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Date deposited: 18th April 2013

Version of file: Author final

Peer Review Status: Peer reviewed

Citation for item:

Woodward R, Jenkins KN. [Soldiers' bodies and the contemporary British military memoir](#). In: McSorely, K, ed. *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience*. London, UK: Routledge, 2012, pp.152-164.

Further information on publisher website:

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Woodward, R. and Jenkins, K.N. (2012) Soldiers' bodies and the contemporary British military memoir. In K.McSorley, S. Maltby and G. Schaffer (Eds.) *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience*. Routledge, London, pp.152-164.

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Soldiers' bodies and the contemporary British military memoir.

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Revised chapter submitted to *War and the Body*, Kevin McSorley, Sarah Maltby, Gavin Schaffer (eds.), Routledge.

Bodies are a feature of military memoirs. The military experience, across the spectrum from initial training to participation in armed conflict, is an embodied experience, and the autobiographical accounts of such activities written by military personnel reflect this. In this chapter, we explore the range of ways in which this embodied experience of military participation is represented and reflected upon within contemporary memoir accounts of military action. We then focus on two accounts which centre on the wounded military body. We suggest that these reflect both established traditions within the genre in asserting transcendence of the injuries of war, and also very contemporary modes of narrative production to address social concerns about the logic for and consequences of military action.

Military memoirs help define how we think about war. Whilst we can identify shifts of emphasis and developments in form within the genre from its emergence in the mid-19th century, there is a unity of intent across the genre in the communication of the lived experience of military participation. Military memoirs sell, often in large quantities, and are read widely as authenticated accounts which inform a broad civilian readership about the nature of specific conflicts and operations, the ways of being as a military operative, and the smaller details of human experience within broader historical narratives of armed conflict. So, for example, the 1991 Gulf War has come to be remembered in the British popular imagination less as a mass, multi-force counter-invasion offensive involving thousands of troops across Kuwait, than as a sequence of lone encounters by special forces operatives on dangerous (and frequently compromised) missions within the sovereign territory of Iraq.¹ As a focus for study, most commonly they serve as source materials in histories of specific conflicts and campaigns² and as data for sociological investigations of the representation of military personnel and military practices.³ Although memoirs of involvement in military action also emerge from groups other than military personnel, our focus here is exclusively on accounts by individuals writing as (ex-)members of armed forces.⁴ More specifically still, we draw here on accounts

written by people who have served with the British armed forces from 1980 to the present.⁵

Within the genre of the military memoir, the body is integral to the narrative. Harari, a key authority on the genre, argues that whereas pre-late modern, pre-mid-19th century memoirs served an ultimate purpose of emphasising the honour which accrued to the individual by pursuit of the profession of arms, a mid-19th century shift changed the central purpose of the military memoir to that of an account of the revelatory effects of war.⁶ Those revelations may be idealistic, and positive about the self, or may be more critically revelatory about the futility of war. Crucially, the bodily experience and not just physical presence provides validity of and for these memoirs. Significant for our purposes here is Harari's idea of 'flesh-witnessing' as fundamental to such revelatory accounts. Informed by Romantic sensibilities about the experiential and the sublime, the flesh-witnessing of war becomes the dominant trope through which the authority of these accounts is established. Rather than the rationalist authority of logical thought or the scientific authority of objective eye-witnessing, 'veterans lay claim to the visceral authority of 'flesh-witnessing' and narratives come to be written by those 'who have learned their wisdom with their flesh'.⁷

Two common features of the memoir follow from this. One concerns the (im)possibility of description, of being (un)able adequately to describe what one has been through as a military operative. A feature of these books, noted also by Vernon, is the accounts their authors give of their struggle accurately to explain the lived experience of physical involvement in armed conflict.⁸ A second feature of the genre is the use of the bodily experience in asserting the authority of the writer and his or her experience, and the inabilities of those who did not directly witness or participate in the events described to otherwise understand that experience. As Harari puts it,

After creating the unique authority of flesh-witnessing, veterans take possession of it by repeatedly narrating incidents when they underwent extreme bodily experiences, and in particular extreme experiences of suffering, which are unknown to peaceful civilians.⁹

The principle of flesh-witnessing, then, rests on two basic ideas – the impossibility of otherwise describing military engagement, and the privileged authority that physical presence provides. When we look at contemporary British military memoirs in terms of the body stories that they tell, we see immediately that these ideas circulate not just around the dramatic stories of active armed combat that we as readers would expect, but more broadly through every aspect of the experience of military participation. Military experience is a totality of bodily engagements, in many ways, and it is to these we now turn.

