

Memory, Masculinity and National Identity in British Visual Culture, 1914–1930

A Study of 'Unconquerable Manhood'

*To the memory of my grandmother for unconditional love,
endless affection and kind understanding.*

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Figure 3.18 Francis Derwent Wood Examining the Finished Plate, Noses Room, 3rd London Hospital. Imperial War Museum Photographic Archive

The sculptor becomes part of the healing process. With infinite patience he trims and builds up the face in order to recreate the one that has been lost. Derwent Wood's casts of the inside of the face become the moulds for the outside. The modeller, who prefers mud instead of stone, because of its obedience and malleability, tames the horrors of mud and turns its slimy, sticky qualities into the solid bronze of the *Boy David*. The bronze becomes the skin that protects and contains the body once again. The sculpture because of its nudity, posture and positioning to the modern instruments of war offers a number of interpretations. Unlike the uniformity of the other figurative memorials that rely on military positions and uniforms for their impact, the *Boy David* relies on the male body and the memories that it embodied for the servicemen. However, the personal memories, because of the newly discovered masculinities at the Front could be problematic. Most importantly, no public scripts were available to express such private memories. This resulted in the acting-out rather than the working through of traumatic memories.

The museum space, particularly the war museum, will be discussed next, to show the interaction between private traumatic memories and the memories of war constructed within the museum space. The gigantic guns will be contrasted with the miniature artefacts created by the servicemen and the souvenirs they collected at the Front.

Chapter 4

Unveiling Polished Guns/ Veiling Fragile Masculinities

A Nation, like a man, is discovered in the critical moments of its fate.¹

This is how the catalogue of the first exhibition of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) (*Illustration 4.1*) in June 1920 at Crystal Palace greeted visitors to the exhibition. The anthropomorphising nature of the quote and the comparison it makes between the nation and a man highlights the correlation that existed between nation and masculinity in the period following the First World War, and the role that the IWM played in maintaining such a relationship. Sue Malvern has argued that establishing the IWM was an exercise in projecting a national identity.² What bearing this had on the establishment of a hegemonic memory of war masculinities will be the theme of this chapter. The relationship between national identity and masculinity was complex, not to mention problematic because of the precarious position that various definitions of masculinity occupied in the aftermath of the war.

The first exhibition to be held at the IWM recognised the unstable positioning of masculinities in post-Armistice Britain. According to the catalogue, 'Great men' as they were thought to be 'shrivel into smallness', while men who were otherwise 'lost in obscurity are brought out of their hiding'. It is precisely this unpredictability that the museum sought to address. Men could not be trusted as they were subject to sudden bursts of fear and emotion; the machinery of war was able to offer a more reliable and efficient way of mapping the history of the war. The IWM catalogue reads: 'The story of that efficiency in the conduct of war of which victory is ultimately born, is the story of the inspired discovery and the inspired use of rifles, each of which made its apparently insignificant contribution to the whole pattern of events, perfectly conceived.'³

1. IWM, *First IWM Exhibition at Crystal Palace*, Catalogue, Central Files, A 1/4, 1920, no pagination.
2. The Imperial War Museum has received very little critical attention despite the immense growth in museum studies and publications in the 1990s. Sue Malvern provides the first critical studies of the museum and its art collections. See Malvern, Sue, 'War, Memory and Museums: Art and Artefacts in the Imperial War Museum', *History Workshop Journal*, 49 (2000), pp. 177–203.
3. IWM, *First IWM Exhibition at Crystal Palace*, no pagination.



Figure 4.1 First Exhibition of the IWM at Crystal Palace, June 1920. Imperial War Museum Photographic Archive

But if it was important for the museum to demonstrate the role that machinery played in the war, what implications did exhibiting the objects of warfare, especially the 'celebration of the uncelebratory'⁴ have for the ex-servicemen? Was the IWM exhibition merely transforming killing machines into aesthetic objects? Annie Coombes has observed that museums are a 'vital component in reclaiming and defining a concept of collective memory' and the reconstitution of 'certain cultural icons'. The IWM became in a sense a 'site for the nostalgic manufacture of a consensual past in the lived reality of a deeply divided present'.⁵ This manufacturing of a consensual past in the public space of the museum also resulted in a 'collision of subjectivities and collectivities', according to Susan Crane, which was equally problematic.⁶ In this chapter the notion of a public consensual past will be examined in more depth, and compared with the personal souvenirs compiled by the ex-servicemen, which offered a counter-point to the exhibition of war machinery at the IWM.

4. Malvern, Sue, 'War, Memory and Museums', p. 178.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

6. Crane, Susan (ed.), *Museums and Memory* (Stanford: 2000), p. 7.

Establishing the Imperial War Museum

The IWM was founded in March 1917 as the War Museum. It was the brainchild of three men: Alfred Mond, who was appointed as First Commissioner of Works in 1916, Charles ffoulkes,⁷ who was later appointed first secretary of the museum, and Martin Conway, who became director of the museum. The Crawford Committee, set up by Lord Crawford, was given the remit to advise on the establishment of the museum, including the decision whether it should be a combined museum and war memorial, and its scope if it performed this dual function.⁸ Martin Conway⁹ submitted a memorandum to the Crawford Committee outlining his vision for the museum. His position was clear: the war museum should be regarded as *the* memorial for the war.

Conway's memorandum suggested that the museum could take the form of a Hall of Honour, 'as rich and beautiful in character as artists can devise',¹⁰ with separate memorials for the Navy and the Army. The Hall of Honour would display portraits and sculptures of eminent individuals. In the Memorial Gallery, the name of every individual who fell in battle would be inscribed on bronze plates. Conway wrote: 'No pile of sculpture wherever set up could possibly vie for public interest or truly memorial character with this Hall and Gallery of Honour in the heart of a great War Museum.'¹¹

7. ffoulkes insists in his autobiography that his surname is not spelled with a capital letter. See ffoulkes, Charles, *Arms and the Tower* (London: 1939).

ffoulkes, before being appointed secretary of the IWM, was Keeper of Arms in the Tower of London. He was associated with the artistic and literary circles of Beardsley, Yeats and Simmonds. See *ibid.*

8. Agenda and Minutes of Committee on Imperial War Museum, 1917–1920, IWM, Central Files, A1/3.

9. Martin Conway was an MP for the combined English Universities from 1918 and was involved in the Ministry of Works. From 1917 he was the Director of the Imperial War Museum. He was also a mountaineer, he wrote a number of books on the subject, and art historian (Slade professor of fine art at Cambridge 1901 to 1904). His collection of more than 100,000 photographs of works of art was presented to the Courtauld Institute of Art. The Dictionary of National Biography describes him as someone who 'would not have welcomed the 'century of the common man', for he did not believe in the infallibility of the majority'. Amongst his publications his work on crowds, *The Crowd in Peace and War* (1915) expresses according the Dictionary of National Biography his 'mature mind' and is 'considered to be his best book'. Other publications include: Conway, Martin, *Mountain Memories. A Pilgrimage of Romance* (London: 1920); Conway, Martin, *The Domain of Art* (London: 1901); Conway, Martin, *The Sport of Collecting* (London: 1914).

10. Conway, Martin, 'Memorandum on the Scope of the National War Museum', *Agenda and Minutes of Committee on Imperial War Museum, 1917–1920*, IWM, Central Files, A1/3.

11. *Ibid.*

Carol Duncan claims that museums need to be seen as 'ceremonial monuments' which carry out 'political and ideological tasks'.¹² Seen from Conway's perspective, the proposed museum could become a place where a unified hegemonic memory of the war could be projected through codes of honour that promoted a self-less masculinity. The figures of eminent individuals could reflect these codes. The museum space was the only form of space that Conway felt would allow for such possibilities; other schemes proposed at the time, such as the creation of an *Empire War Memorial* or a *National War Memorial*, which Conway referred to as a 'pile of sculpture', could not have the same impact because the museum element was lacking. The Hall of Honour, for Conway, was what Duncan describes as a 'ritual site', demanding a 'particular kind of contemplation'.¹³

The Crawford Committee recommended that the War Memorial should be 'erected in juxtaposition to the War Museum building'. As to the character of the collection 'due regard should be had to the Imperial character of the exhibits', and there should be a 'tribute to the heroism of the Empire'. The nature of the museum's content was also beginning to take shape. A. Fisher MP, a member of the Crawford Committee, wrote in a letter to the Earl of Crawford:

The museum, in a word, would be selective, not exhaustive, it would consist of paintings, engravings, drawings, maps, plans and designs of all sorts, models of armaments and instruments of war, uniforms and equipment, selected with a view to giving to the visitor an *ordered and organised conception of the war* [My italics].¹⁴

Conway argued that the importance of the exhibits would attract a wide range of audiences:

Thus the sailor and soldier should be able to see models of ships, batteries, trenches, and the like in which they fought, the uniform they wore, and the weapons they used ... craftsmen should be able to examine models of some of the great munitions works in which they were employed.¹⁵

Both Fisher and Conway placed particular emphasis on the ways in which the paraphernalia of war could become a point of attraction and interest for a wide spectrum of society. For Fisher in particular, it was the ordered organisation of such objects that would provide the visitor with the necessary appeal and attraction. Yet the orderly organisation of the objects of war provides an antithesis to the disorderly way in which the servicemen remembered them. Such display of objects in a museum, Susan Stewart suggests, seeks to replace history with classification

12. Duncan, Carol, 'The Art Museum as Ritual', in Preziosi, D. (ed.), *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: 1998), p. 474.

13. Ibid.

14. Letter from A. Fisher to the Earl of Crawford, 20 September 1917, *Agenda and Minutes of Committee on Imperial War Museum*, 1917–1920, IWM, Central Files, A1/3.

15. Conway, Martin, 'Memorandum on the Scope of the National War Museum', in *Agenda and Minutes of Committee on Imperial War Museum*.

and order, something which is beyond the realm of temporality.¹⁶ For Conway, the associative memories that war objects were able to convey to the ex-servicemen offered the basis for creating a particular memory of the war. This links to Susan Crane's argument that the museum fixes the memory of entire cultures by selecting which objects deserve to be kept, remembered and treasured.¹⁷

Professional bodies such as the Museums Association approved of the machinery of war being used to promote a particular hegemonic ordered and organised memory of the war. The editorial of the May 1917 issue of the Association's journal was dedicated to the establishment of the IWM. It applauded the government decision to set up the museum and offered ideas on ways in which the collection should function. Its central message was that deeds of devotion and bravery should be represented in the museum. The problem was in representing these deeds; in the view of the Museums Association journal, the machinery of war presented the best way forward, and these objects should be 'singled out for special prominence'. Size was also important: 'A gigantic enemy howitzer requiring two or three railway wagons to accommodate its vast bulk, would form an impressive exhibit without the aid of accessories', claimed the editorial.¹⁸ As Susan Stewart has argued however, the miniature is more likely to offer closure, interiority and domesticity than the gigantic, which is inaccessible to lived experience.¹⁹ The large-scale machinery of war represented a contradiction to the inclusivity of the museum that the editorial article was trying to promote: 'history and experience prove all too clearly that the common fighting-man is apt to be soon forgotten'.²⁰

Some commentators found the public display of war material offensive, and called it a display of 'organised murder'.²¹ Charles ffoulkes' article in the October 1918 issue of *Museums Journal* outlined the methods and principles of collecting material for the museum, and used this opportunity to respond to those who criticised the museum. He claimed that 'art invariably follows the sword', and argued that had William the Conqueror been unsuccessful in the Battle of Hastings, 'we should have had none of the magnificent Norman architecture that we possess and our artistic development would have missed the very valuable impetus that it received from its conquerors'.²² For ffoulkes, war provided not only a means of renewal but also a way in which weapons could reveal their own aesthetic properties. The aestheticisation of the machinery of war he was proposing relied to a great extent on personal memory and association, without which, interest in the exhibits could not be sustained.²³

16. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (London: 1993), p. 152.

17. Crane, Susan, *Museums and Memory*, p. 3.

18. Editorial, 'A National War Museum', *Museums Journal*, 16/11 (May 1917), p. 246.

19. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 70.

20. Editorial, 'A National War Museum', *Museums Journal*, p. 243.

21. For example, Madeley, Charles, 'Local War Museums', *Museums Journal*, 18/4 (October, 1918), p. 64.

22. ffoulkes, Charles, 'War Museums', *Museums Journal*, 18/4 (October, 1918), p. 57.

23. Ibid., p. 59.

However, this did not take account of the potential problems that could arise from investing these personal associations and memories with a national character.

According to ffoulkes the purpose of the museum should be twofold: to exhibit a 'series of weapons for the student of military matters', and to appeal to 'individuals of all classes on account of the intimate personal associations collected round the several exhibits'. However, he saw a problem in the intention to include all classes: the English working classes, he believed, lacked the necessary intelligence to understand the exhibits. Charles ffoulkes made a trip to France to research the way in which they were putting together their own museum of war. On his return, he pointed out that the French working class, in comparison with their English counterparts, 'display far more intelligent appreciation of the exhibits'. The matter of the working-class museum-goer was a point which Frederic Kenyon also emphasised in his address to the museums' conference in Paris in 1921. He argued that the wave of revolutionary spirit evident at that time was due to a sense of historic discontinuity. The working classes needed to be educated in the importance of historical tradition, of a national heritage which the museums could supply.²⁴ This attempt at inclusivity needs to be seen within the context of the wider museological debates at the time when the museum space and exhibitions played an important role in support for class unity.²⁵ Nevertheless, the main consideration for both ffoulkes and Kenyon was not inclusivity but regulation and control.

