the mind. To portray medals as encouraging heroism creates a frame of analysis which locates the medal as an incentive. However, this analysis reads these valorous acts as spontaneous and uncalculated. They are given, without thought, by the individual to their oppos, their battle buddy, the people around them, the people they might save. Framed abstractly within the concept of service, the acts become a sort of gift to the country and its people as well. It is this framing, of the Gift, to borrow from Mauss³⁸³, which can be used to understand military decoration as a form of recognition. The institution and nation which receives the gift of valorous act feels indebted and is aware that payment alone does not suffice to recognise the individual's actions.³⁸⁴ The medal system then, can be read as part of a civil-military effort to address the debt incurred with receiving the gift of valorous actions. However, this recognition of the gift has a transformative effect. One of Derrida's key criticisms of Mauss's *The Gift* is that Mauss neglects to engage with the contradiction between gift and exchange.³⁸⁵ For Derrida, there is a tension in the relation between gift and exchange, for a gift must be 'aneconomic'³⁸⁶, with no 'reciprocity, return, exchange, counter gift, or debt.'³⁸⁷ With this in hand, the medals and decoration system, as a move to recognise gifts of valorous action, transforms the gift into exchange. The process commodifies valour.

This section reads medals as queer objects which have anchored the valuation of valour in an expansion upon this original treatment of medals as a token of recognition. In addition, the physical medals and the relations they evoke may be read in our queering of CMR as a gratitude act intended to redress the debt of military service. However, the success of this act relies on the functionality of the cultural work of recognition: the correct individuals must be identified and acknowledged. The section first presents a brief outline

³⁸³ Mauss, *The Gift*.

³⁸⁴ Here, I draw inspiration from Mauss' discussion of social insurance. He writes: 'Although the worker has to contribute to his insurance, those who have benefited from his services have not discharged their debt to him through the payment of wages.' Mauss, 86.

³⁸⁵ Derrida, *Given Time. I*, 37.

³⁸⁶ Derrida, 7.

³⁸⁷ Derrida, 12.

of American and British valorous medal hierarchies to help orient the reader before it develops a sustained analysis of the value(s) of military medals: physical, communicative, and totemic. The section evaluates each of these separately but links them together as examples of how the gratitude act is formed around the military medal as a token of the valorous act. The section concludes by linking the different values of medals with illegal medal activity to demonstrate that the social behaviours and privileges that accompany the commodification of valour produce valour as something worth stealing. It is this theft, taken up in the second half of this chapter, which threatens the viability of the cultural work of recognition.

2.1. Valorous Medals in the US and UK

The United States and the United Kingdom have structured hierarchies of military honours for valour which are codified in military doctrine.³⁸⁸ The systems themselves, which sift out differing levels of valour and distinction and allot rights and privileges, are instruments through which civil-military relations commodifies valour. They codify a system of value and exchange in which valour is captured, kept, and given worth.

The following table summarises the highest four military honours in the British and American systems, with the most prestigious listed first. Following common sense, the decorations decrease in frequency of awarding as one moves up the table. For the UK, which offers separate tiers of operational and non-operational awards, only the operational awards are included.³⁸⁹ The UK's Distinguished Service Order is not included because it has been awarded for command and leadership (but not gallantry) during operations since the introduction of the all ranks Conspicuous Gallantry Cross in 1993.³⁹⁰ The American and

³⁸⁸ For the United States, see: Department of the Army, 'AR 600-8-22: Military Awards'. For the United Kingdom, see Ministry of Defence, 'JSP 761: Honours and Awards in the Armed Forces'.

³⁸⁹ The George Cross, awarded for non-operational gallantry or gallantry deemed not to be in the presence of an enemy is the top tier of the non-operational awards and equal in stature to the Victoria Cross.

³⁹⁰ The introduction of the CGC followed a review of the honours system led by PM John Major in 1993. One of the outcomes of this review was the end of separate awards systems for officers and non-commissioned ranks. Major called for a future in which 'the level of award will be determined by the part played by the individuals concerned, and the courage they displayed, without regard to their rank' (HC Deb, 4 March 1993, vol 455).

British systems are separate, and the tables are not meant to imply any equivalency across systems. Both systems also have non-valorous awards, including for long service or participation in particular operational areas.

United States	United Kingdom
Medal of Honor (MOH)	Victoria Cross (VC)
Distinguished Service Cross	Conspicuous Gallantry Cross
Navy Cross	
Air Force Cross	
Silver Star	Distinguished Service Cross
Bronze Star	Military Cross
	Distinguished Flying Cross
	Mention in Despatches

Table 2. Summary of highest military honours in UK and US for valour

For perspective, the MOH has been awarded 3,527 times to 3,508 individuals, with a disproportionate number from the U.S. Civil War, but only 25 for the War on Terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan.³⁹¹ The honour was first awarded in 1863.³⁹² The medals themselves are made predominantly from brass and thus have little material value, though some politicians and lobbyists unsuccessfully argued for increasing the gold content to be more in line with the Congressional Gold Medal, a top tier non-military award, in early 2002.³⁹³ In addition to the medal itself, recipients are accorded other lifelong 'courtesies and privileges,' including a pension (\$1,406.73/month in 2021³⁹⁴), free travel on military aircraft (if space is available), military commissary and exchange privileges, invitations to Presidential inaugurations, and automatic appointment for their children to any of the

³⁹¹ 'Medal of Honor FAQs | CMOHS', Congressional Medal of Honor Society (Congressional Medal of Honor Society), <https://www.cmohs.org/medal/faqs>, accessed 13 August 2021, <https://www.cmohs.org/medal/faqs>.

³⁹² 'History and Timeline of the Medal of Honor', Congressional Medal of Honor Society (Congressional Medal of Honor Society), <https://www.cmohs.org/medal/timeline>, accessed 13 August 2021, <https://www.cmohs.org/medal/timeline>.

³⁹³ 'How Much Metal Should Be in a Medal of Honor?', *The Washington Times*, 4 February 2002, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/feb/4/20020204-035432-3274r/>.

³⁹⁴ '2021 VA Special Benefit Allowances Rates', Veterans Affairs, 15 July 2021, <https://www.va.gov/disability/compensation-rates/special-benefit-allowance-rates/>.

military service academies outside of the normal rigorous nomination process.³⁹⁵ Since its creation in 1856, the VC has been awarded 1,358 times to 1,354 individuals.³⁹⁶ It was awarded four times for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.³⁹⁷ Like the MOH, the VC is also made from bronze, 'deliberately intended to have little actual value'³⁹⁸ in contrast with its tremendous symbolic value. In addition to the physical medal, recipients receive an annuity of £10,000.³⁹⁹ Interestingly, the equivalent non-operational award, the George Cross, is made from solid silver and thus has a higher physical value.⁴⁰⁰

In examining military medals, it is imperative to emphasise the imperfection of the medal and decoration systems. The systems rely on reporting and writing up actions, necessarily, after they take place, the narrative making its way up through military bureaucracy to be measured and made sense of. Yet the judgement of the system is subjective, even amidst the veneer of objectivity that military doctrine may lend it. The system undoubtedly fails. By design it cannot possibly capture every moment of 'beyond the call of duty' action. It sifts and separates and alienates some people. Why are a person's actions deemed to belong to one category of award, but not another? What do we make of Lance Corporal Matt Croucher, who shielded his comrades from a trip-wire grenade in an enemy compound by throwing himself on top of it?⁴⁰¹ Croucher miraculously survived with

³⁹⁵ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 'DoD Manual 1348.33, Volume 1 Manual of Military Decorations and Awards: Medal of Honor', 7 May 2021, 24–25, https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodm/134833_Vol1.PDF?ver=86rp_OZEVxAiByOjPDSvgQ%3D%3D.

³⁹⁶ Imperial War Museums, 'IWM London Press Release: Facts and Figures about the Victoria Cross and George Cross', accessed 13 August 2021, https://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/public-document/Facts_and_Figures_VC_GC.pdf.

³⁹⁷ 'The Victoria Cross | About Us | Hancocks Jewellers London', Hancocks London, accessed 13 August 2021, <https://www.hancocks-london.com/about-us/victoria-cross/>.

³⁹⁸ Imperial War Museums, 'IWM London Press Release: Facts and Figures about the Victoria Cross and George Cross', 1.

³⁹⁹ Andrew Grice, 'Budget 2015: Bank Fines Will Pay for Annual £10,000 Reward for VC And', *The Independent*, 8 July 2015, sec. News, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/budget-2015-uk-emergency-live-bank-fines-will-pay-annual-ps10-000-reward-vc-and-gc-winners-10373326.html>.

⁴⁰⁰ Imperial War Museums, 'IWM London Press Release: Facts and Figures about the Victoria Cross and George Cross', 2.

⁴⁰¹ Recorded in *The Gazette: Official Public Record (London Gazette)*, issue 58774, pp. 11163-11164, 24 July 2008, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/58774/supplement/11163>, accessed 16 February 2021.

only minor injury thanks to his rucksack and protective equipment, and his intact team was able to continue the operation. Why were Croucher's actions deemed to not have occurred in the face of the enemy, setting him up to receive the George Cross, on par with the VC in terms of level, but less recognisable?

The actions, legacy, and military decoration of William H. Pitsenbarger, a USAF Pararescuman who served in Vietnam, became the focus of the film *The Last Full Measure* (2019), which digs into the bureaucratic side of awarding medals. Pitsenbarger was killed in his overnight effort to evacuate, treat, and defend a pinned-down infantry company that was critically outnumbered and suffered 80% casualties.⁴⁰² He was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross in acknowledgement of his actions. However, surviving members of the infantry company championed a review of his case out of a conviction that his actions warranted the nation's highest honour.⁴⁰³ After reassessment of his case, Pitsenbarger was awarded the Medal of Honor in 2000. The USAF Pararescueman's Code concludes with a phrase echoed in its specialty badge: 'These things I do that others may live.'⁴⁰⁴ Considering the honours and privileges which *structurally* accompany the top military decorations, makes the imperfections of the medals system seem even more acute. However, to appreciate the full commodification of valour in CMR requires analysis of the different types of value associated with medals as part of the cultural work of recognition.

2.2. The Value(s) of Medals

As objects, military medals have several types of value which are useful to tease out in our analysis. This section evaluates three types of value — physical, communicative (in adornment), and communicative (in protest) — before proceeding to analyse medals' value at the point of commercial exchange. If a commodity, by definition, must have value to be

⁴⁰² 'Airman 1st Class William H. Pitsenbarger', National Museum of the United States Air Force, accessed 15 October 2021, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/195918/airman-1st-class-william-h-pitsenbarger/>.

⁴⁰³ Lacy Dean McCrary, 'William H. Pitsenbarger: Bravest Among the Brave Vietnam War Veteran', HistoryNet, 12 June 2006, <https://www.historynet.com/william-h-pitsenbarger-bravest-among-the-brave-vietnam-war-veteran.htm>.

⁴⁰⁴ Department of the Air Force, 'Air Force Specialty Code 1T2XX Pararescue Specialty: Career Field Education and Training Plan', 1 January 2018, 12, https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a3/publication/cfetp1t2xx/cfetp1t2xx.pdf.

exchanged, then the sale/auction of military medals is a key site to evaluate their value, which this chapter introduces as being a fourth type of value: totemic.

Physical

Perhaps surprisingly, modern valorous military medals have very little physical value. By physical value, this chapter refers to the value of object, sans recipient. These medals as objects, without being given, are usually made of brass and are not highly valued. The production cost of the Medal of Honor is less than \$30⁴⁰⁵. While workers mint the medals and sew the ribbons, and further back than that others pick and mine the raw materials, the military medal as an object pre-awarding has little physical value.

Communicative, in adornment

Medals inherently have communicative value. As worn decorations, they are a mark of recognition whose purpose can be traced back to the first military medals conferred. Anyone familiar with the intricacies of military decoration might be able to read a history of service, and perhaps valour, in a chest full of medals. Yet this communicative value continues outside of military company. Even a non-specialist reads something — military, shiny, worthy of distinction — in medals.

The communicative value of military dress and recognition is widely recognised. Clothing and adornment inform social relations. They can speak to class, gender, ethnicity, belonging, and power and we draw clues for our interpersonal relations from the way people dress. From a legal perspective, the interest in regulating military uniforms and decoration, which can be traced to sumptuary (consumption) and heraldry laws, stems from this communicative value.⁴⁰⁶ The intersocial relations called into play by wearing or seeing someone wear a military medal or uniform are notable. They announce a military affiliation without the need for words and engender civil-military social behaviours, for better or for worse. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it was not unusual in the United States to see military servicepersons traveling in uniform and be asked to applaud them or let them

⁴⁰⁵ John Martin, 'Medal of Honor: Gold or Brass?', ABC News, 2 May 2006, <https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=130511&page=1>.

⁴⁰⁶ Kasturi, 'Stolen Valor'.

board/deplane first. On the other side of the coin, the wearing of military uniform has been re-regulated in the modern era out of safety concerns, both during The Troubles and in the aftermath of the 2013 street murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby, who was wearing a military charity t-shirt and targeted as a soldier.⁴⁰⁷

For veterans, whose wearing of their uniform is strictly limited and governed after leaving the service, medals are an important and visible way to honour their service history, particularly on relevant public occasions like Veterans Day or Remembrance Day. However, in wearing their medals, they are also demonstrating their salient identities as veterans. This adornment, on these days, go a long way in structuring social relations. They mark out roles and privileges on days of cultural significance and collective memorialisation. The medal announces something about the person who wears it. However, this is only one form of the communicative value of medals.

Communicative, in protest

The communicative value of military medals also exists in the object itself, a value best observed through analysing their use in political protest, historically. Protests by veterans both in the US and UK have included organised, performative rejection of military action embodied in the public and provocative return of medals they have earned. In April 1971, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) held its first national demonstration in Washington DC, which was named 'Operation Dewey Canyon III' in a nod to two secret military operations in Laos.⁴⁰⁸ The final day of the demonstration, an estimated 700 veterans threw away their military medals in front of the U.S. Capitol in an act which the *New York Times* described as 'the spectacle of the men stripping themselves of combat honours and medals given to them by the parents of their dead buddies' and identified as the demonstration that 'probably best exemplified the point the group had been trying to make for five days.'⁴⁰⁹ Yet the reporter neglected the power of the action, which exceeded

⁴⁰⁷ Caroline Wyatt, 'Woolwich Attack Will Not Stop Soldiers Wearing Uniforms', *BBC News*, 23 May 2013, sec. UK, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-22642441>.

⁴⁰⁸ Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 'Vets' History: Operation "Dewey Canyon III"', *THE VETERAN* 7, no. 2 (April 1977): 15–16.

⁴⁰⁹ 'Veterans Discard Medals In War Protest at Capitol', *The New York Times*, 24 April 1971.

divesting themselves (physically and symbolically) of the decorations. As remembered by the VVAW in a later publication, the protestors placed a sign with the word 'Trash' on it near a statue, which became a focal point for people throwing their medals at the statue, sign, and the Capitol Building itself.⁴¹⁰ This public and performative display of returning their medals is powerful because it strikes a dissonant chord with how medals are valued and treated otherwise. While normally lauded, physically maintained, and displayed with pride, this action equated the medals and their military connection to rubbish.

Operation Dewey Canyon III wasn't a standalone demonstration. More recently, in 2015 the UK ex-services organisation Veterans For Peace (VFP UK) organised and participated in a similar action to protest the UK bombing of Syria.⁴¹¹ The action was reported on, recorded on video, and posted on social media. The video clips emphasize the veterans' speeches and the accompanying action of throwing their medals to the ground, with several shots showcasing the medals on the wet ground.⁴¹² In one, the voiceover identifies an individual who bends down to collect the medals as a Downing Street police officer and notes that the individual said that the medals would be 'well looked after.'⁴¹³ In watching the clip, there is a normative and satisfying response to seeing the medals retrieved from the ground: the twin reaction to the dismay and discomfort that accompanies watching the veterans cast them off in protest.

It is crucial here to acknowledge that returning military medals in this fashion is not the sole or natural way to do so. Juxtaposed with other options, it becomes clear that it is a deliberate, performative, and provocative choice. As an example of an alternative medal protest, in 2019 UK veterans who served in the Troubles in Northern Ireland returned their medals to ministers in protest of prosecution of their veteran peers decades after the conflict. Jim Kenyon, an ex-Para and participant in the protest described that '[The medals] were packaged individually and sent to each MP with the name of a soldier who had been

⁴¹⁰ Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 'Vietnam Veterans Against the War', 15.

⁴¹¹ 'War Veterans to Discard Medals at Downing Street', Veterans For Peace UK (blog), 7 December 2015, <https://vfpuk.org/articles/war-veterans-to-discard-medals-at-downing-street/>.

⁴¹² UK Veterans Throw Away Medals to Protest Syria Strikes, 2015, 0:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahQmF4fjtc8&ab_channel=AFPNewsAgency; Veterans Throw Away Their War Medals in Disgust at British Air Strikes in Syria, 2015, 0:20, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPrpA4Org9M&ab_channel=OnDemandNews.

⁴¹³ Veterans Throw Away Their War Medals in Disgust at British Air Strikes in Syria, 1:47-1:53.

killed.⁴¹⁴ While this manner of return is clearly considered and orchestrated, as demonstrated in the choice to include the names of fallen soldiers, it lacks the same public performativity of throwing medals away in person and for a crowd. The mailed medals in question were retained for safekeeping by the MoD in case of a change of heart.⁴¹⁵

What then do the feelings around and spectacle of using medals as instruments of protest reveal about their value? The impact of seeing medals cast on the ground and the instrumentalization of such an impact in protest demonstrates that the physical medal as an object retains a communicative value separate from the individual who earned it. Stories about the veteran-activists are surprisingly devoid of the tales of individual heroism and distinction which permeates other coverage of military medals. Rather, they focus on the simplicity of the act and in doing so highlight the complexity of the civil-military relations it provokes. The discomfort at seeing them on the ground and the relief of seeing them picked up tells a story in which medals are an only part of a larger making and protection of valour as a commodity.

Totemic

In looking at medals as a commodity at the point of commercial exchange, this project identifies a fourth kind of value: totemic. It reads this across the behaviours that circulate around the sale of military medals, including studying, collecting, selling (as an individual), auctioning, and purchasing them. By taking this approach, this sub-section reads the commercial exchange of medals as a capitalisation upon their totemic value, emphasised across the behaviours as an interest about the unique (his)story of the medal and the valorous act that it represents. Brought to market, the value of the military medal is based upon the valour the object recognises: buying a military medal is buying valour. The study and/or collection of medals and decorations is called 'phaleristics,' (or 'faleristics') and is, understandably, linked with both history and numismatics.⁴¹⁶ The portion of

⁴¹⁴ Ben Quinn, 'MoD Says It Is "Safe-Keeping" 57 Medals Returned by Northern Ireland Veterans', *The Guardian*, 30 May 2019, sec. UK news, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/30/mod-says-it-is-safe-keeping-57-medals-returned-by-northern-ireland-veterans>.

⁴¹⁵ Quinn.

⁴¹⁶ Alexander J. Laslo, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Phaleristics: The Science, Study, and Collecting of the Insignia of Orders, Decorations, and Medals* (Albuquerque, N.M: Dorado Pub, 1995).

phaleristics that includes military honours is also encompassed under the collection category of 'militaria.' Publications within phaleristics tend toward the form of advice for collectors and surveys of military decoration recipients: for example, the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation sponsored and endorsed a book of profiles called *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*.⁴¹⁷ However, as military historian Lord notes in a recent book review, the literature has begun to broaden from its original biographical focus to encompass work on studying medals 'within the cultural and political history of wider society'.⁴¹⁸ This is clear from work on medals across disciplines including in the past twenty years, which are more interested in thinking through questions of what military honours and awards signify, mean, and enable.⁴¹⁹ In this spirit, Powel has examined the awarding patterns of both the Victoria Cross (UK) and the Medal of Honor (USA) to contest the emergence of a 'new "post-heroic" Western way of warfare' since the Cold War.⁴²⁰ However, there is a noticeable absence of research which addresses the socio-political significance and international dimensions of the economy of and around medals. Addressing this gap, this thesis reads and understands the trade of medals as demonstrative of the synthesis of their physical and communicative value into a type of value it terms *totemic*. This value is co-produced by the recipient. The soldier's labour, in the form of the valorous act, adds value to the object. This bears resemblance to Marx's concept of surplus value, in which a worker's labour can add value which outstrips their own compensation to the commodity they help to produce⁴²¹. However, while surplus value is

⁴¹⁷ Peter Collier and Nick Del Calzo, *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor beyond the Call of Duty* (New York: Artisan, 2003).

⁴¹⁸ Matthew J. Lord, 'Book Review: The Medal of Honor: The Evolution of America's Highest Military Decoration', *War in History* 27, no. 4 (1 November 2020): 719–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344520961930a>.

⁴¹⁹ See, for example: Paul Robinson, *Military Honour and the Conduct of War: From Ancient Greece to Iraq*, Cass Military Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 2006); David Kieran, '"Never Too Late to Do the Right Thing": Barack Obama, the Vietnam War's Legacy, and the Cultural Politics of Military Awards during the Afghanistan War', *Journal of American Studies* 51, no. 2 (May 2017): 513–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875816000542>; Dalia Gavriely-Nuri, '"It Is Not the Heroes Who Need This, but the Nation" - the Latent Power of Military Decorations in Israel, 1948–2005', *Journal of Power* 2, no. 3 (2009): 403–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540290903345880>.

⁴²⁰ Brieg Powel, 'Iraq, Afghanistan, and Rethinking the Post-Heroic Turn: Military Decorations as Indicators of Change in Warfare', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 31, no. 1 (2018): e27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12175>.

⁴²¹ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 8. Constant Capital and Variable Capital.

retained by the capitalist, this added value differs in that it is only added in the moment the medal is conferred. This awarding is transformative, and the added value (and medal) is retained by the soldier up until the point of exchange when the totemic value depends on the circumstances of the valorous act for which the medal awarded.

The customs and legislation around the sale of military medals differ in the US and UK contexts. For clarity, they will initially be briefly explored separately. However, subsequent discussion illuminates the intermingling and international aspect of military medal collecting and curation. With narratives that base its origin in successful revolution and armed self-determination, the US has a strong and well-connected community of militaria collectors. In addition to casual hobbyists and people interested in family history, many historical re-enactment societies define themselves around the wars of the nation.⁴²² These groups embrace authentic and historically accurate clothing and equipment in staging battle re-enactments for themselves and/or the public. While there is a market of collectors, the purchase of medals is complicated and legally grey. However, the Stolen Valor Act of 2005 (SVA 2005), signed in 2006, included language that, unintentionally, impinged on military medal collecting.⁴²³ SVA 2005 was proposed to address issues of fraud and military misrepresentation for material and often financial gain and so made it illegal to buy or sell any medals that are authorised by Congress, which includes the gallantry medals summarised previously. The language was stringent in its specified illegal activities, which also included mailing, importing, exporting, trading, and advertising for sale such military decorations in section (a) of 18 U.S. Code § 704. This was of concern for well-intentioned collectors and enthusiasts, who expressed their dismay that their operations were caught in a grey area of the law.⁴²⁴ An article for *Military Trader*, a publication on military collecting, describes how collectors perceived the SVA 2005 as a 'serious threat to collecting', but

⁴²² The following list of such societies is interesting in that it doesn't specialise in *military* re-enactment societies, but categorises the included societies by war anyway: 'The Top 29 Historical Reenactment Societies', *Recollections Blog* (blog), 24 May 2016, <https://recollections.biz/blog/top-historical-reenactment-societies/>.

⁴²³ *Stolen Valor Act of 2005*, Public Law 109-437, U.S. Statutes at Large 120 (2006): 3266-3267, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 704.

⁴²⁴ 'Collectors Worry Over Impact Of Federal Ban On Selling Military Medals', *Antiques And The Arts Weekly* (blog), 27 February 2007, <https://www.antiquesandthearts.com/collectors-worry-over-impact-of-federal-ban-on-selling-military-medals/>.

resumption of trade activities by dealers, a Statement of Intent read into the Congressional Record by Kent Conrad, and the pattern of prosecutions after the SVA demonstrated that collectors were not in the crosshairs.⁴²⁵ Post SVA 2005, eBay also banned the sale of particular medals (higher level merit and gallantry awards) it had previously permitted.⁴²⁶ The SVA was struck down in 2012, but a replacement Stolen Valor Act of 2013 (SVA 2013) was signed into law in 2013.⁴²⁷ SVA 2013 maintained section (a) of 18 U.S. Code § 704, which describes the variety of banned activities around military medals and decorations. eBay, which had previously specified which awards were banned from listing, has become more stringent, specifying that 'Government-issued medals and certificates for medals' are not permitted under their government items policy.⁴²⁸ However, as with most illicit items, a quick eBay search reveals several dubious items for sale.

The sale of medals is much more straightforward in the UK, where there is no law prohibiting the exchange of military decorations. It follows that military medal collecting is well established and relatively popular, with a variety of printed and online guides available for newcomers to the hobby. In 2010, the medals market was worth £150 million per year globally, including £20 million in the UK alone.⁴²⁹ It is not uncommon to see upcoming auctions of gallantry medals written up in the national press, often with a play-by-play account of the actions that garnered the decoration. Due to the open and undoubtedly permitted nature and culture of medal sales in the UK, much of the following analysis follows the UK market and awards. However, it is significant to note the international dimension of collecting, which can tempt buyers and goods across borders.

The Medal of Honor is a particularly interesting vector through which such activity can be analysed. The sale of the decoration was and is banned in law pre-dating SVA 2005.

⁴²⁵ John Adams-Graf, 'Stolen Valor Struck Down. What Does It Mean?', *Military Trader/Vehicles*, 25 July 2012, <https://www.militarytrader.com/jagfile/stolen-valor-struck-down-what-does-it-mean>.

⁴²⁶ Adams-Graf.

⁴²⁷ *Stolen Valor Act of 2013*, Public Law 113-12, U.S. Statutes at Large 127 (2013): 448, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 704.

⁴²⁸ 'Government Items Policy', eBay, accessed 26 August 2021, <https://www.ebay.com/help/policies/prohibited-restricted-items/government-documents-ids-licences-policy?id=4318>.

⁴²⁹ Elliot Wilson, 'Gallantry Is a Finite Resource', *The Spectator*, 13 February 2010, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/gallantry-is-a-finite-resource>.

However, a quiet and sometimes illegal market in Medals of Honor has persisted, including authentic and fraudulent medals, demonstrating a demand for the decoration which has a finite and questionable supply. There is a precedent for these decorations being sold outside the United States. For example, in 2003 a UK-based seller sold a MOH on eBay, though the outcome, receipt, and possible prosecution of the purchase (the FBI was monitoring the sale), should the buyer have been in the US, is unknown.⁴³⁰ More recently, in 2020, a German auction house sold a 19th century Medal of Honor for €14,000, amidst criticism by US politicians, citizens, and the National Medal of Honor Museum.⁴³¹ The medal, which had a guide price of €3,000-€6,000, received 29 bids.⁴³² Notably, the controversy over the sale stirred by a press release from prominent Senator Ted Cruz (Texas)⁴³³, seemed to contribute to the increase in sale price.⁴³⁴ Cruz subsequently introduced the Limiting and Enabling Gathering Awards Commemorating Yesteryear (LEGACY) Act in December 2020, targeted at permitting the 'repatriation' of US military decorations, including the MOH for historical and educational purposes.⁴³⁵ However, this has been received warily by some of the collecting community who view it as a potential

⁴³⁰ Lisa Burgess, 'Medal of Honor Appeals to Some Collectors, but Sale Is a Federal Offense', *Stars and Stripes*, 11 November 2003, <https://www.stripes.com/news/medal-of-honor-appeals-to-some-collectors-but-sale-is-a-federal-offense-1.13541>.

⁴³¹ Diana Stancy Correll, 'German Auction House Sells Historic Medal of Honor despite US Opposition', *Military Times*, 28 May 2020, sec. Your Military, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/05/28/german-auction-house-sells-historic-medal-of-honor-despite-us-opposition/>.

⁴³² 'Lot 5099: Private Thomas Kelly Medal of Honor, Awarded on 1 - May 28, 2020 | Hermann Historica GmbH in Germany', *LiveAuctioneers*, 28 May 2020, https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/84814186_private-thomas-kelly-a-a-medal-of-honor-awarded-on-1.

⁴³³ 'Sen. Cruz Urges Secretary of State to Prevent Auctioning of U.S. Medal of Honor', Press Release, Ted Cruz | U.S. Senator for Texas, 26 May 2020, https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=5130.

⁴³⁴ 'A Medal of Honor, Illegal to Sell in the US, Tripled Its Estimate at a German Auction House—Drawing the Wrath of Ted Cruz', *Artnet News*, 3 June 2020, <https://news.artnet.com/market/us-medal-of-honor-auction-sale-1878006>.

⁴³⁵ 'Sen. Cruz Introduces Legislation to Facilitate the Repatriation of Medals of Honor', Press Release, Ted Cruz | U.S. Senator for Texas, 10 December 2020, https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=5506.

curtailment of their activities,⁴³⁶ even while other community leaders maintain that it would have no effect on the exchange of medals inside the United States.⁴³⁷

In a thorough guide to collecting medals, the *Antiques Trade Gazette* cites 'rarity, provenance and condition' as key factors contributing to a medal's worth.⁴³⁸ However, a medal's worth is perhaps only measurable in the snapshot taken at the point of sale, often at auction for rarer awards. Temporally, the guide notes that interest in medals can swell around anniversaries of conflicts,⁴³⁹ which would perhaps translate to an increase in value. However, a medal is worth only what someone is willing to pay for it. In this sense, it is necessary to examine why medals are bought, in addition to why they are sold.

The *Antiques Trade Gazette* notes that military phaleristics 'comes as close as you can get to a purely academic and emotional field of collecting' in contrast to other collecting fields.⁴⁴⁰ The guide reasons that for collectors with an interest in history, 'owning a medal brings them that bit closer to the act of bravery and the individual it commemorates'.⁴⁴¹ This sentiment of wanting to close the distance between the experience of the collector and recipient of the medal is reminiscent of the relationship between reader and (veteran) writer which is explored later in *Chapter 6*. So too is the tendency noted by auctioneers Warwick & Warwick in their valuation guide that 'a good story will always add more value to a medal,' including details such as rank, particulars of the event, and whether the individual was a casualty.⁴⁴² This, along with the circumstances of ownership and sale, contribute to a vast range in prices for VCs, which the auctioneers estimate as between £80,000 to £1.5 million.⁴⁴³ The high end of this range was set by the 2009 sale of a VC and

⁴³⁶ John Adams-Graf, 'Senator Cruz Launches Bill to Curtail Private Ownership of Military Medals', *Military Trader/Vehicles*, 17 December 2020, <https://www.militarytrader.com/militaria-collectibles/bill-curtails-moh>.

⁴³⁷ Fred Borch, 'A Message from the OMSA President about the Medal of Honor – Orders & Medals Society of America', accessed 26 August 2021, <https://www.omsa.org/proposed-purple-heart-legislation/>.

⁴³⁸ Ivan Macquisten, 'Guide to Buying Military Medals', *Antiques Trade Gazette*, accessed 19 August 2021, <https://www.antiquestradegazette.com/guides/collecting-guides/military-medals/>.

⁴³⁹ Macquisten.

⁴⁴⁰ Macquisten.

⁴⁴¹ Macquisten.

⁴⁴² 'How Much Are My Medals Worth?', Warwick & Warwick, accessed 19 August 2021, <https://www.warwickandwarwick.com/news/guides/medal-valuation-guide>.

⁴⁴³ 'How Much Are My Medals Worth?' Warwick & Warwick.

Bar (indicated a second VC) awarded to Captain Noel Chavasse to Lord Ashcroft.⁴⁴⁴ Chavasse was one of only three individuals who have earned a the VC twice (the second indicated by the Bar). Ashcroft has the largest private collection of VCs in the world (over 180, making up more than 10% of all VCs), which he has amassed since 1986 out of what he describes as a 'passion for bravery' since he was a child.⁴⁴⁵ His collection is included in the Imperial War Museum's (IWM) Lord Ashcroft Gallery 'Extraordinary Heroes' exhibit, which showcases VCs and GCs alongside the stories of 250 British and Commonwealth recipients.⁴⁴⁶

While Ashcroft is clearly a part of the very top percent of military medal collectors, his vision and spirit in amassing and exhibiting VCs stems from the same impulses shared by other people who buy and collect medals. One motivation for some is investment, which was of particular interest around the economic downturn of the late 2000s, looking toward the approaching centenary of the First World War.⁴⁴⁷ However, the difficulty in pricing military medals (compared to other collectables like coins) has been suggested as being a constraint on the investor market.⁴⁴⁸ If Ashcroft sits at one end of the spectrum, with clear admiration and a high demonstrated interest in conservation and cultural memory, then collectors looking to spot bargains and flip medals for greater value as pure investment likely sit at the other. Yet as a profile on collectors' notes, 'curiously, the richer and more driven the collector, the less likely he or she is to see an acquisition as a straight investment.'⁴⁴⁹

The reasons for selling, on the other hand, seem more straight forward. Living recipients, particularly from modern conflicts, have looked to sell their medals at auction to

⁴⁴⁴ Andrew Alderson, 'Lord Ashcroft Pays Record Price for "Ultimate" Victoria Cross', *The Telegraph*, 21 November 2009, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/6624138/Lord-Ashcroft-pays-record-price-for-ultimate-Victoria-Cross.html>.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Lord Ashcroft Medal Collection', Lord Ashcroft Medals, accessed 19 August 2021, <http://www.lordashcroftmedals.com/collection/>.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes', Imperial War Museums, accessed 19 August 2021, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/lord-ashcroft-gallery-extraordinary-heroes>.

⁴⁴⁷ Scott Payton, 'No Retreat for Medal Winners', *The Spectator*, 14 February 2009, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/no-retreat-for-medal-winners>.

⁴⁴⁸ Charlotte Beugge, 'The War Medals That Have Soared in Value', *The Telegraph*, 9 December 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/investing/11280125/The-war-medals-that-have-soared-in-value.html>.

⁴⁴⁹ Wilson, 'Gallantry Is a Finite Resource'.

maximise the profit with an eye to putting it toward substantial life purchases. In July 2021, Shaun Garry Jardine sold his Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (CGC) for £140,000 to help fund a house purchase for his family.⁴⁵⁰ Another CGC recipient, Gordon Robertson, sold his medal in 2016 to help his son purchase his first home.⁴⁵¹ While Alan Owens did not disclose his reason for listing his Military Cross on eBay in 2011 — with a starting bid of £25,000 and a 'Buy It Now' for £100,000 option — it is clear that financial desire or need was at least a partial motivator.⁴⁵² He similarly declined to comment when, after widespread national coverage, criticism, and speculation of the sale, he removed his medals from eBay.⁴⁵³

In 2012, Acting Sergeant Deacon Daniel Cutterham (The Rifles) was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross for his service in Afghanistan in 2011.⁴⁵⁴ Cutterham had saved the lives of his team when he picked up a live grenade which had been tossed into their vicinity and threw it into a neighbouring ditch where it detonated without serious injury to anyone.⁴⁵⁵ In 2020, Cutterham put his medal collection, including the CGC, up for auction, which was advertised and covered by the media as they were expected to fetch a high price. However, the news of the auction also attracted the attention of his former fellow soldiers. Some of them disputed the actions for which Cutterham was awarded his CGC and felt that, at the point at which Cutterham stood to make money from the decoration, they were obligated to speak up. One commented, 'We didn't care if he wanted to tell people how brave he was. What we care about now is him making financial gain from

⁴⁵⁰ Daniel Sanderson, 'Soldier Awarded Medal for Bravery during Iraq War Sells It for £140,000 to Buy Family Home', *The Telegraph*, 22 July 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/07/22/soldier-awarded-medal-bravery-iraq-war-sells-140000-buy-family/>.

⁴⁵¹ Home Staff, 'Hero Sells Medal to Help Son Buy Home', 1 April 2016, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hero-sells-medal-to-help-son-buy-home-d0hdjvrts>.

⁴⁵² 'Ranger Puts His Precious Military Cross up for Sale on eBay for £100k', *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 January 2011, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ranger-puts-his-precious-military-cross-up-for-sale-on-ebay-for-100k-28582114.html>.

