

“NEW” MILITARY HISTORY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LIMITS

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Over recent decades, “new military history” has become a mainstream concept in the historical study of warfare. The article attempts to summarize how this concept has changed our understanding of the First World War, including all the main areas of research it has covered over the years, and focuses on the issue of a “missing link” in the study of conflicts through the lenses of both “new” and “old” military histories – that is, that violence and combat, which are the ultimate focus of every war effort, remain largely left out of the picture current historiographical work paints. Identifying this problem within the context of the historiography of the First World War, the text offers a brief insight into its origins and suggests some possible remedies.

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“Old” and “New” Military History

The field known as “military history” has always held a peculiar position in the historical profession. Devoted to the study of warfare, broadly understood as a more or less organized violent conflict with the aim of imposing one group’s will over the will of others, it has always tended to be interconnected with the very institution it aspired to analyze, i.e. the military. What often resulted was not only much ire and suspicion from the mainstream scholarly community rooted in the generally pacifist environment of the universities, but also a somewhat simplified, utilitarian vision of the past, which was seen either as supplying the “traditions” of “the glorious past” to these institutions, or as a sort of “pot” of lessons deemed necessary for practicing war successfully in the future.

Consequently, military history has a tendency either to follow the dictum that “war is a continuation of politics by other means”, simplifying military operations into projections of political power, or to go the other way and disentangle these operations from all the context and constraints of their cultural, societal, economic and political environment, creating a virtual laboratory of so-called “operational history”. Reaching all the way back to the classical works of authors such as Hans Delbrück,¹ J. F. C. Fuller,² or Basil Liddell-Hart,³ the best adherents to this approach have helped explain an important facet of the way wars were thought of, fought, and experienced by societies in the past. On the other hand, though, the more widespread works of “battleology”, focused on obsessing over tactics, campaigns, great leaders, unit histories and weaponry, are limited in their potential to inspire historical knowledge. While this did not prevent the field from filling endless bookstore shelves titled “Military History”, whose popularity with the reading public makes the average historian cringe with ill-concealed jealousy, this approach has all but ignored the individual experience of the majority of participants in historical conflicts, including even soldiers themselves, focusing instead on stories of great men and their rationalized actions.

This traditional form of military history has always been regarded as a specific niche of little interest to “true” historians, who have tended to look upon its practitioners with a condescending smile at best. As John Lynn recounted in his famous lament over the state of military history at US universities in the late 1990s, “we used to be condemned because we were believed to be politically right-wing, morally corrupt, or just plain dumb.”⁴ “Uninspiring” and “intellectually limited” were some of the more positive adjectives used in connection with military history, with “male-dominated” and “celebrating male aggression”, added during the 1970s. While Lynn’s assessment may seem to be a little over-the-top, I was once told myself by a noted professor of Central European history at one of the leading US universities that “military history is just for hobbyists and ‘buffs’”, and the situation in Europe has hardly been any more promising in terms of the field becoming generally accepted among academic historians.

For many military historians, the obvious solution was to shut themselves up in a ghetto that, over time, had become somewhat self-imposed. Scholarly

1 HANS DELBRÜCK, *Geschichte des Kriegskunst*, 6 vols., Berlin 1920–1932.

2 J. F. C. FULLER, *The Military History of the Western World*, New York 1954–1957.

3 BASIL H. LIDDELL-HART, *Strategy. The Indirect Approach*, New York 1954.

4 JOHN A. LYNN, *The Embattled Future of Academic Military History*, *The Journal of Military History* 61/1997, no. 4, p. 778.