A number of people feared that the use of war objects as exhibits could result in a potential collision between personal subjectivities and public objectivities. Charles Madeley, director of the Warrington Municipal Museum, warned: 'They are commonly called souvenirs and sometimes trophies, objects that have a tendency to the abnormal rather than the typical, and so cease to be historical.'²⁶ Henry Howorth, President Elect of the Museums Association, argued that the appeal of war relics could only be ephemeral and that the associations they carried could only last for the generation that experienced the war. He claimed that a new generation would 'neither understand the weapons nor the machines that you show them'.²⁷

This opposition to the use of war material made no difference, and at the opening ceremony of the IWM the speeches from both the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the IWM, Alfred Mond, and King George V stressed the importance of exhibiting the machinery of war. Alfred Mond's address explained that each of the chosen exhibits was linked with a specific event or incident. As such, they could become 'memorials' to the men who died amongst them:

In the choice of war material, the endeavour has been made to select among suitable examples those to which a definite honourable history can be attached, thus making them

24. Kenyon, Frederic, 'Museums in Modern Time', *Museums Journal*, 21/2 (August, 1921), p. 29.
25. Coombes, Annie E., 'Ethnography and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities', in Hiller, Susan (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism. Perspectives on Art* (London: 1991), p. 197.
26. Madeley, Charles, 'Local War Museums', p. 64.
27. Howorth, Henry, 'Discussion', *Museums Journal*, 18/4 (October, 1918), p. 68.

also serve as memorials of the heroic men who served them on the field of battle and too often laid their lives beside them.²⁸

The response from King George V also focused on the histories behind the chosen material:

It was indeed a happy inspiration in selecting your exhibits not to seek mere specimens, however perfect, but to choose the very things which had played an actual part in the War and had an individual history which could be recorded and cherished.²⁹

The war exhibits, or the relics or trophies as they were often called,³⁰ and their cherished histories, were to become the embodiment of the memories of the men and the memorials to the dead. Through their direct connection with specific incidents, the articles of war became a personification of the dead men as well as a vehicle for the memories of the survivors. Mieke Bal has argued that on the surface, objects, 'appear as the most 'pure' form of objectivity'.³¹ It is this pure objectivity that the instigators of the IWM were seeking. What was overlooked, however, was the fact that attaching memories to objects of warfare was problematic because of the personal memories that these objects also carried for the servicemen; memories which did not always correlate with the heroic histories credited to them by the museum. As Annie Coombes has observed, the 'cultural object can never be an empty vessel waiting to be filled with meaning'; it can only ever be a 'repository' and is 'replete with meanings that are never imminent but always contingent'.³²

A further point emphasised by both speakers at the opening ceremony of the IWM was the inclusivity of the exhibition. King George V took pains to reassure everybody at the ceremony that the museum was a lasting memorial to common effort and common sacrifice for the whole nation. Modern warfare, according to the King, no longer relied for its success on a few distinguished leaders, but was the result of the 'devoted and heroic work of millions of men and women', who all co-operated as 'parts of one vast living machine'. The museum was 'unique in history' because, as King George V declared: 'It records faithfully and impartially the efforts of all ranks in the field and of all classes at home, the private as well as

28. Mond, Alfred, 'Address to the King', *Third Annual Report of the Committee of the Imperial War Museum*, 1 April 1919 to 2 July 1920, p. 3.
29. King George V, 'Reply to The Address of the Chairman of the Imperial War Museum', *Third Annual Report of the Committee of the Imperial War Museum*, 1 April 1919 to 2 July 1920, pp. 3–4.
30. The terms 'relics' and 'trophies' were often used interchangeably to describe war exhibits from big artillery guns to shells and rifles. They included trophies captured from the enemy as well as British war memorabilia.
31. Bal, Mieke, 'Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting', in Elsner, J. and Cardinal, R. (eds), *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: 1994), p. 99.
32. Coombes, Annie E., 'The Recalcitrant Object', p. 92.

the Commander, the worker in the workshop as well as the statesman in the council chamber.³³

King George V was clearly attempting to promote the exhibits as representative of all cultural groups, in other words, as a consensual display that could tell a unified story of the war, and to endorse the museum as a place of equal access. As Annie Coombes has commented, such 'rhetoric of equality' declares 'objectivity at the expense of a recognition of the multiple political interests at stake'.³⁴ The memory of the war is fixed around the objects that are chosen to be kept, remembered and treasured, erasing both the political struggle of the returning servicemen and the traumatic memories that such objects induced. It becomes what Sharon Macdonald describes as an exercise in 'cultural objectification' which structures a 'modern way of seeing and comprehending the world, as if it were an exhibit'.³⁵

Collecting souvenirs from the Front was a very common occupation. The items that servicemen collected ranged from empty shells and helmets, to rats and voles. This was also an occupation that engaged all classes of society. Susan Stewart has made the claim that the souvenir internalises external experiences and that by collecting it, 'the beast is taken home'.³⁶ The following passages provide some examples of this, and illustrate the significance that such souvenirs had for the collectors in containing and expressing the trauma of war.

Personal/Public: Collecting Souvenirs for the IWM

Major Beckles Willson spent the war years collecting war relics for the IWM. Although he was on an official mission, his collecting became a personal quest that reflected the problems of transposing the personal object to an object of public display, particularly when these objects were invested with his own personal memories. During his service in the Middle East he witnessed the capture of Jerusalem and acquired the white flag of surrender waved by the Turkish and German troops. The story goes that on the day the city was surrendered, Willson was riding back to his camp when he discovered a white flag at the roadside, which he took as a souvenir. Later, the Mayor of Jerusalem identified the flag as the original flag of surrender. Shortly before he died he signed it for Willson.³⁷ The flag, like a painting, was thus authenticated.

Major Willson's hunt for war relics continued with astonishing commitment along the road to Damascus. Between Jerusalem and Haifa he collected 'scores of

guns, machine-guns and some thousands of rifles'. Back on the road to Damascus, 'in order to lose no time', he 'travelled until nearly midnight although the road was very bad'. He stopped at El Kuneitra, which troops had entered a few days earlier, and found the white flag of surrender still flying from the neighbourhood citadel. With the General's permission, he removed the flag, assisted by two orderlies, and brought it to the General who at his request 'kindly certified it'.³⁸

Three hours later, travelling along a road littered with Turkish corpses and carcasses of dead horses, Willson entered the suburbs of Damascus,³⁹ where he asked that the silver-gilt wreath and two banners which Kaiser Wilhelm II had placed on the tomb of Saladin be given to the IWM. From Damascus, he set off for Beirut in search of more trophies. On the way he witnessed yet more death and destruction.⁴⁰ After arriving in Beirut he managed to acquire six naval officer's swords, one of these, 'a beautiful little weapon of curious design'. Willson's report reveals several similar instances of juxtaposing the destruction encountered at the Front with the perceived aesthetic beauty of the war relics. The act of collecting war material seemed to provide a containment for the acts they had inflicted, cleansing them of any association with killing, and framing them within the language of aesthetics and art. Willson only ceased his frenzied criss-crossing of Mesopotamia when he contracted Spanish flu. His collection became a justification for the destruction that had surrounded him. The value he attached to the objects he collected is encapsulated in a letter to Charles Foulkes in which he complains about the way that the items he had sent to the IWM were treated. He asserts that the relics are 'of the very greatest human and historic interest and importance' and that he was deeply astonished to find that they were not to be exhibited and would be replaced by 'official photographs and other tame repetitions and reproductions'.⁴¹

How can Willson's authenticating, aestheticising and de-contextualising activities be explained? His account of the battle at Ypres goes some way towards providing an answer. In his memoirs, he describes the attack as 'hell broke loose'. The noise became engrained in his memory. The blast from the detonations turned from 'stunning' to 'overwhelming' as it continued, deafening the ears and paralysing the nerves. He reports that 'dazed men groped about in the storm trying to save the surrounding earth from engulfing them', and that two shells collided in mid-air, 'with a shriek like a woman in agony'. The guns, he describes as 'merciless hidden machines belching forth fragments of insensate metal'.⁴² It was one of these fragments that killed his commander, a man he much admired. 'I never saw a finer

33. King George V, 'Reply to The Address of the Chairman of the Imperial War Museum', pp. 3–4.

34. Coombes, Annie E., 'The recalcitrant object', p. 105.

35. Macdonald, Sharon, 'Introduction', in Macdonald, Sharon (ed.), *The Politics of Display. Museums, Science and Culture* (London: 1998), p. 7.

36. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 134.

37. Willson, Beckles, letter to IWM, *Major Beckles Willson Correspondence 1917–1919*, IWM Central Files, A4/4.

38. Willson, Beckles, Report to Martin Conway (no date), *Major Beckles Willson Correspondence 1917–1919*, IWM Central Files, A4/4.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Willson, Beckles, *In the Ypres Salient. The Story of a Fortnight's Canadian Fighting. June 2–16, 1916* (London: 1916), p. 71.

death' another man told Willson. 'He looked very brave and handsome up there, outlined against the sky, the only figure on the bank above, his helmet off, and his face very pale and blazing with anger, and his right arm pointing forward.'⁴³

The objects Willson collected offered a way of taming the horrors of the battlefield. Susan Stewart has argued that the 'memory of the body is replaced by the memory of the object' and that the object then becomes 'saturated with meanings that will never be fully revealed to us'.⁴⁴ The containment of the battle is achieved through the collecting of those machines and fragments of metal that caused the destruction. This explains Willson's dismay at finding out that his exhibits were 'thrown about carelessly', that they were 'wrongly labelled or with missing labels', and most alarmingly, that many of them were 'consigned to the cellars'.⁴⁵

Collecting Mammals

The case of Philip Gosse offers another example of an attempt to contain the horrors of the battlefield. Philip Gosse volunteered as a military doctor at the outbreak of the war and his memoir provides an insight into his collection of artefacts from the Front. As with the memoirs discussed in the previous chapter, he begins his account with an apology for the absence of horrors in his text.⁴⁶ The title of his book, he explains, should have been 'A Solace of Birds', since without the birds he 'dare not think' how he should have 'got through the War at all'. A friend who read his manuscript told him that it should have included more horrors. Gosse's reply to the friend was that he could 'remember no real horrors, though of birds he could remember so much'. He continues:

The mangled corpse is forgotten, but the warbler with its nest and eggs is remembered. I think the reason for this is largely that at the time the 'horrors' were so beastly, so ugly, that one got into the habit of putting them aside by concentrating on the birds, so that now, after so many years the memory retains the birds and to a large extent got rid of the rest.⁴⁷

Gosse's collecting provided him with 'stability of mind'. He admitted that the situation at the Front tended to make one 'nervous and apprehensive' unless one lacked a 'tiresome imagination'. However, with Gosse, the memory of birds was not of the tranquil pastime of bird watching, but of his encounters with taxidermy. He

43. Ibid.

44. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 134.

45. Willson, Beckles, Letter to Charles ffoulkes, 28 October 1917, *Major Beckles Willson Correspondence 1917–1919*, IWM Central Files, A4/4.

46. Gosse, Philip, *Memoirs of A Camp-Follower* (London: 1934). The memoirs were compiled from letters to his parents, which he found after their death. Philip Gosse was the son of the writer Edmund Gosse.

47. Ibid., p. xiv.

describes the first time he came across someone at the Front who was 'skinning a vole', claiming that immediately, he knew that 'here was a man after my own heart'. He subsequently contacted Oldfield Thomas of the Natural History Museum to enquire whether the museum was well provided with specimens of small mammals from Flanders. Thomas wrote back to say that they were in great need of specimens from Western Europe. He enclosed some museum labels and some arsenic soap for preserving the skins. This was to be the start of Gosse's taxidermic adventure at the Western Front.

In his memoirs, Gosse describes the procedure of catching and skinning the animal. Each evening he went out with his haversack full of traps and a piece of ration for bait. By dawn the next day he would be off again on his rounds, collecting the traps together with the captured mammals. Days of disappointment were followed by days of 'discovery', when he would 'discover some small animal the like of which you had never seen before'. On returning to the camp he would carefully examine and measure each specimen and record on a label its measurement in millimetres, taking the length from the point of the nose to the stump of the tail, noting the length of the tail, not including any hairs at the tip, and the length of the ears and paws. He would also make a note of the place and date that the animal had been caught, along with whether the animal was male or female. Having completed the label, he began the actual skinning. The most difficult part, and the part that required greatest patience and practice, was removing the bone from the tail of a mouse and inserting in its place a long thin wire on which cotton wool had been spun, which tapered in thickness to correspond with the bone that had been withdrawn. Once this had been done, the animal stuffed with army cotton wool and the skin sewn up with needle and thread, it had to be pinned out on a board to dry and a label attached to its leg. It all sounds 'very easy' wrote Gosse, but in 'taxidermy, even the skinning of mice is quite an art, or certainly a craft'.⁴⁸

Susan Stewart, commenting on the collecting activities of the American collector Charles Wilson Peale in the eighteenth century, observes that his interest in taxidermy 'served as an antidote to surplus meaning'.⁴⁹ The captured animal can be seen as a metaphor for the ugliness and horror of the war. The measuring and labelling of the captured animal combined with the horror of that moment provides Gosse with the power to contain that horror as well as the means to measure it. The act of skinning the animal and emptying it of its insides, the actual viscera of the war, can be compared with the act of the modeller, as discussed previously. It is interesting that Gosse does not claim taxidermy to be a science, but an art or a craft.