Writing the military body

The conventions around the structure of the contemporary military memoir are such that early in the course of the narrative, we are introduced to the author as a young recruit embarking on a process which will turn him¹⁰ from unformed youth to soldier

or equivalent. The emergence of physical fitness through enhanced cardio-vascular and musculo-skeletal capabilities is described, and however fleetingly this is done in the narrative, this transformation is always still related to the reader as a means of marking out the transition from civilian to military operative as embodied. Accounts may relate the anticipation of the hardships of physical transition and note the individual's personal preparation prior to enlistment. Ed Macy in *Hellfire* recounts meeting a local hard man, Stig, who is home on leave from the Paras. Macy tells him he wants to join up and is told he will have to train hard:

So I pounded the beach everyday before and after work; come rain, wind or snow, it didn't matter. Gradually I built up my fitness. When it became easy, I tied a rope to a tractor tyre, fixed it round my waist and ran up and down the beach dragging the tyre behind me.¹¹

The training of the physical body and the emergence of the body of the military operative requires testing the body to its physical limits and the conditioning of the body to endure fatigue, stress, pain and injury. Other bodies are held up as examples, models to aspire to. This is a holistic process; the body is punished physically so that the future demands of armed combat can be met, mentally, and the individual can function as a soldier. Adam Ballinger's *The Quiet Soldier*, an account of selection and training for a TA Special Forces unit, is expansive and eloquent on the subject of physical training, conditioning and transformation, noting that this a process that includes both changed self-perception of the newly-uniformed body as well as the resulting physical alterations in terms of enhanced fitness that we as readers would probably anticipate.¹² Throughout this process physical training and development require 'fuel', as Simon Bywater recounts of Commando training:

By now all the physical exercise had begun to increase my appetite and I was eating three large meals a day... I enhanced these meals by eating lots of chocolate during the course of the day. Most evenings I paid a visit to the Dutchy Bar, which was a fast-food caravan run by a civilian.¹³

Physical fitness and training must be maintained, and this is a significant aspect of everyday life for most soldiers. Nick Vaux, in his account of the voyage to the Falklands prior to the 1982 recapture of the islands by British forces, noted that 'All of us were extremely conscious that the comforts of *Canberra* could prove disastrous to our fitness unless firmly controlled at all levels'.¹⁴

The trained operational body is then equipped, providing the military operative with the means to exercise lethal violence. Military equipment, especially small arms, are seen as extensions of the physical body; their functionality must be learnt and appropriated by the soldier as must their transportation and care. Military memoirs often read as instruction manuals for their extensive explanations of the utilities and capabilities of equipment. A good example here would be Dan Mills' *Sniper One*, with its exposition of the capabilities of the sniper rifle.¹⁵ Military equipment enhances the body's sensory capabilities; Jake Scott, writing in *Blood Clot* about his experiences as a Paratrooper in Afghanistan in 2006 notes the ways in which night-vision equipment extended his reconnaissance capabilities.¹⁶ The bodily enhancements of equipment may not be welcomed; Doug Beattie, writing about a tour in Afghanistan, talks frequently of the effects of body armour in simultaneously

enhancing the protection of the body whilst sapping its energy because of the overheating that wearing it incurred.¹⁷ Stuart Tootal, commanding a Paratroop regiment in Afghanistan, notes how he at one point allowed men under his command to stop wearing their issued body armour because its weight and bulk limited their personal mobility and physical capabilities.¹⁸ Ed Macy, an Apache pilot, describes the challenges of flying this helicopter ('like playing an Xbox, a Playstation and a chess Grand Master simultaneously – whilst riding Disneyworld's biggest rollercoaster') in terms which suggest that he 'wears' the machine, with his hands and feet doing four different things simultaneously and his eyes whirling independently of each other as they read different screens.¹⁹ It is physically demanding and exhausting.