study of military history became a retreat for those who saw themselves to be “different” from the mainstream, perhaps even accepting the reality behind the quip that “military history is to history what military music is to music”.⁵ This situation is perhaps no better illustrated than with the case of the Czech historical profession, in which military history pegged itself into a position almost completely isolated from the trends, discourses, and paradigmatic shifts in the wider, radically changing field. In 2002, Ivan Šedivý commented that “Czech military historians generally ignored the dynamic changes the study of warfare had experienced in the worldwide context (...) losing touch with the best of the local historiography as well”, and I have fully agreed with him in the past.⁶ Unfortunately, after sixteen years, the situation has hardly improved. The only institution in the country fully dedicated to the study of military history – the Military History Institute in Prague – has become institutionally “militarized” and fully subject to the needs of the Czech Army, retreating to its inter-war roots and turning itself into a museum perpetuating the “glorified past” of the Czechoslovak military. Methodologically, it has become entrenched in a historicist-positivist, unrepentantly descriptive approach.⁷ At the same time, while the general scholarly community in the Czech republic has experienced rapid evolution, becoming increasingly interconnected with the global community in terms of methodology, publication efforts, and personal connections, it has – for the most part – remained detached from themes connected to the history of warfare. Consequently, only a few “civilian” historians, often representing a younger gen-

- 5 On the issue of military historians’ acute feeling of a “gulf” between them and the mainstream of the field, see also WALTER MILLIS, *Military History*, Washington, D.C., 1961; JOHN WHITECLAY CHAMBERS, *The New Military History. Myth and Reality*, *The Journal of Military History* 55/1991, no. 2, pp. 395–406; ROGER SPILLER, *Military History and its Fictions*, *The Journal of Military History* 70/2006, no. 4, pp. 1081–97; MARK GRIMSLEY, *The Future of Military History. Beyond the Culture of Complaint*, *Headquarters Gazette of the Society for Military History* 19/2006, no. 2, pp. 2–3.
- 6 IVAN ŠEDIVÝ, *Česká historiografie vojenství 1989–2002* [*Czech Historiography of Warfare 1989–2002*], *Český časopis historický* 100/2002, pp. 900; JIŘÍ HUTEČKA, *Jeremy Black. Rethinking Military History* (review), *Dějiny–teorie–kritika* 4/2006, pp. 168–171.
- 7 The best example of this issue is the scholarly journal *Historie a vojenství* [History and Warfare], published by the Institute for Military History in Prague, which fails to depart from the traditional, somewhat antiquarian discourse typical of this field in the Czech Republic. It did, however, include a brief summary of recent trends in English-language historiography of warfare a few years ago. See DALIBOR VÁCHA, *Nový pohled na staré potíže? Dějiny válek moderní doby v anglosaské historiografii od 90. let 20. století do současnosti* [*A New Look at Old Issues? The History of Modern Warfare in Anglo-Saxon Historiography from the 1990s until Today*], *Historie a vojenství* 62/2013, no. 4, pp. 4–17.

eration of scholars looking for fresh methodological approaches to the study of the past, have brought some of the discursive debates reverberating throughout the wider profession into the “fogs” of Czech historiography of warfare.

As a result, Marie Koldinská and Ivan Šedivý approached the topic of war in Czech history in their ambitious – and almost inevitably flawed – synthesis, taking their inspiration from social and cultural history, and ended up arguing that the “low-level militarization” of Czech society throughout the past centuries had a key role in forming Czech attitudes towards warfare.⁸ A few years ago, Vítězslav Prchal followed upon his editorship of a collection of papers exploring the potential of “ego-documents” in military history (mostly in Bohemia and Moravia) with an inspired cultural analysis of warfare and its role in the representative strategies adopted by the early modern Bohemian and Moravian aristocracy.⁹ Miroslav Žitný has brought discursive analysis rooted in gender history into the study of early modern aristocratic warrior imagery.¹⁰ Petr Wohlmut has effectively proven that cultural anthropology is indeed a useful tool that may help us understand the performative quality of violence beyond the grisly realities of 18th century siegecraft; moreover, he has done so by analyzing the infamous siege of Bergen-op-Zoom in 1747, successfully transcending the limits of Central European historiography in the process.¹¹ Michael Viktorík’s efforts have introduced some of the classical “war and society” approach (see below) into the Czech historiography of 19th century fortifications and their social as well as military reality.¹² Dalibor Vácha has touched on the methodology of *Alltags-*

8 MARIE KOLDINSKÁ, IVAN ŠEDIVÝ, *Válka a armáda v českých dějinách. sociohistorické črty* [War and the Military in Czech History. A Socio-Historic Overview], Prague 2008.