Further on in his memoir, Gosse recounts some horrific scenes. In one scene following a raid, a man whose face was blown off in the blast was brought to

48. Ibid., p. 9.

49. Stewart, Susan, 'Death and Life, in that Order, in the Works of Charles Willson Peale', Elsner, J. and Cardinal, R. (eds), *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: 1994), p. 211.

Gosse for medical treatment. He writes: 'It was the first time I had seen such a thing and it was very dreadful. His face was not merely skinned, but entirely gone, slashed off by a splinter of a steel shell. He died in the cellar.'⁵⁰ Gosse anticipates the question of how a surgeon could be shocked by such a sight, pointing out that the surgeon is 'no more callous than other men, but has learned to hide or suppress his feelings'. Making the first incision with his scalpel was something that he found particularly upsetting: 'I always had to glance away from that one moment. Once the first cut had been made I lost all feeling that the subject being operated on was a human being and it became simply a case a piece of living anatomy.'⁵¹

Gosse writes of the death of his 'dear friend McKerrow' and McKerrow's 'inseparable companion, his sergeant'. The death made him 'both angry and sad', although compared to an otherwise dense reminiscence these deaths are given only a short mention. As in the 'first incision', which he found distressing, he was compelled to look away. However, his taxidermy meant that he had to perform that 'first incision' on many occasions. Like in the cases of acting out discussed in the previous chapter, he kept repeating the act he was unable to contain within the boundaries of the self.

Gosse published an earlier memoir in 1927. This was illustrated by his wife, Sylvia, and like his later memoir, 'gave no hint of bloody warfare'. Gosse wanted the reader to 'fritter away their time on the printed page'. Moreover, he wanted the words to 'form a mere frame to the illustrations'. The book records three incidents that took place at a small French village behind the line in 1916. The first incident involves an affair between a young corporal and the female proprietor of a small cafe; the other two incidents involve stories of collecting little mammals.⁵² What is interesting, is that Gosse's wife has provided the illustrations, which implies that there was a sharing of the experiences – albeit the acceptable memories – at the Front. This contradicts arguments that there was no sharing of experiences by the ex-servicemen with their families once they returned from the Front, and that there was a need to forget these experiences.⁵³ Rather than a deliberate lack of communication, it was often an inability to communicate the traumatic experiences of the war. In the case of Gosse, beauty has replaced the horror of the Front and a female interpretation of a very 'manly experience' has emerged, which is significant when one considers that Philip Gosse insisted that the words formed a frame for the illustrations. A similar process takes place in the narratives that follow.

50. Gosse, Philip, *Memoirs of A Camp-Follower*, p. 24.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

52. Gosse, Philip, *Rest Billets* (London: 1927).

53. Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: 1995) and Gregory, Adrian, *The Silence of Memory. Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford: 1994).

Collecting, Authenticating, and Containing the Trauma of War

Lieut. G. N. Holt's letters to his parents provide us with an insight into the life of another middle-class officer at the Front.⁵⁴ He wrote to his parents after finding a case from an anti-aircraft shell, describing the shell as 'one of our own "Archies"'. He claimed that he had polished it up 'nicely' and now considered it as 'quite good souvenir'. He had even thought of the new use it could acquire in his parents' home: it 'will make a decent paper weight', he wrote. Significantly, he stressed that when his parents received the shell it 'will be just the same as it was when I picked it up'. The only difference, he pointed out, was that 'I have cleaned it up' and 'the shell part of it went off in the air'.⁵⁵ What Holt had picked up was the remains of the shell after it had reached its target of the enemy line. In polishing it, he had purified it of its original use, transforming it from a killing instrument into a desk accessory, a paperweight, and a symbol of knowledge, education and domesticity. But Holt also wanted it to remain authentic, and for his parents to know that it was still the same shell that he had picked up from enemy lines. Susan Stewart has argued that the souvenir will not 'function without the supplementary narrative discourse that both attaches it to its origins and creates a myth with regard to those origins'.⁵⁶ The authenticity of Lieut. Holt's shell is given in more detail in a letter to his parents written three days later, during which Holt describes a successful sniping incident. 'I also had some quite good "sniping" yesterday and put one Boche out for certain,' he writes. 'I hit him in the back at about 35 yards and he was clean out.'⁵⁷

The way that the souvenir was acquired was also important for the collectors. It represented a sense of adventure, control and achievement in a landscape of destruction and chaos. Holt also sent his parents a German trench notice board, relating how he had found the object. He and his men had been on a night lighting patrol during which they crossed eight hundred yards of No-Man's-Land. Several obstacles had made the journey difficult, but he writes: 'I really enjoyed myself.'⁵⁸ The significance of the souvenir is made greater by its direct association with a genuine adventure.

Sometimes men would go to great lengths to collect souvenirs. V. E. Upton, who was on a hospital ship in the Dardanelles, was extremely anxious to get ashore

54. Holt, Lieut. G. N., IWM, Con Shelf, Letter, 6 December 1916.

Holt comments in a letter to his parents that although it was 'bad enough' for the officer, the officer's life 'was paradise compared with that of the men's'. Holt used to get his weekly food parcels initially from Fortnum & Mason and later from Selfridges as he found Fortnum & Mason unreliable in their orders. He used to send his dirty washing back home to be laundered. For Christmas, he asked his mother to send him 'white American cloth' to cover the mess festive table.

55. *Ibid.*, 13 December 1916.

56. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 136.

57. Holt, Lieut. G. N., IWM, Con Shelf, Letter, 16 December 1916.

58. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1918.

to collect 'curios' and took a 'small sack ashore' for the occasion. Writing to his wife, he describes the difficulties he had to go through. After landing on the beach and failing to find any souvenirs, he and the other men entered a communication trench. This took them to an opening where: 'The Turkish dead were lying all over the field just as they fell some with arms off, legs off etc. It was an awful sight. Everywhere round about were hundreds of Turkish shells and shrapnel. Bullets were lying about in thousands like pebbles.'⁵⁹ Amidst all this Upton managed to collect three shells and a number of spent bullets. This was despite the fact that, he points out, 'all the time we had to keep ducking down on our hands and knees as snipers were firing all the time'. He adds: 'you get used to it and take no notice'. Back at the hospital ship Upton and his fellow soldiers had to stretch 1,116 patients on board; double the amount they were supposed to carry. Seventeen more died that night.

O. C. M. Haines was stationed in Cairo with the Royal Army Medical Corps and sent a stream of souvenirs to his parents, especially his mother. The size of the collection led him to suggest to his parents that 'you will have to get a show case to display them in and charge 1d to see them'. His souvenirs were divided into two categories: 'Orientalist curiosities' from Cairo, and war relics. In a letter to his parents he describes how he acquired a 'Sikh's bangle' which, he said, 'of course has no intrinsic value' but which he declared 'a great curio'. During the night he had gone to the mosque, where he saw a group of Sikhs 'all squatting down singing and of course it wasn't long before I was in the circle too'. Once in the circle, one of the men 'put his arm around my neck', although Haines adds in brackets, 'I felt creepy as it was dark'. He admired the bangle that the man was wearing, at which point the man promptly removed the bangle and 'forced it on my wrist saying "*backsheesh*"'. Haines translates the word for his parents as 'something for nothing'. In fact, its meaning is tip: something for services rendered. As Susan Stewart argues, the souvenir 'must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by a narrative discourse'. What is particularly important, according to Stewart, is that this is a 'narrative discourse, which articulates the play of desire'.⁶⁰ We will never know what happened to merit Haines being given the bangle as a tip, but it is significant that he chooses to send it to his mother as if it is a love token. After relating the acquisition of the bangle, the mood of the letter changes. Haines describes the patients he has to treat every day at the hospital: 'The wounds are terrible, some with no elbow joints, some with a finger or so left and the hand all shattered. There were eleven operations today.'⁶¹ In another letter home, he writes: 'It is nothing to see a great gaping wound as big as your fist in a man's arm, and to see the shattered bone and tendons all exposed. It doesn't upset me a bit now.'⁶² He then proceeds once again with his acquisition of 'curios':

59. Upton, V. E., IWM, 81/35/1, 30 August 1915.

60. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 136.

61. Haines, O. C. M., IWM, 95/16/1, Letter, 2 June 1915.

62. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1915.

This week I am sending you a curious curio. It is the scoring book of a Turkish crackshot. All in Arabic. One of the wounded gave it to me. Number 2 enclosure is a cigarette card which looks as though a little piece was torn out; well it was taken out by a piece of shrapnel casing. The man who gave it to me was wounded in the shoulder and the shrapnel passed right through his pocket case, letters, pay-book etc. and just tore [sic] this piece out.⁶³

Haines often describes the curios with affection – 'such a lovely bomb',⁶⁴ or a 'lovely piece of Turkish shrapnel'⁶⁵ – and maintains in his letters that he 'longed for mother to see' them. He usually had suggestions on the new use to which the objects could be put – for example, a Turkish cartridge case could be made into a pencil case.⁶⁶

For another serviceman, W. M. Floyd, the collection of curios went a step further. Like Haines, he was stationed at a military hospital in France and his description of wounds forms a major part of his diary. Unlike Haines, however, Floyd is from a working-class background.⁶⁷ His description of one wounded patient reveals the conflation of disgust and desire he felt:

Had patient yesterday young chap about 19, with fair, clear skin large eyes who had bullet in neck, lying in bed with eyes wide open, lips trembling like as if going to cry every minute. Had a bandage around neck and head, and with the dim light of the candle, I thought he would make the prettiest nun I've seen. I had to look once or twice to see if it wasn't a girl!⁶⁸

Sometimes his accounts reveal the sheer horror of the wounds he has seen:

Side of face blown away. Oh Lord it made it look I tell you. His mouth was wide open couldn't shut it and looking down into his mouth could see all black inside ... side loose could be pushed any shape when wiping mouth clean with lint and cotton wool. Got awful job to understand him when talking with mouth open.⁶⁹

Floyd's favourite job was 'cleaning up the operating room', especially 'after taking a leg off' because it meant that he could collect souvenirs. He had a 'piece of bone' from an officer's leg that had been amputated as well as a collection of surgeon's needles.⁷⁰ When German patients were at the hospital he would retrieve buttons from

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, 27 February 1916.

65. *Ibid.*, 11 May 1915.

66. *Ibid.*, 9 July 1915.

67. Floyd, W. M., IWM, 87/33/1. Transcript of original diary. During his embarkation for France at Southampton Floyd's class is evident in the following statement which appeared in his diary: 'At the station before departing for Southampton the Lord Mayor of Cardiff came up and shook hands with me. As a rule I never have much to do with this class of man.'

68. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

their coats.⁷¹ Susan Stewart has argued that the souvenirs of the 'mortal body are not so much a nostalgic celebration of the past as they are an erasure of the significance of history'. According to Stewart, souvenirs of death 'disrupt and disclaim' the continuity of personal narrative.⁷²

As well as acquiring curios from his activities as a soldier, Holt also purchased a number of objects from the Front, which he sent to his parents. In one letter, he wrote: 'I have also bought a rather novel ashtray made with a Boche 77 shell fuse, which I think you will like. It is most ingenious.'⁷³ Holt was one of a number of men who purchased objects made out of used war material, known as Trench Art.⁷⁴ Nicholas Saunders, in an analysis of these items, comments that the broken fragmented world which the war produced found its miniature in metal Trench Art. These objects provided 'portable pieces of war made into whole items of peace'. According to Saunders, the grotesque nature of war was not denied but rather aestheticised. However, the process of aestheticising is one of denial, of de-contextualising the object from the world of war and destruction and transforming it into the sphere of art and aesthetics. This links with a further comment from Saunders, that 'the strange conglomerations of shells and bullets were modernism embodied'.⁷⁵ Modernism during the inter-war years, one could argue, was a process of de-contextualisation and disavowal.

The War Photographic Album

Souvenirs brought back from the Front were not the only vehicle for the traumatic narratives that the servicemen wanted to communicate to those around them. The photograph and the photographic album, like the souvenir, provided the means by which the narrative could unfold and become domesticated. Captain L. Gameson⁷⁶ created seven volumes of photographic albums and wrote two volumes of memoirs. He served as a medical officer in the Western Front from 1916 to 1920. In the introduction to his memoirs he outlines his writing process and its association with the photographic albums. His memoirs were based on a diary kept from 1916–18, along with other documents and letters from that period. The albums comprised photographs he had taken himself, and official photographs. Gameson began to 'order the material' and write his first draft in 1922, when his memories were 'reasonably trustworthy and he still had access

to a 'number of the survivors involved'. Between 1936 and 1937 he rewrote his memoirs. He then 'put the draft aside for some fifteen years' before completing it in its final form of a 'continuous, if patchwork narrative, uninterrupted by conventional chapters'. Like Lt. Col. Hutchison, Gameson's rewriting of his memoirs provided a way of acting out the trauma he had experienced. Gameson revisited his memories and in particular his photographic albums over a period of forty years. The gap in time between the actual event and the final version of the memoir provided him with the opportunity to 'reflect back on youthful naivety and liberality of autobiographical admissions', which he found 'unsettling' but 'sincere when written'.⁷⁷

Gameson's autobiographical admissions will be discussed in more detail, particularly in relation to the structuring of the photographic album. As in the case of other combatants, his war accounts juxtaposed death and destruction with the comradeship and male companionship he had encountered. Like Gosse, he was a medical officer who was profoundly affected by the scenes he witnessed. What makes Gameson's memories intriguing is the way in which once again, death and destruction are often presented hand in hand with desire.