⁴⁵³ 'Soldier Removes Military Cross Medal from Auction Site after Media Storm', *Portsmouth News*, 21 January 2011, accessed via Lexis Nexis.

⁴⁵⁴ Recorded in *The Gazette: Official Public Record* (London Gazette), issue 60095, p. 5848, 23 March 2012, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/60095/supplement/5848/data.pdf>, accessed 1 November 2021.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Lot 41, Orders, Decorations, Medals and Militaria (12 November 2020)', Dix Noonan Webb, accessed 2 November 2021, https://www.dnw.co.uk/auction-archive/past-catalogues/lot.php?auction_id=566&lot_uid=381498.

this.⁴⁵⁶ Their criticism alleges that Cutterham may have thrown his own grenade, as there was no further attack from the Taliban (who must have been close to throw a grenade), no enemy activity was observed by an overhead drone, and a grenade was missing at a subsequent activity check.⁴⁵⁷ The soldiers had voiced concerns during the decoration approval process, but their dislike of Cutterham called their protest into question.⁴⁵⁸ Cutterham, who denied the claims, sold his medal collection at auction for £140,000 to a UK collector.⁴⁵⁹ Here, the actions and timing of the objecting soldiers might be read as a protection of valour as a commodity. If, as they alleged, Cutterham did not merit the medals, then permitting him to profit monetarily would be an additional level, and different, kind of unwarranted recognition.

Both the reasons to buy valorous medals and the reasons to sell them treat them as tokens of totemic value. Because the medals are associated with particular acts and individuals, this value varies. However, the commodification of valour is demonstrated in the higher exchange rates and prices for medals associated with particularly notable persons and histories. Though this is partially explained by the rarity of the highest military decorations (e.g., a VC versus a Military Cross) and thus supply and demand dynamics, the variation of exchange price within a category of decoration supports this section's assertion that something more is operating. The value of these medals at auction is totemic in the sense that the medal becomes a symbol or token of the piece of history it was awarded for. In this sense, it is transformed: the medal itself is *part* of the history and thus each medal, even of the same category, is unique.

In this sense, this kind of value treats valorous medals as a kind of non-fungible token (NFT). NFTs, which drew particular attention during 2021, are data units which mark ownership of digital files (e.g., videos, photos, or art) and are stored in a blockchain (digital ledger). They are, by definition, not mutually interchangeable (each NFT is unique because it marks a distinct thing, so one NFT cannot be interchanged for another), but are

⁴⁵⁶ Jonathan Beale, 'Deacon Cutterham's Medal-Winning Heroic Actions Questioned Ahead of Auction', BBC News, 9 November 2020, sec. UK, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54858424>.

⁴⁵⁷ Beale.

⁴⁵⁸ Beale.

⁴⁵⁹ 'Deacon Cutterham's Medal Collection Sells for £140k', BBC News, 12 November 2020, sec. UK, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54925490>.

exchangeable (they can be bought and sold). Only one NFT may be issued per file. However, in a rich comparison to military medals, the ownership or offering of an NFT doesn't remove the file from public space or awareness. Even if a video is taken offline, it remains in memory and popular culture. So military medals as a kind of non-fungible token, are, due to their totemic value, not interchangeable, but are exchangeable. But even such an exchange, which enables the purchaser to do what they wish with the item, does not remove the embeddedness or significance of the story and object in culture.

2.3. Illegal Medal Activity

As valuable and (depending on circumstance and law) exchangeable items, it's unsurprising that shady and sometimes nefarious activities have sprung up in the trade and circulation of medals as objects. These can be loosely grouped into two types of 'use' — sale and wear — which this section discusses separately, before bringing them together in a discussion of the systems of compensation which incentivise fraudulent behaviour that spans both categories of use.

Crimes concerning use via sale are normally clear cut and, unsurprisingly, appear to be motivated by money. In 2011, a British colour sergeant was found guilty of taking and selling his peers' medals without their consent for a profit of £7,000.⁴⁶⁰ In the 1990s, FBI Special Agent Tom Cottone discovered that H.L.I. Lordship Industries, who was the then sole manufacturer of Medal of Honor, had also manufactured and sold 300 unauthorised Medals of Honor for profit, including to shops and dealers.⁴⁶¹ The company pled guilty in 1996. The sale of fake medals to unsuspecting buyers would also fall under the category of use via sale.

Crimes concerning the illegal use of medals through wear are centred on misrepresentation and misuse, often motivated by a desire to impress others. In 2010, a UK man pled guilty after being exposed as a fraud: he'd worn an "impossible" array of 17

⁴⁶⁰ Simon de Bruxelles, 'Army Sergeant Jailed for Stealing His Comrades' Medals to Sell on eBay', *The Times*, 17 November 2011, sec. News.

⁴⁶¹ 'May 2019: Congressional Medal of Honor Fraud', Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed 26 August 2021, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/artifact-of-the-month/may-2019-congressional-medal-of-honor-fraud>; David Stout, 'Company Admits It Sold Medals of Honor', *The New York Times*, 19 October 1996, sec. Metro.

medals, to an Armistice Day Parade the previous year, apparently as part of an ongoing deception that began with trying to impress his wife.⁴⁶² The man was given 60 hours community service, which was thrown out after it came to light that the 1955 Army Act, under which he was prosecuted, had been repealed by the Armed Forces Act 2006 days prior to the offense.⁴⁶³ Other cases in which a person in the military wears decorations they are not entitled to in professional or social situations also falls under this category.

While there are different types of sale and wear within illegal medal activity, the two categories of use are united when examined alongside the systems of hard and soft compensation for the military. On one hand, hard compensation includes all that which a recipient is, without regard to personal circumstance, entitled to in and by national laws. As discussed previously, this can take the form of pensions and other permissions granted to recipients. However, it also includes the medals themselves, and, if permitted and desired, the proceeds from any sale of them. On the other hand, soft compensation includes everything which sits outside the benefits and privileges conferred in national law. These may have monetary value such as free university tuition⁴⁶⁴ or the array of discounts and freebies available to veterans. They may also have social value or a mix thereof. High level military awards for gallantry often receive heavy press coverage, which may help in elevating the recipient's standing in the community and open a variety of opportunities from political careers to book deals. Some states have special license plates available for certain award recipients, which offer official benefits like free parking alongside *de facto* benefits like lenient policing of traffic violations.⁴⁶⁵ Both types of compensation encourage the fraudulent behaviours exhibited in the illegal sale and wear of medals, for as long as

⁴⁶² Simon de Bruxelles, 'Medal Cheat Aimed to Be a Hero for His Younger Wife', *The Times*, 13 January 2010, 1 edition, sec. News.

⁴⁶³ "'Fake Medal' Man's Case Dropped', *BBC News*, 23 February 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/coventry_warwickshire/8530189.stm.

⁴⁶⁴ This is written into South Carolina Code of Laws and applies to children of recipients of the Medal of Honor or Purple Heart as well as a variety of other service-related circumstances. While this is written into law, because it is State law with residency requirements for eligibility that are not applicable to all award recipients, it is not included with hard compensation. See: 'Code of Laws - Title 59 - Chapter 111 - Scholarships', South Carolina Legislature, accessed 26 August 2021, <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c111.php>.

⁴⁶⁵ Paul Payne, 'Judge Tosses Purple Heart Recipient's Parking Tickets from SRJC', *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, 27 June 2013, sec. News, <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/judge-tosses-purple-heart-recipients-parking-tickets-from-srjc/>.

there is a perceived value or profit in wearing medals, illegally, they will be bought and sold.

In the 2005 film *Wedding Crashers*, which came out shortly before the SVA 2005 was introduced in Congress, two characters con their way into weddings to seduce women through deception. As part of this, in an opening scene, one of them whips out two Purple Heart medals and proclaims, 'We won't have to pay for a drink all night.'⁴⁶⁶ The film's website, which invited people to print their own Purple Heart was criticized for the gimmick.⁴⁶⁷ Prior to its removal, the website-based activity (Figure 3) advised:

Carrying a Purple Heart in your jacket guarantees you attention, admiration and *plenty of free booze*. To get one of these babies, some dudes have to prove their physical, mental and spiritual strength with great feats of bravery on the battlefield. *All you need to do is press the button below.*⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ See 7:02-7:05 in: *Wedding Crashers*, 01:25 21 January 2014, FilmFour, 145 mins. <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/005B98F1?bcast=106050540>, accessed 27 August 2021.

⁴⁶⁷ Amy Ryan, ‘“Wedding Crashers” Inspires “Heart”-Felt Outrage’, *EW.Com*, 25 July 2005, https://ew.com/article/2005/07/25/wedding_crasher/.

⁴⁶⁸ Emphasis original. ‘Purple Hearts Pulled from “Crashers” Site’, *TODAY.com*, 25 July 2005, <https://www.today.com/popculture/purple-hearts-pulled-crashers-site-wbna8701080>.



Figure 3. 'Print Your Own Purple Heart' Activity for the film 'Wedding Crashers'⁴⁶⁹

While the promotional stunt is certainly of questionable taste — consistent with the film itself — it is implausible that a person would be able to swindle others with a cut out, printed Purple Heart. The film was not directly enabling would-be scammers. However, the relevant scene in the film hinted at an economic calculus at play in the fraudulent donning of military decorations. In this case, fake Purple Hearts warranted compensation in free drinks. Altogether not a particularly nefarious brand of defrauding someone. Yet, at its heart, this type of action shares a foundation with much more serious and high-profile instances of military misrepresentation and embellishment, commonly called 'stolen valour' in both the UK and US. Critically, as the second half of this the chapter develops, the threshold for some of the compensation discussed above relies not on medals themselves, but on the much less tangible ability to claim military affiliation. The stealing of valour has moved from a focus on physical objects to speech acts, a shift made possible only by an

⁴⁶⁹ Due to the cessation of Adobe Flash support by all Internet browsers, this screenshot is reproduced from the article: 'Purple Hearts Pulled from "Crashers" Site'.

original structural commodification of valour which has, through instrumental heroization, been transferred from a select few individuals to 'military' in general. If we figure the 'military' as hero, then being 'military' warrants the same privileges previously limited to heroes proper. The cultural work of recognition must recalibrate to identify and excise individuals who threaten this new civil-military relations through their misrepresentation.

3. Stolen Valour

This section analyses stolen valour as a phenomenon, encompassing both the stealing and the hunting of the 'thieves' as well as the anxieties which such behaviours betray within civil-military relations. It reads the phenomenon as a dysfunction which has developed out of the commodification of valour, but which now threatens the cultural work of recognition, which is dependent on a binary logic of identifying 'military' (correctly) and configuring the 'civil' in an oppositional relation. Stolen valour introduces bad faith into the system of recognition within which valorous military medals and the commodification of valour operate as gratitude acts. If someone unfairly accesses and benefits from these gratitude acts and the hard and soft compensation which accompanies them, then the entire system of recognition must be reconsidered.

This project understands stolen valour as a queering force in civil-military relations which directly threatens the viability of the relations which commodified valour in recognising the military hero. That it has emerged from commodification of valour through the process of instrumental heroization is significant, for its queerness grows out of a relational binary. The military hero celebrated by the civil saved and deformed by a relations of debt produces a 'military' equated with a valour and value worth stealing. Yet the 'theft' generates a variety of non-binary individuals who frustrate binary frames of reference and practices which we use to recognise (in both meanings of the word) 'military' and configure 'civil'. An individual purchases military surplus clothing and panhandles with a sign that reads 'Vietnam vet'. An individual is given military surplus clothing by a charity and panhandles, no sign. An individual panhandles with a sign, but no clothing. A marine dresses up for a wedding in mess dress, adding a few chevrons to his uniform which signify the rank of sergeant. The 500th soldier claims to have been a part of the elite team who

killed Osama bin Laden. A pensioner with dementia who is ex-military likes to wear a military uniform around the store and claims every valorous decoration under the sun. A person lies for a free drink or social clout. The examples of characters which arise within stolen valour are diverse and defy generalisation. Yet together they demonstrate an undeniable queerness. The civil may be read, incorrectly, as military. The military may be read incorrectly in a way which undermines faith in their integrity and complicates figuring them as hero. A veteran may misrepresent their service by accident, for gain, or because they truly believe it. Yet the uncertainty introduced into the system by stolen valour emphasises how important the binary is to the cultural work of recognition. Being able to identify someone as *either* military or civil (a binary logic) is critical to locating them and their role within CMR. In challenging this, stolen valour, this thesis contends, can be read as a queer threat which the binary must seek to neutralise. Whether it does so successfully is less clear, however the existence of stolen valour heralds a CMR behaviour that cannot be accounted for solely in a binary logic.

As established in the introduction to this chapter, the term 'stolen valour' was originally used by B.G. Burkett and Whitley in their book. While the legislative history of 'stolen valour' has lifted the term out of the context and its original meaning in Burkett and Whitley's book, the link between the term and the book is evident. The book has been cited widely, including in legal documents around the Stolen Valour acts, and appears frequently in academic research. However, contrary to its handling in other research, this thesis cannot include this work without disclosing that other parts of *Stolen Valor* border on conspiracy-type theories. In particular, the book is derailed in parts by a strongly anti-left, partisan tone. This is particularly prominent in its scepticism about PTSD, which borders on dangerous. In their effort to unmask the frauds and phonies misusing the veterans' healthcare system, Burkett and Whitley allege a top-down and lateral effort by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the American political Left, and veterans' groups to incentivize such behaviour. They suggest that significant studies which prompted and shaped policy movements may have been driven by people with anti-war agendas and

coloured by people who misrepresented their Vietnam and/or combat status.⁴⁷⁰ A further chapter alleges that Agent Orange health effects are unsubstantiated and overblown.⁴⁷¹

Even with this in mind, the book contains a truly impressive number of cases of military imposters. Burkett features several failures by journalists and media outlets to verify the service records of 'veterans' they engage with. The overall takeaway from the book is 'how on earth do we allow ourselves to be continuously fooled and exploited by phony veterans?' Or, as we frame it through this thesis, what social behaviours and forces produce a situation which enables this fraud? Uncomfortably, the question picks at academia as well. How common is it for researchers to ask interviewees for documentation demonstrating their service? Anecdotally, as a participant in research on military spouses, I was never asked for information to corroborate the identity of myself or my partner. If we aren't asking these questions, then why aren't we? Is it out of piety and respect for veterans? Or is it a failure of imagination in which we can't fathom that someone would fake their military service or experience?

The stealing of valour is regularly covered in the mainstream media. Of particular interest are stories of lengthy and extensive deception like that of Alan McIlwraith, a call centre worker who lived his life as 'Captain Sir Alan McIlwraith, CBE, DSO, MC, MiD', war hero, for two years.⁴⁷² This type of long-term identity theft or impersonation is not a particularly new phenomenon, yet as this analysis of stolen valour demonstrates, the contemporary character of military misrepresentation is tied to the patterns of instrumental heroization and victimization which this thesis offers in its queering of CMR. Such processes structure cultural work and social behaviours in a way which commodifies valour, giving it exchangeable value, and thus presents it as something which can be 'stolen.' In the contemporary era, publicised cases of military fraud and misrepresentation in, around, and after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan ruffled the public and resulted in a range of behaviours, research, and organisations. In the legal sphere, petitions and amendments

⁴⁷⁰ Burkett and Whitley, *Stolen Valor*, 150.

⁴⁷¹ Chapter 22, "The Myth of Agent Orange", Burkett and Whitley, 527–52.

⁴⁷² Audrey Gillan, 'My Great Escape from Glasgow Estate: Fake Army Hero Tells Story', *The Guardian*, 24 July 2006, sec. UK news, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/jul/25/audreygillan.uknews2>.

were made to curb the behaviour, including the U.S. Stolen Valor Act of 2005, which was later replaced by the Stolen Valor Act of 2013. While the UK doesn't have a parallel equivalent to the SVA 2013, in 2016 the government responded to a stolen valour petition to 'make it illegal to impersonate soldiers/veterans' which had garnered 11,633 signatures, to explain that such behaviour is already made an offence by the Fraud Act 2006 and The Uniforms Act 1894.⁴⁷³ However, the Fraud Act 2006 only deems the fraudulent wearing of uniforms and/or medals or pretending to be in or have been in the Armed Forces a criminal offense if the activity is linked with making or attempting to make financial gain. This leaves much 'stolen valour' activity in a grey zone.

Though there has, historically, been regulation around the wearing of military uniforms and decorations in the US and UK out of recognition that they, as communicative symbols, carry power and confer privilege, the key to the SVA 2005 and the push for similar legislative change in the UK is the move to regulate speech rather than the action of wearing a uniform. This call for change is only necessary because stolen valour has exemplified that the 'military' and affiliation with it has come to have its own symbolic value separate from the physical signs associated with it. That is to say that 'military' (or 'forces' or 'soldier' or any military specialisation, regiment, etc.) itself, in speech, has come to carry the value of valour as a commodity.

As a social phenomenon, stolen valour has drawn the attention of scholars from disciplines as diverse as law⁴⁷⁴ and folklore⁴⁷⁵. It is a curiosity because it exploits and subverts expectations around what it means to be 'military' and the obligations of the 'civil'. As this section demonstrates, stolen valour is a civil-military behaviour, enabled by an instrumental heroization of 'military' which transfers the value of 'valour' to 'military' in general. This section first approaches stolen valour through three examples of the behaviour — Rick Duncan, Richard Lee, and The Veterans' History Project — to demonstrate a valuation and stealing of 'military' broadly, rather than medals or valour

⁴⁷³ 'Archived Petition: Make It Illegal to Impersonate Soldiers/Veterans - Referred to as Stolen Valour', Petitions - UK Government and Parliament, 22 January 2016, <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/111414>.

⁴⁷⁴ Kasturi, 'Stolen Valor'.

⁴⁷⁵ Kristiana Willsey, "'Fake Vets" and Viral Lies: Personal Narrative in a Post-Truth Era', *Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 522 (Fall 2018): 500–508.

specifically. It then develops an account of the reciprocal behaviour of stolen valour hunting as the vigilantist and sharp end of a broader concern around stolen valour as a dysfunction of the cultural work of recognition. It reads the activity of these 'stolen valour hunters' as an effort to protecting the sanctity of valour as a commodity and maintain the functionality of the cultural work of recognition. In doing so, this section argues, this work participates in the maintenance of the civil-military binary.

3.1. Stealing Valour

To be clear, the people who lie and 'steal valour' are not a homogenous group that one could dismiss as compulsive liars, delusionists (including those struggling with mental health), con-men, or opportunists. The actions of the duo in *Wedding Crashers* are distasteful, but the harm they perpetrate (free drinks and impressing women) is relatively low. What then, is the possible range and magnitude of harm being caused by people who steal valour and stolen valour as a phenomenon? This section considers several cases of stolen valour, though they may not be charged or chargeable, to map out the stakes and potential harms of the behaviours. In doing so, it links the speech claim of military experience to positive social behaviours which, through instrumental heroization and/or victimization, stretch the commodification of valour away from valour itself and toward a flat and baseless commodification of 'military'.

Rick Duncan

Rick Duncan, a former US Marines Captain and US Naval Academy graduate, started and led a successful veterans advocacy organisation, Colorado Veterans Alliance (CVA), attracting more than 30,000 members⁴⁷⁶ from across the state. His experience, having survived an attack that required a metal plate in his head and left him with a PTSD diagnosis, resonated with his community. That incident earned him the Purple Heart.⁴⁷⁷ On open mic nights for discussing wartime experiences, he brought people in the audience to

⁴⁷⁶ *Fake Marine Rick Duncan Talks during Forum in Colorado, 2009*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-oIMs9-mTg>.

⁴⁷⁷ Kelsey Whipple, 'Will the Real Rick Strandlof Please Stand Up?', *Westword*, 26 July 2012, <https://www.westword.com/news/will-the-real-rick-strandlof-please-stand-up-5117405>.

tears.⁴⁷⁸ Duncan had also been in the Pentagon on 9/11 and spoke at a September 11th memorial ceremony with then-congressional candidate and Lt. Col. Hal Bidlack.⁴⁷⁹ Bidlack had also been in the Pentagon that morning.⁴⁸⁰

Duncan was particularly concerned about veterans' homelessness. There is a video of him speaking in a local forum on the issue of the inappropriate search and seizure of homeless veterans' belongings. In addressing the mayor in charge of proceedings, he immediately connects with them over their shared identity, saying, 'As you're a veteran, so you have a nice insight into this...'⁴⁸¹ Duncan's hair is buzzed close to the head. He speaks, if not clearly, then at least clearly genuinely, occasionally looking at his papers in front of them. He sits, lined up at a table with other attendees, they in blazers and he in a khaki green military sweatshirt. And there, the hint of something amiss. Hindsight being perfect, some viewers now pronounce that a *real* former military officer would never wear such an article of clothing for a professional meeting. But perhaps this was merely another quirk of Duncan's that was explained away when people had no real reason for suspicion. Why, after all, would someone lie about such a thing?

As Duncan's own board of directors at CVA would discover, Rick Duncan was, in fact, an alias for Richard Strandlof, a man who had neither served in the military, nor attended the US Naval Academy, nor fought in Iraq, nor been at the Pentagon on 9/11. Strandlof had a history of illegal activity, including a curious stint as a pretend grand prix race promoter in Reno⁴⁸², which perhaps prefigures him taking up the persona of Rick Duncan: a complete fantasy and fabrication of a person who sought out attention or fame in his community. Family members recall his talent for and interest in making up stories and identities from a young age.⁴⁸³ In an interview with Anderson Cooper after being exposed, Strandlof, whose on-screen title is 'Veteran Imposter' describes his reasoning as a

⁴⁷⁸ Deedee Correll, 'The Story of the Marine Who Wasn't', *Los Angeles Times*, 8 July 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-jul-08-na-marine-impostor8-story.html>.

⁴⁷⁹ 'Report: Founder of Vets Group Was Impostor', NBC News, accessed 27 October 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna30768735>.

⁴⁸⁰ 'Fake Veteran Faces "Stolen Valor" Charge', CNN, 12 October 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/12/fake.veteran/index.html>.

⁴⁸¹ *Fake Marine Rick Duncan Talks during Forum in Colorado*, :07-0:10.

⁴⁸² Correll, 'The Story of the Marine Who Wasn't'.

⁴⁸³ Correll; 'Report: Founder of Vets Group Was Impostor'.

combination of factors including 'some severely underdiagnosed mental illness' and 'being caught up in the moment of an election and being surrounded by people who were passionate and loved what they did.'⁴⁸⁴ He explains that one case, of helping a veteran trying to access PTSD treatment, 'convinced me that I could help a lot more people....by putting on a production.' The clip includes flashbacks to media appearances 'Duncan' made as a veteran activist, underscoring the fact that the audience and networks had also bought into the fraud.

Strandlof was investigated by the FBI. An original concern was that he had used the CVA to illegally solicit and receive donations that were inappropriately directed or embezzled. However, Strandlof was adamant that did not make money off the 'production,' as he phrased it. His motives seemed to be social and political: in being a veteran, he could build a platform and influence politics in a way that he felt he otherwise could not. In 2010, Strandlof was charged under the Stolen Valor Act of 2005 for his behaviours, including his claims of having a Purple Heart and Silver Star for gallantry, but the judge found that the SVA 2005 was unconstitutional as 'a content-based restriction on First Amendment speech that is not narrowly tailored to serve a compelling government interest.'⁴⁸⁵ In 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit ruled against the district court to uphold the SVA 2005 as constitutional and proceed with charges against Strandlof.⁴⁸⁶ However, later that year, the Tenth Circuit vacated this position in deference to the Supreme Court's ruling on *United States v. Alvarez*⁴⁸⁷, which held that SVA 2005 was unconstitutional under the First Amendment.⁴⁸⁸ In the years between the two cases, Strandlof had assumed and burned through a new identity as Rick Gold, an Israeli-American oil-and-gas attorney in Denver who had suffered a traumatic brain injury while serving in Iraq as a U.S. Marines captain.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁴ Anderson Cooper 360 -Veteran Imposter, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkyZA5eYnS4>.

⁴⁸⁵ *United States v. Strandlof*, 746 F.2d 1183 (D Colo 2010).

⁴⁸⁶ *United States v. Strandlof*, 667 F.3d 1146 (10th Cir. 2012).

⁴⁸⁷ *United States v. Alvarez*, 567 U.S. 709 (2012).

⁴⁸⁸ *United States v. Strandlof*, 684 F.3d 962 (10th Cir. 2012).

⁴⁸⁹ Whipple, 'Will the Real Rick Strandlof Please Stand Up?'

Around the time that his life as Gold fell apart, Strandlof started a blog, as Strandlof, exploring his recovery with Alcoholics Anonymous and his life, as Strandlof.⁴⁹⁰

Richard Lee

Contextualising the story of Richard Lee, co-founder of Spartan Race, a popular military-style obstacle course event series, brings another dimension of stolen valour to light. In it, we can read slippages, assumptions, and misunderstandings which, combined with the value of 'military', generates stolen valour through civil-military relations. Lee had cultivated a reputation as a gritty, endurance athlete, with a spate of articles covering his success in the Death Race (USA) in 2009 describing him as an 'ex-Royal Marine'⁴⁹¹ and 'Second Lt. Richard Lee of the Royal Marines'⁴⁹². Subsequent media coverage upon establishment of the Spartan Race series in the UK in 2010 consistently references his military experience, often describing him as a 'former Royal Marine' and/or 'commando.'⁴⁹³

The value add of Lee's military background to his professional success is incalculable. While Lee never claimed any valorous decorations, the consistent mentions of

⁴⁹⁰ Rick Strandlof, '...Sometimes Quickly, Sometimes Slowly.', 16 April 2012, <http://rickstrandlof.blogspot.com/>.

⁴⁹¹ Tim Lewis, 'The Former Marine Who Won America's Death Race - by Accident', *The Guardian*, 25 July 2009, sec. Sport, <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2009/jul/26/death-race-extreme-sports>.

⁴⁹² Michael Brick, 'You Created It, Tough Guy. So Let's See You Finish It.', *The New York Times*, 6 July 2009, sec. Sports, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/sports/07deathrace.html>.

⁴⁹³ Elaine King, 'New Ely Headquarters for Multi-Million Pound Spartan Race Company', *Cambs Times*, 6 February 2013, <https://www.cambstimes.co.uk/news/new-ely-headquarters-for-multi-million-pound-spartan-race-company-4840446>; Craig Saunders, 'Nutley Attracts the Toughest for Endurance Test; Ex-Commando Designs Pippingford Estate's First 7.5km Spartan Race Course', *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 30 August 2013, sec. News, Nexis Advance UK, accessed 24 January 2022, <https://advance.lexis.com/document/?pdmfid=1519360&crid=d88a96e5-3dfa-4426-ad5f-f6d57d43cf5a&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fnews%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A597K-RG01-DY9P-N047-00000>

00&pdcontentcomponentid=370508&pdteaserkey=sr8&pditab=allpods&ecomp=xbxnk&earg=sr8&prid=b8865984-bade-4455-a4ce-ea04e7e811aa; Christine Seib, 'The New Urban Warriors; Bankers in Need of Their Adrenalin Fix Have Found the Ultimate Challenge - Death Races in Which They Run through Fire and Swim through Ice.', *The Times*, 28 September 2010, Nexis Advance UK, accessed 24 January 2022, <https://advance.lexis.com/document/?pdmfid=1519360&crid=c343895a-0f75-4109-8f89-9875d5be1b0f&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fnews%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A5142-SJC1-DYVC-R122-00000>

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his experience as a Royal Marine in media coverage demonstrate some validating value between his military background and Spartan Race. The obstacle course race industry trades on challenge, grit, and military/warrior culture, evident in in name ('Spartan') and an 'are you tough enough?' type ethos. In such an environment, having a race director like Lee, with experience of genuine military assault courses, lends a credibility and produced authenticity. *Tri247*, which promoted the UK Spartan Race, profiled Lee:

Richard is no idle Race Director either, detached from understanding the desires and perspective of athletes competing. A former Royal Marines Commando, he is now 'poacher-turned-gamekeeper' having spent many years completing assault courses on a daily basis. He's also 'been there and done it' - and that includes completing the ultimate Spartan event, the "Death Race" a 48-hour test of mental and physical endurance, an event which has just a 10% finishing rate and even entry requirements included a detailed screening process. Oh, and he won that won [sic] too.⁴⁹⁴

The article humble brags on Lee's behalf. He is portrayed as aspirational and having experienced 'real' assault courses as well as elite Spartan events, a sort of bona fide leader now able to offer the public an opportunity to test themselves. It was later revealed that Lee had not completed his military training, a story broken and pursued by online stolen valour investigators The Walter Mitty Hunters Club.⁴⁹⁵ The story was of alleged stolen valour: that Lee had profited off his falsified claims of military service. Lee acknowledged his errors with an apology and resigned.⁴⁹⁶

The details in this case matter. The 2009 *New York Times* article which described Lee as a 'Second Lt.' who had been discharged due to injury also reported on another competitor who was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marines Corps (USMC).⁴⁹⁷ Was this a

⁴⁹⁴ John Levison, 'Spartan Race: Discover Your Inner Warrior', *Tri247*, 13 July 2013, https://archive.tri247.com/index.php?component=user&msgid=ignore&command=display&display=news_details&id=11775&%.

⁴⁹⁵ 'Richard Lee AKA Richard Thomas or "Teggers" as He Was Known.', *The Walter Mitty Hunters Club* (blog), 30 December 2013, <https://thewaltercumpershunterclub.wordpress.com/2013/12/30/richard-lee-or-teggers-as-he-was-known/>; 'Richard Lee AKA Richard Thomas of Spartan Race and the Not so Honourable Thing to Do!', *The Walter Mitty Hunters Club* (blog), 20 December 2014, <https://thewaltercumpershunterclub.wordpress.com/2014/12/20/richard-lee-of-spartan-race-and-the-not-so-honourable-thing-to-do/>.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Endurance Race Organiser Admits He Lied about Being an Ex-Royal Marine', *The Telegraph*, 2 January 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/10547297/Endurance-race-organiser-admits-he-lied-about-being-an-ex-Royal-Marine.html>.

⁴⁹⁷ Brick, 'You Created It, Tough Guy. So Let's See You Finish It.'

first misstep into what would become a case of alleged stolen valour? The nuances and steps of officer training and rank promotion for Royal Marines are complex and, importantly, distinct from other service branches in the UK and US. When candidates enter the 16-month Young Officer (YO) training course, they do so as second lieutenants. They are called 'Royal Marines' from the first day. During their training, they take three Commando tests, only after which time they may wear a green 'lid' (beret) and call themselves a 'commando'. Upon finishing and 'passing out' of YO training, the officers are sent to their first troop command as lieutenants. In contrast, in both the British Army and USMC, an officer receives their first full assignment after training as a second lieutenant, promoting to lieutenant later. Thus, a second lieutenant, to a journalist or reader unfamiliar with the British Royal Marines rank system, might appear to have completed training and have served. The *New York Times* article very much makes it sound as though Lee served in the military and that his experience there was substantive and *valuable* to his abilities and expertise in completing the Death Race. In the USMC second lieutenant, the journalist finds a foil for Lee, and while referring to Lee, an ex-serviceperson, using a junior rank is against custom in the UK⁴⁹⁸, it also is clarifying for the reader. It marks out that Lee used to be a part of the non-special forces military elite.

This story of Lee's military background remained consistent in media coverage: a person leveraging their military background professionally. But it is in the details that the stolen valour accusations would find purchase. Did Lee earn his green beret? Can he be referred to as a 'commando'? Lee rarely added detail in acknowledging his military background. In an exception, he elaborated on it in a 2013 interview on MuddyRace.co.uk: 'When I was at university I was in the University Training Corp [UOTC] and that put me through university. After this I went into the mountain troops in the Royal Marines for about three years but I broke my leg which meant I left.'⁴⁹⁹ This claim, of having gone 'into the

⁴⁹⁸ In British military custom, a serviceleaver does not retain junior rank titles (below Major) after leaving.

⁴⁹⁹ This article is no longer directly available, but is quoted widely in other publications, including: Fran McElhone, 'Race Founder Posed as a Royal Marine', *Western Morning News*, 24 December 2013, Nexis Advance UK, accessed 24 January 2022, <https://advance.lexis.com/document/?pdmfid=1519360&crid=45c74fb8-7d1a-41e9-952f>

mountain troops in the Royal Marines for about three years' appears to have been a turning point for people who were tracking Lee's story. It is obviously incorrect, but it is also difficult to understand. Lee's experience in UOTC is unremarkable. It would not allow him to go directly into the armed forces without additional training. Publicly being known for having been an officer, Lee would also need to complete YO training (16 months) and a junior troop command (12 months) before being loaded onto specialty training courses. 'The mountain troops' seems to allude to the Mountain Leaders (ML), a highly regarded specialisation within the Royal Marines.

Lee's accurate military history is complicated: the opposite of a snappy descriptor or story. By his own admission, upon being accused of misrepresentation Lee clarified:

I was wrong, I am sorry, and I want to apologise for the fact I allowed it to be publicised that I had passed out from CTCRM⁵⁰⁰ as a Royal Marines Commando Officer.... In 2006, I went through selection to become a Young Officer in the Royal Marines, and after being selected, I commenced training in 2007....During the 18-month course, in 2008, I broke my kneecap. After surgery and rehab, I was told to take what is known as a "Back Batch" where you re-enter training with the following year's batch during the same period of training.... In the interim, as my desired career path was to become a mountain leader, I was permitted to attend relevant courses.⁵⁰¹

The specificity here is useful. Most importantly, the detail explains how Lee could have spent multiple years as a Royal Marine but not have completed his training. It also speaks to the distinction between being selected as a YO, entering training, and passing out as a RM commando and officer. 'Back batching' someone is common in YO training, which only has one intake per year, so Lee's story to this point is highly plausible. In training at CTCRM, Lee would have experienced military 'obstacle' and endurance courses including the Tarzan ropes course, Bottom Field assault course, and the six-mile Endurance run which features

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00&pdcontentcomponentid=166724&pdteaserkey=sr9&pdtab=allpods&ecomp=xbxnk&earg=sr9&prid=b8865984-bade-4455-a4ce-ea04e7e811aa.

⁵⁰⁰ Commando Training Centre, Royal Marines (Lympstone). May be called 'CTC', 'CTCRM' or 'Lympstone'. All Royal Marines basic training is held there.

⁵⁰¹ This was originally published directly by Lee but is no longer available. It is quoted extensively in a number of sources, including: Nick Enoch, 'Spartan Race Founder Resigns after Lying about Being Ex-Royal Marine', Mail Online, 2 January 2014, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532778/Walter-Mitty-founder-Spartan-endurance-race-resigns-admitting-LIED-former-Royal-Marine.html>.

an underwater culvert known, accurately, as the 'Sheep Dip'. Whether Lee 'passed out' or not has no bearing on that experience which is directly translatable to the obstacle course industry. However, the quibble with Lee's story is not over him *never* having had the assault course experience he claimed. It is over details of what language he is or isn't entitled to having been in training, but not finished or served. It is about the value which he has, implicitly, capitalised upon in his business: of being 'military' and, with claims about the 'mountain troops', one of the elite.

From Lee's account and apology, it's clear that, temporally, it would be impossible for Lee to have spent 'about three years' in the 'mountain troops.' It remains ambiguous whether Lee passed his commando tests and, therefore, might be able to be described as a 'commando'. In the exposé, the Walter Mitty Hunters Club alleges that Lee has worn a Royal Marines Commando shirt, linking to a video which no longer exists.⁵⁰² If Lee did not pass the commando tests, he, by military social custom, should not wear an item of clothing with the word 'commando' on it. Generously, this case could be read as missteps in journalism and language that produced a story and identity that grew legs. The media and public found value in his military experience and called on the link between background and profession at every turn. Lee is accurate in describing his error: that he 'allowed it to be publicised' that he had finished training. But there is also the sense that the benefits were too good and the prospective fall out in stopping the story and identity too great to be considered before it was brought to light. In unravelling the details and slippages in this case, it is difficult to pin the blame for stolen valour wholly on Lee. Rather, stolen valour begins to come into focus as a complicated civil-military behaviour, linked intimately with the valuing of 'military.' Lee is not mentioned in 'The Origins of Spartan' story on the company's website. While it was reported that he was investigated by the MOD⁵⁰³, it appears Lee never faced charges for this case of misrepresentation.