9 See VÍTĚZSLAV PRCHAL (ed.), *Mezi Martem a Memorií. Prameny osobní povahy k vojenským dějinám 16. – 19. století* [Between Mars and Memoria. Personal Accounts and Military History of 16th to 19th Centuries], Pardubice 2011; VÍTĚZSLAV PRCHAL, *Společenstvo hrdinů. Válka a reprezentační strategie českomoravské aristokracie, 1650–1750* [A Fellowship of Heroes. War and the Representation Strategies of the Aristocracy in Bohemia and Moravia, 1650–1750], Prague 2015.

10 MIROSLAV ŽITNÝ, “Dobry krykzman“ – diskursivní kategorie a maskulinní vzor myšlení nižší šlechty z českých zemí na přelomu 16. a 17. století [“A Good Kriegsmann“ – A Discursive Category and Idealized Masculine Image of the Lower Bohemian Aristocracy of 16th and 17th Centuries], *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 43/2013, pp. 224–248.

11 PETR WOHLMUTH, *Krev, čest a hrůza. Historická antropologie pevnostní války na příkladu britských deníků z obléhání pevnosti Bergen op Zoom z roku 1747* [Blood, Honour and Horror. Representations of Siege Warfare in the Siege Journals of British Defenders at Bergen op Zoom in 1747], Prague 2017.

12 MICHAEL VIKTOŘÍK, *Emanuel Zitta. Pobled na kariéru a dílo důstojníka inženýrského sboru v první polovině 19. století* [Emanuel Zitta. A Survey of Career Path and Work of an Engineer Corps Officer in the First Half of the 19th Century], *Theatrum Historiae* 18/2016, pp. 203–226; MI-

geschichte in his more traditionally-minded study of the Czechoslovak legion in Russia.¹³

To complete this list, I have recently introduced my own fresh take on military history with a study of Czech soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian armed forces during the Great War. Methodologically inspired by gender history, it has tried to skip over the old nationalized perspective, seeing its subjects as *men* turned *soldiers* first, and Czechs only in distant second place. The resulting insight – using the lens of the soldiers’ personal accounts – into how their masculine identity changed under the strain of war, and the way that process influenced their morale, motivation, and even loyalty, may well be important not just for our understanding of this particular group of actors, but also for our understanding of the connections between war, masculinity and gender in general.¹⁴ In the context of Czech historiography of warfare, my text followed in the footsteps of Rudolf Kučera, who has argued for the importance of masculinity, as an analytical category, for our understanding of the two world wars, and applied a similar approach himself to uncover the gendered social pressure experienced by working class people in Bohemia during the First World War.¹⁵

These discursive debates represent an offshoot of the “dynamic changes” mentioned by Ivan Šedivý in 2002, which are usually summed up using the oft-used (and perhaps oft-abused) and decidedly hazy and vague term “new military history”. Twelve years ago, British historian Joanna Bourke opened a historiographic essay with the poignant observation that “the term ‘new military his-

CHAEEL VIKTOŘÍK, *Vojenské posádky na Moravě a v Rakouském Slezsku v 19. století* [Garrisons in Moravia and Austrian Silesia in the 19th Century], *Kulturní dějiny / Cultural History* 9/2018, no. 1, pp. 176–188.