At the start of his memoir he writes that he is getting tired of the smell of blood, but proceeds to describe the wounds of the men in front of him:

They lie inert, lids half open and eyeballs rolling in seemingly deliberate manner that has an unpleasant suggestion of purpose. The breathing is stertorous. It rattles the mucous that cannot be reached, with the rhythm of a machine. The toneless face is white. The flaccid cheeks and lips are sucked in and puffed out by the dreadful rhythmic stertor. Blood, that earlier had oozed from mouth and nose, is clotted to form a half-mask by the time the patients get here.⁷⁸

The albums follow a similar structure to the memoir, that is, a continuous, patchwork narrative. Patricia Holland has argued that the photographic album in the late nineteenth century was a means of portraying 'domestic sensibility'.⁷⁹ Gameson's albums depart from this by also displaying images of death and destruction. The photographs become what Linda Haverty Rugg has described as the 'physical evidence' that 're-anchor the subject in the physical world', or an 'exertion of control over self-image'.⁸⁰

On the first page Gameson explains that the photographs are arranged in a chronological order. He also explains that the album is there to illustrate the manuscript and not to replace it. The text that accompanies the photographs in the albums seems similarly problematic for Gameson and has been crossed through a

71. Ibid., p. 11.

72. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 139.

73. Holt, Lieut. G.N., IWM, Con Shelf, Letter, 19 November 1917.

74. Only very recently have these objects been studied in detail. Nicholas Saunders was the first to offer an anthropological approach to their categorisation and understanding. See Saunders, Nicholas, 'Bodies of Metal, Shells of Memory', *Journal of Material Culture*, 5(1) (2000), 43–67.

75. Ibid., p. 62.

76. Gameson, Captain L., IWM, P396.

77. Ibid., *Memoir*, p. i.

78. Ibid., p. 12.

79. Holland, Patricia, "'Sweet is to Scan ...'" Personal Photographs and Popular Photography', in Wells, L. (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (London: 2001), p. 132.

80. Haverty Rugg, Linda, *Picturing Ourselves. Photography and Autobiography* (Chicago: 1997), p. 2.

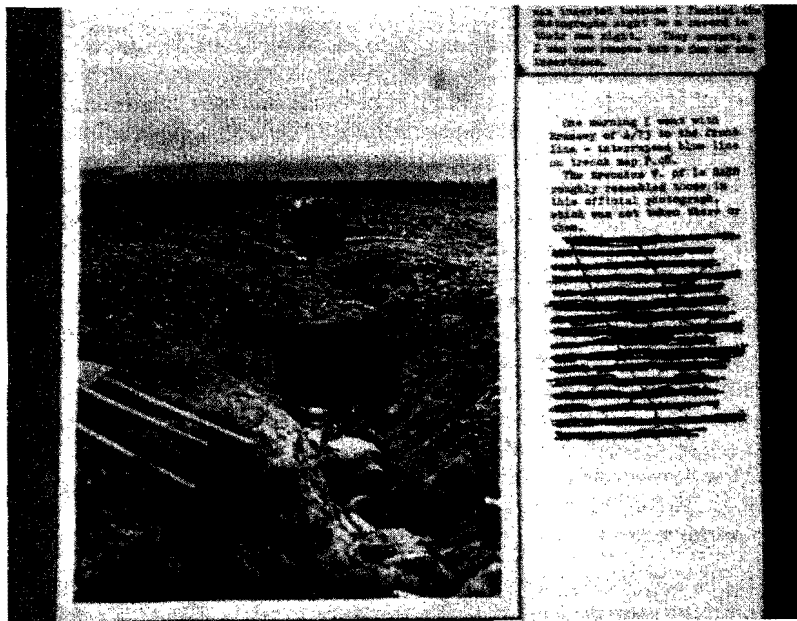


Figure 4.2 Captain Gameson, L., Photographic Album, p. 50. Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, P396

number of times (*Illustration 4.2*). The albums start with his work at the London hospital after his enlistment as an officer. Here, he is pictured with three female nurses, the only female figures to feature in the entire seven volumes other than his fiancée. The photo of the nurses is followed by a photograph of his batman, with whom he appears to have had a close friendship. The first and second volumes of the albums are devoted almost entirely to the destruction that Gameson witnessed at the Front. Gameson indexes each photo to a very detailed map. On page 32 (*Illustration 4.3*) the map pinpoints where to locate a series of photographs of mutilated bodies. Donna Haraway has argued that maps can be seen as fetishes and as such they make 'things seem clear and under control'.⁸¹ By pinpointing the traumatic event on the map, Gameson is attempting to contain the event and bring it under control.

The visual is used by Gameson as a form of evidence for the narrative but also as a means by which the experience can be located, made tangible and hence contained within the boundaries of the map and the frame of the photograph. Taking private photographs at the Front was forbidden and any cameras were

81. Haraway, Donna, 'Deanimations: Maps and Portraits of Life Itself', in Brah, A. and Coombes, A. E. (eds), *Hybridity and Its Discontents. Politics, Science, Culture* (London: 2000), p. 114.

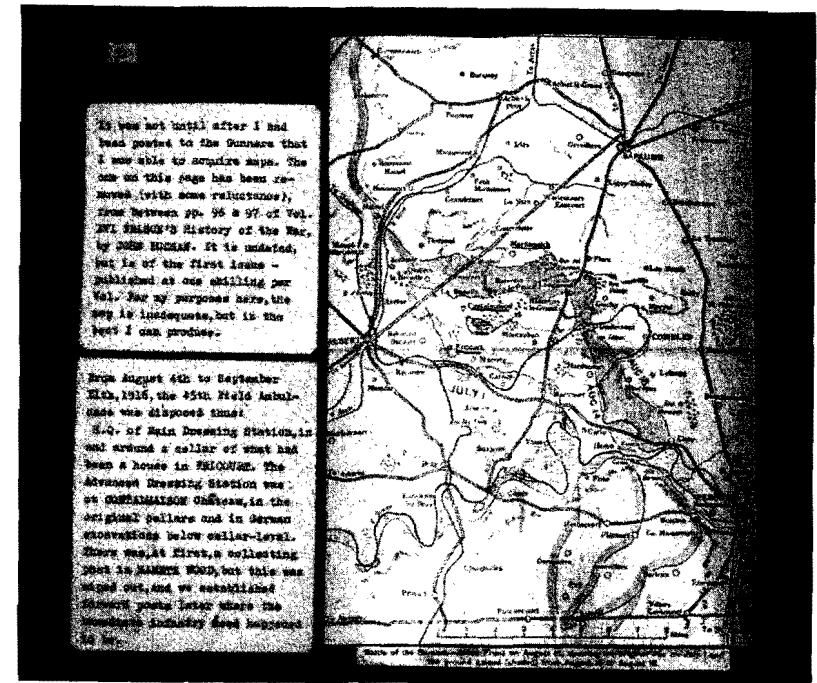


Figure 4.3 Captain Gameson, L., Photographic Album, p. 32. Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, P396

confiscated. Like Gameson, however, the officers – and it was mostly officers who could afford to have a camera – found ways of taking private pictures. The official photograph provided a means of representing the atrocities at the Front but also, because of its official status, provides an official unquestionable proof of the events. The caption for the official photo on page 44 (*Illustration 4.4*) reads: 'One of my first domestic jobs at *Bazentin-le-Petit* was to clear an enemy dug-out for the HQ staff. The above official photo although not taken at the Somme represents things as they then were.'⁸²

The photograph on page 46 was taken by Gameson. Its caption reads:

Near the rubble of our church there was a horse with its head clean-severed from its body. It was not a practice of mine to photograph corpses and human wreckage. Most of the photos in the following books are of a mild, domestic kind. I well fancy to put in a few that hint at the less delightful aspect of war!⁸³

82. Gameson, Captain L., IWM, P396, *Album*, p. 44.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

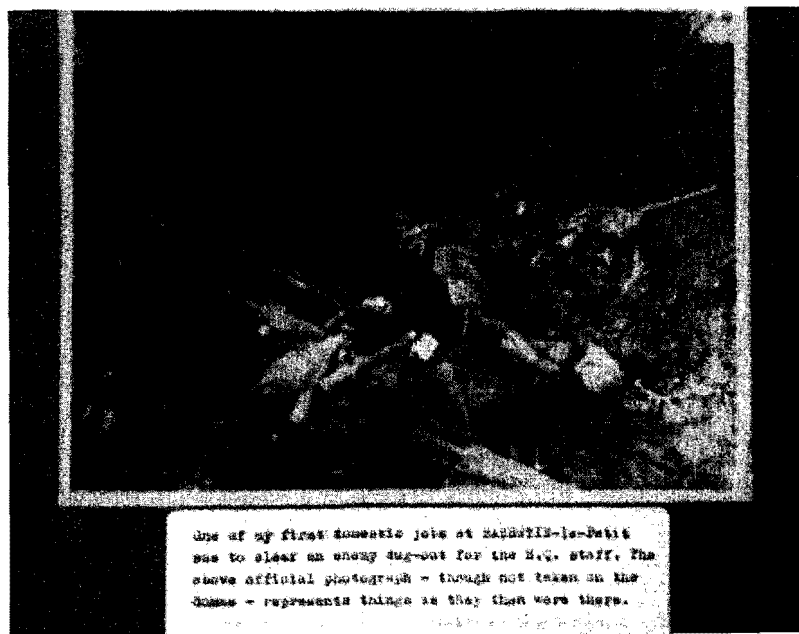


Figure 4.4 Captain Gameson, L., *Photographic Album*, p. 44. Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, P396

Photos displaying the atrocities of war continue for another twenty pages after this one. Gameson then writes: 'In the next five volumes there will be no more photographs of unpleasantness. I cannot stress too strongly that only a hint has been given of the actual conditions obtaining.'⁸⁴

The point about giving only a hint of the atrocities of the war is made in most of the memoirs. Those serving in the war needed and felt compelled to narrate the destruction, but there was always a reservation in doing so, which makes the impact of the narrative above, and in this instance, of the photograph, even greater for the reader/viewer. As Gameson promises, the pages that follow do not include any scenes of mutilation and death. Instead, there is a mixture of devastated landscapes (*Illustration 4.5*) and men in uniform in various poses (*Illustration 4.6*). Gameson does not make such a clear distinction in the narrative between mutilation and landscapes. The visual can be compartmentalised, categorised and contained in a more tangible way, whereas in the narrative desire and disgust can coexist. Gameson writes:

84. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

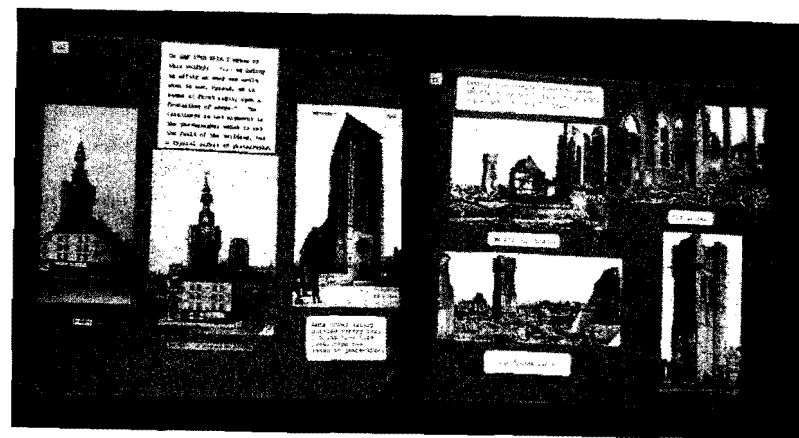


Figure 4.5 Captain Gameson, L., *Photographic Album*, p. 10. Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, P396

In the last lot [of wounded] is a surprisingly beautiful youth, as youths just occasionally can surprisingly be: long lashes, straight nose, finely finished limbs and so on. He was oozing frothing filth. Would the woman who wished him good-bye press now her lips to the clotted slime about his mouth?⁸⁵

A special relationship develops between Gameson and another officer, the 'babe', as he calls him. They exchange little notes which are signed with phrases such as 'Your angel! Babe,' and which Gameson went on to treasure for the rest of his life. In the memoir Gameson describes his feelings of reverence and tenderness for the officer, who also appears in photos of groups of soldiers in later albums. The photographs of the men in uniform, due to Gameson's feelings for this officer, take on a special meaning. They provide what Leo Bersani has described as the 'desiring skin': the homosexuality without sexuality, desire that is satisfied merely by the proximity of the other, at the most by the other's touch.⁸⁶ The photograph with its membranous, skin-like qualities can represent the approximation of the desiring skin. As Linda Haverty Rugg has argued, 'autobiographical texts and photographs indicate both an absence of the body and presence of life; they announce life in the midst of death'.⁸⁷ For Gameson they represent the proximity of the male body and the tenderness of male sociality. They are the tactile memory traces of his desiring skin.

85. *Ibid.*, *Memoir*, p. 12.

86. This concept was analysed in more detail in the Chapter 3 in relation to Lt.Col. G. S. Hutchison and the journal *The Superman*. See Bersani, Leo, *Homos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1995), p. 121.