The Veterans History Project

⁵⁰² 'Richard Lee AKA Richard Thomas or "Teggers" as He Was Known.'

⁵⁰³ McElhone, 'Race Founder Posed as a Royal Marine'.

The Veterans History Project (VHP) managed by the Library of Congress American Folklife Centre is an archive created by the United States Congress in 2000 to catalogue oral histories of American veterans.⁵⁰⁴ The Act that was passed by Congress cites the declining number of veterans from World War I and World War II as one of the motivations for the project.⁵⁰⁵ The VHP maintains an online presence that, though dated, does have a database (searchable by conflict, service branch, sex, Prisoner of War status, and material type) with a digitized collection of resources. The project, which encourages community participation (e.g., they pitch participating in collecting material for the VHP as an Eagle Scout Service Project), grew to include over 50,000 entries. However, it ran into trouble with authenticity.

When Doug Sterner examined the archive's collection of material on 49 Medal of Honor recipients in 2007, he found that 24 of them had *not* been awarded the decoration.⁵⁰⁶ However, the Library of Congress' response was staggeringly bland, maintaining that they are not 'an official military record archive' and their intent is 'only to supplement, not substitute for, the historical record', thus their stance that they do 'not verify the accuracy of accounts that are provided to the project'.⁵⁰⁷ In regard to the issue raised by Sterner, they note that their review 'indicates that there has been no intent whatsoever to provide false information'.⁵⁰⁸ Matt Raymond, the Library's Director of Communications, explained that some of the veterans 'exposed' by Sterner had been awarded the Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal by the South Vietnam government, which was erroneously shortened to Medal of Honor.⁵⁰⁹ 24 seems a very high number of transcription or data entry errors for the country's highest military honour and the Library of Congress' response seems blind to the ethical and historical implications of including stolen

⁵⁰⁴ 'Frequently Asked Questions About the Veterans History Project (American Folklife Center)', Veterans History Project, accessed 29 October 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-questions.html#background>.

⁵⁰⁵ *Veterans' Oral History Project Act*, Public Law 106-380, U.S. Statutes at Large 114 (2000): 1447.

⁵⁰⁶ C. Douglas Sterner, Pam Sterner, and Michael Mink, *Restoring Valor: One Couple's Mission to Expose Fraudulent War Heroes and Protect America's Military Awards System* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2015), loc. 1572.

⁵⁰⁷ Matt Raymond, 'Veterans History Project Responds | Library of Congress Blog', 19 September 2007, <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2007/09/veterans-history-project-responds/>.

⁵⁰⁸ Raymond.

⁵⁰⁹ Raymond.

valour narratives in a government funded and sponsored historical archive. Sterner had found additional discrepancies for other valorous awards (with concerns about roughly 30% of people claiming a Distinguished Service Cross and Navy Crosses).⁵¹⁰ Mary Schantag, a stolen valour hunter who specializes in Prisoners of War, identified a similar proportion of incorrectly identified Vietnam War POWs on the VHP.⁵¹¹

Stealing 'military'

Although these cases are a part of stolen valour as a phenomenon, what's being stolen here is not valour. It is the privileges and rewards, hard and soft, that, traditionally, valour has warranted. In this sense, these cases of military misrepresentation and 'stolen valour' demonstrate a transference of this system of value and civil-military behaviours from decorations and valorous individuals to the 'military' as a whole. While having decorations or serving with elite combat forces retains a higher value, generally being 'military' has come into having a value by itself. Such a process runs along the same logic as instrumental heroization. In the same sense that *all* servicepersons are now heroes, 'military' has come away with some of the value previously attached solely with valour.

With 'military' having exchangeable value, socially and materially, the phenomenon of stealing valour might more accurately be termed 'stealing "military"'. Perpetrators are stealing valour as a commodity, which has been flattened like 'hero' to include all servicepersons. This extension of 'valour' past the logical and physical boundaries of military decorations has been enabled by a desire to repay or address indebtedness in civil-military relations. The cultural work of recognition has extended the privileges and rewards previously tied to objects to 'military' in general. However, doing so has incentivised misrepresentation and become the power which backs stolen valour.

As the subsequent section develops, there is a sense that the legal measures taken against stolen valour are insufficient and unable to cope with this movement away from sumptuary transgressions toward speech-based misrepresentation. This chapter asserts that stolen valour vigilantism, which it describes as 'stolen valour hunting' evidences an anxiety

⁵¹⁰ Sterner, Sterner, and Mink, *Restoring Valor*, loc. 1584.

⁵¹¹ Sterner, Sterner, and Mink, loc. 1584.

around stolen valour and the perception that it erodes traditional modes of civil-military behaviours. If the valuation of 'military' lies in the deformation of valour as a commodity through instrumental heroization, then the defence of this commodification of 'military' is critical cultural work to anchor 'civil' and 'military'. People who exaggerate or misrepresent themselves and their experience in the military benefit from a system of gratitude acts couched in the cultural work of recognition. Finding and excising these individuals from the system is critical to resecuring the civil-military binary.

3.2. Stolen Valour Hunting

What this chapter refers to as 'stolen valour hunting' is the very sharpest edge of these activists and organisations which were founded to raise awareness about stolen valour as a social ill. The network of anti-stolen valour activists documented by the media and themselves appears small and close-knit, with the same people appearing repeatedly. Doug Sterner, a Vietnam Veteran known for his contributions and research toward building online resources for valorous medal recipients and citations, is widely cited and quoted by media and academic research.⁵¹² He has authored a book chronicling the experiences of he and his wife working on stolen valour and notes that his wife, Pam Sterner, proposed the use of the term 'stolen valour' in the SVA's title after being directly inspired by Burkett's book; Pam Sterner helped draft the SVA 2005.⁵¹³ Doug Sterner worked closely with Tom A. Cottone Jr., an FBI Special Agent who handled stolen valour type investigations for the Bureau and is widely known in the stolen valour community and media coverage. Doug also trained Anthony Anderson, a US Army veteran who has been described as a "'stolen valor" detective'⁵¹⁴, in investigation techniques. Anderson founded Guardian of Valor, an organisation that investigates potential stolen valour cases and offers vetting services to

⁵¹² See, for example: Brian Mockenhaupt, 'The Stolen-Valor Detective', *The Atlantic*, 14 November 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/12/the-honor-guard/505859/>; Kasturi, 'Stolen Valor', 437; Anderson Cooper 360 -Veteran Imposter.

⁵¹³ Sterner, Sterner, and Mink, *Restoring Valor*, loc. 558.

⁵¹⁴ 'Meet the Country's Most Prominent "Stolen Valor" Detective', *CBS News*, 14 June 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/guardian-of-valor-investigates-stolen-false-military-service-claim/>.

verify military records for employers or other relevant parties.⁵¹⁵ His associated Facebook page, Stolen Valor, is liked and followed by over 500,000 people.⁵¹⁶

Stolen valour hunting is an activity animated by righteous anger which centres cathartic public shaming on the Internet and social media. There are numerous UK and US based websites which operate galleries of rogues with details of people they've 'caught.' Somewhat disturbingly, one site describes their wall of shame as 'Secured Targets.'⁵¹⁷ The terms hunting/hunter are used deliberately here (versus what other people have called 'investigation' or 'detective') because there is an element of thrill and violent arousal which is essential to understanding stolen valour as a phenomenon.

On its website, The Walter Mitty Hunters Club, a group of ex-servicepersons that hunts down and publishes such cases of deception, threatens: 'IF YOU ARE PRETENDING TO BE A WAR VETERAN, WE'RE PROBABLY ALREADY WATCHING YOU.'⁵¹⁸ The term 'Walter Mitty,' referencing a 1939 short story 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' by James Thurber, takes inspiration from the eponymous protagonist, an average, uninspiring man whose intrusive daydreams figure him as a hero. In the opening passage, Mitty throws the reader and himself into the control centre of a Navy hydroplane taking on an epic storm.⁵¹⁹ In another daydream, Mitty is a World War I bomber pilot ready to face down 'Von Richtman's circus', an allusion to real-life 'Richthofen's circus'/'The Flying Circus'/'Der Fliegende Zirkus', a fighter wing of the German Air Force. Within the phenomenon of stolen valour, a 'Walter Mitty' misrepresents their involvement with the military, be that through an exaggeration of service record or pretending to have served entirely. This behaviour may take several forms, including wearing medals or uniforms, falsely joining groups for particular service branches or specialties, hoodwinking veterans' services and charities, or making false claims in media. Preparators are commonly referred to as 'Walts'.

⁵¹⁵ At the time of writing, the organization website (guardianofvalor.com) is not in service.

⁵¹⁶ 'Stolen Valor Facebook Page', Facebook, Stolen Valor, accessed 26 October 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/StolenValor/>.

⁵¹⁷ 'Secured Targets', Stolen Valor, accessed 2 November 2021, <http://www.stolenvalor.com/target.cfm?source=link&sort=order>.

⁵¹⁸ 'The Walter Mitty Hunters Club Facebook Page', Facebook, The Walter Mitty Hunters Club, accessed 12 October 2021, <https://thewaltercumpershunterclub.wordpress.com/>.

⁵¹⁹ James Thurber, 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty', *The New Yorker*, 18 March 1939, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1939/03/18/the-secret-life-of-walter-james-thurber>.

The Walter Mitty Hunters Club is not an outlier of social behaviour. A transatlantic counterpart, Stolen Valor, does similar work.⁵²⁰ And both organisations are part of a phenomenon born out of the same emotions which fuelled calls for legislation like the Stolen Valor Acts. They are also, more troublingly, the vigilantist, para-legislative moral authority which hunts and 'outs' perpetrators. This public shaming is best understood through a justice lens in which the exposure seeks to both end the stolen valour behaviours and punish the perpetrator. Some individuals, described here as 'stolen valour hunters', record their confrontations with suspected fraudulent individuals to post to YouTube as 'stolen valour' videos. The videos seem to share a formula: the person, often a veteran or someone with a service connection, starts the video describing the situation (e.g., 'We saw this faker at the airport in uniform and it didn't seem right because...') before filming a confrontation with the suspected perpetrator. These confrontations often include profanity, aggressive questioning of the suspected perpetrator's 'story' and demands by the 'hunter' to see military ID cards. In some cases, the suspected perpetrator runs away from the aggressors.⁵²¹ In others, they seem relatively unphased and proceed with their business.⁵²² In a contrived scene of UK reality television show *SAS: Who Dares Wins*, show staff member and ex-Special Forces veteran Ant Middleton follows a familiar pattern of behaviour when confronting a participant who he's discovered has lied about serving in the Parachute Regiment. In the video clip, which has been viewed over six million times, Middleton calmly lays a trap for the participant by showing him his CV and asking about it, before abusing him with expletives when the participant comes clean.⁵²³

Anthony Anderson, founder of Guardian of Valor and a stolen valour investigator doesn't view himself as a 'vigilante,' instead describing his videos as a chance for the accused to explain themselves: he is careful to note that they have never falsely accused

⁵²⁰ 'Home', Stolen Valor, accessed 12 October 2021, <http://www.stolenvalor.com/>. Other sites include: <https://militaryphony.com/> and <https://stolenvalouruk.wordpress.com/>.

⁵²¹ *Fake Outed Outside MacDill AFB Soliciting Money*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8AolRhVdEI>.

⁵²² *Stolen Valor Fake Outed In Gretna, Nebraska Begging For Money*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBG9N3qafvA>.

⁵²³ 'You F****g What?!" Ant Furious With Recruit Who Lied About Being In Military | SAS: Who Dares Wins, accessed 28 October 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d8ri-P3ECw&ab_channel=Channel4.

anyone.⁵²⁴ But the fervour with which stolen valour hunters act and the video viewers embrace the filmed encounters teeters on a thin edge of reason and palatability. Some hunters use tactics like those deployed by vigilalist 'paedophile hunters', organising themselves in networks that arrange bait-and-switch meets with suspected perpetrators. Lured in by the prospect of meeting up with an attractive woman, the perpetrator instead might find himself face-to-face with 'a burly Scouser and ex-Royal Marine called Danny...who has a deep loathing of people inventing a forces background.'⁵²⁵

In 2019, YouTube banned ('deplatformed') 'BUDS131,' a channel run by Don Shipley, a former Navy SEAL and stolen valour hunter who specialises in SEALs and runs SEAL training experiences for civilians. This ban was a stronger action than de-monetisation, in which YouTube revokes the ability of a creator to receive income on a video or channel. YouTube deplatformed Shipley citing their policies against harassment and the sharing of private information – they claimed that Shipley 'enticed Internet users to reach out to those people in his videos directly to criticize them' and provided identifying information about the suspected perpetrators.⁵²⁶ Since then, Shipley has moved his video content to a private, subscription model hosted on his own website: extremesealexperience.com. His website features a sort of how-to guide on identifying phony Navy SEALs titled 'The Scourge of Navy SEAL Imposters.' There is a coarseness to Shipley's content, the tone sometimes bitter. He claims: 'Phonies have a few allies who light me up as a "Cyber Bully." It's OK for the Phonies to spread their lies and steal Valor, but it's not OK for me to expose those lies and reclaim Stolen Valor. Lying about being a SEAL is a "Victimless Crime," they claim, and it is NOT'.⁵²⁷ For Shipley, one example of such exposure and reclaiming takes the form of posting CVs of people he has identified as fakes, complete with photos, addresses, and

⁵²⁴ 'Meet the Country's Most Prominent "Stolen Valor" Detective'.

⁵²⁵ Chris Hughes, 'Meet The Walter Mitty Hunters Club - Vigilantes Who Unmask Bogus War Heroes', *mirror*, 3 March 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/meet-walter-mitty-hunters-club-7490658>.

⁵²⁶ Greg Norman, 'Navy SEAL Who "Outed" Nathan Phillips' Military Record Post-Covington Claims YouTube Retaliated, Banned Him', *Fox News*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/navy-seal-who-outed-nathan-phillips-military-record-in-wake-of-covington-incident-claims-youtube-banned-him-in-retaliation>.

⁵²⁷ 'The Scourge of Navy SEAL Imposters 2', *Extreme SEAL Experience*, accessed 29 October 2021, https://www.extremesealexperience.com/Fake-Navy-Seal-Verification_Scourage-Of-Seal-Imposters-2.

contact information.⁵²⁸ Though Shipley describes his work through an almost intellectual lens — ‘I go out of my way to speak with Phonies, to talk with them calmly in most cases. I ask questions and study them and it makes me better as their stories have so many similarities’ — the sharing and shaming of such identifiable information seems to align more with a framing of vigilantism and incitement: Shipley writes that the ‘cowardly bunch of Valor Thieves...need a solid asskicking.’⁵²⁹

Willsey describes the stolen valour videos as ‘a subcategory of the larger phenomenon... “justice porn”’⁵³⁰ in her analysis, which reads stolen valour within a context of post-truth politics and the commodification of identity, particularly online. There is a pornographic aspect to the videos. A viewer might subscribe to a private platform like Shipley’s or find content on YouTube or a stolen valour hunter site. Some videos replicate the feeling of the ‘hunt’: the viewer, already knowing the genre of the video knows what will happen, but may enjoy the baiting questions, the circling of the perpetrator. Then, the undressing, the accusation unleashed that in the moment of utterance seeks to strip the false identity from the perpetrator. And along with it, or just after: the dressing down, the shaming, the searing words that feel good to hear said. The violence unleashed in these videos — for it is a violence, even if no altercation occurs — from documenting the accusation to the posting on public fora in an act of public shaming is a cathartic experience. The anger behind this violence is righteous and it is shared by the viewer. Who dares steal valour? What should we do with people who steal valour? What does justice, in this case, look like? How can we be sure we are right? And what if we are wrong?

Stolen valour hunting encompasses the behaviours that surround suspected cases: the people who accuse, who observe, who report and condemn in their effort to re-secure the civil-military binary.⁵³¹ Importantly, understanding stolen valour this way also makes

⁵²⁸ ‘Fake Navy SEAL Resumes’, Extreme SEAL Experience, accessed 29 October 2021, https://www.extremesealexperience.com/Fake-Navy-Seal-Verification_Phony-Navy-Seal-Resumes.

⁵²⁹ Both quotations from: ‘The Scourge of Navy SEAL Imposters 2’.

⁵³⁰ Willsey, “Fake Vets” and Viral Lies: Personal Narrative in a Post-Truth Era’, 500–501.

⁵³¹ One counterargument is that efforts which seek to punish and deter stolen valour are doing so in the defence of the true ‘heroes’ and ‘military’ whose rightful privileges and honours are being stolen. However, this, I contend, is predicated on a zero-sum understanding of valour. Logically, can a fraudulent speech act devalue the valour of a deserving recipient? Of a person who *is* in the military?

needed room for the discussion of the failures and stakes. Unquestionably, within stolen valour as a phenomena, there is failure: incorrect accusations, unethical attacks on people in poor mental health, bungled challenges which expose the accuser as a fake instead. The damage of stolen valour cuts across the landscape. Occasionally, there are stolen valour videos which sit uncomfortably.⁵³² Some of the accused people seem genuinely confused or stunned, some are clearly experiencing delusions of grandeur when proudly reeling off impossible (and sometimes comical) military accolades and experiences. The righteous anger which fuels the production and consumption of stolen valour media seems to have a blinding effect. So eager are we to root out stolen valour and defend the sanctity of valour as a commodity that the lines around the appropriateness of method and intensity become fuzzy, sometimes to tragic ends.

Such was the case in 1996, when Admiral Jeremy M. Boorda, the 'first sailor to rise from the lowest enlisted rank to become a four-star admiral and the Navy's supreme commander' committed suicide shortly after learning that an article alleging stolen valour would be published about him in *Newsweek*.⁵³³ Previously, Boorda had worn two combat 'V' pins atop the ribbons (signifying the medals) he'd been awarded for his service during the Vietnam War. While the decorations were authentic and accurate, the citations which accompanied the medals did not specifically cite his entitlement to wear the 'V' pins which denote combat operations experience — they did mention ""combat" missions."⁵³⁴ In his suicide note to "the Sailors", Boorda apologized for his "honest mistake," but was,

Turning to medals, do fake medals devalue the real medals? As identified in this chapter, a significant part of a valorous military medal's value is totemic and linked to its specific story. In this sense, the only way to devalue these medals would be to issue more medals by lowering the required standard. False medals and speech claims cannot dim the civil-military valuation of valour, which this project does not understand as zero-sum. Thus, it disagrees with discourse which positions the stolen valour activist as some sort of protector of the 'military'. What these activists are protecting is the binary and the relations and processes which it enables.

⁵³² Ethically, I have opted to not include links to these videos as they showcase vulnerable individuals.

⁵³³ Philip Shenon, 'Admiral, in Suicide Note, Apologized to "My Sailors"', *The New York Times*, 18 May 1996, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/18/us/admiral-in-suicide-note-apologized-to-my-sailors.html>.

⁵³⁴ Shenon.

according to a Pentagon official, concerned about "how it would be perceived by the fleet, by the sailors, by the media."⁵³⁵

Stolen valour hunting is the less palatable cousin of other efforts, including the legislation discussed earlier in this chapter, which seeks to address, punish, and deter stolen valour activities. That such work is undertaken, often passionately, can be read as countering an increase in the behaviour of stolen valour which capitalises on the value of 'military'. Separated from the physical objects of recognition, like the medals analysed in the previous section, the commodification of valour co-opts behaviour reserved for rare and laudable acts and individuals, flattening it to include a much larger swathe of society. If instrumental heroization explains this shift, it also must be held accountable for introducing the queerness that comes with stolen valour. In this sense, civil-military relations in the contemporary era have created its own queering problem (stolen valour), which it attempts to re-binarize through its own solutions (legislative change and stolen valour hunting). However even these remedial behaviours can fail, sometimes catastrophically. As this chapter has demonstrated in linking stolen valour and military medals in the commodification of valour and the cultural work of recognition, the queering force of stolen valour has been directly produced by relations of debt which value 'military' as a gratitude act. Thus, this queerness itself is also essential to theorising the contemporary character of CMR.

4. Recognition as Cultural Work

Recognition sits at the heart of the contemporary character of civil-military relations. It is a point of rest and agreement in regarding the military as a figure of unease, enabling us to identify and offer acknowledgement to the 'military' as hero and/or victim in behaviours which pattern the 'civil' as saved and/or saviour. Military impersonation or misrepresentation is a direct threat to this tacit agreement, as it undermines the stability of value which underwrites valour as a commodity. Recognition relies on a trust that we can

⁵³⁵ Shenon.

recognise the correct people. If we cannot do this, then the goals of commodifying valour remain unmet.

The social labour which maintains an essentialised and distinct civil-military relations cannot effectively function amidst the deceptions of non-military people pretending to have served in the military, or military people pretending to have served longer, better, or more bravely. These challenges make recognition defunct dually. Not only are we not recognising the correct individuals, correctly. But such deception also introduces doubt into the system. There is a feeling of being tricked and deceived by these people through a system of recognition that we have already, as citizens, bought into. Our anger is double then as well. We are upset at having been swindled. And we are righteously angry on behalf of the people who deserve the recognition we were offering. This indignation is a form of recognition: that the process and purpose of the commodification of valour has been undercut.

This chapter has established recognition as a type of cultural work which maintains the civil-military as a binary. However, its analysis has demonstrated that the cultural work involved in the commodification of valour has been challenged by the emergence of stolen valour as a phenomenon. In building valour up as a commodity which operates on recognition based in physical objects and signs, including medals, this chapter also constructs it as something with exchangeable value worth stealing. Its analysis of stolen valour has posited a movement away from the objects used in recognition, in both senses of the term: identification and acknowledgement. It attributes this movement to a process of instrumental heroization which relocates the value from the objects themselves as a commodification of valour to the speech claim of being 'military'. Just as all soldiers have become heroes and/or victims, the recognition which powered valour as a commodity has expanded to commodify 'military'.

In response to the destabilising threat of stolen valour, the chapter has framed stolen valour hunting and the pushback against this form of military fraud as a concerted effort to secure the civil-military binary and preserve the functionality of valour as a commodity as gratitude act. If valorous military medals were intended to offer acknowledgement of extraordinary actions and enable the identification of these individuals, then the commodification of valour detailed in this chapter which gave medals

value can be read as vested within a larger project of a gratitude act targeted at relieving the indebtedness of CMR. However, such behaviour's incentivisation of stolen valour creates a queerness which warrants additional policing to re-binarize it. This queerness, this chapter argues, is essential to the contemporary character of CMR.

Returning to the image of DeJoseph that this chapter began with, it is interesting and troubling to reflect on how to read DeJoseph's actions and those of the press when confronted with their error by Burkett, perhaps the *original* stolen valour hunter. A lot of the information is out of view: why did DeJoseph dress and act as he did and agree to be photographed? Why was the photographer drawn to him? Did they assume that DeJoseph was a veteran in recognising the signs and objects that mark someone, often, as 'military'? Or did DeJoseph announce that he was a veteran, making a speech claim and, in doing so, hoping to gain the exposure that comes with an Associated Press photo? But why would a person who consciously misrepresents himself choose to participate in and showcase his misrepresentation in one of the most exposed ways (in the mid-1990s) imaginable? This chapter has offered some insight into such public military misrepresentation, taking an instrumental view to build valour as a CMR commodity, which in having a value becomes something worth stealing. That it's worth stealing also means it is worth protecting. However, because valour is a CMR commodity, its value can only be exchanged in the social, cultural space in which the risk of exposure is significant and telling. If we cannot successfully recognise the 'military', then we cannot enjoy the ease found in fixing the 'military' as a figure of unease. If we reward the wrong person from a desire to relieve a sense of indebtedness, then the moment of rest dissipates. Instead, we create the space within which DeJoseph, and the others mentioned in this chapter, operate and which unravels the binary that cultural work must seek to maintain.

CHAPTER 5

RECOVERY: INVICTUS

1. The Cultural Work of Recovery

The previous chapter examined the cultural work of recognition as an example of the immense labour which produces and maintains the civil-military binary. In doing so, it established the constructedness of civil and military culturally. This chapter builds upon this logic and turns its attention to *what* is produced. It analyses the cultural work of recovery to explore the queer possibilities which emerge in looking at the 'reintegration' and conceptualization of veterans. It argues that the complex and queer concurrency of the figurations of the soldier as hero and victim underwrites the contemporary character of civil-military relations and that this behaviour is best observed in the work around the veteran as a non-binary figure. In particular, it offers a queered formation of these figurations as 'hero and/or victim,' as opposed to any victim/hero, hero-victim hybrid model. This queered logic offers an ambiguous fluidity which encompasses instances of both separate employment of the figurations and of concurrency.

The cultural work of recovery is highlighted in this project because it operates at a site of confrontation with the veteran as a non-binary figure which emerges from the military but is regarded as neither wholly military nor wholly civil. The chapter examines forces charities as part of the cultural work of recovery, which is generated around the figure of the ex-serviceperson. Confronted with the nonbinary figure, the work of recovery looks to secure it within the familiar frameworks of instrumental heroization and victimization. However, the veteran as a figure cannot be made to signify monolithically within the civil-military binary. As this analysis demonstrates, an unstableness of the figurations of 'hero' and 'victim' yield entanglement loops which recover each in the other.

This chapter understands forces charities as CMR organisations, which, in the corporatisation of care, should be read as a form of commodification. Military charities, in a neoliberal environment, must compete to secure funding and deliver services. Such efforts, due to the relationship between organisation, donors, and beneficiaries, rely on producing the 'military' (often the veteran) as a cause. As this chapter demonstrates, this rhetoric of

producing 'military' as a cause is closely tied to the figurations of 'hero' and 'victim', thus configuring the donor as both the saved and the saviour. Reading forces charities reveals a wielding of the figurations to pull on the strings and patterns of behaviour that accompany them: a donor feels an obligation or a responsibility to donate because of how 'military' is presented in discourse. In participating in the cultural work of recovery, the donor feels as though they have helped, but their participation in and with forces charities also affirms the CMR binary. However, closer analysis of the charitable discourse reveals a messiness in and around the binary. Examining the cultural work of recovery reveals that the poles of 'hero' and 'victim' within CMR are already queer.

Forces charities have been of interest to researchers as a site at which civil-military relations can be examined, both in historical and contemporary contexts. However, the approach of such research locates it firmly within a binary logic. For example, Herman and Yarwood develop a conceptual framework which locates forces charities as 'boundary subjects' which 'span' and 'depend' on the 'civilian-military binary' and propose it should be understood more as an 'adaptive continuum'.⁵³⁶ While this research purposefully departs from this logic, it appreciates that military charities and their activities are commonly understood within this binary, for example acting as advocates of the 'military' community to the 'civil' government for improved treatment of soldiers and families.⁵³⁷

This chapter builds on work which understands that forces charities produce 'military' as a cause and investigate the means and methods by which they do this. This work spans historical and contemporary approaches. For example, in her analysis of war widow charitable initiatives for the South African War, Riedi highlights the role of the Shilling Fund in 'redefining the rank-and-file soldier as a citizen whose family was 'deserving' of support in recognition of his services to the state.'⁵³⁸ The chapter is

⁵³⁶ Agatha Herman and Richard Yarwood, 'From Warfare to Welfare: Veterans, Military Charities and the Blurred Spatiality of Post-Service Welfare in the United Kingdom', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 47, no. 12 (1 December 2015): 2629, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X15614844>.

⁵³⁷ Owen Dyer, 'Charities Say UK Government Must Do More to Help Soldiers Returning from Battle', *BMJ* 335, no. 7616 (23 August 2007): 364–65, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39314.514734.DB>.

⁵³⁸ Eliza Riedi, '"Our Soldiers' Widows": Charity, British War Widows, and the South African War (1899–1902)', *War in History* 28, no. 1 (1 January 2021): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344518818851>.

particularly close to the work done by Millar on the history and figuration of 'the troops'⁵³⁹ and the military as a social cause⁵⁴⁰. This causification of the veteran has been so successful that an analysis of American news media found that the framing of 'veteran' as 'charity' was more prevalent than either framings of 'hero' or 'victim' on Twitter.⁵⁴¹ This chapter draws on this literature to read forces charities as a site, which in producing 'military' as a cause, harnesses the figurations of hero and/or victim and saved and/or saviour. In doing so, they also participate in the cultural work which configures the 'military' and 'civil'.

Structurally, the chapter proceeds in two parts. It first analyses the discourse of forces charities generally, looking to examples from the UK and US. In doing so, it demonstrates the reliance of these charities on the figurations of hero and/or victim to induce donation and thus success as an enterprise. In this approach, it draws on the processes of instrumental heroization and victimization established in *Chapter 3*. It thus speaks to the criticism that military charities may exaggerate and 'use' PTSD as a problem to encourage donations⁵⁴² and counterbalances it with analysis of how the figuration of 'military' is also operationalised. The chapter then continues to examine a single charity in more detail, as Thompson does in his analysis of the discursive impact and legacy of Help for Heroes⁵⁴³. This chapter focuses on the Invictus Games Foundation (IGF), a high-profile UK charity which operates a 'multi-national sporting event for wounded, injured and sick Servicemen and women.'⁵⁴⁴ Through this case, it demonstrates the figuration of soldier as hero and/or victim and the inadequacy of either/or binary logic in the study of CMR.

⁵³⁹ Katharine M. Millar, 'The Plural of Soldier Is Not Troops: The Politics of Groups in Legitimating Militaristic Violence', *Security Dialogue* 50, no. 3 (1 June 2019): 201–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619836337>.

⁵⁴⁰ Millar, '"They Need Our Help".

⁵⁴¹ Parrott et al., 'Hero, Charity Case, and Victim'.

⁵⁴² Deborah Haynes, 'Military Charities Accused of Inflating Combat Stress Problem; Military Charities "Using Post-Traumatic Stress to Raise Money"', *The Times (London)*, 2 September 2016, 1, Ireland edition, sec. News.

⁵⁴³ Gareth Thompson, 'Help for Heroes: From Organizational Discourse to a New Orthodoxy', *Public Relations Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1 January 2018): 25–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X17753438>.

⁵⁴⁴ Invictus Games Foundation, 'GAMES', accessed 3 March 2021, <https://invictusgamesfoundation.org/games/>.

2. Charitable Giving and Forces Charities

Before analysing the discourse of forces charities, it is crucial to contextualise forces charities within the larger frame of research on charities and an understanding of contemporary charitable giving as a prosocial behaviour. While giving (and volunteering) benefit charities, there is also a performative and self-satisfying dynamic to the behaviour. Looking to research on charitable giving reveals a common corporate framework of understanding charities, which locates the giver as a customer which the charity must engage and induce to action. Research, both implicitly and explicitly, is often oriented toward the question of how charities can better attract and retain donors, a topic of increasing concern as 'charities are competing as never before for consumers' donations.'⁵⁴⁵ As the chief executive of Walking with the Wounded, a British charity, describes, 'We have got to be more interesting than [the charity] Combat Stress, which has got to be more interesting than Help for Heroes because we are all fishing in the same pot.'⁵⁴⁶

This project embraces this corporate approach in framing the discourse it analyses and positions instrumental heroization and instrumental victimization as strategies employed in marketing to and engaging with potential donors. It also draws on the increasingly international conceptualization of the charitable space, enabled by digital and social media. Within research on charitable giving, there is some sense of cultural specificity: studies have been published on donor behaviour in particular national contexts including South Korea⁵⁴⁷, Canada⁵⁴⁸, and Malaysia⁵⁴⁹ among others. However, charities and donor behaviour may also be approached from an international perspective, not only

⁵⁴⁵ Therese A. Louie and Carl Obermiller, 'Gender Stereotypes and Social-Desirability Effects on Charity Donation', *Psychology & Marketing* 17, no. 2 (February 2000): 121.

⁵⁴⁶ Haynes, 'Military Charities Accused of Inflating Combat Stress Problem; Military Charities "Using Post-Traumatic Stress to Raise Money"'.

⁵⁴⁷ Soobin Kim, Chulhee Kang, and Rafael Engel, 'What Convinces Donors? An Analysis of Donation-based Crowdfunding Projects from Nonprofit Charities: The Case of South Korea', *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 7 December 2021, nml.21496, <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21496>.

⁵⁴⁸ Robert Mittelman and José Rojas-Méndez, 'Why Canadians Give to Charity: An Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour Model', *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing* 15, no. 2 (June 2018): 189–204, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-018-0197-3>.

⁵⁴⁹ Muhammad Kashif, Syamsulang Sarifuddin, and Azizah Hassan, 'Charity Donation: Intentions and Behaviour', *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 33, no. 1 (2015): 90–102, <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-07-2013-0110>.

regarding global charities like WWF or Oxfam International, but also given the rise of online and mobile activism and giving via the Internet.

However, the influence of the Internet and social media on charitable giving has been complicated by the rise of performative activism, in which the prosocial act is motivated primarily by a desire to be witnessed by others and thereby gain social credit. Several tools, including public 'likes'⁵⁵⁰, profile photo frames, and virtual ribbons play into this kind of behaviour and have generated further research, building on work which has examined physical tokens of charity including awareness ribbons⁵⁵¹. Performative activism of this sort bears similarity to conspicuous donation behaviour (CBD), originally defined as 'an individual's show of support to charitable causes through the purchase of merchandise that is overtly displayed on the individual's person or possessions.'⁵⁵² Such behaviour has been criticised and written off as 'slacktivism.' There is also the concern that these behaviours and digital tokens of allyship or support may reduce actual donations. For example, recent research has examined whether the ubiquitous 'thoughts and prayers' that are sent in response to negative events as diverse as cancer diagnoses and natural disasters crowd out charitable donations.⁵⁵³ And yet the potential of social media and the Internet for charities is immense: in 2014, the viral ALS Ice Bucket Challenge raised an estimated \$220 million in donations from more than 28 million people.⁵⁵⁴ With social media, which has augmented the performativity of donation and the directness of appeals for donation, the access to and importance of messaging by charities has increased. This trend makes the analysis offered in this chapter even more relevant.

⁵⁵⁰ Elaine Wallace, Isabel Buil, and Leslie de Chernatony, 'When Does "Liking" a Charity Lead to Donation Behaviour? Exploring Conspicuous Donation Behaviour on Social Media Platforms', *European Journal of Marketing* 51, no. 11/12 (1 January 2017): 2002–29, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-03-2017-0210>.

⁵⁵¹ Sarah E. H. Moore, *Ribbon Culture: Charity, Compassion, and Public Awareness* (Basingstoke, UK; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁵⁵² Debra Grace and Deborah Griffin, 'Exploring Conspicuousness in the Context of Donation Behaviour', *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 11, no. 2 (May 2006): 149, <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.24>.

⁵⁵³ Linda Thunström, 'Thoughts and Prayers – Do They Crowd out Charity Donations?', *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 60 (2020): 1–28.

⁵⁵⁴ Emily Sohn, 'Fundraising: The Ice Bucket Challenge Delivers', *Nature* 550, no. 7676 (October 2017): S113–14, <https://doi.org/10.1038/550S113a>.

This growing attention to the messaging of charities has been accompanied by a healthy level of cynicism, fed by prominent scandals which have compromised the integrity of donating as a prosocial action. Ultimately, donating to or volunteering with charities feels good. Importantly, it is a kind of action that *feels* like you're making a difference, even if you're unable to take more direct action. However, it can also be difficult to know whether your personal contribution *is* making a difference. Scandals over the use and allocation of funds⁵⁵⁵, the behaviour of employees⁵⁵⁶, or indeed the bungled handling of scandals themselves can generate a lack of faith in charities, which can be damaging for their image and business. It is discomforting to realise that your donation of money may not be used in the manner you'd assume it would be, or, perhaps, at all: a 2019 news investigation found that the UK's ten largest military charities had £277 million in cash reserves.⁵⁵⁷ Charity Navigator⁵⁵⁸, a website which evaluates and rates non-profits, and makes the analysis and data accessible to the public, has become popular with would-be donors who wish to vet the organisations.

It is against this background of charities and research on charitable organisations that the diverse and crowded landscape of forces charities emerges as a subject for analysis. The Directory of Social Change uses six categories to organise their research on armed forces charities: welfare, service fund, heritage, associations, association branches, and mixed-type.⁵⁵⁹ However, as the final category makes clear, the work done by forces

⁵⁵⁵ See for example, the Susan F. Komen Foundation, which drew criticism for withdrawing (and later re-establishing) funding for Planned Parenthood: Jena McGregor, 'Why Is Nancy Brinker Still CEO of the Susan G. Komen Foundation?', *Washington Post*, 6 June 2013, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2013/06/06/why-is-nancy-brinker-still-ceo-of-the-susan-g-komen-foundation/>.