Above all, these memoirs convey a sense of the sheer physical demands of military roles and tasks, particularly those in infantry or Commando roles. Vince Bramley's account of marching across the Falklands in 1982 stands as a representative account for personnel who were involved there:

Sweat soaked all our clothing. My feet ached beyond belief. All I wanted was to rest. Steve and I continually swapped the GPMG between us, from shoulder to shoulder. My webbing was much tighter than normal, as the wet had shrunk it to fit my body like a glove. In consequence, I suffered webbing burns on my hips and the base of my back. Sweat continually soaked our clothing.²⁰

Similarly, Dan Mills' account of operations in Iraq in 2004 exemplifies many of the accounts coming from that conflict, describing the cumulative effects of physical activity, heat, sleep deprivation and dwindling supplies. 'We had become a force of skeletal zombies relying on little more than an intravenous drip of adrenalin to get us through', he writes. His companions were 'covered in grime, dried sweat and flecks of blood from head to toe, with two huge black circles around their eyes. Most worrying of all was the slightly crazed look we'd all begun to adopt - like we were all on the first rung of the ladder to insanity'.²¹ The memoirs of those conventionally perceived as performing less physically demanding roles are often at pains to emphasise the demands that are made on their military bodies; Ade Orchard flying Harriers in Afghanistan and Nick Richardson flying Harriers over Bosnia are clear on this.²²

These bodily experiences are felt individually, but as memoirs point out, individual bodies function as part of units, and so the flesh-witnessing of the military memoirist necessarily includes observations about other bodies. This is no mere gazing, because close observation is necessary for the functioning of the unit. Nick Vaux, a senior Royal Marine commander during the 1982 Falklands war, talks of the observation and monitoring of the bodies of men under his command as one of the duties of a commanding officer.²³ Barry Fieldgate, in an account of his experiences as the Captain's steward on HMS Broadsword during the Falklands War has as his focus – his chief responsibility on operations – tending to the physical needs of the body of the ship's captain's so that the ship can keep functioning and in turn play its role in the assault on the Falklands.²⁴ Les Howard, deployed as a signaller with a light infantry battalion to Bosnia in 1995-6 as part of a UN peacekeeping force, talks

of the guard duties he and others perform in the cold and dark of the Bosnian winter, conducted for the safety of other military bodies.²⁵ Military bodies do not act alone.

Neither do they live alone, and in a context where controlled aggression is, by necessity, inculcated and developed as a military skill it is unsurprising that military memoirists talk of the many ways in which violence towards the body, within the unit, is managed. Ben Barry, writing about senior command in Bosnia, reflects on this as an accepted and almost prosaic fact of life about military units, where fighting will occur between men under his command which has to be managed rather than checked.²⁶ Steven Preece's account of his life as a Royal Marine is threaded through with tales of violence received and meted out within the unit, starting from his first days within the unit where the disciplining of the body of the newest member of the unit involves violent physical assault.²⁷ Ken Lukowiak and Nigel Ely, in their respective accounts of their Falklands wars, talk of the brawling between Paratroop regiments on the long journey home by ship as a necessity of post-conflict decompression,²⁸ and Doug Beattie, Jake Scott and Stuart Tootal in their accounts from Afghanistan make similar observations of about the expectations of mass fighting within units undergoing post-operational decompression in Cyprus, with brawling expected after the barbeque and beer.²⁹

Most significantly, of course, the operational military body has as his or her mission the destruction or incapacitation of other military bodies. Memoirists negotiate the ways in which such body stories are told with great care.³⁰ Andy McNab, in a memoir with an instructional feel, tells the reader very explicitly about the mechanics of killing a human being with a single shot.³¹ Ed Macy walks a careful line between the necessities of convention in limiting graphic descriptions of human destruction and an explanation of what, precisely, the armoury carried on an Apache helicopter can do to a human body.³² Those who write of experiences on the ground, who encounter bodies killed by military action, are compelled to describe what they see. Vince Bramley gives such an account, on encountering one such body:

... lying on his side, was a dead Argentinean. I turned him over. His stiff body flopped on its back, revealing a single bullet hole in the forehead. I pulled the body to the side of the slope and pushed. It rolled two or three times, then stopped.³³

Elsewhere he talks of the effects of artillery fire and the bits of bodies that he sees, pieces of flesh that he realises are part of a face, a helmet with part of a brain visible inside it. In contrast with his treatment of enemy dead, he describes the care with which he kneels beside the dead body of a British soldier, removing his weapon and covering his face.³⁴ Nigel 'Spud' Ely compares the effects of different types of ordinance on the body in the same conflict:

I was struck by the differences in how the dead had fallen. In Goose Green most of the dead had been shot; here almost all had been blown apart. Everywhere I walked were the remains of an Argy. Some were still in their fire positions decapitated. Others had been blown into hell, still others had their legs severed clean off from the pelvis.³⁵