87. Haverty Rugg, Linda, *Picturing Ourselves*, p. 27.



Figure 4.6 Captain Gameson, L., Photographic Album, p. 157. Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, P396

How was the private collecting of souvenirs and photographs from the Front represented at the IWM? It is clear that the kind of objects collected by the servicemen played a very minor role in the exhibition. To this day, these items are tucked away in a corner of the museum. As we know, the objects that were favoured were large military equipment and artillery guns. According to Stewart, 'we are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow'.⁸⁸ Seen in the museum, the guns are de-contextualised and aestheticised. The function of the collection, as Susan Stewart has argued, 'is the creation of a new context' which stands in a 'metaphorical rather than a contiguous relation to the world of everyday life'. The collection 'represents a hermetic world'.⁸⁹

Recycling Guns

The exhibition at the IWM focused on instruments of warfare. During the war, guns and other instruments of warfare were loaned across the country to help promote the war effort and raise money. An internal report of the IWM highlights the way

88. Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*, p. 71.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 152.



Figure 4.7 Display of War Relics along the Mall, London (no date, probably 1916–17). Imperial War Museum Photographic Archive

in which the 'souvenirs of war' had a direct appeal for the public that was 'almost magic'. The photographs from a display of artillery guns along the Mall (*Illustration 4.7*) in London gives a sense of the appeal claimed by the report. The photograph of the mother with her baby, sitting astride the field gun while her small boy climbs on its barrel, provides the viewer with a pacified image of the gun. The absence of a father figure, who was possibly killed in the war by a similar gun, is noticeable, but the children bring a sense of playfulness to the photo and the newborn baby provides a sense of hope for the future. As a result, the gun is cleansed and abstracted from its previous use and endowed with a magical appeal. The foggy London weather that forms the setting to the image contributes to the sense of the sublime.

Such images were able to arouse in the 'stay-at-home British taxpayer a more definite emotion' that was otherwise impossible with the 'cold appeal of print' alone. However, even without their histories their interest for the public was undiminished: 'Other exhibits have no history save the eloquent evidence of shattered mechanism and the mud of the battlefields. These relics are attractive in no aesthetic sense but one and all possess a grim absorbing interest.'⁹⁰

90. Loan Exhibitions 1918–1919, IWM, Central Files, A5/2, no date. It is interesting to note that the IWM report noted some reservations as to the effectiveness of these objects on the returning servicemen.

Towns and cities across Britain also made their own requests to borrow or be given war relics that would stand as memorials to the dead. G. Stewart of Haylake requested a gun for the town to 'perpetuate the memory of the gallantry displayed' by one of its inhabitants, Sgt. Gousley REA, who had been awarded the Victoria Cross.⁹¹ The Keighley Local Central War Savings Committee requested use of the war relics 'in connection with the specific effort to stimulate the sale of National War Bonds'.⁹² Meanwhile, the secretary of the Dundee Postmen's War Memorial Fund praised the Trophies Committee on the success of its exhibition of guns: 'We had four captured guns sent from Croydon, which were the main attraction. Altogether the show was a great success financially and otherwise.'⁹³

Reports from other exhibitions of war trophies endorsed their use as public attractions. The West Houghton Prisoners of War Fund reported that the 'trophies proved very attractive especially to the youths of the district'. An exhibition of war memorabilia organised in Leicester elicited the comment that the 'war relics were of a distinct help to the popularity of the exhibition, particularly the more unusual things'. The Faversham War Savings Committee reported that 'the Howitzer has proved a great attraction in our recent war savings week'.⁹⁴ One of the most interesting requests came from Lord Robert's Memorial Workshops Committee. The workshops provided work for people who had been wounded during the war, and the committee asked for help to raise funds for the workshops and stimulate sales of their products.⁹⁵ War relics also served educational purposes, such as 'inculcating a larger spirit of patriotism and pride to the British Empire'. A letter from the Brigadier General of the 2nd Training Reserve Brigade to the IWM called for the loan of war relics as a 'graphic aid' to lectures given to reservists.⁹⁶

Recycling provided a further use for the relics. In 1919 the IWM received an application from the Wolseley Memorial Committee for guns that could be melted down to provide metal for a statue of Field Marshal Wolseley.⁹⁷ There was also a request for war relics that could be melted down to produce the Victoria Cross.⁹⁸ The history of the Victoria Cross has an interesting bearing on the association between war relics, their recycling and gallantry. The Victoria Cross was instigated in 1856 by Queen Victoria because at the time there was no award for 'recognising the gallantry' of officers of the lower grades and non-commissioned officers and soldiers. Previous merits had been awarded for long service rather than for bravery in action or distinction before the enemy; the new award was for those who 'by their valour have particularly signalled themselves'. Queen Victoria's instructions

91. War Trophies Committee, IWM, Central Files, A1/4, 2 May 1918.

92. War Trophies General File IA, IWM, Central Files, A4/4, 22 February 1918.

93. *Ibid.*, 25 July 1918.

94. Loan Exhibitions 1918–1919.

95. War Trophies, General File IA, 15 December 1917.

96. War Trophies, General File IA, 3 February 1918.

97. War Trophies Committee, 25 July 1918.

98. *Ibid.*, 8 November 1917.

set out in detail the circumstances under which the medal was to be awarded and what constituted gallantry and valour. The medal would be in the form of a Maltese Cross, with the Royal Crest at the centre and underneath, the inscription 'For Valour'.⁹⁹ What was particularly important was that the medal was to be made from recycled metal – specifically, from bronze from a gun captured in the Crimean War. Because of the unprecedented number of medals given out during the First World War the original gunmetal had begun to run low, which accounts for the request for more guns to be recycled. In view of the large number of guns at Croydon, where the war relics and trophies were stored, and the maintenance expenses this incurred, the request came for 10,000 machine guns to be 'disposed off as scrap'.¹⁰⁰

Certain groups were not permitted to receive war trophies. Sending trophies to Ireland was conditional on the items being 'unserviceable and not repairable' because of the political situation in Ireland at the time.¹⁰¹ Sending trophies to ex-servicemen's organisations was considered even more dangerous. One of the associations, the Comrades of the Great War, asked for trophies for one of their fundraising events in Scotland. The application was refused. Writing to Major Pritchard of the Comrades of the Great War, Charles ffoulkes said that after having consulted with Martin Conway, the decision was that: 'In view of the present activities of all the soldiers associations and also the undoubted political activities of the other two [ex-servicemen's associations] it would be inadvisable for us to send out trophies to any of the three [associations]'.¹⁰² What this incident also points to is a contradiction between the apparent aestheticisation of the guns and their real function. It was only as objects of curiosity and, to a certain extent, admiration and de-contextualised, that they were allowed to serve a purpose.

Exhibiting Guns

The guns in the exhibition at the Imperial War Museum were displayed in the main atrium of Crystal Palace and formed the major attraction. A short film of the opening ceremony of the IWM¹⁰³ follows part of the ceremony, including the arrival of King George V and the Queen, as they walk through the galleries. On entering the main atrium, King George V stops in front of one of the field guns (*Illustration 4.8*) and points it out to the Queen. The camera then observes the other visitors who, taking the King's lead, also pause to admire the gun (*Illustration 4.9*). Mieke Bal has argued

99. Warrant Instituting the Cross, PRO WO 98/1, quoted in Crook, Michael, *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross. A Study in Administrative History* (Kent: 1975), p. 14.

100. War Trophies Committee, IWM, Central Files, A1/4, Extra Ordinary Meeting of the War Office Trophies Committee, No date.

101. War Trophies Committee, 26 September 1918.

102. ffoulkes to Major Pritchard, Loan Exhibitions 1918–1919, Central Files, A5/2, 10 December 1918.

103. IWM film archives.



Figure 4.8 King George V pointing to one of the artillery guns, film still from a short film of the opening ceremony of the first exhibition of the IWM. Imperial War Museum Film Archive

that gestures which point to an object and seem to say 'Look', often imply 'That's how it is'. The instruction to 'look' acknowledges the visual availability of the object on view; 'that's how it is' recognises, or acknowledges the authority of the person who has pointed out the item. Singling something out for attention creates a dichotomy between subject and object, which enables the subject to make a statement about the object and the object to substantiate that statement.¹⁰⁴ The implied statement that King George V made in pointing to the gun was of the importance he attributed to it. The gun became imbued with meaning, ritual and majesty.

In the sequence that follows, the camera closes in on an officer who is looking at one of the guns and reading the label in front of it. None of the footage gives any prominence to the other exhibits. The press reports leading up to and following the opening of the museum saw the guns as the main attraction. *The Observer* wrote that the exhibition was not intended as a 'technical display' but

104. Bal, Mieke, *Double Exposure the Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London: 1996), p. 2.

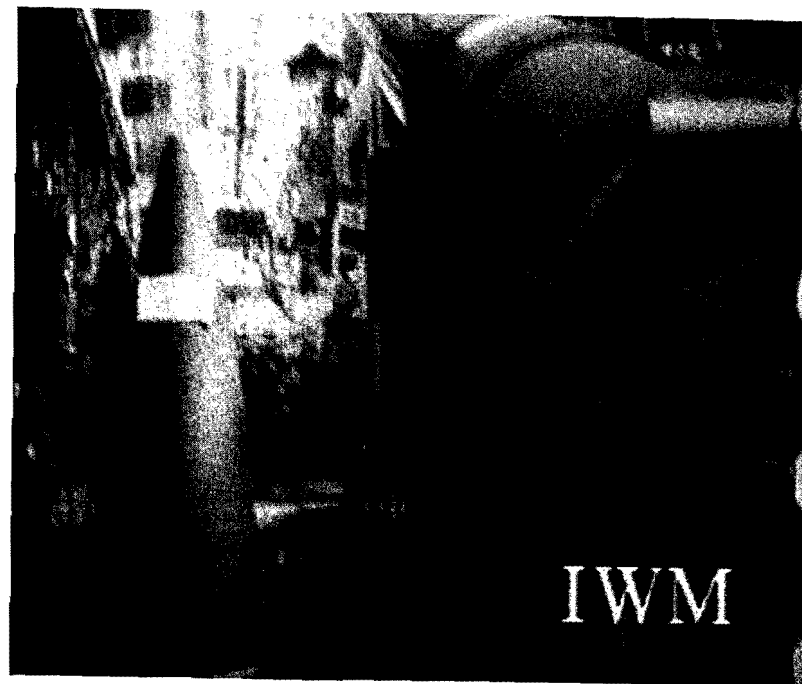


Figure 4.9 Officer looking at one of the artillery guns, film still from a short film of the opening ceremony of the first exhibition of the IWM. Imperial War Museum Film Archive

as a place where a 'father can say: 'This is the gun I used with my battery'.¹⁰⁵ The *Liverpool Daily Post* pointed out that the 'guns will attract the most interest', and contrasted the IWM exhibition with the Science Museum's exhibition of war material in 1914 and 1915.¹⁰⁶ Where the Science Museum exhibition had included models of British warships and of British and foreign aircraft with full size engines and parts, the IWM exhibition offered not only real guns of significant proportions but also avoided complicated technicalities associated with the guns. Science was being replaced by history, while technology was being replaced by aesthetics.

The *Liverpool Daily Post* wrote:

One has not to be content with a general statement that a particular piece of cannon took its part in offence and defence. One can read in a frame beside it its complete record

105. *The Observer*, 11 April 1920.

106. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 28 May 1920.

of service from the beginning to the end of its career and the names of the officers who served it.¹⁰⁷

The reporter justified the amount of space he had given to the guns in his article by saying: 'I have dealt more fully with the guns, because of the personality which each of these monsters acquires through its printed history.'¹⁰⁸ The *Daily Telegraph* followed a similar line of reporting. After briefly describing the exhibition, it concluded that: 'of more fascination to the Englishman is a group of guns, whose stories will be set forth on boards standing beside them.'¹⁰⁹ For the *Daily Express*, the main floor of the exhibition, where all the big guns were exhibited, was a 'mammoth page in the book of world history'.¹¹⁰ The *Daily Mail* initially questioned the validity of placing so much significance on the guns. Ivor Nicholson, formerly of the Ministry of Information, wrote that one might justifiably 'feel an utter sense of nausea with all the filthy paraphernalia of war', but went on to add that it would be 'selfish not to like the guns out of some personal distaste'. He wrote:

But after all we are a nation, we are great people and not a collection of atoms living entirely to ourselves. And all these wonderful items which go to make up our War Museum are part and parcel of our own history.¹¹¹

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* described the guns as 'objects that bear their tales on their faces'; most impressive of all was the 18inch howitzer, which commanded 'universal attention'.¹¹² The *Nottingham Journal* regarded the museum and the guns as 'the most powerful antimilitarist advertisement' one could conceive.¹¹³

Critics of the museum attacked it for glamorising war. They made their point particularly strongly during the House of Commons debate on the Museum Bill¹¹⁴ on June 10, 1920, one day after the museum had been officially opened by the King.¹¹⁵ Opponents of the Bill claimed that the museum was promoting 'propaganda of the war spirit'. They objected to the fact that the opening ceremony was advertised on posters all over London and that a public holiday had been held in celebration. The whole procedure, they claimed, 'fostered a spirit which

107. Ibid.

108. Ibid.

109. *Daily Telegraph*, 25 May 1920.

110. *Daily Express*, 5 June 1920.

111. *Daily Mail*, 7 July 1920.

112. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 7 June 1920.