⁵⁵⁶ As in the case of Oxfam, which suffered after allegations that it had covered up the hiring of sex workers by its employees in Haiti, see: Damien Gayle, 'Timeline: Oxfam Sexual Exploitation Scandal in Haiti', *The Guardian*, 15 June 2018, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/15/timeline-oxfam-sexual-exploitation-scandal-in-haiti>.

⁵⁵⁷ Alistair Bunkall, 'Top Military Charities Sitting on £277m - While Veterans Struggle', *Sky News*, 28 October 2019, <https://news.sky.com/story/military-charities-sit-on-3-1bn-while-veterans-struggle-11844999>.

⁵⁵⁸ 'Charity Navigator - Your Guide To Intelligent Giving | Home', Charity Navigator, accessed 14 December 2021, <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm>?

⁵⁵⁹ Rhiannon Doherty, Anthony Robson, and Stuart Cole, 'Focus on: Armed Forces Charities - Sector Trends' (Directory of Social Change, 2019), <https://www.dsc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DSC-Focus-On-Sector-Trends-2019.pdf>.

charities often overlaps and incorporates different aims. Some common themes can be traced in the goals and initiatives of forces charities which help separate them from each other. Some are conflict-specific and work to serve the interests of veterans from particular wars in policy and advocacy. Others are service branch-specific but conflict-agnostic, intended to build or solidify community among veterans from particular regiments or branches. Still others coalesce around a particular cause: commemoration (as in the case of museums), social services (to address, for example, homelessness and substance abuse), or mental health. The overlapping amongst these categories is numerous and charities exist in every imaginable combination: scuba diving for disabled veterans⁵⁶⁰, the Pararescue Foundation⁵⁶¹, horticulture for mental health⁵⁶². Creating and imagining the veteran as a cause manifests itself in a wide range activities, but these organisations share a commonality in their objective: helping veterans and raising the funding to do so. Following the momentum of social and digital media which has elevated the importance of charitable branding and messaging within a corporate framework of understanding these organisations, the subsequent section analyses the discourse of forces charities to highlight the strategies and themes which draw on the figurations of the 'hero' and/or 'victim' to locate the civil would-be donor as the 'saved' and/or 'saviour'.

3. The Discourse of Forces Charities

This section examines the discourse employed by UK and US forces charities on their websites as demonstrative of how they wish to portray themselves to the public and potential donors. It makes a distinction between the 'self' of the charity and the 'produced self' of the charity, viewing this discourse as a site of charity self-representation which is consciously curated. In surveying forces charities and their self-presentation, it becomes clear that some maintain a neutral and minimal approach to their brand identities and donor appeals. For example, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) merely states, 'IAVA depends on your support. We could not accomplish our mission without the

⁵⁶⁰ 'Home', Deptherapy, accessed 14 December 2021, <https://deptherapy.co.uk/index.html>.

⁵⁶¹ 'Pararescue Foundation', Pararescue Foundation, accessed 14 December 2021, <https://www.pararescuefoundation.org>.

⁵⁶² 'Veterans' Growth', Veterans Growth, accessed 14 December 2021, <https://veteransgrowth.org>.

dedicated support of our donors.⁵⁶³ Similarly, SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity asks donors to 'Support Us' with the message: 'However you choose to support us, you will be helping us to continue our life-changing work with Armed Forces service men and women, veterans and their families. Thank you.'⁵⁶⁴ These statements are unremarkable, save for their juxtaposition with the discourse of the charities examined in this section which makes clear that both styles of self-presentation are part of charity savvy and strategy.

This section looks at forces charities which purposefully use strategies of instrumental heroization and victimization in their self-presentation. It is not surprising that the figurations of military as hero and victim (configuring the civil as saved and saviour) are found in the discourse of forces charities. They are, as fictions, powerful calls to action along templated behaviours which are easily accepted because they are so dominant in CMR. However, these discourses and their employment by forces charities evince efforts to capitalise on the obligation, anxiety, and indebtedness in contemporary civil-military relations. Forces charities are both products of the figural economy and contributors to it. As this section demonstrates, their self-representation often draws on these figurations separately, as instrumental heroization and victimization are difficult to combine. It highlights three themes from the discourse — the obvious heroization and victimization, and an additional framing of donation as service — and presents them separately for clarity in preparation to examine the subsequent sustained case of the Invictus Games.

3.1. Heroization

In heroizing ex-servicepersons, forces charities draw on the relations templated in the figuration of 'military' as hero. This chapter understands this behaviour within a corporate framework in which charities offer their supporters and donors a variety of calls to action. In utilising the language of 'hero', the charities rely on obligation and indebtedness as drivers for donation and support. That this heroization persists, even when it makes little common sense, supports this thesis' identification of *instrumental heroization* as a civil-military behaviour. The production of the veteran as a cause and as a hero carries a tension

⁵⁶³ 'Donating to IAVA', IAVA, accessed 14 December 2021, <https://iava.org/donating-to-iava/>.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Support Us | SSAFA', SSAFA, accessed 14 December 2021, <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/support-us>.

with it. The hero, conceptually, saves. They do not, generally, require the help of the saved. Yet in drawing on the language of the hero, forces charities pursue heroization even in the face of this tension. To use a term which, logically, opposes the dynamics of charity (helping a cause, often people somehow drawn as less fortunate than the donor) could be read as a risk. Calling the service population 'heroes' risks donors questioning if they require assistance. However, the use of the term 'hero' draws not only on language and logic, but also figuration. In calling on the figuration of military as 'hero' in their branding, forces charities produce the implied 'civil' as saved, and thus indebted. Would-be donors are induced to give through the expectation that they feel that they owe something to their heroes.

There is something undeniably unwieldy about terms like 'serviceleavers' or 'ex-servicepersons'. However, it's critical to hold the widespread overuse of the term 'heroes' in the face of suitable alternatives accountable. The usage of this term is present across all levels of branding. Charities, in their titles, ask the public to take action for their 'heroes'. Whether this is the general ask 'Help for Heroes'⁵⁶⁵ or the more specific 'Hire Heroes USA'⁵⁶⁶, the veteran is causified as a hero. This is not an empty or convenient choice made for alliterative preference. In a banner at the bottom of their 'About' page, Hire Heroes USA asks visitors to 'Stand up and support our heroes: Become a donor.'⁵⁶⁷ The non-profit focuses on supporting employment for military, ex-military, and military spouses. To do so, it offers advice to jobseekers and opportunities for companies to connect with prospective hires, or, in the language of the organisation, 'hire heroes'. It does this out of the expectation expressed on its landing page, that, 'When heroes get hired, companies prosper and America grows stronger.'⁵⁶⁸ Hero is used, interchangeably, for serviceleaver or veteran, with no suggestion of their difference. It is drawn upon alongside other suggestions of patriotism, including tying the strength of the nation to the employment of

⁵⁶⁵ 'UK Armed Forces & Military Veterans Charity | Help for Heroes'.

⁵⁶⁶ 'About', Hire Heroes USA, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://www.hireheroesusa.org/about/>.

⁵⁶⁷ 'About'.

⁵⁶⁸ 'Home', Hire Heroes USA, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://www.hireheroesusa.org/>.

the 'heroes' layering obligation between the supporter and the cause.⁵⁶⁹ Another charity also focused on career transition (specifically on building trades) is titled 'Building Heroes'.⁵⁷⁰ They describe their mission 'to tackle unemployment amongst those who have kept us safe by offering them a seamless transition to a new career in construction'.⁵⁷¹ Thus, they construct their work as a sort of exchange that a donor or supporter can participate in, an addressing of a social debt to the people who 'have kept us safe.'

'Hero' appears in every combination in the forces charities landscape.

Entrepreneurial current and former military people are referred to as 'heropreneurs'.⁵⁷² It is not for lack of choice of suitable words that 'hero' appears so frequently in the landscape of forces charities. Rather, it forms a strategic choice on the part of the charities to causify the veteran through *instrumental heroization*. This becomes particularly clear when the logical tenability of the heroization is tested. For example, F4H (full title 'Remount t/a Future for Heroes) describes the people it serves as 'individual men and women who have made sacrifices and an enormous contribution to their Country', which while laudable falls short of 'hero'.⁵⁷³ In an even starker example, Operation Second Chance, a military charity which supports WIS veterans and their families features a gallery of 'Our Heroes', individuals who the charity has assisted.⁵⁷⁴ However, the stories of the selected people and the basis for being called 'hero' centre on their common experience of becoming ill or injured, detail often absent. Logically, why does 1) being military and 2) falling ill warrant being called a hero? The answer, of course, is that it does not. However, that they are called 'heroes' anyway and tied to the collective 'our', as in heroes *for us* as well as *our responsibility*, demonstrates the push and pull of instrumental heroization as a branding strategy of forces charities. This section may be accused of cynicism in its criticism of the hero-language of

⁵⁶⁹ Many of the charities analysed in this section focus on employment. It is a further curiosity that they use hero-language given that it would likely be opposed by the people they seek to help. Yes, veterans want jobs. No, they don't want to be heroes.

⁵⁷⁰ 'Building Heroes', Building Heroes, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://www.buildingheroes.org.uk/>.

⁵⁷¹ 'Building Heroes'.

⁵⁷² 'About', Heropreneurs, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://www.heropreneurs.co.uk/about-us>.

⁵⁷³ 'Introducing the Future for Heroes Charity | F4H', F4H, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://www.f4h.org.uk/about-us/>.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Heroes – OSC', Operation Second Chance, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://operationsecondchance.org/heroes/>.

forces charities, but its omnipresence emphasises the instrumentality of the choice of words and relations which forces charities capitalize upon.

3.2. Victimization

Converse to the heroization of the veteran, the victimization of the veteran presents ex-servicepeople as damaged and in need of help or solutions which a supporter can assist in providing. Like with heroization, there is a sense that victim-language is being used without regard to the desires of the people who the charity serves. In this sense, the victim-language, which reflects and produces a saviour-donor is shaped more around the supporter than the served.

Capitalising upon the figuration of 'victim' involves not only the representation of the veteran but also then the configuration of the civil as saviour. In doing so, it follows well-trodden lines in charitable work, which appeals and centres donors, perhaps at the expense of the people they serve. The civil as saviour is compelled to act (in this case, donate or support), doubly. First, the figuration of the veteran as victim elicits pity: the donor acts because they feel bad for the veteran-victim. This is common across other causes and types of charities, including homelessness⁵⁷⁵ and international aid. Second, the figuration of veteran as victim calls on the obligation and indebtedness dominant in contemporary CMR. This, unique to forces charities, is tied to a perception that donating or supporting is owed to the veteran, and the possibility that doing so may alleviate some indebtedness. The veteran as cause has suffered, often, for or on behalf of the civil, non-military citizen. They deserve our continued support for this, which, invested with sentimentality can be imagined as giving back to them now, in *their* hour of need. To do so configures the act of donation within a repayment of debt accompanied by positive self-affirmation that often accompanies charitable giving.

Operation Healing Forces (OHF), a charity which specialises in supporting Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators and their families, offers programs, including couples' retreats. The organisation describes the programming as 'designed and tailored to enable

⁵⁷⁵ David Conrad-Pérez et al., 'Voiceless Victims and Charity Saviors: How U.S. Entertainment TV Portrays Homelessness and Housing Insecurity in a Time of Crisis', *International Journal of Communication* 15, no. 0 (27 August 2021): 22.

these war-torn men and women to break through the silence to openly discuss their battlefield and personal hardships and provide needed support.⁵⁷⁶ Within its goal of 'Rehabilitation', it portrays its services as 'a therapeutic experience far from the horrors of war'.⁵⁷⁷ OHF depicts war negatively, as a place of hurt that tears people apart. However, it is difficult to parse the label of 'war-torn men and women' with the tradition of pride and excellence associated with SOF. This isn't to refute the existence of problems with reintegration or mental health that some SOF operators experience, but rather to suggest that such individuals may take umbrage with this portrayal of themselves as 'war-torn' victims.

Demonstrating an instrumentality to its employment of victim-language, OHF fleshes out the behaviours of victim/saviour CMR, portraying its charitable activities as a type of saviourism, which, by donating, a person could join. In one instance, it shares a testimonial from a participant who describes: 'By the end of the retreat, you could read emotion on their faces and in their eyes, and you could literally see them [the 'wounded couples'] coming back to life.'⁵⁷⁸ Here, the stakes are clear: a donor would be helping support programming which saves lives. They could be a saviour too. OHF knows who its would-be donors are and the victim-language which invokes saviourism is done in a way which speaks to and accommodates the indebtedness of contemporary CMR. For example, the FAQ section for the retreat notes that costs are 'covered by the generosity of donors hoping to give back to the SOF community'.⁵⁷⁹ Here, the charity reveals its imagined donor, opening the space imaginatively for the reader and prospective donor to step into. Not only can supporting OHF's programmes help you help the victim, but they also can speak to the debt that is owed.

The victim/saviour dynamic of self-presentation is not unique to forces charities. It has been rightly linked to concerns over saviour-complex behaviour and, when linked with

⁵⁷⁶ 'About Us', Operation Healing Forces, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://operationhealingforces.org/about-ohf/>.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Our Goals', Operation Healing Forces, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://operationhealingforces.org/goals/>.

⁵⁷⁸ 'Our Goals'. Operation Healing Forces describes the couples it serves as 'wounded couples'.

⁵⁷⁹ 'Veterans Couple Retreat Program', Operation Healing Forces, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://operationhealingforces.org/ohf-retreat-program/>.

charities' strategy, image, and self-presentation has been criticised widely in recent years. These charges were particularly invigorated by Teju Cole's 'The White-Savior Industrial Complex' in 2012, a significant critique of white, Western humanitarian aid which has since appeared regularly in academic literature⁵⁸⁰. First through a series of viral tweets and later in a longer article, he articulates the linkages between sentimentality and saviours who engage in charitable aid for their own emotional satisfaction.⁵⁸¹ Drawing out the contradictions and banality of such behaviour through satire, he writes, 'The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening.'⁵⁸² Cole's critique, particularly his points on the dangers of sentimentality, is useful in reflecting on how and why the invocation of the figuration of veteran as victim works so well for forces charities. It goes some way in explaining why a charity would find motivation or success in naming itself 'Soldiers' Angels', an organisation whose logo features a silhouetted soldier sheltered by a guardian angel with American flag wings.⁵⁸³

There are, of course, other reasonable alternatives to the invocation of such sentimentality (and religiosity) in choosing a name or identifying language. A name rarely defines or limits the capacity or type of work a charity can do, but they are descriptors and indicators of how the charity sees itself and/or wants others to view it. In taking this type of branding seriously, this section has demonstrated the appeal and instrumentality of the victimization and saviourism in the discourse of forces charities, which are doubly appealing. As the final section of this analysis demonstrates, the portrayal of charitable

⁵⁸⁰ See, for example: Kristina R. Anderson, Eric Knee, and Rasul Mowatt, 'Leisure and the "White-Savior Industrial Complex"', *Journal of Leisure Research*, 25 October 2021, <https://www-tandfonline-com.gate3.library.lse.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1080/00222216.2020.1853490>; David Jefferess, 'On Saviours and Saviourism: Lessons from the #WEscandal', *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19, no. 4 (8 August 2021): 420–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2021.1892478>.

⁵⁸¹ Teju Cole, 'The White-Savior Industrial Complex', *The Atlantic*, 21 March 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>.

⁵⁸² Teju Cole, '2- The White Savior Supports Brutal Policies in the Morning, Founds Charities in the Afternoon, and Receives Awards in the Evening.', Tweet, @tejucole, 8 March 2012, <https://twitter.com/tejucole/status/177809558608150529>.

⁵⁸³ 'Welcome', *Soldiers' Angels*, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://soldiersangels.org/>.

giving as a way to redress and rebalance CMR is something unique to forces charities within the larger charitable sector.

3.3. Framing Charity and Donation in the Language of Military Service

The theme of framing charitable work and donation within the language of military service runs across the forces charities landscape. This move, seen primarily in language which co-opts military terms, could be read through lens of militarisation which normalises such terminology and conceptualization. This would be consistent with work like Joanna Tidy's analysis of British military charity food brands, including Forces Sauces, which uses the 'Serve with Pride' pun in their branding.⁵⁸⁴ However, this section reads the framing of charitable work and donation in a language of military service as an effort to encourage supporter's participation as a way of redressing the imbalance and indebtedness of contemporary CMR. In messaging 'You can serve too!', forces charities generate a point of resonance, calling the service of the military and the debt incurred into awareness and offering the supporter a road toward an exchange of service, a way to make relations more level.

The use of military terms and phrasing are common in forces charities. Several style themselves as 'operations', including 'Operation Gratitude', which describes its work to 'provide Americans with opportunities to honor our military, veterans, and first responders through hands-on volunteerism.'⁵⁸⁵ Operation Gratitude invites supporters to 'Join the Brigade' as a monthly giver.⁵⁸⁶ Another charity recruit donors for its 'Battalion of Hope'.⁵⁸⁷ The British charity, Forward Assist⁵⁸⁸, draws on the concept and imagery of the firearms

⁵⁸⁴ Joanna Tidy, 'Forces Sauces and Eggs for Soldiers: Food, Nostalgia, and the Rehabilitation of the British Military', *Critical Military Studies* 1, no. 3 (2 October 2015): 228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2015.1011439>.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Operation Gratitude - Thanking All Who Serve', Operation Gratitude, accessed 17 January 2022, <http://www.operationgratitude.com/>.

⁵⁸⁶ 'The Brigade - Campaign', Operation Gratitude, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://giving.operationgratitude.com/campaign/the-brigade/c140673>.

⁵⁸⁷ '2021 Battalion of HOPE! - Campaign', Hope for the Warriors, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://support.hopeforthewarriors.org/campaign/2021-battalion-of-hope/c376335>.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Forward Assist', Forward Assist, accessed 17 January 2022, <https://www.forward-assist.com>.

procedure/mechanism⁵⁸⁹ in its title. Performing a forward assist ensures the bolt is fully forward and the weapon will fire. Thus, drawing on this concept suggests that the charity is also dedicated to propelling the people it serves forward and ensuring veterans successful transition out of the forces. A donor or volunteer is offered the opportunity to join in this work, this service framed in military language.

While forces charities may employ military language for other reasons including to resonate with their service populations — for example, The Mission Continues recruits veterans to 'report for duty' to their community service 'platoons'⁵⁹⁰ — their choice of terminology in framing their work and encouraging participation from donors may also be read as strategy. In offering charity and donation as a type of service, dressed in the language of the military, forces charities appeal and find connection with people who wish they might repay or 'serve back' some of the civil-military debt. Framing participation with the charity in such language draws it as a mirror image to the perceived gift of military service. As a call to action, it capitalises upon the anxiety of the debtor. Though the 'work' of donating and volunteering is unequal to that of military service (in many ways, but most crucially the absence of dealing in the work of life and death and risk to the self), the discourse constructs it as a counterweight and counterpart which seeks to balance the books within a relations of debt.

This section has developed three themes in the strategic branding of forces charities: heroization, victimization, and donation as service. It did so separately for the sake of clarity. Yet these themes are mixed and matched across the discourse the circulates among and around the charities. Reading the forces charities landscape, it is, at times, difficult to hold them apart as charities seek to strike and exploit different sentimental attachments which accompany the figurations. While the cultural work of recovery tries to maintain a separateness between the CMR figurations, as the sustained case of the Invictus Games developed in the next section demonstrates, reading the recovery of the hero in the

⁵⁸⁹ While the M4 carbine (used by the US and others) has a forward assist button, the British SA80's cocking handle directly connects to the bolt. To conduct a forward assist on an SA80, a person would make a chopping motion against the cocking handle with their left hand to ensure it is in its fully forward position.

⁵⁹⁰ 'Home', The Mission Continues, accessed 18 January 2022, <https://www.missioncontinues.org/>.

victim in a queer analysis reveals the instrumentality of this choice and its ultimate futility in the face of queerness.

4. The Invictus Games

As the previous section demonstrated, the discourses employed by forces charities deliberately draw on the figurations, relying on the patterns of behaviour they template to induce support and donation. In their branding, they try to maintain a separateness of the figurations, focusing on *either* hero *or* victim and producing simple narratives and calls to action. However, this section's sustained analysis of the Invictus Games demonstrates the futility of this separation. Reading the recovery of the hero *in* the victim requires a theory of queer CMR because the figurations themselves are already queered.

The Invictus Games were first held in London in 2014, welcoming over 400 competitors from 13 nations⁵⁹¹ to compete in nine sports⁵⁹². The IGF was founded in November of that year.⁵⁹³ The most recent iteration of the Games, at the time of writing, held in Sydney in 2018, hosted 491 competitors⁵⁹⁴ from 18 countries⁵⁹⁵ in 13 events⁵⁹⁶. The Games, as indicated in the IGF 'story', were inspired by the Warrior Games, which the Duke of Sussex, patron of the Invictus Games, visited in 2013. The Warrior Games differ in that they are directly affiliated with the U.S. Department of Defense and have a more domestic focus, featuring teams based on service branch alongside international teams from partner

⁵⁹¹ 'TEAMS | INVICTUS GAMES', Invictus Games London 2014, accessed 10 March 2021, <http://2014.invictusgames.org/teams/index.html>.

⁵⁹² 'SPORTS | INVICTUS GAMES', Invictus Games London 2014, accessed 10 March 2021, <http://2014.invictusgames.org/sports/index.html>.

⁵⁹³ Invictus Games Foundation, 'Invictus Games Foundation Impact Report 2020', December 2020, 1, <https://invictusgamesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Invictus-Games-Foundation-Impact-Report-2020.pdf>.

⁵⁹⁴ Invictus Games Foundation, 'SYDNEY 2018', accessed 10 March 2021, <https://invictusgamesfoundation.org/games/sydney-2018/>.

⁵⁹⁵ 'Invictus Games Sydney 2018 | Competitors', Invictus Games Sydney 2018, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://www.invictusgames2018.com/games-hq/competitors/>.

⁵⁹⁶ While the Invictus Games Foundation page says that the 2018 Games featured 11 sports, the separate 2018 Games website lists 13: 'Invictus Games Sydney 2018 | Sports', Invictus Games Sydney 2018, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://www.invictusgames2018.com/games-hq/sports/>.

nations.⁵⁹⁷ They were originally established in 2010 and sponsored by the U.S. Olympic Committee.⁵⁹⁸

The intersection of sport and militarism has been of interest to academic research in recent years, particularly from critical war studies and war and culture scholars. For example, John Kelly outlined the link between sport and British 'hero'-fication in 2012.⁵⁹⁹ Recently in 2020, Pullen and Silk published on the body politic of the para-athlete-soldier, examining masculinized and militarized discourse around and about the 2016 Paralympics and their media coverage in the UK.⁶⁰⁰ The Invictus Games sit amongst this research interest, though little substantive work has been done on them thus far. In an excellent exception published in 2020, Cree and Caddick read the Games as an example of the state's recasting of wounded military bodies through techno-heroic redemption.⁶⁰¹

This chapter's analysis is sympathetic to work from disability studies, which broadly counters 'Hegemonic framings of disability [that] individualise, pathologize, medicalise, psychologise, essentialise and depoliticise the phenomenon of disability'.⁶⁰² The figurations of hero and victim are found in stereotypical and historical representations of persons with disability and are a source of interest for research and public intervention. For example, Media Smarts, a Canadian media literacy non-profit, highlights disability representation as a media issue and creates awareness around the common stereotypes of victim, hero, and villain.⁶⁰³ Black and Pretes, working within disability studies, have published on the representation of physical disability in films through the lenses of victims and victors, building on a tradition of work that links media portrayal of persons with disabilities to

⁵⁹⁷ 'DoD Warrior Games History', *Warrior Games* (blog), accessed 10 March 2021, <https://dodwarriorgames.com/about/history/>.

⁵⁹⁸ 'DoD Warrior Games History'.

⁵⁹⁹ Kelly, 'Popular Culture, Sport and the 'Hero'-Fication of British Militarism'.

⁶⁰⁰ Emma Pullen and Michael Silk, 'Disability, Masculinity, Militarism: The Paralympics and the Cultural (Re-)Production of the Para-Athlete-Soldier', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 13, no. 4 (1 October 2020): 444–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2020.1829789>.

⁶⁰¹ Alice Cree and Nick Caddick, 'Unconquerable Heroes: Invictus, Redemption, and the Cultural Politics of Narrative', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 13, no. 3 (2 July 2020): 258–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2019.1615707>.

⁶⁰² Dan Goodley et al., 'Provocations for Critical Disability Studies', *Disability & Society* 34, no. 6 (3 July 2019): 973, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1566889>.

⁶⁰³ 'Common Portrayals of Persons with Disabilities', MediaSmarts, 2 April 2012, <https://mediasmarts.ca/diversity-media/persons-disabilities/common-portrayals-persons-disabilities>.

perceptions and treatment of disability in society.⁶⁰⁴ Other disability studies scholarship is oriented toward illuminating the damages done by these tropes, like Silva and Howe whose research criticizes 'supercrip' iconography in Paralympic sport.⁶⁰⁵ Disability studies also overlaps with sports studies in research on Paralympic sport, which understandably shares a great deal of common ground with the Invictus Games. In disability studies, the focus is largely on societal understanding or impressions of Paralympic athletes⁶⁰⁶ and Paralympic empowerment and/or disempowerment⁶⁰⁷. Within sports and physical rehabilitation studies, there was a surge of publications about Paralympic sport around 2012 – the London Paralympic Games in 2012 no doubt contributes to this timing – including a full special issue⁶⁰⁸ as well as standalone articles.⁶⁰⁹ Additional parallel research can also be found in media or communications studies.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁴ Rhonda S. Black and Lori Pretes, 'Victims and Victors: Representation of Physical Disability on the Silver Screen', *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 32, no. 1 (March 2007): 66–83, <https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.32.1.66>.

⁶⁰⁵ Carla Filomena Silva and P. David Howe, 'The (In)Validity of Supercrip Representation of Paralympian Athletes', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 36, no. 2 (1 May 2012): 174–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511433865>.

⁶⁰⁶ Hayley Fitzgerald, 'Paralympic Athletes and "Knowing Disability"', *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* 59, no. 3 (1 September 2012): 243–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2012.697721>.

⁶⁰⁷ For example: Danielle Peers, '(Dis)Empowering Paralympic Histories: Absent Athletes and Disabling Discourses', *Disability & Society* 24, no. 5 (1 August 2009): 653–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590903011113>; David E. J. Purdue and P. David Howe, 'Empower, Inspire, Achieve: (Dis)Empowerment and the Paralympic Games', *Disability & Society* 27, no. 7 (1 December 2012): 903–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.695576>.

⁶⁰⁸ Brett Smith, ed., 'Paralympics and Disability Sport [Special Issue]', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 4, no. 2 (2012).

⁶⁰⁹ See for example: P. David Howe, 'From Inside the Newsroom: Paralympic Media and the 'Production' of Elite Disability', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 43, no. 2 (1 June 2008): 135–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690208095376>; Kristen D. Dieffenbach and Traci A. Statler, 'More Similar than Different: The Psychological Environment of Paralympic Sport', *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action* 3, no. 2 (1 May 2012): 109–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2012.683322>; Cheri Blauwet and Stuart E. Willick, 'The Paralympic Movement: Using Sports to Promote Health, Disability Rights, and Social Integration for Athletes With Disabilities', *PM&R, Exercise and Sports for Health Promotion, Disease, and Disability*, 4, no. 11 (1 November 2012): 851–56, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmrj.2012.08.015>.

⁶¹⁰ Olga Kolotouchkina et al., 'Disability, Sport, and Television: Media Visibility and Representation of Paralympic Games in News Programs', *Sustainability* 13, no. 1 (29 December 2020): 256, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010256>.

In discussing the Invictus Games and the Invictus Games Foundation, it's significant to emphasize that while this project heavily critiques the discourses around the organisations, it also acknowledges that both, as charitable enterprises, are social products. They have been, are, and will continue to be shaped by larger discursive patterns that form and reform the soldier and veteran. In no way does the critique in this chapter seek to devalue or minimise the tangible, practical, and in some cases profound impacts that the organisations have had on the lived experiences of the populations they seek to serve. Similarly, the project does not question the reality of the needs that the charities address, nor does it dispute the validity of PTSD as a service injury (or its existence as a mental health condition). While this disclaimer may seem common sense to the reader, the current political climate and diversity of views represented in writing on the subject warrants an openness about the spirit, intent, and focus of the close, critical analysis which follows.

This section is interested in similar issues to the aforementioned research on war, disability, and sports studies, but to a different end. This section provides a close reading of the discourse and content used by Invictus Games competitors⁶¹¹, foundation members, and patrons to demonstrate the inadequacy of analysing the Games' figuration of the soldier through a binary of either hero or victim. As it demonstrates, IGF discourse reveals a profound entanglement of hero and/or victim, which is best accounted for by this thesis' queering of CMR.

In its self-portrayal, the IGF demonstrates two distinct faces. The first is inward toward the community of wounded, injured and sick (WIS) veterans and servicepeople that it serves. This community also includes the families of these individuals, a wider focus which has become increasingly important since the Games' inception in 2014.⁶¹² The second face looks outward, to the larger public and the global audience and articulates the Foundation's vision for why the Games are important and should matter to prospective donors and sponsors as well as society at large. Both faces must be analysed with the

⁶¹¹ The section uses the term 'competitor' rather than 'participant' to be consistent with the language used by the IGF.

⁶¹² This has been remarked upon, as in the 2020 Invictus Games Foundation Conversation webinar: Invictus Games Foundation, 'Invictus Games Foundation Conversation Webinar: Sharing the Invictus Spirit -13 May 2020 Executive Summary', 13 May 2020, <https://invictusgamesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20200610-IGF-Conversation-Webinar-13-May-20-Exec-Report.pdf>.

awareness that as a charity, the IGF must justify and recruit sponsors and donors to its purpose. This thesis argues that the IGF manipulates and harmonizes between both faces to the extent that they become self-perpetuating. This inextricability is best accounted for through an understanding of how the will to knowledge of the soldier/veteran as hero and/or victim configures the civil.

This section draws on the IGF corporate story, particularly promotional content from the foundation on its website and social media, including its YouTube channel which has been active since before the first Games in 2014. It additionally looks at the IGF Conversation 'Sharing the Invictus Spirit', a webinar held in May 2020 in place of an in-person conference scheduled for the cancelled Invictus Games The Hague 2020.⁶¹³ The webinar was attended by circa 275 people from around the world, including 20 nations which participate in the Games.⁶¹⁴ Finally, the section closes with an analysis of the IGF 2020 Impact Report, a publicly available document which is geared at supporters and prospective partners and/or sponsors. While drawing on materials produced and distributed directly by the IGF does introduce a level of privileging and silencing of voices and experiences which conform with or challenge corporate branding, this chapter reads these materials as indicative of how the IGF wants to portray itself, its competitors, and the significance of the Games for them.

4.1. The IGF Corporate Story

The IGF corporate story, as told on its website, can be read as exemplary of the values and identity of the organisation. To this end, this thesis reproduces the story in full, before highlighting parts for subsequent analysis:

Most of us will never know the full horrors of combat. Many Servicemen and women suffer life-changing injuries, visible or otherwise, whilst serving their country. How do these men and women find the motivation to move on and not be defined by their injuries?

⁶¹³ The webinar was recorded and made publicly available alongside the speakers' slides on the Invictus Games Foundation's website: <https://invictusgamesfoundation.org/realising-and-sharing-the-invictus-spirit-the-igf-conversation/>

⁶¹⁴ Invictus Games Foundation, 'Invictus Games Foundation Conversation Webinar: Sharing the Invictus Spirit -13 May 2020 Executive Summary', 1.

On a trip to the Warrior Games in the USA in 2013, HRH The Duke of Sussex saw first-hand how the power of sport can help physically, psychologically and socially those suffering from injuries and illness. He was inspired by his visit and the Invictus Games was born.

The word 'invictus' means 'unconquered'. It embodies the fighting spirit of wounded, injured and sick Service personnel and personifies what these tenacious men and women can achieve post injury. The Games harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their country.

The Invictus Games is about much more than just sport – it captures hearts, challenges minds and changes lives.⁶¹⁵

The statement begins by demarcating a distance between those who know the full horrors of combat (the few, the 'Servicemen and women') and those who don't (the majority of a non-military 'us'). That the story begins with this establishment of separateness indicates the positional relationship the IGF perceives in contemporary CMR, choosing to draw boundaries around soldier/veteran through combat, even though a significant number of Servicemen and women also will never 'know the full horrors of combat' by virtue of their non-teeth arms affiliations and roles. In eliding these differences in experience, the IGF flattens the Serviceperson and constructs a veteran who has been affected by the 'horrors' of combat. As the next sentence suggests, these affects are negative and include 'life-changing injuries, visible or otherwise.' The final sentence of the first paragraph is a question, one that can be read with an air of humble wonder or pity. Or, in a queered logic, and as this section argues most accurately, with an air of humble wonder and/or pity. Both are present in the question of resilience and redemption.

The second paragraph outlines the origin story of the Invictus Games, portraying it as born out of the inspiration that the Duke of Sussex felt after seeing the Warrior Games. However, this inspiration is linked to the figuration of the veteran as victim. Sport is depicted as having a 'power' that can 'help...those suffering from injury and illness.' Here, the figuration is of 'victim,' configuring the Games as a provider of sporting opportunity in a saviour-like role to those who are suffering.

⁶¹⁵ Invictus Games Foundation, 'The Invictus Games Story', accessed 5 March 2021, <https://invictusgamesfoundation.org/foundation/story/>.

The third paragraph delves into the story behind 'invictus', meaning 'unconquered.' This term and messaging is a focal point and touchstone in IGF branding, including fan apparel and their forum noticeboard community 'We are Invictus' for WIS Servicepersons.⁶¹⁶ Though not explicitly mentioned in the corporate story, the term 'invictus' likely was chosen based on the 19th century poem by British poet William Ernest Henley, which is included on the same 'Our Story' webpage.⁶¹⁷ Henley had a below-the-knee amputation at the age of 12 and his poetry, including 'Invictus' ('I am the master of my fate;/ I am the captain of my soul'), grew out of his experience and recovery.⁶¹⁸ One IGF shirt available through their shop seems to celebrate a milestone, reading 'I am the master of my fate/ I am the captain of my soul/ 5 years unconquered/ #WeAreInvictus.'⁶¹⁹ It is unclear here who exactly the '5 years unconquered' refers to: the Foundation, the athletes, or someone else? Who is the intended wearer of the shirt?

The ambitions of the IGF are articulated in the final three sentences of the corporate story. The 'fighting spirit' of the 'tenacious men and women' is elevated to a public stage. While the Games serves the WIS community, it is equally about facing outward to 'generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve.' The language here positions the IGF as in between those who serve and those who don't and the generation of this wider acknowledgement as on behalf of the WIS community. This dual focus of the IGF on its service population and wider society could be described as catering to both internal and external faces. It is with ambiguity and a sense of and/or that the corporate story concludes. The Games 'captures hearts, challenges minds and changes lives.' Whose hearts, whose minds, whose lives?

⁶¹⁶ 'Welcome', WIS Noticeboard | Invictus Games, accessed 11 March 2021, <https://weareinvictus.co.uk/#/welcome>.

⁶¹⁷ Invictus Games Foundation, 'The Invictus Games Story'.

⁶¹⁸ 'William Ernest Henley', Poetry Foundation, 11 March 2021, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-ernest-henley>.

⁶¹⁹ 'We Are Invictus T-Shirt', Invictus Games Foundation Clothing, accessed 11 March 2021, <https://invictus-games-foundation.teemill.com/product/we-are-invictus-t-shirt/>.

4.2. The 2020 IGF Conversation: Repay 'a Debt of Honour', Recover a Hero

The discourse produced by the IGF and Games competitors consistently reproduces this duality of faces. On one hand, there is the internal face, which, in speaking to the competitors and WIS service community reinforces the message of resilience and redemption: you are unconquered. On the other, the external face asks the wider (civil) community to support this project of helping veterans save themselves and then recognize the sacrifices and exemplary personal characteristics of the individuals. Very specifically, recovery from injury is held up as an example of a reason why they should be admired. However, a sense of indebtedness hovers on the fringes of these discourses, occasionally leaking into overt speech. In this sense, the external face also reminds the civil community that they owe the veterans their support.