Dan Mills starts his account of action with a sniper platoon in Iraq with an unsparing account of what a rocket propelled grenade attack does to one of the members of his unit:

He was a proper mess. The shrapnel had pepper-potted both his legs with puncture holes from the top of his thighs right down to his desert boots. There were around a dozen serious wounds in his flesh. His right foot in particular had been torn up very badly, and was just a mess of ripped boot and blood, bubbling and congealing through his matted and shredded white sock.³⁶

Coming as it does as an opening to the book, the description of destruction to one of his own soldiers frames the narrative from the start to suggest that British soldiers are recipients of armed violence, victims of attacks, rather than as aggressors in an invasionary expedition. But we shouldn't doubt for a moment the shock and horror that encounters with dead, damaged bodies does to the writers of these memoirs. Patrick Hennessey reflects on this following the casualty evacuation of a fellow officer after a contact in Afghanistan; he and his companions try to laugh at the exposure of the injured man's penis to the downdraught of the evacuation helicopter, and realise how strained the effort at humour has become for them.³⁷ Many memoirists start to write precisely because of the shock incurred through repeated encounters with dead and injured bodies, although graphic descriptions of one's own comrade's death are avoided so as not to upset relatives of the dead who may read that account.³⁸

So far, then, we have explored some of the ways in which military memoirs engage with the body. These memoirs are accounts of war which rely for much of their validity, veracity and narrative power on articulations around the idea of flesh-witnessing. Revelations about war, the key trope to the post-19th century military memoir, are explored through the experiences of the body, from the descriptions of the body in spaces of conflict through to the vocabulary of emotion, which relies so heavily on bodily metaphors. Yet whilst we can consider the coherence and consistency within the genre, through which the relationship between war and the body is accounted for, we can also consider the war body in terms of the wider social context within which the memoir is produced and orientated, and it is to this that we now turn.

Recovery narratives and the cultural politics of war

Our observations here turn on our reading of two specific accounts of experiences following active operations in Afghanistan. One is by Mark Ormrod, a Royal Marine, who published *Man Down* in 2009.³⁹ Whilst on patrol in Helmand province in December 2007, Ormrod stepped on an improvised explosive device. The force of the explosion resulted in the loss of both legs and his right arm. Evacuated immediately back to the UK, his narrative describes, chronologically, his rehabilitation from his injuries, culminating in him walking his bride, Becky, down the aisle. The other is by Martyn and Michelle Compton (with Marnie Summerfield Smith), who together published *Home from War* in 2009.⁴⁰ In August 2006, in Helmand province in Afghanistan, Compton was badly burned when the Spartan

armoured personnel carrier he was driving was hit by a rocket propelled grenade. Compton was engulfed in the fireball. He was also shot in the leg by a Taliban fighter during the incident. His narrative, interwoven with that of Michelle (his girlfriend at the time) tells a similar tale to Ormrod's, of the slow and painful journey of rehabilitation culminating in his wedding to Michelle.

Tales of trauma and transcendence are by no means novel within the genre of the military memoir. Famous examples include Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* which describes (amongst other things) his recovery from injuries sustained on the Western Front,⁴¹ and Simon Weston, badly burned in 1982 during the Falklands War, who went on to write three books about his recovery and rehabilitation, and who has achieved national prominence as a motivational speaker and charity worker.⁴² Our point is not that rehabilitation stories such as Ormrod's the Comptons' are new. Rather, the production of the published text reflects emergent conventions within the market for life-writing, and because of the way they do this can be understood as interventions in public debates about the merits of specific armed conflicts, in this instance in Afghanistan. These memoirs are still revelatory in Harari's sense, but the core revelation is of the possibility of survival and recovery from potentially fatal injury, and the body is implicated at the very centre of that narrative arc.