113. *Nottingham Journal*, 9 June 1920.

114. The Museum Bill was introduced by Alfred Mond MP and outlined the statutory powers of the IWM.

115. It appears as if the opening of the museum was rushed in order to coincide with the second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons. There is, however, no clear evidence as to this.

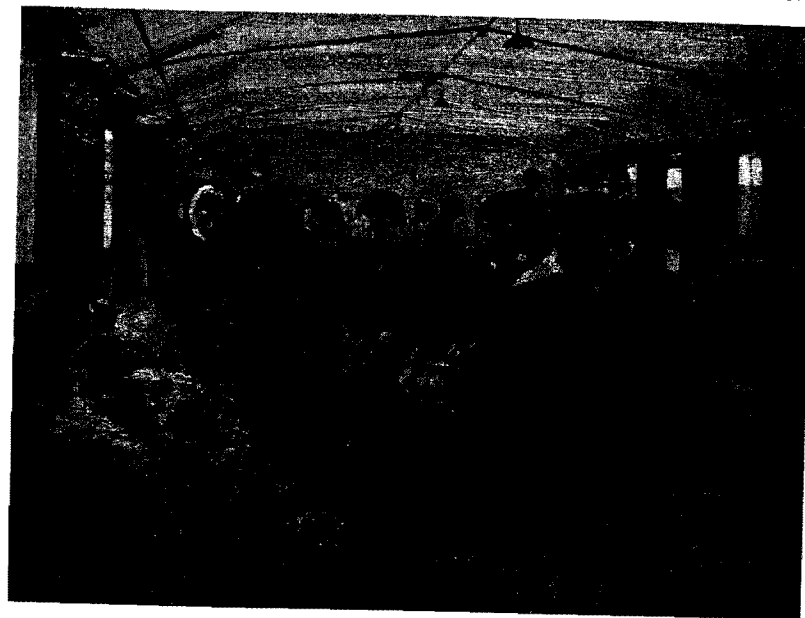


Figure 4.10 John Lobley, *The Toy-Makers' Shop* (1919). The Queen's Hospital for Facial Injuries, Frognal, Sidcup. Imperial War Museum Art Department

we all hoped will die out quickly'.¹¹⁶ What was most interesting, according to the Liberal MP Lieut. Commander Kenworthy was the fact that the museum avoided the horrors of war. He was referring to the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) section of the exhibition, which had been relegated to a small corner of the upper gallery. This section included, amongst other works, paintings by John Lobley of soldiers at Sidcup Hospital with facial disfigurements (*Illustration 4.10*).¹¹⁷ Responding to Kenworthy's criticisms, Alfred Mond said that the positioning of the RAMC exhibits was due to simple logistics, as heavy objects needed to go to the ground floor and smaller, light exhibits needed to be placed in the galleries.¹¹⁸ Kenworthy suggested that instead of attaching a history to each of the guns, the 'price of manufacture of every gun, aeroplane, mine-thrower, gas-projector and all the rest of them should be marked on it in plain figures'. He continued:

116. Lieut. Commander Kenworthy MP, 'Museum Bill – Second Reading', *Hansard*, cl.702, 10 June 1920.

117. It is also symptomatic that the majority of the RAMC paintings were disposed by the IWM following the first exhibition.

118. Mond, Alfred, MP, *Hansard*, cl.705, 10 June 1920.

Let Democracy know what it costs to go in for war, and know that besides the pomp and the ceremony and the suffering and the disease and the demoralisation, it is also a costly business.¹¹⁹

MPs taking part in the discussion were also concerned about the effect that the exhibition would have on the minds of the young. Myers MP (Liberal) argued that the effect of the relics upon the 'young mind is such that we are going to familiarise them with all the barbarism of warfare'; instead, he maintained, 'we ought to be proclaiming the virtues of peace'.¹²⁰ Alfred Mond responded by pointing out that at the opening ceremony the previous day, when he had accompanied King George V and other officials around the exhibits, 'all felt that the museum expressed the terror and horror of war'.¹²¹ Also supporting the exhibition was Martin Conway MP, who highlighted the role that museums could play when it came to Britain's increased reliance on the tourist trade. The museum would make its contribution to the economy through the tourist industry, he maintained: 'The tourist industry in the immediate future will be one of our great paying industries. Every year it increases in value, and our museums have a direct relationship to it, quite as much as have hotels or any other factors of that kind.'¹²²

The press reporting of the opening ceremony highlighted a number of issues connected with class division and labour unrest. A major strike which threatened to postpone the opening of the exhibition was sparked by objections from the trade unions to the fact that IWM attendants were carrying out work that could have been undertaken by unemployed ex-servicemen. The Annual Report of the IWM noted that 'the labour question on several occasions assumed somewhat serious proportions' and the matter was settled by the museum taking on casual labourers for the heavy work and keeping the museum attendants for the lighter and more technical work. These labour difficulties, the IWM stated in its Annual Report, 'recurred almost every week'. Fortunately, by 'the exercise of a certain amount of tact and compromise, serious trouble never materialised'.¹²³

The *Morning Post* regarded the IWM as a potential resolution to the conflict between the workforce and the economy in the way that it offered a place for 'contemplation of the great struggle' and a 'record of heroism'.¹²⁴ The *Times* editorial saw the opening of the exhibition as a chance to 're-establish the war spirit of fellowship'.¹²⁵ The principle founders of the museum, Mond, Conway and Foulkes, as well as the King in his opening address, all tried to maintain that the museum

was a permanent record of the efforts of all ranks and classes, but the *Daily Herald* argued that the 'working-class element was not conspicuous in the assembly'.¹²⁶

The guns, however, remained the main focus of the exhibition. Only a few press reports mentioned the art section. Other than one remark by the *Liverpool Daily Post* on John Singer Sargent's *Gassed*, and by *The Times* on Gilbert Roger's *Stretcher Bearers* – both paintings singled out because they were 'horribly real' – the reviewers seemed to concentrate on the machinery of war. Sue Malvern has argued that the museum's art collections enabled contrary meanings to leak into the homogeneous and continuous space of the displays of war material, rupturing the rhetoric of national redemption'.¹²⁷ By contrast, the 'solid exhibits', as *The Times* described the war relics, provided the 'text' out of which the 'history of the war in concrete hieroglyphs' could be written.¹²⁸ At the luncheon that followed the opening, Winston Churchill gave an address in which he acknowledged that the war relics were 'grim and fierce' but that in the future, they would become sacred: 'Those sombre relics of war would be looked upon, not merely with wonder and astonishment by future generations, they would be regarded as the sacred objects which represented the sacrifice of one splendid generation.'¹²⁹

The stories attached to the guns provide a further example of the way in which they were singled out for attention. The guns that were chosen for display – some of which are still on display at the Imperial War Museum in London – were those to which it was possible to attach 'an honourable history'. Concentrating on some of these histories, one could gain a sense of the hegemonic memory that was being imposed on visitors to the exhibition.

The 'L' Battery Royal Household Artillery Gun, also known as 'Nery',¹³⁰ first saw action near Audringiers in August 1914. The following description was printed on its label for the exhibition:

In September of that year it assisted against the attack that was opened by the Germans. The battery was heavily shelled and suffered severe casualties, three guns only being in action. Captain Bradbury and Sergeant Nelson took one gun, Lieut. Gifford another, and Lieut. Campbell and Mundy the third. This last gun was immediately silenced by a direct hit. At about 5.30am Lieut. Gifford was severely wounded and all his detachment killed or wounded leaving only Captain Bradbury's gun in action. Lieut. Campbell and Mundy went to his assistance, and gunner Derbyshire and Driver Osborne served the gun with ammunition from a nearby wagon. Lieut. Campbell was killed immediately. The gun was heavily shelled by the German Division at 800 yards and about 6.30am Lieut. Mundy and Sergeant Nelson were seriously wounded. About 7.15am Battery Sgt. Major Dorrell reached the gun and on arrival Captain Bradbury was mortally wounded in bringing ammunition from the wagon. By this time the German attack had been held up,

119. Lieut. Commander Kenworthy, MP, *Hansard*, cl.703, 10 June 1920.

120. Myers, MP, 'Museum Bill – First Reading', *Hansard*, cl.1468, 12 April 1920.

121. Mond, Alfred, MP, 'Museum Bill – Second Reading', *Hansard*, cl.706, 10 June 1920.

122. Conway, Martin, MP, 'Museum Bill – Second Reading', *Hansard*, cl.710, 10 June 1920.

123. *Third Annual Report of the Committee of the Imperial War Museum*, 1 April 1919 to 2 July 1920, p. 5.

124. *Morning Post*, 10 June 1920.

125. *The Times*, 'Editorial', 10 June 1920.

126. *The Daily Herald*, 10 June 1920.

127. Malvern, Sue, 'War, Memory and Museums', p. 192.

128. *The Times*, 19 August 1920.

129. Churchill, Winston, *The Times*, 10 June 1920.

130. The guns were usually given female names such as 'Mother'.

and about 7.30am as the reinforcements arrived the gun fired its last two rounds. During the action it accounted for three German guns at the least before it ceased firing.¹³¹

What emerges from this account is the way in which the gun acquires its own heroic qualities. The men and their deaths become less important. The same idea permeates through the *Royal Artillery War Commemoration Book*. The frontispiece states that the book is dedicated to those who laid down their lives 'in the service of the Guns'. The men commemorated in the book were awarded the Victoria Cross for saving the guns from destruction. Major Ernest Wright Alexander, for example, 'handled his battery against overwhelming odds with such conspicuous success that all guns were saved, notwithstanding that owing to heavy casualties, they had to be withdrawn by hand by himself and three other men'.¹³²

Another of the guns exhibited at the IWM, the 'Lone Howitzer', provides further evidence of the status accorded to the guns once the war was over.¹³³ A section of the *Royal Artillery War Commemoration Book* is dedicated to the gun because the 'services of the guns themselves are overlooked'. The 'Lone Howitzer' represented something 'more than a cold, lifeless piece of steel'. Most importantly: 'Many men have died round it in its service; as time goes on those still left who have tended it and fought it will pass away; but the gun, their master, will remain'.¹³⁴

The 'Lone Howitzer', was given a name, an identity, and was polished and exhibited. The memories attached to it were filtered and expressed through its scarred but shiny surface. Shiny surfaces reflect rather than absorb, and the memories of those who visited bounced off the shiny surface of the gun as polished and newly restored memories. The IWM also promoted the idea of the guns as memorials. For each gun there was an annual service when the regiment and other interested individuals could place a wreath on the gun. As Winston Churchill had envisaged, guns became sacred. The wreaths placed on them were believed to have acquired special blessings. ffoulkes received a letter requesting the wreath on 'Nery' to be handed over so that it could be sent to Gallipoli and placed on the grave of a relation.¹³⁵ The request was refused, as it was customary to 'destroy by fire' the weathered wreaths.¹³⁶ Members of the public also requested photographs of the guns or asked permission to reproduce the guns in model form.¹³⁷ 'Nery' was even

131. 'L' Battery RHA Nery, Guns Army, IWM, Central Files, A2/4.

132. Royal Artillery Commemoration Fund, *The Royal Artillery War Commemoration Book. A Pilgrimage Record Written and Illustrated for the Most Part by Artillery Men While Serving in Line During the Great War* (London: 1920), no pagination.

133. Lone Howitzer, Guns Army, IWM, Central Files, A2/4.

134. Royal Artillery Commemoration Fund, *The Royal Artillery War Commemoration Book*, p. 172.

135. ffoulkes to J. A. Darbyshire, 'L' Battery RHA Nery, Guns Army, IWM, Central Files, A2/4, 11 September 1923.

136. ffoulkes to J. A. Darbyshire, 'L' Battery RHA Nery, Guns Army, IWM, Central Files, A2/4, 13 September 1923.

137. ffoulkes to Commanding Officer, 'L' Battery RHA Nery, Guns Army, IWM, Central Files, 12 September 1923 and 1 November 1923.

wheeled outside the confines of the museum to attend the unveiling ceremony of the *Royal Artillery Memorial* in Hyde Park Corner in October 1925. Charles ffoulkes wrote in his memoir:

So battered was this splendid but pathetic relic that it could not be moved by horse transport and we patched up the wheels and man-handled it up Queen's Gate and Knightsbridge to Hyde Park Corner. The word must have gone before us, for I saw men en route raise their hats to this gallant relic which lay at the foot of the Memorial during the dedication ceremony.¹³⁸

It was significant that the Royal Artillery memorial committee, responsible for the design of the *Royal Artillery Memorial*, should ask for a realistic gun to be incorporated into the monument. Lutyens and Derwent Wood, who had initially submitted designs in the form of a cenotaph, refused, and so the committee turned to Charles Jagger. Their instructions were that it should be 'a war memorial' and include all the accoutrements, equipment and details of active service. Jagger, who had been a non-commissioned officer for the infantry during the First World War, was known to respect the Artillery for their 'terrific power' and the 'last word in force'.¹³⁹

In 1926 the *Evening News* printed an article about 'Nery' under the title 'Polished Old Veteran':

It is a battered gun but very spick and span too. The brass hubs of the gun wheels shine so you could almost do map reading by them on a dark night. There is a dent in the muzzle of the gun. It is the dent by which the gun got its final knock out from German fire. But we all remember how smart a scarred warrior the gun looked when it was taken to Hyde Park Corner that Sunday last October when the RA memorial was unveiled.¹⁴⁰

A series of photographs from the unveiling of the *Royal Artillery Memorial* provide a visual tableau of the importance of the guns in relation to masculinity. The first photograph (*Illustration 4.11*) shows Charles ffoulkes and the sculptor Charles Jagger standing in front of the veiled memorial. Both are dressed in morning suit and top hat and present an imposing picture. Between them, the two men created and orchestrated the pageantry and ceremonial that was to follow. What the photograph also reveals is the class specificity of the masculinities promoted by the commemoration of the First World War. Their masculinities were those of the establishment and a particular circle of men with very specific connections to the corridors of hegemonic power at the time.

