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Making War at Fort Hood: Life and Uncertainty in a Military Community. Kenneth T. MacLeish. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP., 2013. h/bk 265 pp. ISBN 978-0-691-15274-5. Price £19.95.

Common sense and reality are two concepts even the most seasoned scholar must battle, yet when discussing concepts of war and the social mandates and backlashes of it a common sense study is often a refreshing approach. In the case of Kenneth MacLeish's study on soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas the author has done just that. He focuses his work on how institutionalized acts of violence, orchestrated by the state, affect plays of power and the role of individuals within these societies. Specifically, he does this by arguing that parceling out legitimate violence by the state and its minions are intrinsic to exercising power dynamics and making a populace compliant (9).

Throughout this modern study the author takes the reader on a meander through the lives of servicemen and women, but he also showcases the lives of those left behind on base. The women who attempt to create service organizations for spouses, to comfort each other, to create a sense of a community within a transit existence of the military. This desire for connection, and kinship, is endemic to human nature and considered a core of American society.

Of course, a good deal of time is spent on examining soldiers' lives and how they cope. More specifically, the way soldiers are trained and kept to function. The irony of the modern soldier is that technology keeps him alive, far longer than any other war, and as such legions of troops are returning to manpower desk jobs as they exit from duty or for several years as they finish out an enlistment cycle. The shame of not being able to function at full capacity is often heightened with the knowledge that an end of service date is near, making the solider more vulnerable as the days pass. Here, as soldiers discuss the hazards of war — death, loss of friends, extended time away from family, and the fear of cheating spouses — MacLeish subtly juxtaposes the knowledge that the injury and return from battle makes a solider vulnerable on another level. Their psyches are not the same, yet society expects them to act the same (54-56). The burden of war work and the burden of returning to home life and civilian life showcase the plays of power in modern society.

Expertly woven into this tale of the military and the loss of life, limb, and brotherhood is the notion of love and how the love of country and community rise to the occasion. The military provides definable boundaries and expectations from recruits, allowing them to develop a bond of unchallenged affection and authority. They are rewarded for jobs well done with promotions and pay increases. Poor performance equals the loss of pay, job, and respect (145-149). MacLeish notes that "while soldiers themselves get paid for war, the real wealth it produces seems vague and abstract. It takes the form of greater prosperity to be collectively enjoyed, or is someone else's wealth, siphoned off the hard work of many to be enjoyed only by a few" (207). In reality, the military shows conditional love to its workers as it casts those deemed unfit and unworthy out into civilian society. Civilian society represents what must be protected, and enabled by the military: it is the collective of people who without the restraints of a military force would collapse upon themselves.

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