Ormrod's and the Comptons' accounts show the influence of the recovery narrative, which is a dominant form within life writing.⁴³ The market share of recovery and trauma narratives is evident in bookshops through the existence of discrete sections for 'tragic life stories' on the shelves of major UK book retailers such as WHSmith and Waterstones. Recovery narratives follow a number of textual and stylistic conventions which include their packaging and binding within white or pale covers with cursive fonts and whimsical cover photographs. We could code the recovery narrative as 'female' in terms of their content and presentation, evident of what Lauren Berlant identifies as the work of sentimentality in women's print cultures.⁴⁴

The Comptons' book, textually and visually, sits as readily within the genre of the recovery narrative as it does within the genre of the military memoir. *Home From War* domesticates war, bringing the injured body home. The injured body, rendered grotesque through the burns received by Martyn Compton, is normalized through marriage, that most conventional act of appropriation of the soldier into the domestic sphere. The normalizing process, constructed at least in part for a female readership, refutes war's effects. Quite crucially, it positions the transcendence of horror centrally, by its suggestion – or indeed demonstration – that war's terrible effects can be overcome. We know as readers that the damage is enduring, but we are led to believe that this is of less significance than the fact of rehabilitation. Drawing on Lauren Berlant's arguments here, we could argue that in a sentimental worldview, 'people's "interests" are less in changing the world than in not being defeated by it, and meanwhile finding satisfaction in minor pleasures and major fantasies'.⁴⁵ In this book, then, the drive of the narrative comes not from revelations about the horrors of war on the body and thus arguments for a non-military future, but rather from the story of overcoming the bodily effects of these horrors and shaping a life according to conventional markers of happiness.

Ormrod's book, in terms of its narrative arc, offers an ostensibly similar story to Compton's, of a young man's injury in war and slow rehabilitation culminating in marriage. The book is packaged very differently. *Man Down* is presented visually according to the current conventions of the standard military memoir, with the use of a stark sans serif typeface for the title, the use of images of fire (indicative of destruction) within the cover design, and the inclusion on the front cover of an image of a faceless and unidentifiable soldier poised looking at the reader with weapon ready. The author is pictured on the back cover, on patrol with the Marines. There is nothing on the cover of the book to indicate that it is primarily about recovery from trauma. The briefest glance at the text shows liberal use of Royal Marines slang and a familiar, conversational narrative style. The book is still, however, a recovery narrative.

Neither book tells us much about the Afghanistan war, and both tell us a lot about the experience of rehabilitation. Both also have happy endings; the body is maimed, but functions sufficiently to enable (in Ormrod's case) a return to his unit (he takes a desk job) and both conclude with marriage. But both books work through and are structured around a key idea which is very much part of the military memoir's accounts of the body. The body, in the military memoir, cannot fail. These narratives are about fear, not of the failure of the body to function (most memoirs at some point or other recount how exhaustion or injury prevents action) but about the failure of the self to overcome the failure of the body. That fear of personal failure is frequently articulated around letting others down. But it is also a fear of failure of the self to have control over the body, to overcome failure of the body. The condemnation of a failed soldier (which, in these books, is the worst thing to be) isn't of a failed body, but of the mental state that cannot transcend that failure, that pain, injury and debilitation. In these two books, that often-incidental feature of the memoir informs the entire account.

These books do not tell us much about the specifics of the Afghan war, but they are still significant for informing wider civilian public narratives about war. These two books were written whilst the conflict in Afghanistan, responsible for the injured body, was on-going. There is no benefit of hindsight, no grand narrative of final victory or defeat which is widely known, shared and understood as a structuring framework for understanding the specifics of the story. The operational tours in which these personnel have participated have not been conducted around a structuring arc such as that of the Falklands campaign, which provided a very straightforward framework for the memoirs of that war in terms of sequential declaration of war, deployment and embarkation to the South Atlantic, armed conflict, and finally its aftermath. In the Afghanistan war, in the absence of a clear sequence of events providing a narrative structure, the authors are reliant on their own interpretations of their own individual operational experiences. This has always been so for many soldiers, of course. As Samuel Hynes notes

Infantrymen's narratives are narrower in their range of vision, smaller in scale, more identified with groups than individuals, more determined by the contingencies of battle, more concerned with survival than with action.⁴⁶