For example, Tony Abbot, former Prime Minister of Australia, and Patron of ISPS Handa, an originating and current sponsor of the Invictus Games (which were held in Sydney in 2018), expressed the following at the 2020 online IGF Conversation:

We all owe a debt of honour to the members of our Armed Forces. We owe a particular debt to those who have been wounded in the service of our country and that's why the Invictus Games movement should be so enthusiastically supported by all of us. Sport, as you know, is a wonderful way to make friends, to build character, and to help restore souls and the Invictus Games have helped thousands of thousands of veterans again to believe in themselves.⁶²⁰

In calling into being the 'debt of honour', Abbot conveys how the non-serving civil is thusly configured as the donor-saviour who has been saved and retains an obligation. In a loop, the civil has been saved through the service of the military servicemembers, so must now perform their indebtedness through supporting the IGF, which helps servicemembers save themselves. The phrase 'to help restore souls' is surprising in its intensity, but perhaps indicates the perceived stakes and significance of IGF activities as something vital and perhaps metaphysical.

The process of restoration is also one of redemption, and the IGF portrays this as a sort of heroism in itself. This loop, which is constantly cycling across, among, and between configurations defies an either hero or victim binary. Instead, this narrative of redemption is

⁶²⁰ *Realising and Sharing the Invictus Spirit*, 2020, 7:10-7:42,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr62jJhWiGk&ab_channel=InvictusGamesFoundation.

predicated upon a complicated and queer and/or figuration. For the IGF, the WIS veteran is figured as more than a victim to be saved. They are victims who, through sport, can rehabilitate themselves and thus are heroes, again. It is this process of rehabilitation, of redeeming the hero in the WIS serviceperson, which is celebrated in the Games. The representation of the competitors and community members suggests that this process tracks along a redemptive arc which figures the WIS veteran as hero and/or victim, with the figurations being inextricably bound together. The rehabilitated athlete is not only celebrated as fixed or saved, but also is recovered as a hero.

4.3. Recovering the 'Hero' in the 'Victim'

While 'hero' is unsurprisingly not too loosely banded about in the discourse, there are a few obtrusive examples. For example, in response to the disruption of the pandemic, the IGF hosted an 'At Home Superhero' triathlon challenge for 24 teams from around the world.⁶²¹ However, the consistent references to 'role models' can be read as coded language for 'hero' in the loose sense that a childhood hero is often equivalent to a role model. For example, speaking at the opening ceremony of the Invictus Games Toronto 2017, the Duke of Sussex hyped up the crowd of competitors, families, and spectators, saying, 'I hope you're ready to see role models in action that any parent will want their children to look up to.'⁶²² In another video, the Duke of Sussex describes competitors as 'the best role models that any parent out there or anybody could wish for' consistent with a broadening of role model from someone that a child should be inspired by to someone that everyone should admire.⁶²³ This elevation of the saved and self-saved victim as a role model is consistent with a narrative of recovering the hero from the victim in a type of instrumental heroization. In a totalizing articulation of the Invictus Games competitor as a

⁶²¹ Invictus Games Foundation, 'Invictus Games Foundation Impact Report 2020', 3, 11.

⁶²² 'Speech by Prince Harry at Opening Ceremony Toronto 2017,' *Speech by Prince Harry at Opening Ceremony of Invictus Games Toronto 2017*, 2017, 4:08-4:14, <https://youtu.be/KtQzWRkhsqM>.

⁶²³ *The Power of the Invictus Games*, 2018, 2:31-2:36,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=106&v=PpnYcXJVWNM&feature=emb_logo.

hero, the Duke of Sussex told the 2018 Games Opening Ceremony audience: 'You are the new generation of service and, you are the role models to us all.'⁶²⁴

The IGF's mission to help the victim WIS to redeem themselves as heroes relies on a twinning of the internal and external faces in their discourse, using each to serve the other. As the Duke of Sussex reflects: '*That's why we created Invictus, not only to help veterans recover from their physical and mental wounds, but also to inspire people to follow their example of resilience, optimism, and service in their own lives.*'⁶²⁵ It is this quality of the discourse which is best analysed with this queered lens. The charitable IGF, through the Games, contributes to the production of the source of inspiration, recovering the 'hero', and then actively promoting these narratives and experiences as inspiring material to be used by 'civil' people who have, through donation and support 'saved' the 'victims-now-heroes'. Consistent with this discourse, Mart de Kruif, Chair of the Invictus Games The Hague 2020 (now 2022), a former Commanding Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army Land Forces, suggested, 'Perhaps the Invictus Games spirit can act as an example to show the world that resilience, trust in the endless power of the human being and unconditional friendship can help us to overcome nearly every crisis.'⁶²⁶ What de Kruif offers with an open-ended 'perhaps' is consistently and more strongly messaged in other IGF discourse. The Duke of Sussex frames this as necessity, saying: 'These individuals and their stories are so remarkable that the general public across the world need to see this to draw strength from it...' This obligation is a curious one. To argue that these individuals are so remarkable that they warrant special recognition is one matter. But the Duke of Sussex's words suggest that the wider world and audience should do so for their own benefit, 'needing' to see the Games to 'draw strength' from witnessing the stories of the competitors. At the 2018 Games in Sydney, he explained that 'Invictus has become about the example of service and dedication our competitors have provided to the world,' again emphasizing the benefit that

⁶²⁴ The Duke of Sussex's Speech at the Invictus Games Sydney 2018 Opening Ceremony, 6:42-6:47, accessed 12 March 2021,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G166QP0oTqc&ab_channel=InvictusGamesFoundation.

⁶²⁵ 'Speech by Prince Harry at Opening Ceremony Toronto 2017,' *Opening Ceremony of Invictus Games Toronto 2017*, 2:25-2:40.

⁶²⁶ *Realising and Sharing the Invictus Spirit*, 12:25-12:40.

the wider, civil audience (and saviour-donor pool) stands to gain from the Games existence and their competitors.⁶²⁷

While it would be imprecise to call it an arrogance, the belief that the Invictus community possesses some experience-based knowledge that is transferrable and *needs* to be learned from remains curious. Yet, it is a prominent and recurrent feature of IGF discourse that is best explained as an effort to recover the hero in the victim. For example, the IGF produced a podcast focused on supporting NHS workers, which featured 'the experiences of our community in dealing with very difficult situations' and included an emphasis on best practices like 'the importance of the family unit, the restorative powers of teams and peer-to-peer support' alongside a focus on preparation 'for a second deployment or "wave"' of the pandemic.⁶²⁸ In spite of the equivalizing and interpretation of the pandemic through a militaristic lens, the clear effort that goes into producing a podcast is indicative of the value the IGF producers think the content could have for listeners. Again, the voices of Invictus community members are portrayed as having some expert value rooted in their victimhood and/or heroism.

Examining the comments from the competitors themselves sheds light on the system of hero and/or victim conceptual co-dependency. To explain this through a binary logic is insufficient because the source of their heroism is their recovery from victimhood, which is enabled and witnessed by (civil) donor-saviours who, in the recovery of the hero, are figured once more as 'saved,' or in need of the wisdom of the recovered hero. Even as the spectators need to witness and feel inspired by the competitors, the athletes need the presence of the spectators, whose attendance and support can materially and significantly alter the lives and experiences of Games participants. That the Games bring increased awareness and better services to the WIS competitors and communities of the national teams is unsurprising, particularly as the Games travel to new host cities for each competition. In this manner, the IGF fulfils an advocacy role which locates the competitor and WIS veteran community as victim to be healed, rehabilitated, and saved. As much is evident in statements from team managers like Gabriel Ion, the manager of Team Romania,

⁶²⁷ The Duke of Sussex's Speech at the Invictus Games Sydney 2018 Opening Ceremony, 1:36-1:42.

⁶²⁸ Invictus Games Foundation, 'Invictus Games Foundation Impact Report 2020', 13.

who notes that participation in the Games helped to alter the Romanian government's perception and treatment of their WIS veterans.⁶²⁹ In Australia, the Games' legacy is demonstrated in the launch of the new organisation Veterans Sport Australia, which created a more cohesive sports programme for Australian WIS veterans.⁶³⁰

It is additionally unsurprising that a great deal of content from competitors details the significant role that sport, the Games, and the Invictus community has played in recovery journeys. In some cases, the effect has been profound. Danielle Hampson-Carrol, who competed in Sitting Volleyball for the UK in 2014, reflected, 'The Invictus Games is [sic] saved me really. It's come into my life at the point where I needed it the most.'⁶³¹ A video that showcases 2014 competitors' statements about what the Games meant to them brims with this internal, personal, or community-based focus on healing and self-belief, including joyous proclamations about surviving.⁶³²

However, many statements from the competitors frame their meaning in participation through a demonstrative, external and public-facing discourse. This is present in both pre- and post-Games reflections by participants. JJ Chalmers, a UK Athletics athlete in the 2014 Games, said in the lead up to them: 'I can't wait for the opportunity to do it [the Games] in front of the great British public because at the end of the day I really want to show to them that we're not beaten by anything.'⁶³³ Similarly, David Hubber, a UK archery competitor, explained: 'To win is great, but for me personally, I want to prove that even now I've left the military, that people with injuries can achieve anything.'⁶³⁴ Both Chalmers and Hubber articulate the importance of the wider audience to themselves, and portray part of the significance of the Games as an opportunity to show or prove something to the implied civil audience.

⁶²⁹ Invictus Games Foundation, 17.

⁶³⁰ Invictus Games Foundation, 15.

⁶³¹ *Sitting Volleyball Competitors Talk about the Upcoming Invictus Games*, 2014, 0:05-0:13, <https://youtu.be/hUZL4xI6VTU>.

⁶³² *We Asked Our Invictus Games London 2014 What the Games Meant to Them*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gW0VnQPAHCk&ab_channel=InvictusGamesFoundation.

⁶³³ *Athletics Competitors Talk about the Upcoming Invictus Games*, 2014, 0:13-0:21, <https://youtu.be/ky9hAq5QtBA>.

⁶³⁴ *Archery Competitors Talk about the Upcoming Invictus Games*, 2014, 1:07-1:17, <https://youtu.be/XUq7wWwomM>.

The same holds true in post-Games reflection, with several competitors citing the experience of coming to view themselves as role model figures through their participation in the Games. One competitor described the meaning of their participation as: 'Representing our nation as a team, being recognised for the inspiration we gave others of all ages whether injured or not.'⁶³⁵ Another disclosed, 'I feel that I can be a motivator for other people and this fact makes me proud.'⁶³⁶ A multi-game competitor reflected on their journey: 'I know for sure then [sic] I want to help people. To tell my story and hopefully they will get the strength to take the step forward.'⁶³⁷ Here the value of the Games and interaction with the Invictus community is framed not through personal healing or growth, but through the Games as a platform or experience that is or was public, performative, and reclaiming. This duality of competitor testimony discourse which balances therapeutic growth with redemptory performance shows a concurrence of victim and hero figurations. That the hero is bound up in the recovery of the victim rejects an analytical framework which insists on a binary or hybrid model.

4.4. The IGF 2020 Impact Report: Wielding the Figurations of 'Hero' and 'Victim'

However, just because these figurations are drawn in an entangled loop which recovers hero from victim in both internally and externally oriented discourses, doesn't mean that the figurations cannot be separated out should the situation warrant it. This section understands the IGF 2020 Impact Report as a document which demonstrates the IGF's knowledge of and control over the figurations it employs in discourse. As its analysis demonstrates, at times the IGF flickers between the figurations as it appeals to different audiences, code-switching to pull on different strings of relations. Yet read as a whole, the Impact Report further supports this chapter's assertion that the cultural work of recovery produces queered poles of civil and military.

In an obvious 'sell' section, the report appeals for 'Your Support' in a manner consistent with other charities. It attempts to do so in three categories – Inspire, Improve, Influence – which directly correspond with how the IGF articulates its vision and mission –

⁶³⁵ *We Asked Our Invictus Games London 2014 What the Games Meant to Them*, 3:03.

⁶³⁶ *We Asked Our Invictus Games London 2014 What the Games Meant to Them*, 4:18.

⁶³⁷ *We Asked Our Invictus Games London 2014 What the Games Meant to Them*, 4:35.

'What We Do' – earlier in the report.⁶³⁸ It is an ill and curious fit. Both sets of statements are reproduced in full below.

	'What We Do' ⁶³⁹	Your Support ⁶⁴⁰
INSPIRE	We use the Invictus Games to inspire recovery and demonstrate the resilience of the Invictus community	The Invictus Games is not like any sports event, it transforms lives. As we prepare for the Games in 2023 and 2025, a brand partnership at an event could support your organisation's goals for sustainability, health and wellbeing, and inclusivity and diversity.
IMPROVE	We improve lives through sports recovery and adventurous challenge to build an international active support network that continues to serve	Your support can provide diverse and bespoke sporting and adventurous opportunities to improve the lives of wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women across the globe.
INFLUENCE	We share best practice and collaborate to influence research and knowledge around trauma recovery, rehabilitation and the power of sport	Help us to undertake world-class research to raise awareness, influence and contribute to the advancement of civilian and military recovery pathways. Equally, you may be able to offer valuable advice, time or expertise to our programmes, which would be gratefully received.

Figure 4. Invictus Games Foundation Impact Report

While the IMPROVE and INFLUENCE sections demonstrate clear correlation, the INSPIRE section contains a noticeable and significant difference. The 'What We Do' INSPIRE section presents the dual internal and external faces discussed in this section. In this instance, the 'inspire' is aimed at the WIS veteran community, while the 'demonstrate' can be read as positioning the Games as an example for a wider audience to appreciate the resilience and recovery narrative. As discussed above, this twinning of the faces evokes the figuration of the veteran as victim and/or hero, configuring the civil as the saved and/or saviour.

In direct contrast, the 'your support' INSPIRE section erases the dual narrative in service to the purpose of the text: to gain financial sponsorship. In the section, which contains no information on actual inspiration, the IGF seeks to create value alignment with prospective brand partners. The implication seems to be that through sponsorship, a brand

⁶³⁸ Invictus Games Foundation, 'Invictus Games Foundation Impact Report 2020', 21, 7.

⁶³⁹ This column's contents are transcribed from: Invictus Games Foundation, 7.

⁶⁴⁰ This column's contents are transcribed from: Invictus Games Foundation, 21.

might be able to say that it too is participating in 'transform[ing] lives.' However, this clearly evokes the figuration of the veteran competitor as victim and the civil brand as donor-saviour. The hero and saved is absent. That it does so without the invocation of the necessity of elevating the WIS veteran competitors so that they may inspire the civil demonstrates a wilful separation of the victim from the hero. The absence of the hero and/or victim figuration is noteworthy because it is omnipresent in the IGF discourse. Its omission suggests a utility-based exclusion. A donor needs to be reminded of how they are helping, not how they may be helped. Giving may be incentivized by pro-social feelings, or even guilt, but to say that the civil donor may be receiving something, even inspiration, alters the economics and effect of the transaction. The exclusion of the veteran as hero and/or victim in favour of a less complicated solely victim figuration is important because it demonstrates a strategic code-switching by the IGF.

This analysis of IGF discourse has demonstrated the inextricability of the hero and/or victim figuration of the WIS service community. It has additionally drawn attention to moments when one figuration is strategically highlighted or, alternately, excluded. This is consistent with this thesis' argument that the will to knowledge of the soldier/veteran configures the civil. It demonstrates a savviness on the part of the IGF, which invokes a figuration of the soldier to produce the civil potential donor/sponsor/partner audience in a certain form. This form then gives rise to the IGF's intended behaviour. To elicit financial donation and goodwill, the figuration of the soldier as victim dominates, configuring a saviour civil that will support the IGF. To draw in and persuade a civil audience of why they should listen, the figuration of the soldier as hero creeps in: the civil as saved has a baseline obligation to the people who have served. And to convince the competitors and society at large why IGF matters, the Foundation animates a story of recovering the hero from the victim. A civil saviour-supporter can save the victim-soldier, who through the Games can be restored to the hero-soldier whose story inspires a then civil saved-supporter. Yet without the original victimhood of WIS suffering, there could be no inspiration.

5. The Queerness of Recovery

In its analysis of the discourse and dynamics around forces charities, this chapter has focused on the cultural work of recovery. It particularly has engaged with forces charities' strategic branding, which wields the figurations of 'military' and 'civil' to generate and capitalise on support and relations pre-templated in the fictions of the figures. In doing so, it engages with CMR in a moment of vulnerability as it reckons with how to conceptualise and treat the nonbinary figure of the veteran. The ability of forces charities to hold the categories of 'hero' and 'victim' wholly separate dissolves under scrutiny, as the close reading of the Invictus Games demonstrates. Applied more broadly, this chapter demonstrates how the CMR produced in the cultural work of recovery refuses to signify monolithically along the poles of the relational binary.

The insights of this chapter are directly enabled by this dissertation's queering of CMR, which in addition to denaturalising the civil-military binary also takes seriously the project of seeing queerly. The recovery of the hero in the victim and the configuration of the 'civil' which it produces is evidence that the civil-military binary is unstable and unnatural. Furthermore, the complexity read in the cultural work of recovery cannot adequately be analysed with a binary, either/or logic. In claiming this, this chapter contends that approaches which cannot perceive or otherwise disregard this queerness miss something essential about the contemporary character of civil-military relations. Individually, instrumental heroization and instrumental victimization might appear to secure the binary, but as they are employed culturally actually undermines the binary and reveals its constructedness. Thus, this chapter moves our argument toward the assertion that the contemporary character of CMR is queer.

CHAPTER 6

REPRODUCTION: WAR WRITING, WAR LITERATURE, WAR PORNOGRAPHY

1. War Writing

Empirically, this project has thus far demonstrated how efforts to maintain and secure the civil-military as a binary produce civil and military culturally (*Chapter 4*). It then built upon this logic in *Chapter 5* to argue that what is produced through cultural work is already queer. Closing this loop, this chapter examines the cultural work of reproduction. It chooses war writing as its empirical site due to its prominent and valued position in generating cultural memory. However, it acknowledges that this meaning of 'war writing' focuses largely, if not solely, on what this chapter separates out as 'war literature.' In unpicking war writing and conceptualising generic processes which segregate war literature from other forms of commercially produced war writing, this chapter analyses the binary relations that are maintained through this industry. It introduces a new generic category of 'war pornography' as a queering force within war writing and the cultural work of reproduction to further illuminate the queer character of contemporary CMR.

War writing, as a category, encompasses several genres and formats including poetry, memoir, fiction, diary, correspondence, (auto)biography, and war reporting. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also saw a burgeoning of military blogging ('mil-blogging'). Some of these blogs later were reformatted and published by presses, leading to books including Matt Gallagher's *Kaboom* and Matthew Currier Burden's *The Blog of War*. Curiously, much of war writing may remain private, in the form of journals or letters which are produced for only a small audience, in some cases an audience of one. War writing then, in its public and private dimensions, captures a desire to record the experiences of war. It is a way of narrativizing and putting down memories so they might last.

War writing is thus also the way that many of us first learn about war. We despair in the muddy trenches with Owen, and engage with what a war story is, what truth is, in O'Brien's Vietnam. Our introduction to these texts, often through formal education, continue to ground many of our understandings of what war is like. We call these cultural

products 'war literature,' according them the canonical importance that makes authors immortal, their works 'classics.' But this is not the only type of war writing published through commercial presses. What then do we call texts whose perceived value, as this chapter will demonstrate, lies not in their artistry, but in their particular brand of authenticity? This chapter offers 'war pornography' as a suitable category. Though the terms 'war pornography' or 'war porn' have been cited in other popular and academic works, this thesis operationalises a definition which identifies the production, distribution, and consumption of a text as central to identifying it as war pornography.

The US and UK share a strong English language tradition of war writing and research on war writing, which links it to cultural memory, history, and pedagogy. However this research, for which the First World War is a key site⁶⁴¹, almost exclusively focuses on high culture war literature.⁶⁴² Recently, some academic interest has been shown in military blogs as a form of war narrative.⁶⁴³ However, research tends to be situated in literary criticism and is thus interested in how, for what purpose, and to what effect war writing is able/unable to represent war.⁶⁴⁴ Such work resonates with other scholarship on representation, including war art and photography⁶⁴⁵. However, this chapter deviates from traditional lenses of analysis to focus on the systems of production, distribution and consumption around war writing as a commodity.

In reading war writing as a CMR commodity, this chapter focuses on two subsets of war writing which are produced and distributed for public consumption. The first, war

⁶⁴¹ Trudi Tate, 'The First World War: British Writing', in *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing*, ed. Catherine Mary McLoughlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 160–74.

⁶⁴² See, for example: Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Allen Lane, 1997); Daniel W. Hipp, *The Poetry of Shell Shock: Wartime Trauma and Healing in Wilfred Owen, Ivor Gurney and Siegfried Sassoon* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2005).

⁶⁴³ Kaitlyn Medley, 'Keep It Down Over There! Milblogs: Evidence That Historic Things Happen', *Journal of Archival Organization* 9, no. 3–4 (1 July 2011): 141–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332748.2011.648558>; Maj. Elizabeth L. Robbins, 'Muddy Boots IO: The Rise of Soldier Blogs', *Military Review* September-October (2007): 109–18.

⁶⁴⁴ See, for example: Catherine Mary McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Alex Vernon, ed., *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing*. (Kent: Kent State Univ Press, 2007).

⁶⁴⁵ Liam Kennedy, 'Soldier Photography: Visualising the War in Iraq', *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009): 817–33.

literature, is a well-established research subject, particularly in the humanities. The second, war pornography, includes texts produced for the mass market that are sold based on their authenticity and ability to satisfy the voyeuristic desires of the reader. This chapter understands both war literature and war pornography as produced through civil-military relations which perform the cultural work of reproduction to naturalise the civil-military binary. It focuses on war literature and war pornography produced by veterans and published commercially because it is a rich site of commodification in which the figurations of 'military' as 'hero' and/or 'victim' not only are circulated, but also are strategically wielded for profit. For this analysis, this chapter returns to the producer-distributors of both types of war writing: publishing houses. It asserts that the generic distinctions created by the mass production of war writing seeks to separate and distinguish figurations of 'military' in a binary logic, tailoring for a configured, imagined 'civil' reader. In tying this work which maintains the dominant figurations of CMR to war writing, a key contributor to cultural memory, this chapter establishes how CMR cultural work reproduces and validates the binary in a self-perpetuating cycle.

In approaching war writing as commodity and identifying war literature and war pornography as variations of this commodity, this chapter denaturalises the separation between high and low cultural products. It analyses war pornography and war literature as foils to each other, their differences magnifying qualities about themselves and CMR when read as products in concert. What does it mean for the civil-military relationship when texts are manufactured not to generate understanding or remembrance, but to satisfy a kind of lust? After a brief discussion of the more familiar war literature, the chapter devotes time to building war pornography as a serious analytic category. It then considers war literature and war porn alongside each other, reading their co-existence as an effort by the publishing industry to produce and cater to separate figurations of 'military' and 'civil'. However, as the subsequent analysis of *American Sniper* as a text, film, and story demonstrates, this categorisation is an imposition of binary figurations which fails to account for the queer character of contemporary CMR.

2. War Literature

In reading war literature as part of war writing, which participates in the cultural work of reproduction, this section identifies its contribution to cultural memory as the key mechanism through which it is co-constitutive of civil-military relations. Within this, this section looks at reasons why people read war literature and highlights education and obligation as motivations which call upon figurations of the 'military' (writer) as hero and/or victim, producing the 'civil' (reader) as saved and/or saviour.

In using the term 'cultural memory', this chapter doesn't presume a homogeneity of collective memory or thought amongst people. Rather, it thinks of what Assmann and Hölscher describe as 'the re-usable and available texts, images and rites of each society, with the preservation of which it stabilizes and spreads its self-image; a collective shared knowledge...on which a group's sense of unity and individuality is based.'⁶⁴⁶ This form of cultural memory is a formalisation of what, conceptually, this thesis referred to as 'the things we [I] carry' in the introductory chapter. War writing has been identified as critical to generating this sort of cultural memory,⁶⁴⁷ which while, perhaps not factually strict, remains critical to national and cultural identity and self-image. Todman describes history as 'a conglomeration of half-remembered facts from school, the occasional reading of books of fact and fiction, references in the media and conversations at the table, the bar or the workplace'.⁶⁴⁸ History, functionally and socially, is tied to the products through which we engage with the past and each other, and the memories we take away. In the sort of history Todman discusses, we begin to see how a product like war writing participates in the (re)production of civil-military relations.

Critically, war literature operates within and contributes to cultural memory because it is used. The function of war literature, then, is reliant upon how and why people continue to read it, even long after it was written. The role of war literature, particularly poetry, in the

⁶⁴⁶ Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher, eds., *Kultur Und Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 15. Quoted in Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 138.

⁶⁴⁷ Tate, 'The First World War: British Writing'; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁶⁴⁸ Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), xii–xiii.

classroom has received reinvigorated attention around the Centenary of the First World War. War poetry from World War I and its place in the classroom has been of interest and concern since *during* the Great War⁶⁴⁹ and appears regularly in British and American curricula for both English and History. It has remained a popular subject despite scholarly and popular protests that it participates in a deformation of history and the perpetuation of myths within cultural memory.⁶⁵⁰ Das articulates the slipperiness of war poetry as a historical and literary subject of study, which, in the classroom, 'often ceases to be poetry and begins to look like history by proxy.'⁶⁵¹ That the inclusion of war literature remains a common and popular feature of teaching and learning even against valid criticism and caution captures the inclination to lean on it as a key generator of cultural memory. This is likely because literature generally and poetry specifically are artistic media and produce sites of affective experience for their readers. These encounters become individual memories, and in doing so anchor the reader in a shared cultural experience of participating in war remembrance. Christopher Moore, who authored *Trench Fever* based on his interest in the First World War and family history, remembers his first encounter with war literature:

We were reading the War Poets for O-Level. For the first time in my inky, football-crazed life I was about to be knocked sideways by a work of art: '*Dulce et Decorum Est*' by Wilfred Owen. As we read the words aloud, my boy's store of feelings overflowed without warning. It had to be stopped. I choked on the injustice.⁶⁵²

Simply put, the affective potential of war literature makes it a critical site for the generation of cultural memory and the fulfilment of a promise to never forget.

In addition to its incorporation within the classroom, the format of war literature, which creates a relationship between writer and reader, also operates as a form of testimony, linking reasons to write with reasons to read. McLoughlin's assessment of war as a subject which 'demands' to be written about⁶⁵³ finds counterpoint in an obligation to read. This perspective and function of war literature casts it as a form of bearing witness,

⁶⁴⁹ Adrian Barlow, 'Re-Thinking War Poetry', *Teaching English*, no. 6 (Autumn 2014): 30.

⁶⁵⁰ For example, see: Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front*; Todman, *The Great War*.

⁶⁵¹ Santanu Das, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xx.

⁶⁵² Christopher Moore, *Trench Fever*, e-book (London: Hachette Digital, 1998), Chapter 1.

⁶⁵³ McLoughlin, *Authoring War*, 7.

moving from an understanding that it's a genre in which, according to Winter, 'soldiers display the authority of direct experience in telling their "truth" about war.'⁶⁵⁴ This understanding of the genre configures the 'military' as the writer and the 'civil' as the non-military reader, obligated to receive the testimony of the returned soldier as one of the people who sent him/her to war. To flesh out war literature as a form of bearing witness requires a reader, someone to receive and remember the testimony.

The casting of war literature within this testimonial role clearly draws on the figurations of military as 'hero'. As a genre oriented towards telling and receiving solemn truths about war, the duty to read is doubly scripted. First, there is an obligation to read of the experience of the cultural hero, one whose service has saved and preserved the civil. The debt incurred might be relieved through an effort of reading to understand that experience and acknowledge that gift. Yet second, there is also an undeniability about the figuration of the military as victim which pervades this genre. In receiving testimony, the reader bears witness to war's tragedy. War might be necessary, but with it comes a suffering which is often highlighted in works of war literature. Here, a civil reader is configured as a saviour insofar as their bearing witness becomes a vow of 'never again'. In moving toward preventing war through reading and remembering it, a reader might be able to save the 'military' from avoidable pain and death.

In employing the two sets of figurations concurrently, war literature hints at a queerness about war writing and an entanglement of hero and/or victim, saved and/or saviour. Yet while war literature is a familiar category which attracts study and engagement, it is only one type of commercially-produced war writing. In examining the relationships between writer and reader it engenders, this section begins to contextualise war literature under the wider umbrella of war writing. As the next section develops, reading these other types of war writing bring it more clearly and queerly into focus as a site of the cultural work of reproduction.

⁶⁵⁴ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 103.

3. War Porn

In its previous usage, the term 'war porn' has been applied inconsistently. Previous uses range from a sub-category of pornography, proper, that involves sex scenes with soldiers to what Jacobs describes as 'the hybridization of war documentation and pornography.'⁶⁵⁵ Some academic attention has begun to coalesce around the term, though it remains poorly focused. Emphasizing the performative power of war porn, French theorist Baudrillard used the term to describe images of Baghdad prisons taken by American soldiers which depicted the humiliation and abuse of Iraqi prisoners, describing: 'it all becomes a parody of violence, a parody of the war itself, pornography becoming the ultimate form of the abjection of war which is unable to be simply war, to be simply about killing, and instead turns itself into a grotesque infantile reality-show.'⁶⁵⁶ In her discussion of war memorials, Doss uses the term to engage with militarism and 'general fetishization of war itself on every conceivable level of American society,' focusing on the term's association with lust.⁶⁵⁷ There is little sense that anyone knows what 'war porn' means, for sure. This chapter uses the term 'war porn' to describe a category of mass-produced war writing which is united by patterns of production and consumption which, in their pursuit of pleasure, privilege affective 'authenticity' over the truth. While this thesis did not coin the term 'war porn' generally, it is the first to apply it to this subject in a sustained manner which takes the 'pornification' of war writing seriously.

There are cultural products that mix the military and the sexual already, which warrant academic attention around what their production, distribution, and consumption signify within CMR. These include erotica such as *Hot SEALS: SEALed Fate*, a Kindle book from the Deep Six Security Series by Becky McGraw, which one customer-reviewer

⁶⁵⁵ Matteo Pasquinelli, 'Warporn! Warpunk! Autonomous Videopoiesis in Wartime', *Sarai Reader 5* (2005): 492–99; Katrien Jacobs, *Netporn: DIY Web Culture and Sexual Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 118.

⁶⁵⁶ Jean Baudrillard, 'War Porn', *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (April 2006): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/147041290600500107>.

⁶⁵⁷ Erica Doss, 'War Porn: Spectacle and Seduction in Contemporary American War Memorials', in *War Isn't Hell, It's Entertainment: Essays on Visual Media and the Representation of Conflict*, ed. Rikke Schubart et al. (London: McFarland & Company, 2009), 18.

recommends 'to everyone who loves to read about Navy SEALs.'⁶⁵⁸ The 'everyone' in such a scenario is bounded by a certain type of 'love' for SEALs. In a more controversial example, some scholarly attention has been paid to *Now That's Fucked Up (NTFU)*, a mid-2000s website that allowed users to swap sexually explicit images of their wives and girlfriends. Recognising that military users in Iraq and Afghanistan were unable to pay subscription fees because of credit card protection, the site owner waived fees for some of these users in exchange for them uploading graphic images of the war.⁶⁵⁹ The site was shut down in 2006 by US authorities.⁶⁶⁰ Such products engage with directly sexual war pornography, which warrants work outside the scope of this thesis.

This section theorises war pornography as an analytic category within war writing, tying its definition to a categorisation process operating within the publishing industry. The product is seen as a genre, something which exists to be bought, read, and enjoyed. But restoring the conditions of production denaturalises it as an existing genre and presents it instead as a created category of work intended to capitalise upon an imagined audience of readers. This section proceeds in two parts. First, it engages with Pornography Studies to outline its contribution to theorising war pornography as subset of war writing. Then, drawing upon porn studies, it reads the valuation of authenticity in war porn as consistent with the pursuit of a Real, which differs from the truth. In doing so, it considers how the figurations of military as hero and victim are called upon in the relations of reading a war porn text.

⁶⁵⁸ Review by 'Kdskandles,' on 'Hot SEALs: SEALed Fate (Kindle Worlds Novella), Deep Six Security Series Book 0', Amazon, 8 August 2015, [⁶⁵⁹ Helen Hester, *Beyond Explicit: Pornography and the Displacement of Sex* \(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014\), 103–4; George Zornick, 'The Porn of War', *The Nation*, 22 September 2005, <https://www.thenation.com/article/porn-war/>; Robert Niles, 'Porn Site Offers Soldiers Free Access in Exchange for Photos of Dead Iraqis', *Online Journalism Review*, 20 September 2005, <http://www.ojr.org/050920glaser/>.](https://www.amazon.com/Hot-SEALs-SEALed-Novella-Security-ebook/dp/B013CGXELK/ref=sr_1_175?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1489078090&sr=1-175#customerReviews.'</p></div><div data-bbox=)

⁶⁶⁰ Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, *War and Media: The Emergence of a Diffused War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 29.

3.1. Porn Studies

Taking war pornography seriously, this text draws on the concepts, approaches, and language of Porn Studies, a relatively new field which analyses the cultural, moral, social, and economic contexts and effects of pornography. The field is wide-ranging and multidisciplinary and though its application to a work of IR scholarship is unusual, it provides the necessary analytical tools to develop the proposed understanding of war pornography. In doing so, the section acknowledges several challenges in incorporating Porn Studies. It deals with each of these briefly, before drawing on porn studies in its analysis to anchor war porn as a generic category in the produced semblance of authenticity which caters to readers seeking affective experiences of pleasure.

How is pornography defined?

Much of Porn Studies is occupied with questions about the nature and character of pornography itself.⁶⁶¹ Opinions and definitions have come from academia, government, and law as pornography (and the associated industries) are subject to evaluation and regulation. The term has been held up to and evaluated against 'obscenity' and 'erotica'.⁶⁶² From a radical feminist perspective, it has been considered as the 'graphic sexually explicit subordination of women, whether in pictures or in words'.⁶⁶³ However, despite a wide variety of voices which chime in to define pornography, the subject seems to defy objective definition. Because pornography is reliant upon intent, audience, and use, it finds definitional form in contextualisation. In a now famous 1964 U.S. obscenity case, Justice Stewart surmised, 'I know it when I see it.'⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶¹ For more definitions, consider: Rebecca Sullivan and Alan McKee, *Pornography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015); Daniel Linz and Neil Malamuth, *Pornography*, vol. 5, *Communication Concepts* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993); Gordon Hawkins and Frank E. Zimring, *Pornography in a Free Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Andrea Dworkin, *Men Possessing Women* (New York: Penguin, 1981); Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); B.A.O. Williams, 'Report of the Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship' (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1979).

⁶⁶² Linz and Malamuth, *Pornography*, 5:12.

⁶⁶³ MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 262.

⁶⁶⁴ *Jacobellis v. Ohio* 378 U.S. 184 (1964).

Pornography is sexual, isn't it?

Not always. Sullivan and McKee describe pornography as 'the graphic depiction of sexually explicit acts made available for public consumption on a media platform...deemed pornographic because their intention is understood to be primarily for the sexual pleasure of the audience member.'⁶⁶⁵ This description is familiar and comfortable. However, this chapter draws on critical approaches within Porn Studies which challenge the application of 'pornography' at various sites. Hester (2014) describes the desexualisation of the term 'pornographic,' theorising the term's increasing application to nonsexual concepts, including 'warporn', as a definition widened to include 'something related to the body in a state of intensity.'⁶⁶⁶ Such a theory liberates us to ask why terms like 'food porn' or 'trauma porn' have entered our vocabularies to describe non-directly sexual products. This chapter considers war pornography, which falls toward the desexualised mark on the spectrum of the sexuality of pornography. When it considers lust, it does so along lines of affective desire and pleasure, rather than sexual satisfaction. In doing so, it participates in Hester's theory of non-sexualised pornographies which use the terminology due to 'triggering' the 'itching, voyeuristic desire or lascivious curiosity typically associated with pornography as a visual genre.'⁶⁶⁷ To term something 'porn' then is reflective of the relationship between the consumer and product, which is based in a matrix of desire and satiation.

Pornography is only visual, right?