- 13 DALIBOR VÁCHA, *Bratrstvo. Všední a dramatické dny československých legií v Rusku (1914–1918)* [The Brotherhood. The Mundane and Dramatic Days of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia (1914–1918)], Prague 2015.
- 14 JIŘÍ HUTEČKA, *Muži proti ohni. Motivace, morálka a mužnost českých vojáků Velké války, 1914–1918* [Men against Fire. The Motivation, Morale, and Masculinity of Czech Soldiers in the Great War, 1914–1918], Prague 2016. For a look at the same argument in English, see JIŘÍ HUTEČKA, “Looking Like the Other Guys”. *The 1914 Mobilization as a Masculine Experience in Czech Soldiers’ Writings*, *Revue des études slaves* 88/2017, pp. 667–682.
- 15 RUDOLF KUČERA, *Muži ve válce, válka v mužích. Maskulinity a světové války 20. století v současné kulturní historiografii* [Men in War, War in Men. Masculinities and the World Wars of the 20th Century in Recent Cultural History], *Soudobé dějiny* 19/2011, pp. 549–562; RUDOLF KUČERA, *Losing Manliness. Bohemian Workers and the Experience of the Home Front*, in: *Other Fronts, Other Wars? First World War Studies on the Eve of the Centennial*, (eds.) Joachim Bürgschwentner, Matthias Egger, Gunda Barth-Scalmani, Leiden 2014, pp. 331–348.

tory' is a misnomer."¹⁶ Indeed: what is known as "new military history" in the history of warfare has its roots firmly planted in the mid-1960s when, as another great historian put it, the "Vietnam generation" of Western scholars tried to find a new way of understanding and analyzing warfare in its historical context.¹⁷ A projection of the general developments in the historical profession, this effort was characterized by a major shift away from events and great men towards structures, social history, the "holy trinity" of class, race, and gender, and, from the late 1980s onwards, towards "new" cultural history. Reflecting politics in the academia, this new military history more or less built its case on the existing opposition to traditional military history – while it is extremely difficult to define what exactly the discourse includes today, it is much more easily defined by what it does not: the supposedly "old-fashioned" study of tactics, campaigns, leaders, weapons, and logistics.¹⁸

This "new" military history established itself as a dominant discourse in the field during the 1970s and 1980s, and somewhat successfully bridged the gap between the "academic" and "military" histories, although it did so not so much by drawing military historians out of their metaphorical ghetto but rather by bringing more mainstream historians into the study of warfare. In a more or less conscious opposition to the traditional approach, seen as limiting and insufficient for the reasons listed above, these authors embarked upon researching warfare and conflict *differently*. Instead of focusing narrowly on combat and operations, they embraced the study of conflict as a whole, focusing on anything even remotely connected to it, "the *rest* of military history – that is (...) the recruitment, training, and socialization of personnel, combat motivation, the effects of service and war on the individual soldier, the veteran, the internal dynamics of military institutions, inter- and intra-service tensions, civil-military relations, and the relationship between military systems and the greater society."¹⁹ The resulting emphasis on the social and cultural preconditions, effects, and consequences of warfare came to be seen as the true path to understanding its role in the past. While military institutions often remained the focus of this

16 JOANNA BOURKE, *New Military History*, in: Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History, (eds.) Matthew Hughes, William J. Philpott, London 2006, pp. 271.

17 JAY WINTER, *Introduction*, in: The Cambridge History of the First World War, (ed.) Jay Winter, Cambridge 2014, vol. 1, p. 3.

18 See J. BOURKE, *New Military History*, pp. 271–273; J. A. LYNN, *The Embattled Future*, pp. 783.

19 PETER KARSTEN, *The 'New' American Military History. A Map of the Territory, Explored and Unexplored*, American Quarterly 36/1984, p. 389.

research, they came to be seen as instruments or reflections of larger societal structures, increasingly studied with the help of a new vocabulary of class, race, gender, identity, individual experience and memory. In this context, the event of war remained the prime mover, the ultimate *raison d'être*, but it gradually left the stage to be replaced by whatever preceded it or came out of it. The essence of war as defined by Clausewitz – organized violence between armed groups – was skipped (rather than re-visited with a new, inspiring lens) in favour of studying its structural background and the causes and consequences of the destruction it brought about, in particular casualties both real and symbolic.²⁰ In its most limited variant, as exemplified by the seminal work by André Corvisier on the French army during the *ancien régime*, this approach amounted to a “war and society” concept focused on armies as social institutions and, in the scathing words of John Lynn, “worked best in a freeze frame (...) [seeing] war [as] a confusing complication in the study of military history”.²¹ In a more general sense, it is perhaps best to summarize the shifts towards “new military history” as a move from “military history” to a “history of war and warfare”.