But particularly in the Afghanistan war, there exists very little in terms of a wider coherent narrative framing a soldier's participation, beyond general public awareness of deployment for reasons unclear, to a far-flung arid region, to experience unanticipated levels of violent contact. Operational tours, for these memoirs, instead consist of a sequence of engagements, movements and contacts and there is no wider consensus politically or socially as to the rectitude or otherwise of the Afghan conflict. So whilst there have emerged from Afghanistan some very distinct stories – Doug Beattie's *An Ordinary Soldier* is essentially about a 13 day attack and defence of Garmsir – they lack the certainty that a narrative arc around reflection of broader military strategy provides. So they turn in on themselves, reflecting to a much greater degree on the personal and the corporeal. Whilst books like Ormrod's and the Comptons' – and indeed other accounts from Afghanistan – can still be seen as revelatory, those revelations are essentially the reflections of immediate embodied experience, of physical participation in the event. We could even argue that the body, as evidenced in this recent crop of memoirs, has changed in significance as a feature of the military memoir because of the changing nature of warfare and military operations. We speculate here, but it is possible that with smaller numbers of better equipped and better trained troops, working more frequently with a wider range of rules of engagement and in coalition with other national forces, with an enemy opponent who is not constructed as an equal (i.e. not as a fellow soldier), and with advances in medical care for the injured, there is a wider range of corporeal experiences available to the military operative than those open to their predecessors, even twenty years ago. This in turn is prompting new ways of writing about the war experience as corporeal. We should also note the ever-diminishing time-lag between experience and publication. It would seem that publishers are eager to get onto bookshelves these very recent tales of military endeavour. A consequence of this is that the reflections and revelations are necessarily those which can be more immediately written about, such as physical and embodied reactions, rather than those which require the passage of time for their realisation, such as mental illness and post-traumatic stress, or the development of views critical of armed conflict and militarisation, which are a feature of many Falklands memoirs published in the decades after that conflict.

There is a final feature of these books to note. The Ormrod and Compton books reduce the war in Afghanistan to individualised stories of transcendence; there is no room here for critical engagement (supportive or oppositional) with the logic of the wider mission in which British and other NATO forces are engaged. It is as if the politics and the rationale of engagement are squeezed from the frame. There is evidence that central Ministry of Defence clearance for publication of books such as these, plus wider PR activities around their authors, assists with this process whereby specific types of stories – redemption and rehabilitation – are promoted and encouraged.⁴⁷ The prevalence of such stories feeds the growth of a very specific discourse around the contemporary British soldier, of automatic heroism and sacrifice, evident in much tabloid coverage.⁴⁸ A further feature here is that high levels of public discomfort with fatality and casualty levels experienced by British personnel, fighting in a conflict the origins and purpose of which remain unclear to many, can somehow be addressed with stories of rehabilitation such as Ormrod's

and Compton's. This is not to deny that these are almost incredible stories. With these two men, bodily injuries which might have been expected to be fatal have been survived, because of a combination of medical expertise and care, and physical and mental strength and condition. But the point remains that narratives such as these contribute to a set of ideas around the conflict in Afghanistan which suggests that even when it produces horror, this can be transcended. As a consequence, the space for critical engagement with the causes and consequences of the war is reduced, and the military body as a political and geopolitical body, is reduced.

¹ See Newsinger, J. (1997) *Dangerous Men: The SAS and Popular Culture*. London: Pluto. Newsinger comments how the dominant image of the Gulf War, of a lone man trudging across a desert, is a consequence of the popularity of books such as Andy McNab's *Bravo Two Zero* (1993, London: Transworld) and Chris Ryan's *The One That Got Away* (1995, London: Century).

² Examples include the use of Nick Vaux's *March to the South Atlantic* (1986, Trowbridge: Buchan and Enright) and Rick Jolly's *The Red and Green Life Machine* (1983, London: Century) in historical analyses of the 1982 Falklands War.

³ Examples include Claire Duncanson's work on peacekeepers and masculinities (Duncanson, C. (2009) Forces for good? Narratives of military masculinity in peacekeeping operations. *International Journal of Feminist Politics* 11 (1): 63-80), or our own work on citizenship and military participation (Woodward R. (2008) 'Not for Queen and Country or any of that shit...': reflections on citizenship and military participation in contemporary British soldier narratives. In Gilbert, E. and Cowan, D. (Eds.) *War, Citizenship, Territory*. London: Routledge, 363-384).

⁴ Alex Vernon gives a comprehensive account of the range of military experiences, combatant and non-combatant, that complicate any simple definition of the genre. See Vernon, A. (2005) No Genre's Land: the problem of genre in war memoirs and military autobiographies. In Vernon, A. (Ed.) *Arms and the Self: War, The Military and Autobiographical Writing*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1-40.

⁵ The research on which this chapter draws was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, for the project 'The social production of the contemporary British military memoir', RES-062-23-1493. The research interviews cited were conducted with a number of military memoirists as part of this project.

⁶ Harari, N.Y. (2008) *The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture 1450-2000*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷ Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, p.7.

⁸ Vernon, *No Genre's Land*.

⁹ Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, p.8.