Perhaps because pornography is often associated with visual work, much of the attention that has been paid to war porn thus far has been visual as well. This includes the aforementioned work of Hester who acknowledges Porn Studies' 'blind spot' for literary products, as well as Doss' work on war memorials.⁶⁶⁸ Research on aesthetic pleasure and the military without the use of the term 'pornography' also demonstrates an established

⁶⁶⁵ Sullivan and McKee, *Pornography*, 4.

⁶⁶⁶ Hester, *Beyond Explicit: Pornography and the Displacement of Sex*, 123. Hester describes 'warporn' [single word] as a 'non-sexualised pornographic,' but her definition applies the term to documentary images of war (105).

⁶⁶⁷ Hester, 105.

⁶⁶⁸ Hester, 10; Doss, 'War Porn: Spectacle and Seduction in Contemporary American War Memorials'.

interest in visual products such as film.⁶⁶⁹ Porn Studies itself has emphasized a divergence between visual and literary pornographic material, citing legal precedence which applies different censorship schemes to each.⁶⁷⁰ At the same time, however, within Porn Studies there is precedence for restoring the literary to the pornographic, something which this thesis takes seriously and seeks to do.⁶⁷¹ It does so in the belief that the approaches, concepts, and language of Porn Studies have as much to say about the textual as the visual. Although visual war pornographies warrant further attention, this chapter focuses on written war pornography as a contribution to the emergence of 'war porn' as a subject for serious academic consideration.

The challenges facing the incorporation of Porn Studies scholarship in this analysis of war writing as part of the cultural work of reproduction are not insignificant. Yet in addition to the analytic potential of applying dynamics of desire to reading war writing as CMR cultural work, Porn Studies also sets precedent for examining such pleasure products as commodities manufactured through industry. Susanne Kappeler's feminist-constructivist critique of pornography as constructed within and by social discourse re-emphasises the role of representation or the '-graphy' of pornography by focusing on publishing and the manufactured distinction between high/'literary' and mass cultural products.⁶⁷² It is from this work that this chapter takes its approach. In doing so it moves back and forth between empirics and theory to emphasise that a text is made war porn through commodification. To understand war pornography, it's necessary to look at the industry behind it and read the trappings that make a text a product, reflecting a vision of how the text fits within the larger category of war writing.

⁶⁶⁹ Anne Gjelsvik, "'Tell Me That Wasn't Fun' Watching the Battle Scenes in *Master and Commander with a Smile on Your Face*', in *War Isn't Hell, It's Entertainment: Essays on Visual Media and the Representation of Conflict*, ed. Rikke Schubart, Fabian Virchow, and Debra White-Stanley (London: McFarland & Company, 2009), 115–31.

⁶⁷⁰ Hawkins and Zimring, *Pornography in a Free Society*, 219.

⁶⁷¹ See: Jennifer Wicke, 'Through a Gaze Darkly: Pornography's Academic Market', in *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power*, ed. Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson (London: British Film Institute, 1993), 62–80; Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography In Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (London: Corgi, 1969); Hester, *Beyond Explicit: Pornography and the Displacement of Sex*; Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986).

⁶⁷² Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*.

3.2. Authenticity

The appetite for authenticity, or what Badiou terms the 'passion for the real [*la passion du réel*],' in discussing the twentieth century is a well-circulated concept within Porn Studies.⁶⁷³ Here, it provides a foundation for unpicking the relationship between authenticity and war pornography. Drawing on Badiou, Žižek describes the obsession with 'penetrating the Real Thing...through the cobweb of semblances which constitute our reality,' portraying 'the Real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality.'⁶⁷⁴ Žižek writes in conversation with Badiou, building on his theory. Most significantly, he suggests that the Real itself is another semblance, that in its violent Realness it cannot be assimilated into experience as anything other than another semblance.⁶⁷⁵ Within war writing, war pornography inspires anxiety and contestation over authenticity because its value to the reader lies in such an ability to encounter the Real. This is not something unique to war pornography. In discussing readers' craving for such reality in texts, Shields describes a 'thrill' from 'the (seeming) rawness of something that appears to be direct from the source,' suggesting that the authenticity of a cultural product may enhance the pleasure derived from it.⁶⁷⁶ However, this section identifies the semblance of authenticity as a defining characteristic of war pornography as a genre.

Because the importance of authenticity lies at the centre of the relationship between reader and war porn, it is important to represent the voices of the readers in this discourse. While the reader is unlikely to be aware of the term 'war porn' or think the texts they consume could be considered 'pornographic,' the way they describe and treat these texts demonstrates a valuation of affective reality and authenticity, sometimes ironically at the cost of truth. Books are judged on their ability to satisfy a particular desire to experience and come close to the Real. Military enthusiasts, some of whom have never been in the military, connect online in popular military forums and other social media groups, including

⁶⁷³ Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

⁶⁷⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), 12, 5–6.

⁶⁷⁵ Žižek, 19.

⁶⁷⁶ David Shields, *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010), 82.

those discussed in *Chapter 4*. Such digital spaces are largely uncensored, with minimal regulation, providing an opportunity to access the candid opinions of the consumers of these texts. One such forum, *Army Rumour Service* (ARRSE), has a sub-forum called the 'The Book Club,' which features a lengthy pinned thread called 'Best War Book.'⁶⁷⁷ ARSSE enjoys a high-profile within an in-the-know community. It receives 5 million hits per month and has been cited as a source in multiple news outlets.⁶⁷⁸ These military forums are not marginalised spaces, and yet the veil of anonymity provided by the Internet encourages a no-holds-barred environment helpful in approaching the reader-consumers of war pornography. At the same time, it is this same dynamic which likely has led to a digital culture that has been criticised for condoning racist, transphobic, sexist, and threatening remarks.⁶⁷⁹

In a thread on another, more tastefully moderated military forum, a user ('prmc85') asks whether others would recommend *Black Water: By Strength and By Guile* by Don Camsell.⁶⁸⁰ The book cover (Figure 5) portrays a uniformed individual wielding a weapon and the headline 'My Secret Life in the Special Boat Service', a promise to take the reader into the writer's confidence.

⁶⁷⁷ The thread was started in 2006 and has remained active for 15+ years. See: Run_Charlie!, 'Best War Book', Forum Thread, *Army Rumour Service*, accessed 8 May 2017, <https://www.arrse.co.uk/community/threads/best-war-book.35110/>.

⁶⁷⁸ Matt Broomfield, 'What's the Deal with This Super Racist British Army Forum?', *Vice*, 26 May 2016, https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/army-rumour-service-arrse.

⁶⁷⁹ Broomfield.

⁶⁸⁰ prmc85, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #1, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 4 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/>.

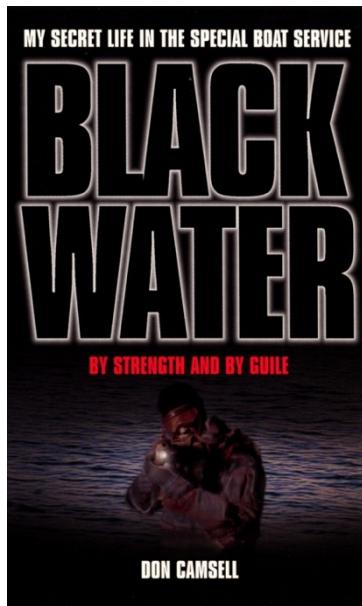


Figure 5. *Black Water: By Strength and Guile* by Dom Camsell⁶⁸¹

Responses on the forum are mixed, ranging from the enthusiastic, 'Lots of little stories in there about what its [sic] all about. Also you can feel what it would be like to be in those situations. BUY IT!'⁶⁸² to a warning that a fellow forum member 'in the know...rubbishes this book!!'⁶⁸³ The debate over the text is not about its literary merit, but its affective realness and its authenticity. The first response recommends it in language that suggests the text may offer an opportunity to penetrate Žižek's Real. The second casts doubt, identifying concerns over authenticity as a reason to not read the text.

Their preoccupation is not confined to the text at hand, but spirals into a general conversation over the importance of truth in such war writing. The original poster (OP) comments that 'Suicide is never funny, but that is quite...' regarding a 'Walt' (stolen valour perpetrator) that killed himself after his misrepresentation came to light.⁶⁸⁴ If the

⁶⁸¹ 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile', Penguin, accessed 3 December 2021, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/107/1077428/black-water--by-strength-and-by-guile/9780753505120.html>.

⁶⁸² itslikethat, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #4, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 4 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/#post-304680>.

⁶⁸³ westy, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #8, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 4 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/#post-304712>.

⁶⁸⁴ prmc85, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #16, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 5 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/#post-304751>.

nonchalance of such a comment suggests anything, it supports the conviction with which these readers regard what this chapter is calling 'war porn.' A collection of comments suggests that there is a limited acceptance of imperfect authenticity. For one user, watching a documentary that exposed the supposed misrepresentation of Andy McNab's *Bravo Two Zero* was enough for him to be put off.⁶⁸⁵ Yet others demonstrate an awareness and acceptance of limits of the authenticity produced by the publishing industry. In explaining, 'I know books are embellished by authors, I understand that... I'm not a big fan of books by journalists and outsiders, I try to avoid them,' one user demonstrates a simultaneous desire for the authentic (seen in the preference for 'insider' authors) and an awareness of embellishment.⁶⁸⁶ Similarly, another user muses, 'Books are stories. Even books based on true stories are only **based** on true stories. There's always going to be some stretching of the truth' (emphasis original).⁶⁸⁷ It seems that the semblance is enough for some. So long as the author and text are not directly proven to be entirely fraudulent (what this chapter calls 'authenticity breaks'), which would locate them within the phenomenon of stolen valour discussed in *Chapter 4*, there is a tolerance for distorting the truth to produce an affective realness for the reader. As a user on another thread phrases it, 'Who cares, its [sic] a good dit.'⁶⁸⁸

War pornography's high valuation of authenticity reflects deep anxieties within civil-military relations on several levels. First, one common to war writing as a larger category: that there is something about war which is unrepresentable or beyond the understanding of people who have not directly experienced it. It is such an anxiety which produces the damaging social piety, which inhibits healthy dialogue in pedestalling the veteran above

⁶⁸⁵ Master_Sayer, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #10, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 5 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/#post-304719>.

⁶⁸⁶ westy, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #19, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 5 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/#post-304795>.

⁶⁸⁷ Ross154, 'Black Water: By Strength and By Guile by Don Camsell', #20, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 5 October 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/black-water-by-strength-and-by-guile-by-don-camsell.43763/#post-304806>.

⁶⁸⁸ CM2010, 'The Real Bravo Two Zero...', #10, *Potential Royal Marines Forum*, 23 August 2011, <https://www.royalmarines.uk/threads/the-real-bravo-two-zero.42785/#post-298322>. Here 'dit' is slang, often associated with the Royal Marines, used to mean 'story.'

civil society. In discussing a text (though not one that belongs to war pornography), Hester notes that we have a 'lingering fascination with experiencing an affecting realm that exists beyond comprehension and representation, and which therefore stands in opposition to everyday social reality.'⁶⁸⁹ The language here, of 'comprehension and representation,' evokes this particular anxiety. Authenticity in this case seems to offer a non-military reader the best chance at experiencing war, albeit second hand. If the product is inauthentic, the opportunity is wasted. If the authenticity is tarnished, it threatens the clean figurations of 'military' and 'civil' as 'hero' and 'saved'. Where is the presumed 'military' honour amidst the unravelling lies?

Second, the focus on authenticity within war pornography can be read within a larger context of suspicions about the 'realness' of ex-servicepersons and their experiences. The importance of authenticity in war writing is proactively drawn against the anxiety of instrumental misrepresentation, like stolen valour, explored in *Chapter 4*. The acute attention garnered by military hoax events evinces a deep social anxiety, often driven by veterans and supported by civilians, over authenticity. Such anxiety may stem from a desire to prevent fraudulent individuals from accessing the prestige and social capital accorded to veterans. Such gatekeeping constructs a pathway between the experience of being in the military and the privileges accorded to the ex-serviceperson for having served his or her country. One cannot have the reward without the work.

Finally, authenticity plays a key role in understanding the pleasurable aspect of consuming war pornography. With the obsession with 'penetrating the Real Thing' that Žižek portrays, must come a rush when the impression is given that one has accomplished such a task.⁶⁹⁰ The appeal of war pornography lies in creating the opportunity to enjoy such a pleasure, to match desire and satiation. It is imperative that the reader-consumer be able to feel as though they have glimpsed the Real. At the same time, one must question whether the consumers of these texts are so naïve as to ingest them as absolute truth. In contrast to the witch-hunting evidenced by the Walter Mitty Hunters Club, debates by readers over the authenticity of war pornography reveals an acceptance for a margin of

⁶⁸⁹ Hester, *Beyond Explicit: Pornography and the Displacement of Sex*, 92.

⁶⁹⁰ Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*, 12, 5–6.

embellishment. Taken too far, the previously discussed anxieties come into play, but unsubstantiated doubts over the exact veracity of a text are not enough to destroy the potential for pleasure.

In aligning authenticity with Žižek's Real, this section identifies the allure of war pornography within a relations of desire and satiation. Reading this within our theory of CMR reveals a queerness in this behaviour, for the Real contains, necessarily, both the hero and/or the victim. In pursuing a produced authenticity above an objective truth, the reader of war pornography desires an affective truth, one which feels Real. Yet in considering this Real alongside the figurations of military as hero and victim, what emerges is a queer and entangled figuration. The root of affective truth in war pornography is, this project argues, a kind of suffering. Often this looks like an intensity of experience: seemingly insurmountable odds, nearly unimaginable conditions, a certain horror of combat which war pornography makes accessible to the reader. Logically, if suffering is key to the production of the Real, then the protagonists of these texts must be read as a kind of victim of their experience. However, the orientation of war porn looks to celebrate the hero who performs in this extreme adversity. Like the queerness of the hero redeemed in the victim in forces charities (Chapter 5), the hero figuration in war pornography is inseparably joined with the figuration of the victim.

4. War Literature/War Porn

While this chapter has so far separated war literature and war pornography to analyse the generic categories in detail, in approaching war writing as the cultural work of reproduction, this section moves the argument toward making sense of war literature and war pornography alongside each other. Culturally, war writing has a pedigree of taste that prefers the memorialisation and timeless character of literature to the pleasure offered by war pornography. While someone may be praised for reading Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the same praise does not extend to readers of war pornography. Inherent with this is the assumption that literature has a didactic, valuable role, whereas war pornography only offers entertainment. There is some discomfort in consuming war pornography and again it is Porn Studies which lends us the language to deconstruct the

sentiment. The term 'prurience' describes a curiosity that arouses ethical or political discomfort when acknowledged, or an “interest” to which no one wants to own up.⁶⁹¹ Within this context, 'prurience' provides language to describe the uneasiness in consuming war porn. There is something outwardly objectionable about the gleeful consumption of a product which unabashedly celebrates the gory and heroic aspects of war without the commemorative or sentimental tones that temper war literature. Innate curiosity becomes prurience because war pornography contravenes norms around how the war writing should be treated in culture. If war literature is an honour or obligation to read, then war porn is our guilty pleasure.

War porn's content is driven by the mass consumer-satisfying function of a publisher, who funnels subject-appropriate manuscripts into either the 'literary' bucket or the 'war porn' bucket. The literary production function of a publisher is unconcerned with producing material which will satisfy the reader of war porn, because to do so would not be 'literary,' a canon additionally protected through self-regulation. Literary war writers would never produce war porn because to do so is neither their function nor aim – as much may be observed in the enthusiasm with which such writers differentiate themselves from war pornographers. This examination of war pornography offers a way of understanding war writing as its own canon, accounting for and uniting a seemingly divided body of texts, some of which are praised as art and some of which are sold, grossly embellished, on the shelves of supermarkets. To study war porn and war literature is to study war writing more largely, with an intense focus on the relationship between producers, distributors, and consumers.

Marking war pornography as manufactured points out the produced nature of the categories that cut across war writing. Kappeler describes: 'The term 'literary' is a word like 'tasteful,' that is to say, not descriptive, but discriminating in terms of a scale of values, containing value judgement...Thus concepts like 'taste', 'literary', 'quality' do not directly denote what they mean, but allude to a set of rules made elsewhere.'⁶⁹² In war writing, the publishing industry originates these rules, dividing 'literature' from 'war pornography'

⁶⁹¹ Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 122.

⁶⁹² Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, 115.

which, in a feedback loop, performs the CMR cultural work of reproduction through the marketing and distribution of war writing. War porn, like any commercial product, sits at a nexus of the producer (writer), consumer (reader), and distributor (publisher). Analysing it reveals an industry which envisions and maintains the binary of a 'civil'-reader/'military'-writer. The binary is re-invoked several times over: first in the writing and editing, then in the distribution and marketing, and finally in the act of reception and consumption of the published text.

At a first glance, it seems that war porn and war literature can be loosely tied to the figurations of 'military' as hero and victim. If porn is all flesh and intensity and action, then the figuration of the 'military' as hero seems automatic. War literature, as a commodity, is produced as sombre, reflective, and poignant tells of struggles of 'military' as a sort of victim, inspiring the 'civil' as saviour to bear witness, engage politically, and never forget. However, the simplicity of this division between war literature and war porn, between two types of war writing which seem to promote particularly dominant figurations of 'military' and 'civil', falls apart under scrutiny. The actual stories that are recorded, packaged, and transformed in war writing defy the binary logic that the publishing industry appears to follow in sifting and separating what is placed on the track of war literature vs. war porn. This section traces this process through an analysis of the aesthetics of war literature and war pornography. In identifying themes within these aesthetics for both generic categories, this section takes book covers seriously as indicators of how the publishing industry seeks to position texts.

4.1. The Aesthetics of War Literature and War Pornography

If one, in the absence of an objective definition, can recognise pornography when one sees it, then the aesthetics of war writing are critical to this analysis of war literature and war porn. This section analyses the aesthetics of promotion for both war literature and war pornography, with a focus on the covers and titles designed and selected by publishing houses, designers, publicists, and authors. It focuses on writing about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to produce a like-for-like comparison, but many of the points made apply to the genre at large. These aesthetics are significant because they speak for the book even before a reader opens it. In defiance of the adage, one's judgement of a book always

begins with its packaging. What does the cover look like? What does the title suggest? How long is it? These factors are crude signifiers, but they are the first ones a potential reader encounters.

Comparing several covers sheds light on the visual types and vocabulary that publishing houses often employ in marketing war writing. Though war writing covers often portray images of military personnel, machinery, or gear, the style varies greatly, and a general division can be traced between works of war pornography and war literature. The style of covers for war writing tells a narrative of what sort of book is contained within. They are signifiers for whether a book is being sold as war literature or war pornography. The more abstracted, artistic, and subtle covers claim something as a valued cultural product, while the hyper-realistic, action-orientated covers (often accompanied by subtitles that remind readers that it's a 'true story') create expectations of a low-brow entertainment or pleasure object. Even in the absence of a formalised visual analysis, the covers side-by-side create a strong contrast. The judgment of the content therein begins.

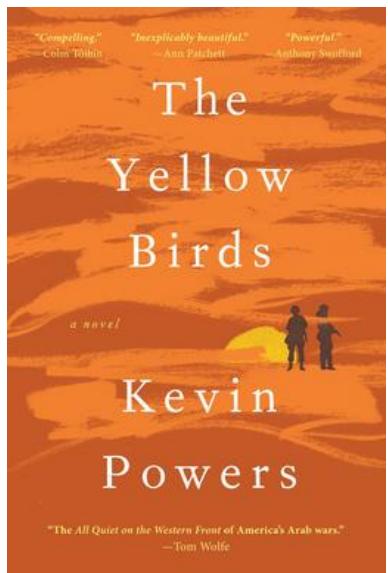


Figure 6. *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers

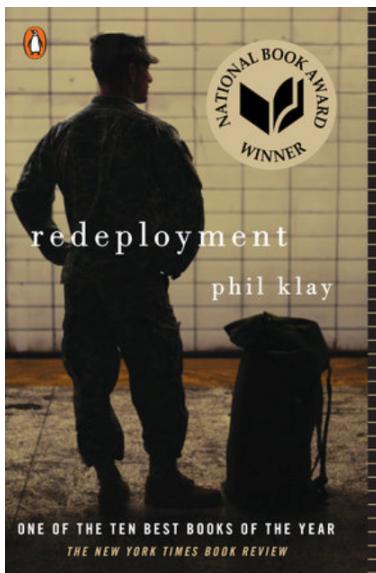


Figure 7. *Redeployment* by Phil Klay (US hardcover)⁶⁹³

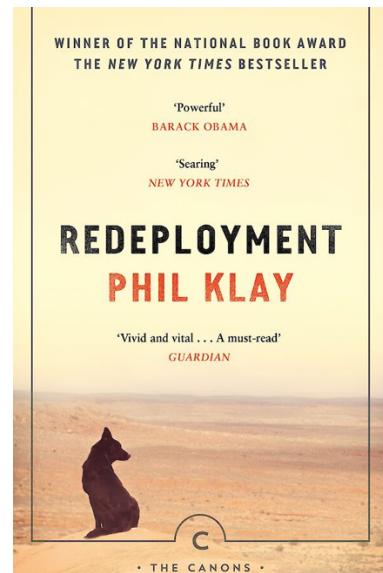


Figure 8. *Redeployment* by Phil Klay (Canongate paperback)⁶⁹⁴

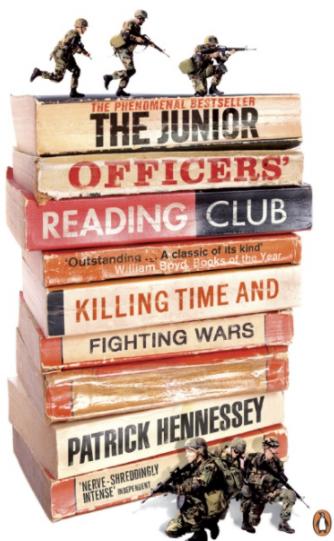


Figure 9. *The Junior Officers' Reading Club* by Patrick Hennessey⁶⁹⁵

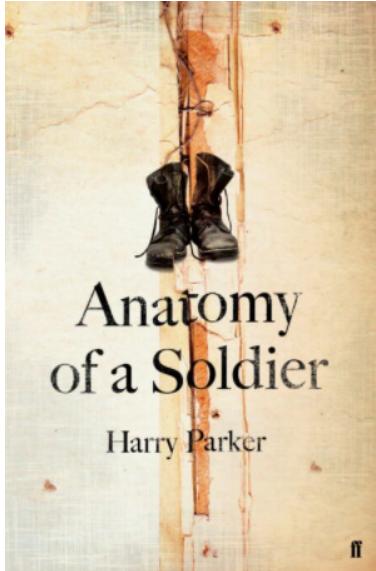


Figure 10. *Anatomy of a Soldier* by Harry Parker⁶⁹⁶

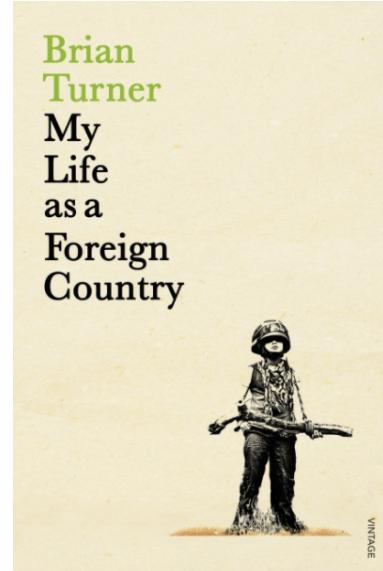


Figure 11. *My Life as a Foreign Country* by Brian Turner⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³ 'Redeployment by Phil Klay', Penguin Random House, accessed 3 December 2021, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/311509/redeployment-by-phil-klay/>.

⁶⁹⁴ 'Redeployment by Phil Klay', Canongate Books, accessed 3 December 2021, <https://canongate.co.uk/books/1678-redeployment/>.

⁶⁹⁵ 'The Junior Officers' Reading Club', Penguin, accessed 4 December 2021, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/180357/the-junior-officers--reading-club/9780141039268>.

⁶⁹⁶ 'Anatomy of a Soldier', Faber, accessed 6 December 2021, <https://www.faber.co.uk/product/9780571325818-anatomy-of-a-soldier/>.

⁶⁹⁷ 'My Life as a Foreign Country', Penguin, accessed 4 December 2021, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1093918/my-life-as-a-foreign-country/9780099578871>.

The dynamics of remembrance and obligation which circulate around war literature demonstrate the seriousness, and at times sentimentality, that perfuse it as a genre. This register is supported by and reflected in the titles and covers, a selection of which are presented in this section (Figures 6-11). When surveyed, commonalities emerge, including a tendency toward an abstract and minimalist aesthetic. For Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*, the figures of the soldiers are tastefully reduced: two small silhouettes against a flat wash of orange strewn with yellow (Figure 6).⁶⁹⁸ Many of the covers draw on a similar colour scheme of beiges and neutrals with accents of burnt orange. The covers are also united by their efforts to subvert expectations. Rather than go for the obvious visuals of soldiers in battle, several of the covers play with military imagery. *The Junior Officers Reading Club* (Figure 9) cuts away the background from the figures of the soldiers and plays with scale, locating them on top of a stack of books, as though they're army men figurines. *My Life as a Foreign Country* (Figure 11) depicts a monochromatic image reminiscent of the work of Banksy, featuring a child dressed as a soldier, balancing a hefty tree branch in a pose that evokes a soldier carrying a GPMG⁶⁹⁹. *Anatomy of a Soldier* (Figure 10) showcases a pair of well-worn boots, the background cut by a strong, rust-coloured vertical line, together producing an image reminiscent of the battlefield cross, a field or base camp memorial for a deceased soldier composed of their inverted rifle, planted in the ground with their boots at the base, and topped by their helmet. The two covers for *Redeployment* (Figures 7 and 8) are eerily consistent, despite their differing subject matter. Figure 7, the original US hardcover, depicts a silhouetted soldier, backlit against a tile wall. His rucksack sits next to him as he stands in a relaxed pose with his hands on his hips. He, a clearly 'military' figure, seems at odds with the environment before him, the tiles, which appear sooty and stained, evoking a 'civil' subway station. Figure 8, when viewed alongside its predecessor, riffs on this same imagery of a dislocated figure. In this case, a black fox sits in the foreground. These twists

⁶⁹⁸ 'The Yellow Birds', Kevin Powers, accessed 13 March 2017, http://www.kevinctowers.com/the_yellow_birds_114142.htm.

⁶⁹⁹ General Purpose Machine Gun. Belt-fed and mountable on vehicles, it also may be carried as a light machine gun on foot patrols as a platoon-level weapon. With a 50-round belt, the GPMG used by UK Forces weighs 13.85kg. See: 'Small Arms and Support Weapons', Equipment: Small Arms and Support Weapons, accessed 6 December 2021, <https://www.army.mod.uk/equipment/small-arms-and-support-weapons/>.

on imagery, which encourage the viewer to think, sets the tone for engagement with the text. It produces expectations for contemplation and encourages the reader to locate the text within an artistic and culturally valuable tradition of literature.

The text, including the titles, placed on the covers also sustains the register of war literature in both form and content. The titles echo the abstraction and slight abstruseness of the cover images. Several (Figures 6 and 11) don't refer to anything military. Others maintain some mystery, causing the viewer to wonder what the author means. Lethality and violence are largely absent, an exception is Figure 9, which references 'killing time' in a double-meaning which references the alleviation of boredom and warfighting in a thought-provoking tension between intensity and routine. Visually, the title text skews heavily toward serif typefaces, traditionally aligned more formal writing and messaging. They are displayed in font sizes that don't dominate the cover, permitting the intrigue of the visuals to draw the viewer in.

Reviews, visually, are de-emphasized in deference to the titles and authors' names, following the minimalist aesthetic which keeps the covers feeling uncluttered. In content, these testimonials make reference to the canon of war literature, comparing them to All Quiet on the Western Front (Figure 6) or claiming them as a new 'classic' (Figure 9). The adjective 'powerful' is used twice (Figures 6 and 8), alluding to the affectiveness of the text, while other descriptors — 'searing' (Figure 8) and 'nerve-shreddingly intense' (Figure 9) — attest to a pain in the testimony of the writers. The quoted reviewers include Barack Obama (Figure 8), prizewinning authors and journalists (Figures 6 and 9) and respected publications (Figures 7, 8, and 9), again setting the cultural tone and expectations around the texts. The previous ranks and titles of the authors, all of whom are British or American veterans, are absent, though this absence isn't notable until drawn in contrast to their inclusion in the covers of war pornography. The intentionality of tone and register in marketing war literature is evidenced in the coherence of its aesthetics which present an artistic and subdued vision of war. Contrasting these against the aesthetics of war pornography draws each into sharper focus, aiding in this analysis of war writing as commodity.

The covers of war pornography are united by their visuals, which celebrate soldiers in action, grittiness, and 'real' photographs. All the covers (Figures 12-17) depict soldiers carrying weapon, often as the sole visual focus, in a solidifying theme which contrasts with

the more diverse and artistic renderings found in war literature. This reality is further emphasized through a level of grit in the images. This dirt may be affected, as in the case of *Maverick One: The True Story of a Para, Pathfinder, Renegade* (Figure 13), in which the artist has added filters to make the cover appear gritty, producing an effect reminiscent of high-budget computer war games. Or it may be a part of the images as in Figures 16 and 17, which show dirt and debris kicked up around the soldiers. This dirt, which locates the depicted soldiers in combat and theatre, contrasts with the abstracted representations of soldiers in Figures 6 and 9 who are deprived and extracted from their context. Interestingly, many of the photos, despite the effort to effect reality, must be staged, stock, or otherwise enhanced, and in this sense, clearly not real.

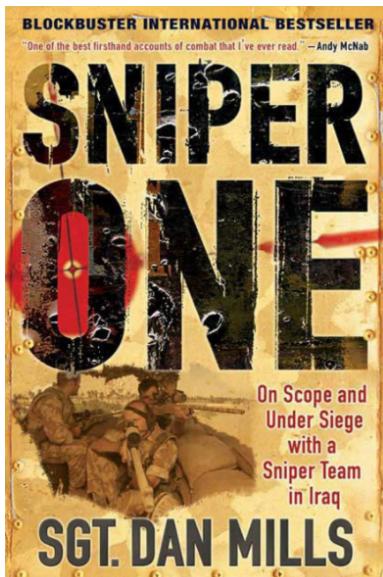


Figure 12. *Sniper One* by Sgt. Dan Mills⁷⁰⁰

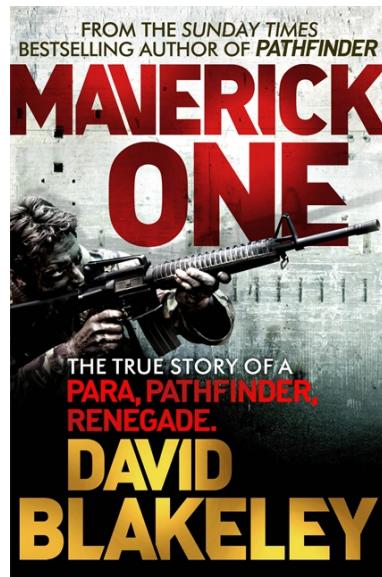


Figure 13. *Maverick One* by David Blakeley⁷⁰¹

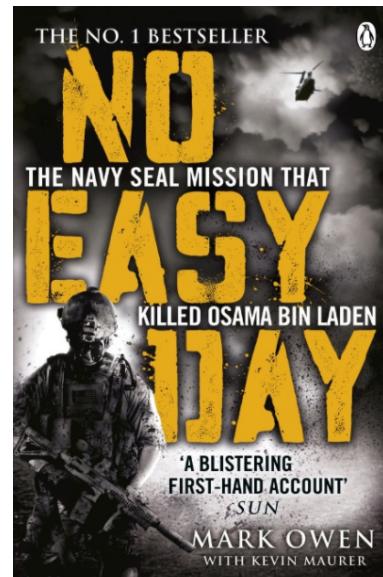


Figure 14. *No Easy Day* by Mark Owen with Kevin Maurer⁷⁰²

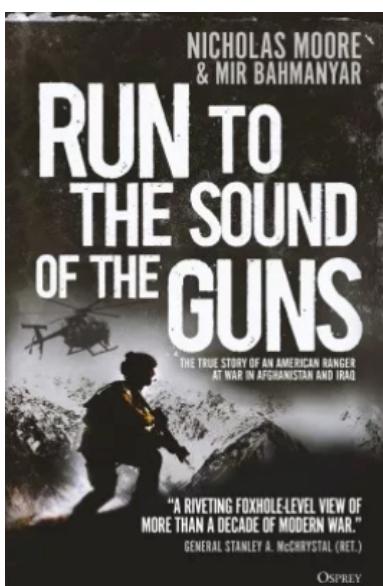


Figure 15. *Run to the Sound of the Guns* by Nicholas Moore & Mir Bahmanyar⁷⁰³

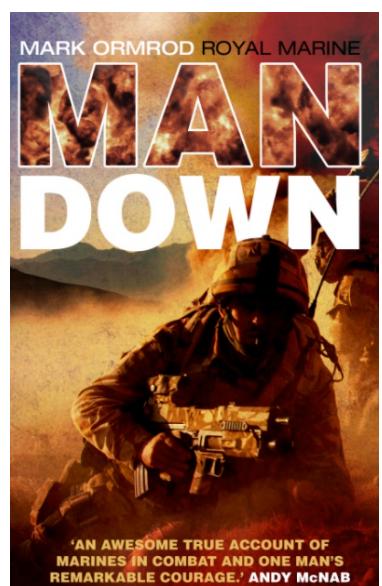


Figure 16. *Man Down* by Mark Ormrod⁷⁰⁴

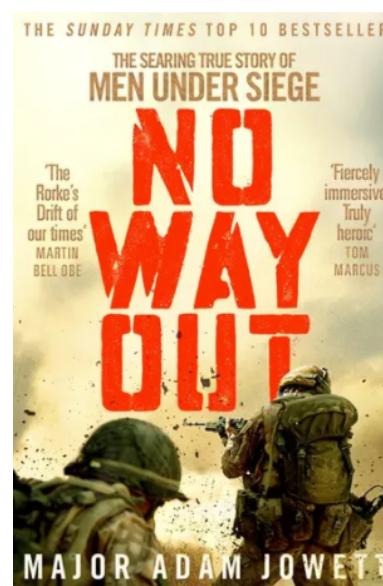


Figure 17. *No Way Out* by Major Adam Jowett⁷⁰⁵

The same visual unity carries over to the form and content of the text found on the covers of war pornography. Many of the main titles make direct reference to military roles

⁷⁰⁰ 'Sniper One', Macmillan, accessed 3 December 2021, <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780312567385/sniperone>.

⁷⁰¹ 'Maverick One by David Blakeley', The Orion Publishing Group, accessed 18 November 2021, <https://www.orionbooks.co.uk/books/detail.page?isbn=9781409146636>.

⁷⁰² 'No Easy Day', Penguin, accessed 3 December 2021, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/192432/no-easy-day/9781405911894>.

or action-oriented situations ('Sniper One' in Figure 12, or 'Man Down' in Figure 16). 'Maverick One' (Figure 13) could be understood as a call-sign for a soldier. The titles of the texts in Figures 14 and 17 are similar in their problem-oriented language ('No Easy Day' and 'No Way Out') which hints at the difficulties and dangers faced by soldiers in the books. Two of the covers use military rank in recognising the authors (Figure 12 and Figure 17). The titles and author names are uniformly written in sans serif typefaces and assertive, bold, all capital letters that seem to yell at the viewer. They dominate the space of the covers, producing covers that feel cluttered. This sense is augmented by the inclusion of subtitles on five out of six of the selected covers (Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, 17), which, in contrast to the abstruseness of war literature titles, actively seek to clarify the books' content. The subtitles commonly emphasize military specialisations, with a clear focus on the teeth arms (Pathfinder, Navy SEAL, Ranger), many of which maintain a sense of elite exclusivity. They also are united by common language, including the phrase 'true story' (Figures 13, 15, 17).