Charles Jagger held the view that a sculptor needed to be strong because 'his mistress is without mercy and she will demand every ounce of vitality he possesses and more'. The demanding mistress could, however, also offer satisfaction:

138. ffoulkes, Charles, *Arms and the Tower*, p. 146.

139. Stevens Curl, James, 'The Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner', in Compton, Ann (ed.), *Charles Sargeant Jagger. War and Peace Sculpture* (London: 1985), pp. 84–5; On Jagger's sculptural work, see Compton, Ann, 'Sculptural Biography', in Compton, Ann (ed.), *Charles Sargeant Jagger*.

140. *Evening News*, 7 June 1926.



Figure 4.11 Charles ffoulkes (right) and Charles Jagger in front of the veiled *Royal Artillery Memorial* (1925). Imperial War Museum Photographic Archive

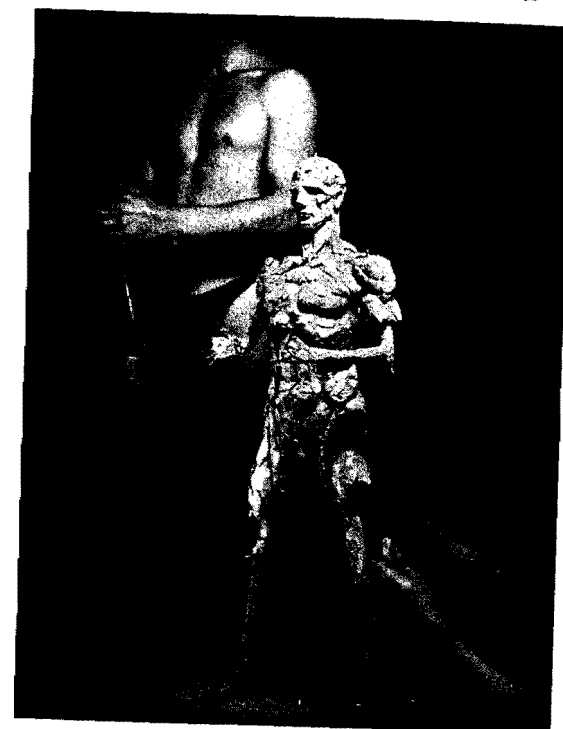


Figure 4.12 Charles Jagger modelling the figures for the *Royal Artillery Memorial* from a life model – Source: Jagger, Charles, 'Modelling and Sculpture in the Making', *The Studio*, 'How to Do it Series', London, 1933, p. 10

'When body and soul are satiated or have outlived the transitory pleasures and diversions of life, she will be by his side, filling his imagination with pictures of loveliness. She alone will remain with him to the grave. For this, no man can want more.'¹⁴¹ Jagger's description of the sculpture as a mistress provides an escape from the constraints of contemporary modern society and the codes of masculine behaviour imposed on him by society.

In the photograph of Jagger (*Illustration 4.12*) the sculptor is seen creating a model of the soldiers for the *Royal Artillery Memorial*. He has based the clay model on a soldier who is standing in front of him naked, holding a gun complete with bayonet. The sculptor inspects the 'ideal' body of the model, who is posed standing to attention. Jagger's work was described as possessing a 'realism', and a quote from

141. Jagger, C. S., *Modelling and Sculpture in the Making* (London: 1933), p. 9.

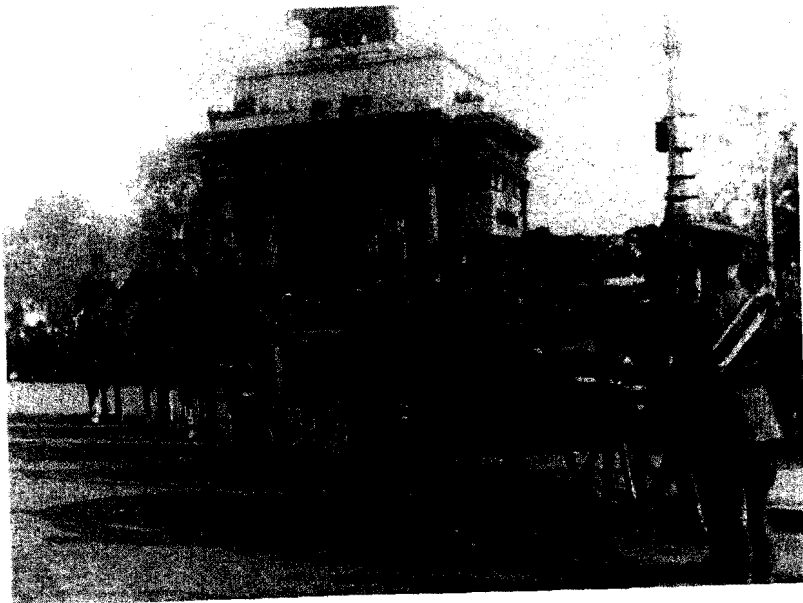


Figure 4.13 Artillery Gun 'Nery' at the unveiling of the *Royal Artillery Memorial* (1925). Imperial War Museum Photographic Archive

a gunner at the time of the unveiling is often cited to support this.¹⁴² However, the faces and bodies of the gunners were less important than the equipment they carried. More importantly, their military uniform hides or submerges any individuality. It armours the body.¹⁴³ The unveiling of the memorial therefore revealed a further veiling: the veiling of the fragile male body. It was the gun, Nery, that was wheeled out for the ceremony (*Illustration 4.13*) that presented the real embodiment of courage, endurance and sacrifice.

The Memorial to the Fallen

The plans for the museum included mounting a centrepiece called *Memorial to the Fallen* which would incorporate photographs of all those who had died during the war. Each photograph was to be accompanied by a short biographical note. To gather

142. 'See that man carrying the shells. He is real. All the green men are real.' *Manchester Guardian*, 9 October 1925, p. 10, quoted in Graves-Smith, John, 'Realism and Propaganda in the Work of Charles Sargeant Jagger and their Relationship to Artistic Tradition', in Compton, Ann (ed.), *Charles Sargeant Jagger*, p. 52.

143. Foster, Hal, 'Armour Fou', *October*, 56 (1991): 64–97.

the photographs for this giant memorial, adverts were placed in all the national and local newspapers. This elicited a huge response.¹⁴⁴ The correspondence relating to the photographs shows how their relatives sought some form of solace from the act of sending the photographs of their loved ones to the museum. One of the bereaved, Cathleen Cooke, wrote: 'I should feel so pleased to think that his name was put amongst all the other brave fellows who have died for their country.'¹⁴⁵ Some felt that sending photos offered a way of expressing the enormity of their loss, like the mother who lost two of her sons in two consecutive days.¹⁴⁶ For some, writing to the museum also represented a means of appealing for help in tracing the graves of their friends and relatives.¹⁴⁷

The act of sending something that belonged to the dead or related to their death seems to have been very important for most of the correspondents. Frederick Pattern made a memorial tablet to the memory of his son; 'something new', which 'has never been seen before'. The tablet was a mosaic that could 'stand on the table' or as 'an ornament on the wall'. Pattern wanted the museum to have this memorial tablet 'for a month or two' so that it could 'hang up to his memory'. The museum politely refused the tablet, although it suggested that he could send a photograph of the tablet.¹⁴⁸ Sarah Bisson had only one document relating to her son's death, which she wanted to send to the museum. She wrote: 'I am enclosing my dear son's photo and a letter from his commanding officer. I have no other papers.'¹⁴⁹ The letter from Mrs M. Collett to the museum enclosing her son's photograph encapsulates how many saw the compilation of photographs as a form of honouring the dead. She wrote: 'I have sent you his photo and letter I received from the Priest. ... He was my eldest son by my first husband and better son a mother ever [sic] had. I am only glad to do anything to honour him.'¹⁵⁰

Once they had parted with their photographs, correspondents were anxious to find how they would be displayed.¹⁵¹ The curator of the museum wrote back, saying that the photographs would be kept in 'special boxes alphabetically for ease of reference'. This was important because of the lack of permanent accommodation for the museum. His letter continued: 'The ultimate arrangement will be decided upon

144. The photographs are still held in storage at the IWM. At present there are approximately 15,000 photographs. These have never been exhibited. This information was provided by Hilary Roberts from the photographic section of the museum. The correspondence with the relatives of the dead who sent photographs to the museum is held in the museum's central files.

145. Cathleen Cooke to IWM, 'Memorial to the Fallen', Central Files, IWM, 4 September 1917.

146. Mrs Herbison to IWM, *ibid.*, 28 July 1917.

147. Sarah Bisson to IWM, *ibid.*, 31 May 1918.

148. Frederick Pattern to IWM, *ibid.*, 31 May 1918.

149. Sarah Bisson to IWM, *ibid.*, 31 May 1918.

150. M. Collette to IWM, *ibid.*, 17 July 1918.

151. Mrs Gibson to IWM, *ibid.*, 27 February 1918.

when the Museum building is settled.¹⁵² The photographs were to remain in their boxes to the present day in a storage space at Duxford.

In some instances the museum responded with a rather personal touch. Correspondence was mostly dealt with by the Keeper of Photographs, E. Sikes, who had two sons in the army and for whom the letters provided a constant reminder of what could have happened to his own sons. To one correspondent who forwarded a memoir of his nephew, Sikes wrote that he found it so interesting that 'I have rather neglected my duty, in order to read some part of it.'¹⁵³ Sikes' comforting responses combine the personal with the official. The letters were also an opportunity for Sikes to express his feelings on pacifism. In a letter marked 'Not for Publication' he elaborated his strong dislike not only of the German race but more importantly, of the 'perverted pacifists' who advocated kindness:

It passes one's comprehension to imagine how, with this and innumerable other evidences of the frightfulness that is characteristic of the whole German Nation, there are still found in our country spineless and perverted pacifists who advocate kindness to Germany. The whole race is utterly vile.¹⁵⁴

The correspondence accompanying the photographs conveyed a sense of the loss and an attempt to provide a closure to the grief by idealising the dead. One correspondent wrote that her son was 'ideal in every way'. His life was perfect in 'everything that gives to make a man and a gentleman'. He was a man whom 'any man could envy' and 'wherever he was he would have led'.¹⁵⁵ Such idealisation could be attributed to the bereavement process that the correspondent was going through, but was also characteristic of the middle and upper classes and the way in which they saw their role as leaders especially in relation to devotion, selflessness, and a sense of duty. Another correspondent described the life of his dead son as an example of 'unselfish devotion to duty'.¹⁵⁶ One mother wrote that her son 'underwent a painful operation' in order to make him fit for service. She praised him for being 'self-denying and anxious to do his best for others', and concluded by saying: 'I do not know if I have said too much but he was everything to me.'¹⁵⁷ This letter provides a striking contrast with another from a correspondent whose son had almost completed his apprenticeship as a blacksmith before joining the Army. The soldier's mother wrote: 'He died on June 18th 1917, after serving over two years out in France. The Government have never appreciated the sacrifice these grand young men made who went so willing at the beginning of the war.'¹⁵⁸

152. Charles ffoulkes to Mrs Gibson, *ibid.*, 2 March 1918.

153. Sikes to Sir James, *ibid.*, 10 July 1918.

154. Sikes to Mrs C. Bennett, *ibid.*, 14 November 1918.

155. Mrs Richardson to IWM, *ibid.*, 18 October 1918.

156. Mr Brackleyhurst to IWM, 'Memorial to the Fallen', Central Files, IWM, 24 November 1918.

157. Mrs Torey to IWM, *ibid.*, 6 December 1918.

158. Mrs Rawcliffe to IWM, *ibid.*, 3 December 1918.

Whereas the middle- and upper-class families often resorted to an idealisation of the dead men, the working class appeared to derive comfort from drawing to attention the inability of the government to provide an appreciation of the sacrifice of the dead men.