While this discursive shift potentially saved military history from ultimate “ghettoization” at the fringes of the historical profession – as we have unfortunately witnessed here in the Czech Republic – it did, as all such shifts do, bring its own problems. While focusing on virtually *everything* connected to warfare, ever expanding into areas previously deemed irrelevant to it, “new” military history not only became a term lazily thrown in more or less every time a text does not “do” the “old military history”, but also caused some surprising “casualties” in the process. To analyze this issue more specifically in a short essay, it is necessary to narrow our point of reference, as the whole of “new military history” would be unmanageable. For this purpose, we will first summarize the past fifty years of research on the First World War, giving particular attention to works dealing with Central Europe whose authors subscribe, one way or another, to the concept of “new military history”. Then, using this area of research as an example, we will try to pinpoint the aforementioned discursive “casualties”.

20 CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ, *On War*, (eds.) Michael Howard, Peter Paret, Princeton 1989, p. 75.

21 J. A. LYNN, *The Embattled Future*, p. 784; ANDRÉ CORVISIER, *Les Français et l'armée sous Louis XIV. D'après les mémoires des intendants 1697–1698*, Vincennes 1975; ANDRÉ CORVISIER, *Armées et sociétés en Europe de 1494 à 1789*, Paris 1976.

New Military Histories of the Great War

Picking the Great War as a testing ground for “new military history” is not just a reflection of my own scholarly interest and preferences. The study of the global conflict of 1914 to 1918 has been one of the primary grounds of the changes we have so far described in general terms, and the first steps in “new military history” can be traced back to a few key works in this field. As Jay Winter summarized, it was John Keegan and his *The Face of Battle* (1976) which “opened a new chapter in the study of military history as a *humane discipline*”.²² The italics are mine to emphasize the fact that, for Winter, “old military history” seemed not to be humane, giving support to what we have said about its acceptance among “non-military” historians. We will analyze Keegan’s work later in detail, as while it was at the birth of “new military history”, it has remained an exception. Besides Keegan, Jay Winter also considers Paul Fussell and Eric J. Leed “the founding fathers” of the discipline, the former for his groundbreaking work entitled *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975). Taking its approach from literary criticism, this work heavily influenced subsequent generations with its claim that in order to make sense of the chaotic experience of modern warfare, its participants escaped to a new, modern myth built on an essentially ironic understanding of the modern world that brought a sharp rupture with the old as well as with those who did not see combat first-hand.²³ The resulting debate, in which Jay Winter took the opposing stance in his own influential text, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War and European Cultural History* (1995) – seeing much more continuity across narratives of war as well as across wartime society itself – made the study of war memory and remembrance a mainstream theme in military history.²⁴ Similarly, Eric Leed’s psycho-historical study, influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology, did the same for the cultural meanings of conflict.²⁵

These works formed a base upon which the “new military history” of the Great War stands today, sprawling to all possible corners of human experience

22 J. WINTER, *Introduction*, p. 4.

23 PAUL FUSSELL, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, London 1975; SAMUEL HYNES, *A War Imagined. The First World War and English Culture*, London 1992; MODRIS EKSTEINS, *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, London 1989.