This emphasis with assuring readers that the books are the 'true story' echoes in the reviews selected for the covers. These testimonials showcase the realness and truth of the books, using buzzwords including 'first-hand' (Figures 12 and 14) and language which locates the readers' experience close to the soldiers (e.g., 'immersive' in Figure 17 and 'on scope and under siege with a sniper team' in Figure 13). Such language is oriented toward producing an authenticity around the text in which the space between the reader and writer is minimised: it assures the reader that the text, being 'true', will bring them in contact with the direct experience of the authors. Testimonials are drawn from authors from within the genre, including Andy McNab⁷⁰⁶ (referenced on the covers in Figures 12 and 16) and Tom Marcus (Figure 17), a pseudonym of an ex-soldier and MI5 officer who has authored similar books on his spy experience⁷⁰⁷. These peer reviews assist in securing the books within their

⁷⁰³ 'Run to the Sound of the Guns', Osprey, accessed 4 December 2021, <https://ospreypublishing.com/run-to-the-sound-of-the-guns>.

⁷⁰⁴ 'Man Down', Penguin, accessed 6 December 2021, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1084322/man-down/9780552159494>.

⁷⁰⁵ 'No Way Out by Adam Jowett', Pan Macmillan, accessed 6 December 2021, <https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/adam-jowett/no-way-out/9781509864737>.

⁷⁰⁶ Andy McNab is the pseudonym/nom de plume of Steven Billy Mitchell, CBE.

⁷⁰⁷ 'Tom Marcus', Pan Macmillan, accessed 6 December 2021, <https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/tom-marcus/24656>.

genric canon, while other testimonials attest to the excitement of the texts using terms like 'riveting' (Figure 15) and 'blistering' (Figure 14). However, the merit being lauded is anchored in the truth or Realness of the texts in a clear departure from the aesthetics of war literature.

Taking the book covers and titles of war writing seriously reveals a clear aesthetic divide in how they are advertised and packaged as war literature and war pornography. It restores the hand of production in war writing as a commodity and highlights a sorting of sifting of war stories that dictates who might read them and for what purpose. Yet this process, evidenced in the stunningly consistent aesthetic divides between war porn and war literature, also seeks to maintain the civil-military binary in particular ways. In this sense, the aesthetic analysis of this section establishes a metric against which other works of war writing might be compared. A reader who seeks intensity and action might be deterred by the plainness of works of war literature. Someone who is looking for a serious and contemplative book might scoff at the bravado of the covers of war pornography and dismiss the books as commercial (vs. artistic). The aesthetics of promotion thus have a significant role in shaping the expectations and thus audience of these texts which, in being war writing, are, together, the war stories we tell about ourselves.

Despite the publishing industry's considerable interest in separating war literature and war pornography, this chapter contends that doing so fails to account for the queerness of contemporary CMR which defies the binary figurations upon which the superficial production of the literature/porn divide rely. The work of binary maintenance and reproduction taken up in book publishing cannot cope with or contain the messiness which accompanies these books as sociocultural texts. To demonstrate this inseparable queerness, the following section takes up these issues in reading *American Sniper* and Chris Kyle as product, person and story which draws on cultural memory, instrumental heroization/victimization, and crises of authenticity.

5. *American Sniper*

Before Chris Kyle was a Navy SEAL, he was just another boy from Texas. As a SEAL, he served his country in the early 2000s as war wound its way back into the American

consciousness and everyday experience. After, he became an American-made hero, so-crowned by a public that read of his feats in *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* (William Morrow, 2012), which sold 1.2 million copies in its first two years across all formats.⁷⁰⁸ His image and exposure grew. A film deal emerged. When Kyle was shot and killed in February 2013 by a fellow veteran, his funeral was held at the Dallas Cowboys stadium to accommodate the estimated 6,500-7,000 attendees; the procession covered 200 miles to the Texas State Cemetery in Austin.⁷⁰⁹ The *American Sniper* film, already in progress at the time, went on to garner six Academy Award nominations and win one. It boosted book sales, with *Publishers Weekly* tallying 2015 sales at 354,536 units of the mass market movie tie-in and 851,457 units of the trade paperback movie tie-in.⁷¹⁰ In the background to all this, quietly at first, and then demanding more attention, the controversies began rolling in. Is the kill count accurate? The medal count? Is he lying? Why might he lie? Is it unpatriotic to doubt him, a veteran and American hero? The narratives run over each other in their desperation to be the truth. *Chris Kyle is the consummate American soldier, a typical Texas boy who became the greatest hero of all time and was tragically taken from us. He is a PTSD-tormented veteran driven to lying, an example of how the government and society is failing its troops. He is a murdering, self-inflating braggart who is glorified through his autobiography and movie.* The *American Sniper* controversies cut across questions of authenticity, politics, perceptions of the 'civil' responsibility to veterans, and the publishing industry's controlling hand in packaging a war story.

⁷⁰⁸ Andy Lewis, "'American Sniper' Book Sales See Continued Bump From Movie's Success. 6 February', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 6 February 2015, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/american-sniper-book-sales-see-77090>.

⁷⁰⁹ Jeff February Mosier, 'Thousands Attend Memorial Service for Slain Navy SEAL Sniper Chris Kyle at Cowboys Stadium', *The Dallas Morning News*, 11 February 2013, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/news/2013/02/11/thousands-expected-for-navy-seal-sniper-chris-kyles-funeral-at-cowboys-stadium-today>; Wayne Carter, 'Final Salute: Thousands Pay Respects to Chris Kyle at Cowboys Stadium', *The Dallas Morning News*, 11 February 2013, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/arlington/2013/02/11/final-salute-thousands-pay-respects-to-chris-kyle-at-cowboys-stadium>.

⁷¹⁰ 'Bestselling Books of 2015', *Publishers Weekly*, 1 January 2016, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/69054-bestselling-books-of-2015.html>.

With elite acceptance and accolades elevating its cultural value, *American Sniper* is not immediately recognisable as war porn. As a text, it challenges the naturalness of war pornography, exposing the hand of the publishing industry. As an initial book, it demonstrates the manufacturing and packaging of a text to be sold to an imagined audience that craves authenticity, entertainment, and glory. But as events unravelled with authenticity controversies, Chris Kyle's murder, and the release of the film, the categorisation of *American Sniper* as war pornography was compromised. The controversies that followed the book around what this section calls 'authenticity breaks' allude to the passion for the Real which is essential to war pornography. It is precisely this seeming disjoint, between its reception as a high culture product and its production and distribution, initially, as a war porn work, which makes *American Sniper* a strong case to consider within this research. It becomes clear that it is not the story, but the packaging of *American Sniper* which made it war porn to begin with. As a case, *American Sniper* threatens the binaries of war porn/war literature by revealing the constructedness of these generic categories. It introduces a queerness which defies the maintenance of the binary undertaken in the cultural work of reproduction.

This section proceeds in four parts. First, it draws on the chapter's aesthetic analysis of book covers in the previous section to bring *American Sniper* into focus. It then moves past the aesthetics of the text and uses authenticity as a lens to read the book as a cultural phenomenon which is intertwined with Chris Kyle as a cultural hero. Building on this, the third section contextualises some of the authenticity crises of *American Sniper* by reading it against similar cases of exaggeration or misrepresentation in war pornography. Finally, the section considers what *American Sniper* can tell us about the constructed character of the generic categorisation of war writing.

5.1. Producing *American Sniper*: Aesthetic Choices in Covers and Titles

Triangulating *American Sniper* between the visual extremes of war pornography and war literature begins to locate the product within the context of commercially published war writing. At the most essential level, the instrumental choice of a title begins to bring the marketing of the product into focus. *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History*. Apart from common sense, both the egoism and the

third-person structure of the title suggest that it was not chosen by Kyle alone. Thus, the title becomes a site to dissect the 'distributor' aspect of the war pornography nexus. Evident in the sub-title, the text is situated within the market as an autobiography. Inherently, this suggests that the work is non-fiction, authentic, unlike texts written by veterans that deliberately play with the fiction/non-fiction boundary.⁷¹¹ At the same time, it is clearly written 'with' Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice. McEwen, an attorney by training, acknowledged that he first proposed the idea of writing a book to Kyle, whom he met through a mutual friend.⁷¹² Although McEwen and Kyle initially worked on the project together, DeFelice, a writer, was later hired to 'carry the project forward' on the suggestion of Peter Hubbard, current Executive Editor at William Morris (HarperCollins).⁷¹³ Though in this case both McEwen and DeFelice are attributed across all covers considered, their names are de-emphasised through font colour and size. Such a design choice suggests that Chris Kyle is the majority author responsible for the text, again emphasising the authenticity of the narrative as his story. The co-writers' diminished presence on the cover is reassuring for a reader suspicious about authorial meddling. However, unintuitive to the uninformed reader, the use of such co-writers, not outright 'ghost-writers,' may boost the semblance of authenticity, falling into the (incorrect) trope that soldiers can't also be writers.⁷¹⁴ In claiming Kyle as the 'most lethal sniper,' the author panders to an interest in mortality, framing a high kill number as something laudable. That it appears in the title suggests that the distributor is aware that such an interest can stimulate book sales. Finally, the use of the phrase 'American Sniper' claims Kyle as an authentic American product, tapping into streams of both patriotism and militarism. The subtext is 'American, not ____.' It provides a sense of ownership for the imagined American consumer.

Such themes are picked up again in the book cover. The two *American Sniper* covers (Figures 18 and 19), drawn from different formats, fall somewhere in the middle.

⁷¹¹ One might consider Karl Marlantes' novel *Matterhorn* (2009).

⁷¹² McEwen Dep. 37:13-15, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷¹³ McEwen Dep. 41:18-19, 47:6 – 48:13, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷¹⁴ 'Ghost-writing' describes professional writing done without attribution in the final product.

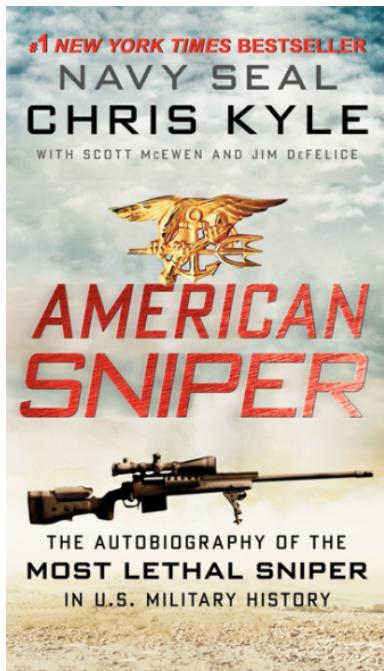


Figure 18. *American Sniper*: Mass Market Paperback⁷¹⁵

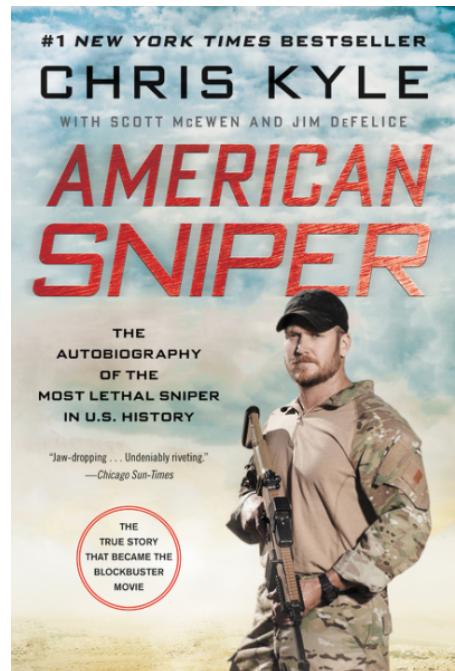


Figure 19. *American Sniper*: Trade Paperback⁷¹⁶

Comparing the two covers as variations on the theme (both feature the same fonts, colours, and background image), it appears Kyle has been abstracted in Figure 18, reduced to the US Navy SEALs cap badge and a sniper rifle, those two items standing in for his figure on the trade paperback. This embodies the sort of autobiography that *American Sniper* is, a certain type of self-telling that is oriented around the elite military narrative. The colours can be read as a muted assemblage of red, white, and blue, evocative of the American flag and playing on the patriotic theme in the title. The image of Kyle (Figure 19) appears to be a studio shot, purpose made for the cover, rather than an 'authentic' image brought from the field; however, it serves the purpose of putting a face to a name. Chris, dressed in a UBACS shirt and camouflage trousers, stares down the camera, his weapon cradled in his arms, his finger close to the trigger. There is an easiness in his body language, suggestive of the casualness associated with special forces operators that is contrary to the rigidity and perfect turnout of non-SF soldiers. He wears his authenticity in his pose, which in not trying to impress anyone conveys the realness essential to selling a war autobiography. One can imagine the slight absurdity of a studio photoshoot so carefully curated to appear real. That

⁷¹⁵ 'American Sniper - Chris Kyle, Scott McEwen - Hardcover', HarperCollins Publishers, accessed 25 January 2017, <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062290793/american-sniper>.

⁷¹⁶ 'American Sniper - Chris Kyle, Scott McEwen - Hardcover'.

the titling, by-line, and covers of *American Sniper* by William Morrow (HarperCollins) revolves around the assertion of authenticity betrays the publisher's consciousness that the success of a text like *American Sniper* rests on its ability to convey realness.

5.2. Making and Breaking Authenticity in *American Sniper*

American Sniper takes great pains to establish its authenticity, following established routes of peer-endorsement to build credibility. Yet the authenticity breaks which followed posed a significant threat to the Chris Kyle narrative and his text. This subsection follows the making and breaking of authenticity for *American Sniper*, moving between the text and Kyle as a cultural figure caught in a struggle over the Real.

In discussing gatekeeping of the 'literary', Kappeler identifies two paths to acceptance: 'to be chosen or valued by an authority, an already adjudged member of the literary elite (who therefore knows – see taste), or by being similar to or like an already accredited member, another literary work (arrogance or ease).'⁷¹⁷ Similar processes of gatekeeping apply in claiming the Realness of a work of war pornography. In the case of *American Sniper*, HarperCollins sourced validation through authenticity, citing peer veteran-writers in the reviews circulated for marketing. Marcus Luttrell, the author of *Lone Survivor*, which also became a film, applauds Chris rather than the book: 'In the elite community of warriors, one man has risen above our ranks and distinguished himself as unique. Chris Kyle is that man. A master sniper, Chris has done and seen things that will be talked about for generations to come.'⁷¹⁸ Luttrell's commendation is effective. It lauds Kyle, discussing the warrior community which already celebrates him. The implication for the would-be consumer is that in reading the text one may also learn of the things that 'Chris has done and seen,' coming as close as is possible to an experience that may defy representation. At the same time, Luttrell's comment serves as an authenticity marker due to his own status as a former Navy SEAL. It is a stamp of approval for Kyle. Other critical praise also celebrates Kyle as an individual, rather than praising the book. They describe him as 'the most celebrated war hero of our time' (D Magazine) or 'a true American warrior.' (Charles W.

⁷¹⁷ Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, 116.

⁷¹⁸ All reviews cited in this paragraph from 'American Sniper - Chris Kyle, Scott McEwen - Hardcover'.

Sasser, special forces veteran-writer). The book is celebrated for being a 'raw and unforgettable narrative...a powerful book, both in terms of combat action and human drama' (Sasser) or 'the inside story of what its' like to be in war.' (Richard Marcinko, special forces veteran-writer). It is commended as 'read[ing] like a first-person thriller,' (Booklist) or being 'extremely readable.' The comments inaugurate the book not for its literary merit, but for its qualities which align with authenticity, a marker for war pornography. Its worth is in its packaging as Real, which seeks to assuage the readers' anxieties.

There are more books like *American Sniper* — first-person war narratives that fit within a 'war porn' category — than are worth counting. Yet what makes the Chris Kyle narrative — his military experiences, his popularity, his autobiography, his demise, the film, and his codification as an American hero — so compelling are the juxtaposition of his position as an American hero with the significant controversies over authenticity which only added to his presence in societal discourse. Such authenticity crises, which will be discussed with reference to other war porn texts for context in the next sub-section, challenge war pornography's ability to claim they are offering a glimpse into the Real for the reader. Without gold-star authenticity, *American Sniper* played directly into the anxieties discussed above. Authenticity crises complicate the casting of 'military' with 'honour' and 'hero,' leaving the reader to reconcile the dissonance of an industry selling the Real and the real which undoes the packaging. The following discussion of controversies reveals that the civil-reader, the veteran-writer, and the publishing house have different interests in authenticity that come into conflict in the construction of war pornographies.

For Chris Kyle and *American Sniper*, the authenticity breaks came from within the text and outside it. One section, 'Punching Out Scruff Face' was removed in 2014 after a jury awarded Jesse Ventura ('Scruff Face') \$1.8 million for 'unjust enrichment,' implying that Kyle enriched himself through the inclusion of the section of the book.⁷¹⁹ The section alleged that Kyle had punched Ventura for comments he made about the Navy SEALs

⁷¹⁹ Dan Lamothe, 'Jesse Ventura vs. Chris Kyle: A Case Where No One Won', *The Washington Post*, 30 July 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/07/30/jesse-ventura-vs-chris-kyle-a-case-where-no-one-won/?utm_term=.de6fb9b01f33; Michael Schaub, 'Jesse Ventura's \$1.8-Million Defamation Award Denied in His "American Sniper" Book Case', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-jesse-ventura-book-case-20160614-snap-story.html>.

(Ventura is a veteran, political commentator, and former Minnesota governor). Ventura, who claimed defamation, invasion of privacy by appropriate, and unjust enrichment, also sued HarperCollins over the same book excerpt.⁷²⁰ However, in June 2016, U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit remanded the defamation case and reversed the verdict of unjust enrichment.⁷²¹ However, Ventura's suit was only one of the cracks that began to appear in the authenticity of Chris Kyle and *American Sniper*. Though it was represented by Kyle and others that all proceeds from the book were going to veterans charities, the *National Review* reported that only \$52,000 of the estimated \$3 million from pre-film royalties was donated to charity.⁷²² And there were still other cracks in what *Washington Post* reporter Terrence McCoy calls 'the "unverifiable" legacy of Kyle, an opinion echoed by Mooney.⁷²³ Did Chris Kyle kill dozens of people in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in an act of street justice?⁷²⁴ Did he shoot and kill two men who tried to carjack him at a gas station in Texas? The 'confirmation' offered by one investigative journalist is shaky at best. Though several individuals (friends, police chiefs, etc.) were familiar with the story when interviewed, requests for the reports or tape went unanswered. The writer concludes, 'So consider this story confirmed from the man himself. In every sense of the word, Chris Kyle was a true American badass.'⁷²⁵ Recall that this is the same magazine whose critical praise features on

⁷²⁰ Jury Instructions, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 22 July 2014); Michael Schaub, 'Jesse Ventura sues "American Sniper" publisher HarperCollins', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-jesse-ventura-sues-american-sniper-publisher-20141216-story.html>.

⁷²¹ *Ventura v. Kyle*, No. 14-3876 (8th Cir. 2016); Dan Lamothe, 'Court Throws out \$1.8 Million Judgment against "American Sniper" Chris Kyle's Estate', *The Washington Post*, 13 June 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/06/13/court-throws-out-1-8-million-judgment-against-american-sniper-chris-kyles-estate/?utm_term=.27a73b782881.

⁷²² A.J. Delgado, 'Justice for Jesse: Ventura Was Right in His Lawsuit', *National Review*, 30 July 2014, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/384176/justice-jesse-ventura-was-right-his-lawsuit-j-delgado>.

⁷²³ Terrence McCoy, 'The "Unverifiable" Legacy of Chris Kyle, the Deadliest Sniper in American History', *The Washington Post*, 30 July 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/07/30/the-complicated-but-unverifiable-legacy-of-chris-kyle-the-deadliest-sniper-in-american-history/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.0ded87faec9b.

⁷²⁴ Jarvis Deberry, 'The "American Sniper's" Preposterous Post-Katrina New Orleans Story', *The Times-Picayune*, 20 January 2015,

http://www.nola.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/01/the_american_snipers_preposter.html.

⁷²⁵ Michael J. Mooney, 'Here's What American Sniper Chris Kyle Said About His Killing Two Men at a Gas Station in 2009', *D Magazine*, 8 February 2013, <https://www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2013/02/confirmed-american-sniper-chris-kyle-killed-two-men-at-a-gas-station-in-2009/>.

the back of the *American Sniper* book. On the article, a commenter who points out the shoddy journalism and other discrepancies of Kyle's story is attacked as a 'libtard' by another commenter.⁷²⁶ Journalism such as this constitutes what A.J. Delgado, a conservative writer and lawyer, laments as 'blind hero worship, at its most embarrassing.'⁷²⁷

Perhaps most closely related to the book is the controversy over whether Kyle embellished his military record. In May 2016, *The Intercept*, a digital magazine whose 'mission is to hold the most powerful governmental and corporate factions accountable,' broke a story about discrepancies in Kyle's medal count.⁷²⁸ The article cites his official record, confirmed by Navy officials, as one Silver Star and three Bronze Stars with Valour, in contrast to Kyle's claim of two Silver Stars and five Bronze Stars with Valour. Adding to the confusion, Kyle's DD214, his separation document made available by *The Intercept*, records two Silver Stars and six Bronze Stars with Valour, a discrepancy purportedly acknowledged by Navy officials.⁷²⁹ One of *The Intercept* journalists who broke the story claimed that Navy officials had questioned his patriotism on multiple occasions when pursuing the case.⁷³⁰ The ensuing investigation by the Navy found that Kyle had earned one Silver Star and four Bronze Stars, but noted that mistakes on DD214s are not uncommon.⁷³¹

With profits a high priority for publishers, even the anxieties around the authenticity of the Chris Kyle narrative as well as the sensationalism of high-profile legal cases over defamation and his death have augmented the success – measured in monetary terms – of *American Sniper* for HarperCollins. Indeed, the anxiety around Kyle's authenticity spawned its own media bloom. So great was the appetite for more information proving/disproving Kyle's claims that a biography, *The Life and Legend of Chris Kyle: American Sniper, Navy Seal* by journalist Michael J. Mooney, became a *New York Times* bestseller after its release

⁷²⁶ Mooney.

⁷²⁷ Delgado, 'Justice for Jesse: Ventura Was Right in His Lawsuit'.

⁷²⁸ Glenn Greenwald, Laura Poitras, and Jeremy Scahill, 'Welcome to The Intercept', *The Intercept*, 10 February 2014, <https://theintercept.com/2014/02/10/welcome-intercept/>.

⁷²⁹ Matthew Cole and Sheelagh McNeill, '"American Sniper" Chris Kyle Distorted His Military Record, Documents Show', *The Intercept*, 25 May 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/05/25/american-sniper-chris-kyle-distorted-his-military-record-documents-show/>.

⁷³⁰ Dan Lamothe, '"American Sniper" Chris Kyle Accused of Exaggerating Medal Count', *Star-Telegram*, 26 May 2016, <http://www.star-telegram.com/news/state/texas/article80076857.html>.

⁷³¹ Juan A. Lozano, 'Probe Trims Medal Count for "American Sniper"', *Star-Telegram*, 10 July 2016, <http://www.star-telegram.com/news/nation-world/national/article88789182.html>.

in 2013.⁷³² For every person for whom the break in authenticity is too much, another is intrigued by the promise of a good story. A private email between Peter Hubbard, a HarperCollins editor, and Sharyn Rosenblum, an in-house publicist appears to describe the controversy as a 'nice little bonus hit for us.'⁷³³ The deposition suggests that there is a question whether Ventura's name may have been used as a search engine optimization term for *American Sniper*.⁷³⁴ However, Hubbard testified that the controversy's impact on the book's success was negligible, going so far as to suggest that the questioning of the story's authenticity may have hurt sales.⁷³⁵ In his deposition McEwen maintains that Chris 'didn't want to engage in this colloquy, this discussion, if you will, with Ventura...he felt it was detracting from the purpose of the book and what we were trying to do with the book with the warriors.'⁷³⁶ Read together, the scenario suggest a continual disjoint between the producers and the distributors of the book.

The repeated authenticity crises of Chris Kyle and *American Sniper* tarnish the text's situatedness. To the informed reader, it can no longer be a simple story of a hero, wrapped in the trappings – the covers, the titles – of authenticity and honour. And for every wary reader, there is another who maintains the party line. Commenting on the fall-out of the medal controversy, co-author of *American Sniper*, Scott McEwen, who was deposed for the Ventura case, suggested 'I think there's a group of people in this society that really doesn't like to see heroes coming from the military...I think the left doesn't like heroes from the military like Chris who are larger than life. There just seems to be a desire to tear that type of character down.'⁷³⁷ In doing so, McEwen politicizes the controversy, yet he oversimplifies.

⁷³² 'The Life and Legend of Chris Kyle: American Sniper, Navy SEAL', Hachette Book Group, accessed 25 January 2017, <https://hachettebookgroup.com/titles/michael-j-mooney/the-life-and-legend-of-chris-kyle-american-sniper-navy-seal/9780316278232/>.

⁷³³ McEwen Dep. 162:11-15, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷³⁴ McEwen Dep. 126:13-19, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷³⁵ 'In Jesse Ventura Trial, Co-Author Says Story Is True – and Minor', *Pioneer Press*, 16 July 2014, <http://www.twincities.com/2014/07/16/in-jesse-ventura-trial-co-author-says-story-is-true-and-minor/>.

⁷³⁶ McEwen Dep. 157:15-19, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷³⁷ Peter Flax, '"American Sniper" Co-Author Defends Chris Kyle's Military Record Over New Controversy', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 3 June 2016, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/american-sniper-author-defends-chris-899044>.

Reading the discrepancies in Kyle's medal count as part of an anxiety over authenticity as offered by war porn makes this not an issue of the Left, but one of any citizen, veteran or not, who encounters war stories. In moments, the Chris Kyle and *American Sniper* controversies feel one in the same, but conflating the man with the book, or the authorial identity with the writer erases the production of war pornography, a process that this chapter is restoring. McEwen's belief in Chris' story may not be simple misplaced hero worship, as A.J. Delgado might suggest. As he was being deposed, McEwan commented: 'I think it was Chris's biggest concern that he not get involved in something that was going to be inaccurate.'⁷³⁸ In this light, is there an alternate explanation for the discrepancies of Kyle's story? For this, we turn to other texts in the genre which have experienced authenticity crises.

5.3. Contextualising the Authenticity Failures of *American Sniper*

American Sniper is at once remarkable for the scope of its cultural impact and unremarkable laid against a context of other authenticity failures in war pornography. In June 2013, *The Christian Science Monitor* made authenticity accusations made against *Carnivore: A Memoir by One of the Deadliest American Soldiers of All Time* by Army Sgt 1st Class Dillard Johnson 'and James Tarr' (writer). The article targets the book's claim that Johnson had 2,746 confirmed kills in Iraq, including 121 confirmed sniper kills, asking if this is a case of stolen valour.⁷³⁹ It points out that 2,746 would be about 14% of all militant deaths by coalition forces reported in 2007 after Johnson had left. In a shrewd inclusion, the article notes that Johnson's unit only claims 2,200 kills. When the writer, Dan Murphy, followed up with Johnson, the veteran's answers revealed another disjoint between the veteran-writer and the publishing house. Johnson frames the kill count as a part of promotion for the book, blown up as it was repeated across print and television media. The front flap of the book reads: 'Credited with more than 2,600 enemy KIA, he is perhaps the

⁷³⁸ McEwen Dep. 38:24 – 39:1, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷³⁹ Dan Murphy, 'America's Deadliest Soldier or Stolen Valor?"', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 June 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/Backchannels/2013/0626/America-s-deadliest-soldier-or-stolen-valor>.

most lethal ground soldier in U.S. history....' Summarising Johnson after interviewing him, Murphy writes:

He says the book doesn't contain that claim, that he never claimed to have killed 2,746 enemy fighters in Iraq, and that he didn't kill that many people in Iraq. He says a combination of innocent mistakes by others and a desire by HarperCollins and his co-author to promote the book have led to the impression he's making claims that he hasn't made.⁷⁴⁰

Similarly, 'sniper' was substituted for 'designated marksmen' to make it easier for the civilian public to understand, though this inappropriate designation was one of the hot points for stolen valour hunters.⁷⁴¹

Other cases that call into question the publishing industry's ability to prioritise truth over money include that of *Zero Footprint: The true story of a private military contractor's secret wars in the world's most dangerous places* by Simon Chase and Ralph Pezzullo (Sphere). Sporting a war porny cover with the gritty graphic effects and imagery common to the aesthetic, the book has been attacked as a work of fabrication. Scathing reviews on Amazon allege that the pseudonym Simon Chase was taken from a deceased real person, that the photos included in the book have been deliberately misrepresented, and that the individual behind 'Simon Chase' has exaggerated his military credentials.⁷⁴² Though *Zero Footprint* stretches war writing to read private military contractors as mercenaries, the question remains why will a publishing house publish such shoddy 'non-fiction' without substantial fact-checking?

Johnson's experience with *Carnivore* and HarperCollins and the countless other examples of controversial war pornography suggests the immense influence that publishing houses have over how war stories are told and sold. Their Real is not the same as real for the writer or the reader. The examples throw into question the ethical limits of attempting to drive sales and whether the semblance of the Real is subordinate to the truth. It is

⁷⁴⁰ Dan Murphy, 'America's Deadliest Soldier? Dillard Johnson Says He Never Made That Claim', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 June 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/Backchannels/2013/0627/America-s-deadliest-soldier-Dillard-Johnson-says-he-never-made-that-claim>.

⁷⁴¹ Murphy, 'America's Deadliest Soldier? Dillard Johnson Says He Never Made That Claim'.

⁷⁴² 'Zero Footprint: The True Story of a Private Military Contractor's Secret Wars in the World's Most Dangerous Places', Amazon, accessed 9 May 2017, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Zero-Footprint-military-contractors-dangerous/dp/0751564699>.

possible that some of the discrepancies in the Chris Kyle narrative could be attributable to the war pornography industry, which, in packaging his story a certain way also told the facts in a certain way. In his video deposition for the Ventura case, co-writer Scott McEwen describes:

When I first approached, or was -- when I first approached HarperCollins, it was envisioned that the book was going to be a third person, if you will, chronicleization [sic] of the battles that Chris Kyle was involved in, and it would not be a first party autobiography.

So it really wasn't about Chris Kyle. It was about, if you will, the battle of Fallujah, the loss of Mark Lee, the loss of – ultimate loss of Ryan Job. It was more of a battle-based book that was envisioned in the beginning, as opposed to an autobiographical-based book.

So Chris's, if you will, personal anecdotes were specifically going to be, if you will, secondary to the overall, if you will, story of the SEAL teams in battle and the war in Iraq. That's what they [HarperCollins] were interested in.⁷⁴³

However, there is a great difference between what McEwen perceived as what HarperCollins was interested in and the manuscript that was eventually published. In retelling how DeFelice was hired, McEwen recounts:

Peter [Hubbard, HarperCollins editor] had told me there were certain deadlines that were going to have to be met relative to the production of this book. He also told me that we were going to have to change it from a third person, if you will, description of the battles and the events that had taken place with SEAL team 3 Charlie or C platoon, cadillac platoon, which they referred to it as, and that they wanted to make it a first party, if you will, description of Chris Kyle and an autobiography of Chris Kyle to make it more personable to the audience.⁷⁴⁴

This information is not readily accessible to the reader, instead buried in a deposition. Yet it suggests that the final *American Sniper* book was far from what Kyle originally intended. These changes, which placed the demand for authenticity on Kyle as an individual rather than McEwen's accuracy in describing battles, were necessary for the commercial success that HarperCollins sought. *American Sniper* may have been a very different book without

⁷⁴³ McEwen Dep. 45:10 – 46:2, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

⁷⁴⁴ McEwen Dep 47:14-24, *Ventura v. Kyle*, Civ. No. 12-cv-472 RHK-JJK (D. Minnesota filed 18 December 2013).

HarperCollins. A different publisher may have seen merit in McEwen's original idea and moved forward with it. The text may have been bound for the history shelf instead.

That the production processes around war writing can deform the truth in pursuit of a more extreme Real locates the writers, celebrated as lethal war heroes as a kind of victim of the publishing industry. Though they profit off the texts, these authors are, should the authenticity breaks become apparent, scrutinised as the logical source of the false claims. Their character comes under question. Yet it is the binary relations which the publishing industry maintains along the lines of war pornography and literature which forces their hand and disregards the lived experience of the soldiers in favour of something that will sell better.

5.4. War Porn Forever? The Arbitrariness of War Pornography

For a book that was never intended to be an autobiography, *American Sniper* crystallised the controversies around Chris Kyle in a way that has complicated his place in social discourse. In doing so, as the discourse around *American Sniper* shifted due to Kyle's death and the release of the successful film, *American Sniper* ceased to be marketed as war pornography. The markers of war pornography tell less than we'd think about the content of the text, but more than we think about the audience that the publication process has fashioned around it. The publishing process that shaped *American Sniper* into its initial form reveals the determining role distributors play in telling war stories. The changing social discourse around the cultural product, which is reflected in the marketing package of the book in later forms, highlights the manufactured nature of war pornographies. Later covers demonstrate the malleability of production processes to cater to newly re-imagined audiences and capitalise on current affairs.

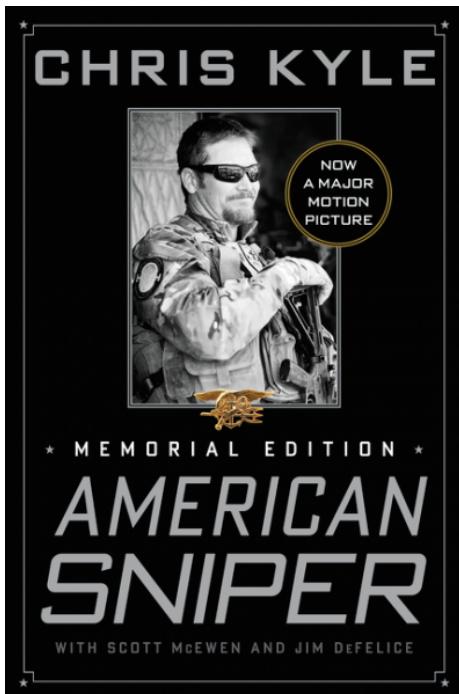


Figure 20. *American Sniper*: Hardcover Memorial Edition⁷⁴⁵

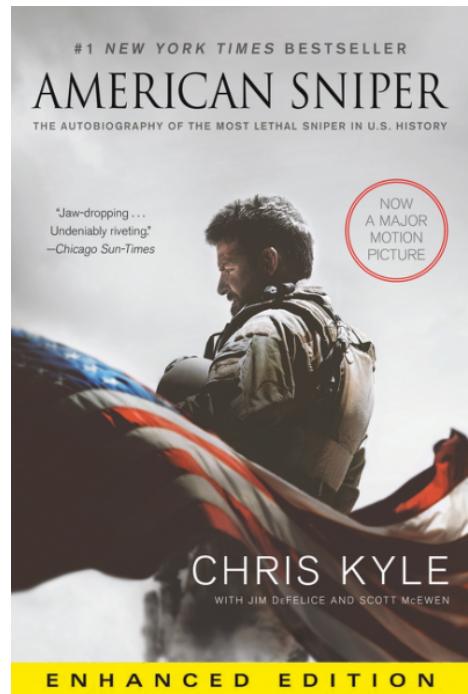


Figure 21. *American Sniper*: Enhanced e-book⁷⁴⁶

The Hardcover Memorial edition and the Enhanced E-book (Figures 20 and 21) – are much staider than the paperback covers. As simple as the memorial cover (Figure 20) is — indeed it is reminiscent of a card given out at funerals — it is difficult to read the issuing of a Memorial Edition as anything more than a commercial effort to capitalise on his death. Here, the emphasis is not on lethality (notably the subtitle is not on the cover) but on memorial. Though screenwriter Jason Hall had been working on a script prior to Kyle's death, the end of the film followed from real life, not the book, and how to include the end of his life became a point of concern for filmmakers and family alike.⁷⁴⁷ The image selected for the film tie-in cover (Figure 21) is the most sombre of the four covers, yet it is an image engineered with the added talents of the film industry. It is an image that tells a story. It is composed. Compositionally, the eye follows the curve of the flag, embracing with it the figure of Bradley Cooper as Kyle in profile. Together, the grey tones of the background and figure and the colour of the flag caught in action in contrast to the figure's stillness is reminiscent of a statue. It certainly resonates with images of the USMC War Memorial,

⁷⁴⁵ 'American Sniper - Chris Kyle, Scott McEwen - Hardcover'.