The idealisation of the dead men is also prevalent in the memoirs that accompanied the photographs,¹⁵⁹ such as the memoir of Lieut. Col. A. H. James (Archie).¹⁶⁰ This memoir was compiled by James's uncle, Ferdinand Baker, from letters sent to him during the war, and printed for private circulation. The letters are juxtaposed with personal observations by Baker on James's character and abilities whilst managing his uncle's plantations in India. The publication also quotes official letters from James's superiors concerning his injury and subsequent death, and eulogies from the parish priest and other 'officials' at home. James's own letters are few and far between. One letter describes a near escape at the Front when he tried to help a man who had been shot next to him and as a result was hit by an enemy bullet which passed through his breast pocket, through his field glasses and bore a hole in his steel whistle. Baker chose this unselfish act as a symbol of James's character. In a testimony on James's life in India, Baker writes:

As a tea-planter, Archie had a fine reputation and greatly increased the productiveness of the estate, which he managed mainly owing to the excellent discipline and organisation, which he maintained amongst the overseers and labourers.¹⁶¹

James's managerial abilities and sporting prowess led to a degree of fearlessness which was particularly evident on hunting expeditions:

Archie was a brilliant sportsman, and was ignorant of fear. He commenced his career in India when barely seventeen by pursuing a wounded bear into some bushes, and was severely torn by the engaged animal. ... On one occasion he tackled a wounded bear in a cave, armed only with a revolver. He also killed chamois, and other local wild beasts.¹⁶²

James's hunting prowess extended to Africa, where he 'succeeded in killing, single-handed, a huge male elephant' and 'two very large male wild buffalo'. This capacity for killing was praised by the military authorities. His Major contributed a eulogy paying tribute to James's fearlessness, unselfishness and ability to lead his men. He wrote that James was 'always in the thick of it, encouraging and urging his men'.¹⁶³ The vicar wrote along similar lines, describing James as 'an excellent shot and rider', a man of 'strong character' and a 'strict disciplinarian'. He particularly remembered a lecture that James gave to the Boy Scouts on the 'Big Game', shortly before the war started, and

159. The majority of these have been lost with only a few exceptions.

160. Baker, Ferdinand, *A Short Memoir of Lieut. Col. A. H. James DSO* (Exeter: 1918), p. 40.

161. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

162. *Ibid.*

163. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

he also recalled the mug James had presented to his godson bearing the words 'Be bold and fear not'. The vicar observed that although James was unmarried, he possessed a great love for children and his 'constant care and kindness for his men was very conspicuous'.¹⁶⁴

To those who sent photos and mementos to the Imperial War Museum, the official reasons given to explain why it was not possible to display all the memorabilia appeared contradictory. Charles ffoulkes claimed that owing to the enormous number of photographs received, it was impossible to display them all.¹⁶⁵ Martin Conway, however, claimed that insufficient photographs had been received, despite widespread publicity of the project.¹⁶⁶

Several issues arise from the correspondence received for the *Memorial to the Fallen*. By sending personal details to the IWM, the relatives were seeking a channel for their grief; a chance to justify the deaths of their loved ones and to give a meaning to those deaths. For some, it was a way of voicing their dissatisfaction at the treatment they had received from the government. For others, it was a way of re-establishing the significance of the life that had been lost. This element was entrenched in the codes of acceptable masculinities, which included unselfishness, fearfulness, strength and discipline. In this respect, the museum during the run-up to the project of the *Memorial to the Fallen* offered an opportunity to express multiple views. As Andreas Huyssen has commented, no matter how much the museum consciously and unconsciously produces and affirms the symbolic order, there is always a surplus of meaning that opens spaces for reflection and counter-hegemonic memory.¹⁶⁷ Perhaps it was this fear of the possibility of a counter-hegemonic memory which led to the photographs and the *Memorial to the Fallen* itself being confined to the storage space of the museum, where it remains to this day.

The establishment and inauguration of the IWM provided a platform from which a national identity could be established, but most importantly, it provided a forum in which a hegemonic memory of war masculinities could be promoted. As this book has argued, the establishment of such masculinities was problematic because of the uncertain position that various definitions of masculinity occupied as a result of civil unrest, shell shock and new forms of male sociality at the Front. The establishment of hegemonic forms of masculinity relied on the establishment of certain cultural icons, the machinery of war, which in the museum space were de-contextualised and imbued with importance, ritual and majesty. It was these objects that became the memorials to the war, overshadowing the unstable nature of masculinities at the time.

164. Ibid., pp. 44–45.

165. ffoulkes to C. Champion, 'Memorial to the Fallen', Central Files, IWM, 22/02/1921. I thank Gill Smith of the Directorate Service of the IWM for bringing this letter to my attention.

166. Conway, Martin, *Museums Journal*, 20/2 (July 1920), p. 27.

167. Huyssen, Andreas, *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: 1995), p. 14.

Conclusion

The new Imperial War Museum North (IWM North) opened in July 2002. It was designed by Daniel Libeskind, who designed a number of key museums worldwide,¹ and links the previously derelict landscape of the Salford Quays in Manchester with regeneration and culture. It is also the first purpose-built building to house the IWM eighty-five years after the idea for such a memorial to the war was first conceived.

The architect's vision was to create a 'striking emblem that in an instant illuminates both tradition and the new', but also 'brings together culture and regeneration'. The building consists of three fragments or 'shards'. These are the fragments of a 'shattered world', which are reassembled 'as a fundamental emblem of conflict'. The shards, which could also represent 'traces of history', are there to create a new landscape in which the participatory experience of the public will 'begin long before the visitors enter through the actual doors'. They also take their cue from the environment to represent earth, air and water. It could be said that they represent the Army, Air Force and Navy. The Earth Shard forms the main museum space and 'signifies the open earthly realm of conflict and war. The Air Shard houses the projection and the educational space, and also serves as a 'dramatic entry into the museum'. The Water Shard forms the platform for viewing the canal and houses the restaurant, café and performance space. What is essential is the way in which the three shards come together:

These three shards together, Earth, Air, and Water, concretise twentieth century conflict, which has never taken place on an abstract piece of paper but has been fought on dramatic terrain by the infantry, in the skies by the air force and on the sea by the battleships.²

For the architect, the space provides an arena in which the 'personal histories of the people of the North' can be shown in a 'concrete and visible form'. These personal histories, however, serve yet another purpose. The museum space is seen by Libeskind as a 'cultural dynamo' which transforms the past into a new era and is underscored by the recreation of the region in the form of urban regeneration and tourist spending. Martin Conway's prophetic comments to the House of Commons

1. The most famous of which are the Jewish Museum, Berlin, 1988–99 and The Boiler House Extension, V&A Museum, 1996–Present.

2. Libeskind, Daniel, 'Earth/Time', in Libeskind, Daniel, *Daniel Libeskind: The Space Encounter* (London: 2001), p. 62.

on the future importance of the museum industry could not have been better realised.³ More importantly, the previously derelict site of Salford Quays has been re-cycled from its previous industrial use to become a cultural heritage landscape,⁴ with immense possibilities for economic regeneration. The guns that were first exhibited in 1920 to contain the unpredictable emotions of the men who fought the First World War, and create stability in the social and economic reconstruction of the 1920s, are being used once again to provide for economic regeneration. This time their polished surfaces are housed under the shining, aluminium-clad surfaces of the IWM North. Shine abstracts, dematerialises, cleanses and creates an object that is untouchable, autonomous and outside any time and place. As such, the shattered world that the three shining shards represent is outside the realm of war and traumatic memory and inside the realm of regeneration and global capitalism.

What is absent from Libeskind's vision is the idea of the trauma of war; it is only in his projects relating to the Holocaust that trauma is evident. Although one cannot deny the immensity of that experience in terms of the suffering and loss it caused, one also needs to recognise that war in every form entails destruction, loss and trauma. In a lecture in Berlin entitled 'Trauma', Libeskind argued the (im)-possibility of representing the trauma of the Holocaust. He saw traumatic experiences relating to the Holocaust as having created a void which needed to be experienced historically in terms of the relationship between what the void is and the absence of a generation from history. Libeskind interpreted that absence as catastrophic. He believed that it was impossible to simply interpret trauma and that here, trauma found expression in the void of architectural space since the void is a space, the 'space of being and non-being'.⁵ The concept of the architectural void is reflected in his design for the Jewish Museum Berlin and forms its central feature. The void is contained within fragmented lines, zigzags instead of spheres, which incorporate the names of the dead. The zigzags form sixty-two sections, each of which represents one of the 'Stations of the Star' described by Walter Benjamin in *One-Way Street*.⁶ Once again the external and internal surfaces are clad in shining aluminium but in the Jewish Museum Berlin they incorporate the names of the dead and the void they left behind. The same void has not been recreated for in the IWM North. Instead, the guns form the focus of attention.

In 2002 another war museum was unveiled, this time in Nicosia, Cyprus, when the National Museum of Struggle (NMOS) moved to its new building. The museum commemorates the four-year war of independence (1955–59) from British rule and

3. The National Lottery Heritage Fund twice rejected the funding application for the new museum. The original cost had to be reduced from £40 million to £28.5 million financed by the Trafford Metropolitan Council, Peel Holdings plc, developers of the area, the European Regional Development Fund and the Board of Trustees of the IWM. The opening of the museum received very little publicity in the press.
4. The Lowry Centre is amongst the other developments as well as the Manchester United Football Ground.
5. Libeskind, Daniel, 'Trauma', in Libeskind, Daniel, *Space Encounter*, pp. 202–205.
6. Benjamin, Walter, *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (London: Verso, 2000).

its exhibits are strictly confined to that period, despite the fact that the history of the island is a continuous history of war.⁷ The way in which war is represented at the NMOS differs significantly from the way it is represented at the two IWMs. Wyndham Lewis comments on the IWM in his autobiography:

For your reconstruction you would have to admit Death there as well. You would have to line the trenches with bodies freshly killed that morning. No hospital could provide it.⁸

The NMOS has managed to fill the majority of its space with photographs of dead bodies. A spiral walkway leads the visitor through the four levels of the museum. The first level provides an introduction to the war of independence and connects the history of Cyprus with the ancient Greek civilisation, thus establishing a firm historical background. The second level provides an iconography of the demonstrations that were an almost daily occurrence during the period of the war. The third level provides a very different visual picture which details guerrilla-style warfare and its consequences. Photographs of the mutilated bodies of the dead line the wall. This procession of the dead bodies leads to the last level, which has been transformed into a shrine to all those that died. A candle burns in front of each photograph. Three ropes hang from the centre of the space. These represent the ropes used by the British Colonial troops to hang those involved in the struggle. The IWM also has its own monument to the war of independence. In a small glass case lies a collection of various items of war used during the struggle. There are no dead, mutilated bodies here. There are no dead mutilated bodies anywhere in the IWM.

Writing during the outbreak of the first Gulf War more than ten years ago, Judith Butler noted the absence of the human body from the reporting of the war. Instead of images of human beings at war, the media presented images of a war carried out by machines. Body counts were replaced by weapon counts. The only bodies that featured in the coverage of the war were the bodies of reporters and the single, sanitised body of the American military. American masculinity was re-inscribed through the hyper-masculine weaponry. Bodies of any kind, marked by race, gender or the fragility of flesh, were invisible in the spectacular images of the Gulf War. Viewing spectacle necessitated the absence of any associations with death:

7. See for example, Mavratsas, V., 'The ideological contest between Greek-Cypriot nationalism and Cypriotism 1974–1995: Politics, Social Memory and Identity', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20/4 (1997), pp. 713–37; Cassia, Paul, 'Martyrdom and Witnessing: Violence, Terror and Recollection in Cyprus', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11/1 (1999), pp. 22–54; Anthias, F., 'Ethnicity and Class in Cyprus', *Race and Class*, 25 (1983), pp. 59–76; Panayiotopoulos, P., 'The Emergent Post-colonial State in Cyprus', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 37/1 (1999), pp. 31–55; Papadakis, Yiannis, 'The National Struggle Museums of a Divided City', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17/3 (1994), pp. 400–19; Bryant, Rebecca, *Imaging the Modern. The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus* (London: 2004).
8. Lewis, Wyndham, *Blasting and Bombardiering. An Autobiography (1914–1926)* (London: 1937), p. 134.

The so called 'smart bomb' records its target as it moves in to destroy it – a bomb with a camera attached in front, a kind of optical phallus; it relays that film back to a command control and that film is re-filmed on television effectively constituting the television screen and the viewer as the extended apparatus of the bomb itself.⁹

It was after the invasion of Iraq by the Allied forces that images of the tortured naked body of the 'enemy' started emerging in the media. These images were often characterised as pornographic, voyeuristic, a carnivalesque spectacle which glorified violence and which provided an index for the torture committed by the Allied forces in Iraq. What the images also revealed were the boundaries of the acceptable representation of the human body, especially of the male body in war, and the shock that the sight of the tortured, dead, mutilated body creates in the Western World.

As this book has demonstrated, the commemoration of the First World War faced the same boundaries of acceptability and relied on another spectacle, the perfectly formed spectacle of the unveiling ceremonies. The mutilated bodies of the war were absent. Only the sanitised and aestheticised body of the 'picturesque soldier' was evident, and masculinity was inscribed on the machinery of war. By concentrating on the relationship between masculinity and national identity, this book has investigated the kinds of masculinities that were projected by the commemoration of the war and the power relations across male sociality that the commemoration attempted to re-establish after the war. Fundamental to this were class relations and the new forms of male sociality that emerged at the Front.

The commemoration of the First World War in general and its memorials in particular have often been described as inclusive and as a means of facilitating the resolution of the grief of the bereaved. This argument can be challenged on two fronts: the idea of simplicity was a class specific aesthetic, and the grief and trauma of the ex-servicemen was to a very great extent ignored. During the post-Armistice period the notion of simplicity in the commemoration of the First World War was an aesthetic idea that was embedded in middle- and upper-class artistic sensibilities. As such, simplicity in the design of war memorials cannot be seen as providing a universal language for the expression of grief but needs to be seen within the broader perspective of the commemoration of the war.

9. Judith Butler, 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism', in Butler, J. and Scott, J. (eds), *Feminists Theorise the Political* (London: 1992), pp. 11–12.

For similar views see Virilio, Paul, *Desert Screen. War at the Speed of Light* (London: 2002); Mirzoeff, Nicholas, *Watching Babylon. The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (London: 2005).

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