24 JAY WINTER, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History*, London 1995.

25 ERIC J. LEED, *No Man’s Land. Combat and Identity in World War I*, New York 1979.

of a modern conflict over the past fifty years.²⁶ Thus, as early as the 1970s, Klaus Theweleit took the tools of Freudian psychoanalysis and gender studies, and put them to work on the perpetrators of “white terror” in the Weimar Republic in the early 1920s.²⁷ Subsequent works by George Mosse, who saw modern warfare as the cornerstone of modern masculinity as well as a cradle of totalitarian thought,²⁸ established veteran identity and comradeship, the interpretations and societal consequences of the so-called “war experience”, as one of the most hotly debated issues in the field.²⁹

Turning our attention to the war itself, an immensely wide range of topics would fit under the broad wings of “new military history”. While political histories periodically revisit the causal chains of events that led to the war, in which Austria-Hungary is usually seen to have played a key part,³⁰ pre-war militarism and “military culture” has also been examined by authors such as Laurence Cole, who analyzed the issue of societal militarization in pre-war Austria, and Christa Hämmerle, who contrasted the discourse of male citizenship with the military’s unwillingness to utilize it fully as an ideology behind universal conscription.³¹

26 For an extensive analysis of historical writing on the First World War, see JAY WINTER, ANTOINE PROST, *The Great War in History. Debates and Controversies, 1914–present*, Cambridge 2005; or, more recently, ALAN KRAMER, *Recent Historiography of the First World War (Part I)*, *The Journal of Modern European History* 12/2014, pp. 5–27; ALAN KRAMER, *Recent Historiography of the First World War (Part II)*, *The Journal of Modern European History* 12/2014, pp. 155–74.

27 KLAUS THEWELEIT, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., Cambridge 1987–1989.

28 GEORGE L. MOSSE, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, New York 1996; GEORGE L. MOSSE, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford 1990.

29 See THOMAS KÜHNE, *Kameradschaft. Die Soldaten des Nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2006; ROBERT GERWARTH, *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End*, New York 2016; *The Great War and Veterans’ Internationalism*, (eds.) JULIA EICHENBERG, JOHN PAUL NEWMAN, London 2013. For the Czechoslovak context, see NATALIE STEGMANN, *Kriegsdeutungen – Staatsgründungen – Sozialpolitik. Der Helden- und Opferdiskurs in der Tschechoslowakei, 1918–1948*, Munich 2010.

30 For the most recent example, see CHRISTOPHER CLARK, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went To War in 1914*, London 2013.

31 LAURENCE COLE, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria*, Oxford 2013; CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, ‘Back to the Monarchy’s Glorified Past?’ *Military Discourses on Male Citizenship and Universal Conscription in the Austrian Empire, 1868–1914*, in: *Representing Masculinity. Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture*, (eds.) Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, Anna Clark, New York 2007, pp. 144–163. For a similar work on Germany, see UTE FREVERT, *Nation in Barracks. Modern Germany, Military Conscription, and Civil Society*, Oxford 2004; *Der Bürger als Soldat. Die Militarisierung europäischer Gesellschaften im langen 19. Jahrhundert. Ein internationaler Vergleich*, (ed.) CHRISTIAN JANSEN, Essen 2004.

Wartime communication, particularly letters and the practice of letter-writing, as well as the censorship thereof, came under scrutiny as part of studying both the home-front relationships and the *Alltagsgeschichte* of the population at war, soldiers and civilians alike.³² The so-called home front, with the issues such as loyalty, group identity, the economy of everyday life, class and gender politics, has become almost a field by itself, focusing fully on the way wartime pressures changed communities, regions, as well as whole societies.³³ In this area, particular attention is given to women's experiences of wartime, reflecting on the massive shifts in their social position, changing concepts of femininity, as well as on issues such as wartime prostitution and sexual violence.³⁴ Wartime sexuality in