¹⁰ In our collection of 149 memoirs written by British military personnel after 1980, only three are sole-authored and one co-authored by women. This excludes ghost-writers and other un-named collaborators.

¹¹ Ed Macy (2009) *Hellfire*. St.Ives, Harper Press, p.24.

¹² Ballinger, A. (1994) *The Quiet Soldier: On Selection with 21 SAS*. For a lengthier account of the physical transformation process within Ballinger's memoir, see Woodward R. (1998) 'It's a Man's Life!': soldiers, masculinity and the countryside. *Gender, Place and Culture* 5 (3), 277-300.

¹³ Simon Bywater (2003) *Forced Out*. Brighton: The Book Guild, p.30.

¹⁴ Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic*, p.27.

¹⁵ Dan Mills (2008) *Sniper One: The Blistering True Story of a British Battle Group under Siege*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

¹⁶ Jake Scott (2008) *Blood Clot: In Combat with the Patrols Platoon, 3 Para Afghanistan, 2006* Solihull: Helion.

¹⁷ Doug Beattie (2009) *Taskforce Helmand: A Soldier's Story of Life, Death and Combat on the Afghan Front Line*, London: Simon and Schuster.

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- ¹⁸ Stuart Tootal (2009) *Danger Close: Commanding 3 Para in Afghanistan*. St Ives: John Murray.
- ¹⁹ Ed Macy (2008) *Apache: The Man, the Machine, the Mission*. London: Harper Press, p.35.
- ²⁰ Vince Bramley (2006) *Forward to Hell*, London: John Blake, p.76.
- ²¹ Mills, *Sniper One*, p.326.
- ²² Ade Orchard (2008) *Joint Force Harrier*, London: Michael Joseph; Nick Richardson (2001) *No Escape Zone*. London: TimeWarner.
- ²³ Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic*.
- ²⁴ Barry Fieldgate (2007) *The Captain's Steward*. Chippenham: Melrose Books.
- ²⁵ Les Howard (2006) *Winter Warriors: Across Bosnia with the PBI*. Brighton: The Book Guild.
- ²⁶ Ben Barry (2008) *A Cold War: Front Line Operations in Bosnia 1995-1996*. Stroud: Spellmount.
- ²⁷ Steven Preece (2004) *Amongst the Marines: The Untold Story*. Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- ²⁸ Ken Lukowiak, 1993, *A Soldiers' Song: True Stories from the Falklands*. London: Secker and Warburg. Nigel Ely (2003) *For Queen and Country*. London: Blake.
- ²⁹ Tootal *Danger Close*; Scott, *Blood Clot*; Doug Beattie (2008) *An Ordinary Soldier*, London: Simon and Schuster.
- ³⁰ Research interviews, 2010.
- ³¹ McNab, *Bravo Two Zero*.
- ³² Macy, *Apache*.
- ³³ Bramley, *Forward into Hell* p.191.
- ³⁴ Bramley, *Forward into Hell*, p.183.
- ³⁵ Ely, *For Queen and Country*, pp.233-234.
- ³⁶ Mills, *Sniper One*, p.xxii.
- ³⁷ Patrick Hennessey (2009) *The Junior Officer's Reading Club*. London: Allen Lane p.225.
- ³⁸ Research interviews, 2010.
- ³⁹ Mark Ormrod (2009) *Man Down*. London: Bantam Press. This book had sold about 8,000 copies by March 2011.
- ⁴⁰ Martyn and Michelle Compton with Marnie Summerfield Smith (2009) *Home From War: How Love Conquered the Horrors of a Soldier's Afghan Nightmare*. Edinburgh: Mainstream. This book had sold about 2,000 copies by March 2011.
- ⁴¹ Robert Graves (1929) *Goodbye to All That*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- ⁴² Weston, *Walking Tall*; Simon Weston (1992) *Going Back*. London: Bloomsbury; Simon Weston (2003) *Moving On* London: Portrait.
- ⁴³ For an overview of trends within life-writing, see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010) *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Second Edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- ⁴⁴ Lauren Berlant (2008) *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. London: Duke University Press.
- ⁴⁵ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, p.27.
- ⁴⁶ Hynes, S. (1998) *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. Pimlico, London, p.145.
- ⁴⁷ Research interviews, 2010.
- ⁴⁸ See Woodward, R., Winter, T. and Jenkins, KN (2009) Heroic anxieties: the figure of the British soldier in contemporary print media. *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 2 (2): 211-223.