⁷⁴⁶ 'American Sniper - Chris Kyle, Scott McEwen - Hardcover'.

⁷⁴⁷ K.C. Baker, 'Here's Why American Sniper Doesn't Show Chris Kyle's Death', *Time*, 17 February 2015, <http://time.com/3712785/american-sniper-chris-kyle-movie-death/>.

which depicts bronze cast figures raising a colourful, real flag. As the figures are still, the flag flies at full mast every day of the year.⁷⁴⁸ Though the 'most lethal' subtitle is de-emphasised, it is still present. The cover tells of the lethality comingled with the memorialisation. It monumentalises Kyle and commemorates him at once, something which Figures 18, 19, and 20 struggle to do. He is either lauded for his lethality (18 and 19) or memorialised for his death (20). The affective impact of the cinematic cover suggests a complication in continuing to sell *American Sniper* as war porn. Though the content of the book remained constant, discourse which created the book as war pornography changed. While the cover may not market the book as 'high literature,' the presence of Bradley Cooper and the high culture visual referent elide the war pornography/war literature boundary.

Where high-budget cinema may hold a transformative power to shift the discourse around a single work of war pornography, the repackaging of *American Sniper* is merely superficial for the industry. The shift in discourse disassociating *American Sniper* from war pornography did not hold sway over HarperCollins' following decision-making. War writing is published through industrial processes that mould manuscripts into a form consistent with the ideas of publicists and editors who try to make something consumers want. The crude designation of such writing as war porn triggers a process of alteration and packaging that is aims to achieve the veneer of Reality and entertainment. What is lost in this process is some sense of uniqueness: much of war pornography begins to sound alike, look alike, and be used interchangeably. War porn is signified through flashy, hyper-realistic covers, the words 'true' or 'real' in the subtitle, references to kill rates or lethality in the marketing. From a distance, a wall of covers (like that included earlier in this chapter) would give the impression that all war porn texts are the same, regardless of publisher. To demonstrate that *American Sniper* is only one of many, it becomes helpful to examine a peer text. Such an analysis suggests the homogenization and interchangeability of this type of texts. Save the controversies and peculiarities of Kyle's life, *American Sniper* may not have grown as it did.

⁷⁴⁸ 'History of the Marine Corps War Memorial', National Park Service, accessed 9 May 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/historyculture/usmcwarmemorial.htm>.

Viewed another way, any similar text could have been or could be the next *American Sniper* if the right mix of extra-textual factors comes into play. For example, *The Reaper: Autobiography of One of the Deadliest Special Ops Snipers* by Nicholas Irving (with Gary Brozek), was released in 2015 by St Martin's Press (Macmillan). With an eerily similar subtitle and a cover (Figure 22) to *American Sniper*, *The Reaper* may be read as Macmillan's attempt to capitalise on the public's interest in the year that the *American Sniper* film was released or their attempt to have an *American Sniper* of their own. The image of the cover, which incorporates an uncannily similar font to *American Sniper* covers, notes 'Soon to be a TV mini-series.' Yet the current marketing and positioning of *The Reaper* differs in two significant ways. First, the author is alive, so there is no sense of memorialisation to the marketing. Instead, the publisher's webpage brags, '33 kills in a single deployment in Afghanistan. Special Ops Ranger NICHOLAS IRVING is THE REAPER.'⁷⁴⁹ If Chris Kyle was the 'most lethal,' then Macmillan sells Irving's lethality with an explicit kill count. Moreover, the title 'The Reaper' mythologises Irving, displacing him from human-ness. Through his experience Irving has been transformed, the reader is told.

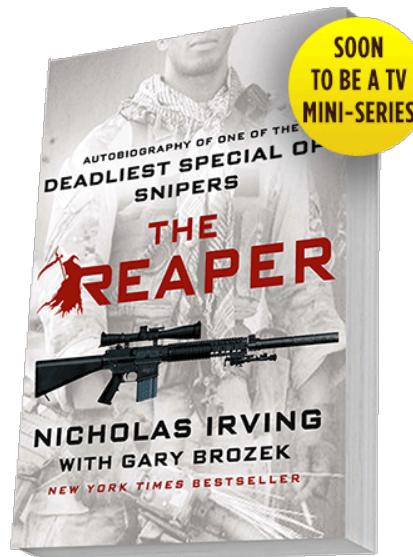


Figure 22. *The Reaper* by Nicholas Irving⁷⁵⁰

Second, in what is perhaps a lessons-learned moment, the publisher's site deals with authenticity anxiety head on. Though it includes a few critical reviews, they focus on the

⁷⁴⁹ 'The Reaper – Nicholas Irving', Macmillan, accessed 13 March 2017, <http://us.macmillan.com/static/smp/therereaper/>.

⁷⁵⁰ 'The Reaper – Nicholas Irving'.

book, rather than Irving himself. Neither 'More exciting than any thriller could be' (Howard Wasdin, special forces veteran-author) nor 'A hell of a book' (Marine Sniper Sgt Jack Coughlin), contain claims over the heroism or authenticity of the text. As one would expect from war pornography, the quotations comment on entertainment factor rather than literary merit. Yet, Macmillan's website also contains a link to 'Read more about *The Reaper* on SOFREP,' which is news site self-described as 'Trusted News and Intelligence from Spec Ops Veterans.' A search for 'The Reaper' turns up 101 results, including numerous interviews with Irving.⁷⁵¹ The sort of site – gatekept by veterans intent on the truth – that seeks to bring down Walter Mittys, here is endorsing *The Reaper* and his story. As a non-Macmillan affiliated site, SOFREP has an authenticity all its own, which it lends to Irving and his book. In linking to SOFREP, Macmillan seeks to address anxieties common amongst war pornography consumers, those over authenticity. *The Reaper* has not found the same success as *American Sniper*. Perhaps this is attributable to the lack of significant scandal over the text or the lower profile author. Or perhaps it is because *The Reaper* continues to be presented as war pornography. Without its transformative moment – for *American Sniper*, arguably Kyle's death or the cinematic success – *The Reaper* is dismissed within cultural discourse as a disposable entertainment object with limited cultural value. The homogeneity of industrial production, which can hazard the truth for the sake of a good story, suggests that war porn is made as a quick, lucrative consumable for the masses. As an industry, war porn does everything it can to separate itself from war literature and vice versa.

Considering *American Sniper* alongside peer texts reveals a paradox. In some ways, *American Sniper* was ordinary for a work of war pornography. In others, it has surpassed the cultural significance allocated to a work of war pornography, automatically pushing it to become a liminal text, neither war porn nor war literature. The discussion illuminates the hand of the publishing industry in producing the generic divide between war literature and war pornography. In doing so, it denaturalises understandings of genre which separate high and low brow cultural products in a binary. What would have prevented *American Sniper*

⁷⁵¹ '101 Search Results Found For: "The Reaper"', SOFREP News, accessed 9 May 2017, <https://sofrep.com/?s=The+Reaper&x=0&y=0>.

from remaining firmly war pornography or made it into a history book are small, decisive moments and choices. Since publication, the book as a cultural product has been transformed through social discourse, even as the text itself remains unchanging.

6. War Writing as the Cultural Work of Reproduction

Almost instinctively, an analysis of pornography, and in this chapter war pornography, emphasises the reader/viewer. Implicitly, the gaze situates itself on the moment the object is invoked to fulfill its purpose, thereby becoming pornography through connecting the produced object and the consumption of the reader/viewer. Though there is a common-sense pressure to view war porn through supply-and-demand, if we do so, we risk ignoring the mechanics of production which regulate and participate in both literary canonisation and mass production. How does *American Sniper* chart the path to becoming a guilty pleasure read? How did it then become something we *should* read, dragged into the public eye as worthwhile?

This chapter has read *American Sniper* as a product of an industry that creates war pornography. In doing so, it has restored the 'authorship of production [that] has been made to disappear from view.'⁷⁵² In optimising war writing for the market, publishing houses demonstrate an awareness of multiple registers. They are the sites of connection and gatekeeping which regulate war pornography and war literature. The publishing industry can be secretive. Book sale numbers are not made readily available. At present, the most reliable (though not unproblematic) source for these figures is Nielsen Bookscan, an industry service that runs on a subscription model. Such secrecy makes such deconstructive work like this chapter even more important.

In exploring the cultural work of reproduction in war writing, this chapter has asked questions about how the dominant figurations of 'military' and 'civil' are constructed, distributed, and continually reinscribed in society. War porn as an industry is reflective of how publishers view the civil and the military and their view is, in turn, empowered through

⁷⁵² Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, 130.

the act of publishing and pushed to the audience. To hearken back to Stuart Hall, the process is not a top-down dissemination of a product crafted for consumers by distributors. Instead, it is cyclical, as the reader may become a publisher or a writer and re-produce the figurations that have been conditioned as valid by the industry and popular culture.

The cultural work of reproduction ensures the survival and success of the figurations that power the civil-military binary. For every book that is a success, measuring success through sales and consumption, there are many times more which fail. But the works that are successes, like *American Sniper*, are explosive in their power to reach and influence the discourse around the 'civil' and 'military.' The figurations laid down in text are reinscribed in talk shows, awards, and films that are based on the books, some of which reach great acclaim and are branded in our cultural memory as valuable through award ceremonies and the ensuing media frenzy. As an industry, war pornography's reach and power over how the mainstream consumer encounters and reproduces civil-military relations cannot be overstated. It establishes a relationship based on the level of affect, which produces the soldier as the titillator and the reader as the titillated. Such a relationship becomes taken-for-granted. Without challenge, it may become essentialised. What is at stake in this discussion of war pornography is such a risk.

Consider the readers who may encounter war pornography. One is a die-hard 'military masturbator,' a category of consumers that a former US Marine characterises by their ignorance of the military and the arousal they get from talking about it all the same.⁷⁵³ Military masturbators suffer from uncomplicated, steadfast perceptions of 'the military', and draw on new material not to challenge their views, but to affirm them. Such individuals may look to war pornography for the raw, pleasure of the semblance of the Real. War pornography can gratify both these viewpoints, playing to the hero trope or the trauma trope or both at once. They need only find the right book. But where these individuals go looking for the simulated authenticity of war pornography, others may come across it unknowingly. They may receive the book as a gift, or they may be thinking of joining the military and want to know what it's *really* like. Drawn by the manufactured Real configured

⁷⁵³ William Treseder, 'The Problem with Military Masturbators', *Task and Purpose*, 3 December 2014, <http://taskandpurpose.com/problem-military-masturbators/>.

by the publishing house, these readers may experience war pornography not as a guilty pleasure, but as an honour to witness. The war pornography industry does not prioritise truth in its production. It prioritises entertainment which projects a semblance of authenticity. It repeatedly privileges figurations of the 'military' and 'civil' as 'hero' and 'saved,' the doer and the observer, the honoured and the indebted. In doing so, it risks its audience grossly misunderstanding. A dutiful student of war might sample across war writing and become aware of different categories of taste and aesthetic, even without the language of 'war pornography'. However, if readers limit themselves to war pornography only, if that is what they solely and continually crave, they may not be able to claim, 'I know it when I see it.' And they may come away thinking they have experienced the Real, consuming and internalising only one set of CMR figurations that become the truth, leaving them deaf to any other.

As a war writing site, war pornography participates in the cultural work of CMR through the production, distribution, and consumption of a highly commoditised product. It creates an imagined 'civil' reader and a 'military' writer for whom the defence of the authenticity of such 'military'-ness is paramount. The making and breaking of authenticity within war pornography captures a traditional 'othering' of the 'military' from the 'civil'. The appeal of war pornography lies in the authenticity of a 'military' that is outside the bounds of experience of the 'civil.' Because this relationship is laden with notes of respect and awe from the 'civil' toward the 'military,' the produced hierarchy heightens the stakes in the consumption and thus reproduction of the figurations. The produced authenticity of a text relies not on its faithfulness to the truth, but on its ability to seem Real to the civil-reader, complying with how a civil-reader who has never been to war might imagine it. The civil-reader, while acknowledging the potential for embellishment is also adamant to protect the sanctity of the civil-military relationship at this site. The respect and awe are earned rather than given, creating a situation that is brutal on fraudulent individuals who seek to profit from the civil-military relationship, but who have given nothing.

In reconciling the existence, and perhaps co-constitutive nature of war literature and war pornography, it becomes clear that the two together reflect mainstream publishing's efforts to capture war in its complexity. Kappeler describes:

...the prior division into 'high' culture (the baby) and 'popular' culture (the bathwater) not only does not serve, but obscures the very object of enquiry. If a connection is perceived between pornography, popular culture and the culture at large, if they are seen as merging at the boundaries, a sensible response would surely be to study this connection...The connection as feminists see it is that the scum on the bathwater has, after all, rubbed off from the baby.⁷⁵⁴

Although the publishing industry may be heavy-handed in its categorisation of writing as pornography or literature, such industrial reductionism digests and presents two, binary configurations of the 'civil' and 'military'. While war literature may answer a need to memorialise, mourn, or dutifully try to understand the seeming unfathomability of war, war porn sates a taste for thrill and adventure. It gives into a prurience that finds pleasure in one of the most revered, respected, and ritualised human activities. War porn feeds a passion for the real that only heightens the militancy of a readers' response to gross misrepresentation. It markets the divulgence of hidden truths accessed only by experience and creates cultural products that purport to let the outside consumer in to experience a semblance of the Real. If war literature accommodates a discourse of trauma and commemoration, war pornography accommodates one of celebration, unflinching violence, and adventure.

Yet the imposed division of genre elucidated in this chapter unravels the conditions of production to expose published war writing as a site of commodification of CMR which maintains the civil-military binary. In catering to two audiences and sets of imagined relations, the publishing industry cannot also account for the complex queerness of the experiences around war writing. As this chapter has developed in its close analysis of the generic categories and related texts, what *is* produced in commercially-published war writing is anything but binary. War porn uses suffering, which victimizes 'military', to anchor the Real, redeeming the 'hero' who overcomes the challenges they face. War literature capitalises upon an obligation to understand that can also be read as part of the relations between military as hero and civil reader as indebted and saved. In war writing, the cultural work of reproduction draws on familiar binary relations to (re)tell us the stories we already know about war. In function, one work of war literature is interchangeable for another. One

⁷⁵⁴ Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, 28.

war porn text satisfies as much as the next. Yet in reading between the lines as this project does, a queerness emerges from the texts and the genres themselves which defies this neat categorisation and creates space between what is maintained and reproduced and what the products themselves tell us. Though the binary may be secured in generic categorisation, the queerness of war writing undermines and denaturalises this binary.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis has posed three questions. 1) What is the contemporary character of CMR in the US and/or UK? 2) What might a queer, non-binary approach to CMR look like? 3) Why does the civil-military binary persist despite logical opposition? To answer these questions, the study has queered CMR, identifying the instrumental use of the figurations of hero and/or victim, saved and/or saviour. Seeing queerly, it has analysed contemporary CMR in the US and UK through the cultural work of recognition, recovery, and reproduction.

This thesis has argued that the contemporary character of CMR in the US and/or UK is shaped by a framing of military service as a gift and the ensuing indebtedness which is understood as demanding repayment or acknowledgement. This character vivifies the dominant figurations employed in the empirical analysis, which provide behavioural templates which redress the indebtedness. *Chapter 2* identified the theoretical legacies of Huntington and Janowitz within CMR literature and characterised the developmental patterns which, at times, appear inescapable, as a failure of theoretical imagination. *Chapter 3* sought to address this gap by queering civil-military relations, developing an analysis in which the figurations of military as hero and/or victim and civil as saved and/or saviour are commoditised in an economy. *Chapter 4* examined the cultural work of recognition, demonstrating how instrumental heroization has enabled the expansion of the commodification of valour from physical tokens like military medals to speech acts, giving rise to stolen valour as a phenomenon and the efforts to resecure the civil-military binary. Moving to the cultural work of recovery, *Chapter 5* read the discourse of forces charities, particularly the Invictus Games Foundation, as productive of and produced by the figurations of a queer hero and/or victim, in which the hero is redeemed in the victim. It argued that this entanglement and queering of the figurations themselves is vital to conceptualising contemporary CMR and only possible when analysed through a queer lens.

Chapter 6 recovered the 'authorship of production'⁷⁵⁵ in war writing as the cultural work of reproduction and developed war pornography as a counterpoint to war literature. It asserted that the generic categorisation of war writing attempts to reproduce a binary which the actual queerness of war writing culturally undermines.

This thesis has made three critical contributions. First, it has articulated a novel theoretical approach in the study of civil-military relations which approaches the subject outside the frameworks of Huntington, Janowitz, and their inheritors. In doing so, it contributes to the civil-military relations literature, particularly that which is interested in innovative and/or critical approaches. Though in queering CMR the project takes a new tact, it remains tied to and consistent with other CMR research, including previous ethnographic work by MacLeish, Wool, and Lutz and interventions in CMS and IR by scholars including Katharine Millar and Victoria Basham.

Second, the project joins with other work of Queer IR and queer theory in its theoretical approach. It draws inspiration from concepts that Weber develops in her *Queer International Relations* (2016) and returns to Haraway's figurations as a conceptual framework. Yet it brings these tools to bear on new materials and subjects, keeping open the queer of Queer IR in its method of seeing queerly.

Finally, the project's queering of CMR provides a foundation from which we might question the civil-military binary. In answer to how the civil-military binary persists, the project identifies commodification as the partner of reification. In developing a figural economy, the project reads the cultural work as a commodification of the figurations of hero and/or victim, saved and/or saviour. These figurations are predicated upon a relational system which locates the military and civil as opposites. The relations templated in them perpetuate the binary. So, in seeking comfortable behavioural relations in the face of the military as a figure of unease, people who participate in the cultural work of CMR are also performing binary maintenance. Queering CMR and empirically engaging processes which support and essentialise the binary opens a way to work through the social relations and 'divides' which have been discussed as unsurmountable. For all the articles which lament

⁷⁵⁵ Kappeler, 130.

the civil-military gap, there has been little substantive work on what might be done. This thesis offers a denaturalisation of the binary, of the 'gap' language as a first step.

This conclusion advances the argument developed in and sustained across the previous chapters. First, it looks to synthesise the cultural work (of recognition, recovery, and reproduction) developed in *Chapters 4-6* to produce an understanding of the system which upholds the binary. Second, it furthers the analysis to offer three possible alternate frames of civil-military relations beyond debt that speak to the dysfunction of contemporary CMR identified in the thesis. Finally, it reflects on and relates the project's contributions to the broader study of the contemporary character of civil-military relations.

1. Recognition, Recovery, Reproduction

Recognition, recovery, and reproduction are distinct types of cultural work which operate together within the figural economy of civil-military relations. Though this thesis separated these types of work into different chapters for clarity and structure, it's crucial to read them in concert as a system that is cooperative and generative to understand the power and momentum of binary maintenance. What emerges from the empirics of this thesis is that queering CMR allows us to perceive and conceptualise the queer possibilities that arise in contemporary CMR. As all three chapters demonstrated, queerness is persistent and pervasive across multiple kinds of cultural work despite structural efforts taken to curb it and thereby maintain the binary. That queerness surfaces in and around the very work which seeks to leverage the figurations of hero and victim in a binary logic suggests that the contemporary character of CMR in the US and/or UK is queer. This queerness, this conclusion argues, opens possibilities for futures that look beyond a relations of debt.

In concert, the responses to the indebtedness of contemporary CMR can be read as overlapping and concurrent, with the figurations operating both alongside and with one another. The hero is recognised for valour and elevated above their community by the people they saved. They are lauded. And yet they are also pitied and defended in the discourse against stolen valour which portrays instrumental military misrepresentation as somehow diminishing the accomplishments of actual soldiers. When injured, the victim is

causified and cared for in a language of saviourism. And in their recovery, cultural work redeems the hero in their victimhood, raising them up as role models once again. The production of commercial war writing is best read as part of the work of reproduction, in which the dominant figurations both produce and are produced. The genres of war porn and war literature defy simple alignment with one figuration or the other, with the reasons to read intimately entwined with imagining the writer as *hero and/or victim*. This concurrency is a sort of flickering between images and relations. It is one *and/or* the other, a sandwiched negative.⁷⁵⁶ Drawing on the empirical work of Chapter 4-6 to read cultural work as a whole allows us to recognise this pattern.

Reading the empirical work of this thesis in concert enables us to understand more about how figuration and myth work together in generating the character of CMR. The cultural work analysed in this thesis draws on and perpetuates myth, which, as a meta-language becomes both a product of and productive of the essentialisation of the binary. In this sense, figurations become sticky through myth. They appeal to us doubly in our moment of anxiety in encountering the military as a figure of unease. First, because they offer the templated behaviours shaped around addressing and redressing indebtedness. Second, because they are familiar to us. In this sense, this project has demonstrated how figuration and myth work together. Figurations gain their 'truth' and currency because we have seen and participated in the cultural work which produces the vocabulary and 'things we carry', the myth, with which we 'read' the world and representations of 'military' and 'civil'. To follow Barthes, this myth operates as meta-language. By 'truth' here I refer to the resonance of the figuration as accurate, not its factual correctness, for, as this project has shown, the latter is often forgone in favour of the former. This understanding of how figuration and myth work together is consistent with the work of Bleiker and Hutchison on the politics of emotion, in which 'representation is the process by which individual emotions acquire a collective dimension and, in turn, shape social and political processes.'⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁶ A sandwiched negative refers to a film photography printing process in which an artist exposes multiple negatives on top of one another. Though each may be printed separately, in layering them and altering the exposure time an artist may produce a third, *and/or* image.

⁷⁵⁷ Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison, 'Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics', *Review of International Studies* 34 (2008): 130.

Highlighting the relationship between the figural economy and myth is crucial because it reveals the strings which pull different parts of the system to make it function. Put another way, it reveals the source of power in the creation of the civil-military binary and so denaturalises the binary.

This work of denaturalisation taken up in this project is a critical contribution because it paves the way toward understanding the figures and the relations they template as a sort of elective fiction. However, the danger lies in favouring the performative, but fictional resolutions over humble, genuine engagement. To continue in the figural economy is the easiest option. In their orientation toward addressing indebtedness, instrumental heroization and instrumental victimization are self-satisfying behaviours. However, the gratitude acts – the teddy bears and rounds of applause – fail. And this activity, which is a success for one party and a failure for the other, evidences a profound dysfunction in civil-military relations. As the next section considers, the question that stems from this project's line of argumentation is how might we move from 'Thank you for your service' toward civil and/or military understanding?

2. Civil-Military Relations Beyond Debt

In concluding this project, it is crucial to explore the futures that a conceptualization of 'us' and/or 'them' (rather than either 'us' or 'them') identifies and enables, and how they might be made possible. As this project has theorised the system and processes which maintain the civil-military binary, imaginings beyond this limit take the form of disruption. In other words, the circuits which connect the cultural work with myth as a form of meaning-making must be reconfigured. If, as this thesis establishes, debt is the defining feature of the contemporary character of civil-military relations in the US and/or UK, then how might we move past this? What might a civil-military relations beyond debt look like and how it could move us toward an understanding of civil and/or military?

Here, it is helpful to look to the work of anthropologist David Graeber on debt. Graeber argues that we have been conditioned to view everything through a lens of reciprocity and thus exchange, despite other systems of moral accounting which operate

alternately and concurrently and upon which economic relations might be built.⁷⁵⁸ So, with this tendency, Graeber asserts, there are relations which we interpret as debts, like that which a child might be considered to owe a parent for raising them⁷⁵⁹, which cannot and should not be paid, leading us to ask 'if it is not a debt, what is it?'⁷⁶⁰ Conceiving of military service as a gift leads toward using exchange as our frame of reference from which indebtedness is a logical end state. Yet, the debt concerns life, death, and sacrifices which cannot and should not be repaid. Within debt and exchange as a frame of reference, the 'civil' remains in a binary, opposite from the 'military' to which it is beholden.

So, what alternate framings are available to us in understanding military service? If it is not conceived of as a gift, then Mauss' theory of the gift and the drive to offer a counter-gift to settle the debt, would cease to operate. A significant component of the relations which create 'military' as a figure of unease would dissipate. Conceiving of civil-military relations outside the binary enables us to move this discussion from a matter of accounting between two, opposite parties toward other relational possibilities. This conclusion will present three: equity, mercenarism, and interdebtendness. While all three engender different conceptions of relations, they speak to particular anxieties and dysfunctions that have been developed and substantiated in this thesis. Together, they emphasise civil-military relations as a project based in our understandings of ourselves and others as socio-political beings.

Equity: we invest in society

One possibility from economics might come in the form of equity, a counterpoint to debt in finance when raising capital for a company. While debt dictates that an investor shares only the downside of the company in which they invest, equity allows for them to share both the downside and upside of the company. When we imagine the joy that might accompany a freedom from our debt of civil-military relations, then we must recognise that the indebtedness is held onto and maintained by both the creditors and the debtors.

⁷⁵⁸ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2014).

⁷⁵⁹ This is a common example in the literature on debt, and is also featured in: Margaret Atwood, *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2009), 8.

⁷⁶⁰ Graeber, *Debt*, 92.

Achieving this sort of freedom might require a radical re-framing and a widespread, basic alteration to how we conceive of labour, society, and our responsibilities to it.

To frame military service through equity is to reimagine how we generate capital in society.⁷⁶¹ In it, a person who serves in the military can be imagined as an investor, who gives something up to society in return for ownership of a stake of it. Without expanding this frame outside of only military service, such ownership could quickly alienate and imbalance society and other members. However, within equity as a framework, others would have opportunity to invest in society as well, making service of all kinds a matter of community and socio-political responsibility. In an equity frame, service of all kinds is a way that people take a stake in the nation and its interests, exchanging investment for part ownership. Thus, it understands military service as investment in the national community and interest rather than as a gift to those who do not serve. The national (and perhaps beyond) community benefits from their military service as it benefits from the labour of others in various ways. In this sense, a kind of balance is achieved through a diversification and plurality of investors in society.

Equity as a framework can be expanded in understanding that people who elect to participate in society and community are all investors in different ways, according to our abilities. In this sense, no one is better than anyone else, just different. All services, from doctor to banker to artist, are necessary, but some are perhaps more vital or contribute more directly to community and societal wellbeing. Critically, equity could only function as a frame if in recognising such difference it also organises it into a non-hierarchical relations. It would need to understand that while different 'investors' may be more important for society at different times (e.g., medical professionals during a pandemic, or the military during a conflict) society as a whole cannot operate without all its parts.

Mercenarism: we don't owe each other anything

Another possible framework comes in an alternative recalibration of civil-military relations through an understanding of mercenarism. With a framework of indebtedness, the

⁷⁶¹ Here, it's important to note that there are framings outside of the US and UK which already measure and track social capital, including China's social credit system.

expectation of compensation other than wages is perpetuated by both 'military' and 'civil' individuals. Though typically used to describe the activity of private, hired soldiers, mercenarism as a framework for civil-military relations would conceptualise a system in which the individual is fairly and appropriately compensated for the labour that they have consented to do, including the making of war and the giving and taking of life. That mercenary soldiers exist suggests the possibility of remunerating such labour, though it is certainly a different kind of labour than other jobs or professions. In mercenarism, the emphasis is on the *choice to serve*, rather than the choice to serve.

Merenarism would function as an alternative to indebtedness because it addresses both the creditor and the debtor of civil-military relations. The soldier, satisfied with their compensation, does not expect anything else when their work is completed. The 'civil' is then relieved of the burden of debt and mollified that they, in paying taxes, have adequately participated in the compensation of the soldier. Thus, within a frame of mercenarism, there is no obligation or sense that anyone owes each other anything beyond the formal systems of compensation and recognition.

Merenarism would maintain compatibility with institutional efforts that recognise military service as a different and valued kind of labour. In this sense, mercenarism is different from framing the military as a job like any other. Heroes could continue to be recognised and celebrated through official pathways and decorations, but there would be no need to instrumentally heroize or victimize because the civil-military relationship is understood through a professional frame of reference, rather than a sentimental, personal one. Another example of a mercenarism-compatible institution is the British Armed Forces Covenant, which is structured to avoid disadvantage and is interested in achieving fairness (rather than advantage) for the service and ex-service community.

One challenge to mercenarism as a frame is the social relations it might engender, particularly a loosening of social bonds. Within this kind of labour for money exchange, if compensation is considered fair and adequate, there is a possibility that the acceptable completion of the exchange would enable what Graeber describes as 'the ability to walk away from each other'⁷⁶². A scenario in which 'civil' and 'military' might consider the

⁷⁶² Graeber, *Debt*, 92.

exchange and accounts settled is, then, a coupling made impossible and undesirable by the very function of a military for a government and a people. While, as this thesis has demonstrated, there is a dysfunction in a civil-military relations based owing each other something, so too could there be in a frame in which we don't owe each other anything.

Interdebtess: we all owe each other something

This thesis has developed indebtedness as a negative force which causes anxiety and demands redress. However, the third framework this conclusion considers moves from one extreme of the elimination of debt to the other of radical indebtedness, which it terms 'interdebtess'. Such a framework imagines debt as social connection. In it, society itself is held together by forms of indebtedness, with that of civil-military relations made unextraordinary by a system that normalises and embraces debt.

In such a framework, the debts which connect us to people (hence *inter-debtess*) cannot and should not be settled. While it would allow for compensation for labour and other forms of economic exchange, interdebtess elevates the significance of that which cannot be compensated by money. While military service would be one activity in which the debt exceeds the compensation, so too might be the work of the doctor who saves your life, the firefighter who defends your city from wildfire, or the midwife who helps birth your child. These moments and work which deal in life and death form radical debt that might be conceived of without a demand for repayment. If instead, through interdebtess, society holistically understood what we owe each other as that which binds us together, then this frame would operate from a place of gratitude. In doing so, it would lean into interdebtess as a positive social force that reminds us of our interconnectedness, our interdependence. In this way, interdebtess offers the direct inverse of mercenarism: a tightening of civil-military relations.

Crucially, re-reading society through this frame unmakes the notion of military as creditor and civil as debtor, for we are all beholden to each other. The soldier as an individual is indebted as well. The farmer is a creditor, whose work is crucial to the specialisation in the division of labour which society now benefits from. We acknowledge that, as a whole, we only function through an essential interdependence which demands no payment.

3. The Future and Changing Character of CMR

This thesis grew out of a desire to understand how and why contemporary civil-military relations in the US and/or UK is understood within a binary and the dysfunctions that this relational understanding perpetuates. In its queer theory, it has explored the analytical value of non-binary potentials in civil-military relations and offered an account of how and why the binary is maintained. It thereby opens a door to consider a CMR beyond the binary and its dysfunctions. In proposing equity, mercenarism, and interdebtdeedness as alternative frames of reference, this thesis doesn't favour one over another. Nor does it view them as 'solutions' to what is often described as a problem: the 'gap' that must be filled, closed, or otherwise erased. In theorising the *contemporary* character of CMR in the US and/or UK in this moment this thesis has embraced cultural work in its richness and specificity which precludes a broader, historical approach to theorising the character of CMR more generally, particularly its entanglement with memory, time, and space. This project closes by reflecting on and relating the work done here with work which remains to be done.

In its approach, this thesis has been necessarily situated in and limited to moments and geographies. Empirically, there remains rich and varied opportunities for subsequent work on cultural work which might be read within a queered CMR, including activities/instruments of remembrance, which were inaccessible due to constraints of the pandemic. Yet the project's focus and attention to what it describes as the 'character' of civil-military relations offers the potential for similar work across histories and systems, even those which differ profoundly from that analysed in this project. It is, in the view of this project, insufficient to theorise CMR in ways which separate the personal from the political, the individual from the institutional. Its focus on cultural work understands civil-military relations as entangled with the social, political, and cultural in a way which defies analysis in isolation. Indeed, it embraces the notion that more is gained from reading the registers together. This analysis of the contemporary character of CMR might be particularly interesting for considering countries with other models of recruitment and conscription, which a queer approach can account for, including South Korea, Norway, or Israel. In a

100% conscription model in which all genders are required to serve in some capacity, for example, does the term 'veteran' have any meaning? What becomes of civil-military relations if, in a crisis, the government of a country calls for 'civilian' volunteers for armed defence?

Contextualising the work and contribution of this thesis requires attention to the time as much as the geographies and what the relationship between time, space, and the character of CMR might suggest about the future of the CMR analysed here. A crucial feature of debt in economics is that it is accompanied by an agreed set of terms, which, among other things, outlines a schedule for repayment. When someone cannot or does not repay according to the schedule, a debt might be passed on to a collections agency for recovery. However, in the case of civil-military relations, in which indebtedness is generated and maintained intersocially, there is no third-party to whom such a matter might be referred. So, might time run out for this debt of CMR? Will this sense of indebtedness dissolve as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan recede in memory?

We might find a parallel in medical services. As mentioned in *Chapter 3*, the COVID-19 pandemic produced a heroizing discourse around healthcare professionals. I attribute this to a gap between the value of labour and compensation which developed as the pandemic placed medical professionals in roles which dealt with the work of life and death in intensity and at substantial risk to themselves. Though the medical profession is accustomed to life and death, the scale of the pandemic and the personal risk and sacrifices which individuals accepted to care for patients altered the value of their labour as healthcare professionals. If wages can be conceived as an equilibrium between value and compensation (mediated, particularly in the UK, by politics and the market), then the pandemic inaugurated a moment when value dramatically increased, but remuneration did not. Thus, a gap opened between value and compensation. This gap evidenced itself in the indebtedness and accompanying discourse of heroization which emerged, which can be read as an effort to socially compensate the work of the medical professionals. Now, we have largely stopped heroizing healthcare professionals, a move which coincides with a reduction in intensity of labour and sacrifice/risk to them as we developed appropriate PPE, vaccines, and treatment. The value of their labour, in this sense, has decreased and has begun to align itself more closely with the pre-pandemic level of equilibrium in

compensation. Crucially, this movement back towards equilibrium is enabled by an understanding of the pandemic as an exceptional and rare crisis.

When read against civil-military relations, this concept of a gap between the value of labour and the compensation equilibrium bears out. If we return to this thesis' introduction, one of the significant triggers for constructing the military as a figure of unease was activities associated with war (dying, killing, sacrifice). Though tied to the function of the military, in peacetime such activity is rare. Yet, despite this significant increase of value of labour during wartime, the level of monetary compensation for the military in peacetime and wartime is constant. Two possibilities emerge for standing, professional militaries like those in the US and UK. First, that the compensation equilibrium is calibrated against wartime activity. Thus, we over-compensate the military in peacetime. Or, second, that the compensation equilibrium is calibrated against peacetime activity and the requirement for military preparedness, so we are indeed, similar to the gap between compensation and the value of labour during the pandemic, undercompensating the military during wartime. Thus, the indebtedness of contemporary CMR is rooted in the perception of this difference between what the military receives and what it deserves. What financial compensation cannot address social compensation looks to relieve. However, it is difficult to view war as rare and exceptional, so the return toward an equilibrium of compensation can be waylaid and reversed by conflict, or, even, reminders of conflict which highlight the uncompensated labour of the military. Thus, the calculus of the value of the labour of the military relies on more factors than conflict tempo.

The anxiety around the military's work of life and death seems to endure beyond the end of high-tempo military operations when such work is no longer the day-to-day reality of military service. An individual in the teeth arms might enter the military and leave it without drawing a weapon against an enemy, as is becoming the case for both the US and UK. But the contrast of the reality of this kind of military service against the relations identified in this project opens the possibility that this character is a relic, a hangover, from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. If so, might the indebtedness, the gap between compensation and labour, wane? Observing this evolution would require us to consider questions of time, change, and the character of civil-military relations. More broadly, such a study might look at change over time and how the gap between labour and compensation which currently

indebts us is recalled and reproduced across histories and geographies. A conflict in a place we've never been which has a wholly different civil-military relations can evoke our own indebtedness. A war need not be ours to become a 'thing that we carry' and subsumed into the myth with which we read and live. As much as it may be measured in eras in and around conflicts as this thesis has done, the character of CMR also maintains its own continuity and history, inflected by memory and experience.

Such considerations illuminate possible directions for further research which accepts and accommodates non-binary logics and the cultural work of CMR. In taking seriously the queer potentials enabled in its theory, this project has established a new foundation for such work which no longer accepts the binary as natural and perpetual. It is on such a basis that we might begin to challenge the cultural work which continues to maintain the binary and, in doing so, allow ourselves to move past it.

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