- 32 CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, 'You Let a Weeping Woman Call You Home?' *Private Correspondences during the First World War in Austria and Germany*, in: *Epistolary Selves. Letters and Letter-writers, 1600–1945*, (ed.) Rebecca Earle, Aldershot 1999, pp. 153–186; GUSTAV SPANN, *Zensur in Österreich während des 1. Weltkrieges 1914–1918*, Vienna 1972 (diss.); GERALD LAMPRECHT, *Feldpost und Kriegserlebnis. Briefe als historisch-biographische Quelle*, Innsbruck 2001; BERND ULRICH, *Feldpostbriefe im Ersten Weltkrieg – Bedeutung und Zensur*, in: *Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung und der Friedenserziehung*, (ed.) Peter Knoch, Stuttgart 1989, pp. 40–83. On the use of war correspondence to analyze the complicated problem of loyalties, see PÉTER HANÁK, *Die Volksmeinung während des letzten Kriegsjahres in Österreich-Ungarn*, in: *Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches. Zusammenbruch und Neuorientierung im Donauraum*, (eds.) Richard G. Plaschka, Karl-Heinz Mack, Munich 1970, pp. 58–66. For an inspiring French example, see MARTHA HANNA, *A Republic of Letters. The Epistolary Tradition in France during the World War I*, *American Historical Review* 108/2003, pp. 1338–1361. For a rather basic attempt at covering the issue in the context of Czech war experience, see DAVID PAZDERA, *Korespondence jako jeden z pramenů pro výzkum každodennosti českých vojáků rakousko-uherské armády ve Velké válce*, *Historie a vojenství* 52/2003, no. 1, pp. 37–43.
- 33 For the best examples, see MAUREEN HEALY, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*, Cambridge 2004; TAMARA SCHEER, *Ringstrassefront. Österreich-Ungarn, das Kriegsüberwachungsamt und der Ausnahmezustand während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Vienna 2010; *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Alpenraum/La Grande Guerra nell'arco alpino. Erfahrung, Deutung, Erinnerung / Esperienze e memoria*, (eds.) HERMANN J. W. KUPRIAN, OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, Innsbruck 2006. For similar research on Germany, see BENJAMIN ZIEMANN, *War Experience in Rural Germany*, Oxford 2007; and in the case of Bohemia, RUDOLF KUČERA, *Rationed Life. Science, Everyday Life and Working-Class Politics in the Bohemian Lands 1914–1918*, New York 2016. For a general overview, see TAMMY M. PROCTOR, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914–1918*, New York 2010.
- 34 For a recent summary of these issues in the case of Austria, see CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, *Heimat/Front. Geschlechtergeschichte/n des Ersten Weltkriegs in Österreich-Ungarn*, Vienna 2014; on prostitution, see NANCY M. WINGFIELD, *The World of Prostitution in Late Imperial Austria*, Oxford, 2017; on sexual violence against women and their changing situation in wartime in general, see, *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, (eds.) NANCY M. WING-

general has been a subject of inquiry since the days of Magnus Hirschfeld in 1930s, but found its way into the field of “military history” with the works of authors such as Santanu Das, Jason Crouthamel or, in the case of Austria, of Oswald Überegger, i.e. authors who focused on the way soldiers experienced their sexuality under the constraints of wartime service.³⁵ The soldier’s side of the conflict also came under scrutiny from the point of view of masculinity studies, with several authors – including myself – examining how both societal discourse and individual experience of masculinity were shaped by military service in peace and in war.³⁶ And, taking inspiration from French historiography, children’s wartime experiences also became a focus of study.³⁷

FIELD, MARIA BUCUR, Bloomington 2006. See also MARGARET R. HIGONNET, PATRICE L. R. HIGONNET, “*The Double Helix*”, in *Behind the Lines. Gender and the Two World Wars*, (eds.) Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret Collins Weitz, New Haven 1987, pp. 31–50; *Gender Relations in German History. Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, (eds.) LYNN ABRAMS, ELIZABETH HARVEY, London 1996; *Gender and the First World War* (eds.) CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, BIRGITTA BADER-ZAAR, New York 2014; *Home/Front. The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany*, (eds.) KAREN HAGEMANN, STEFANIE SCHÜLER-SPRINGORUM, Oxford 2002.

- 35 MAGNUS HIRSCHFELD, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1930; JASON CROUTHAMEL, *An Intimate History of the Front. Masculinity, Sexuality, and German Soldiers in the First World War*, New York 2014; SANTANU DAS, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, Cambridge 2005; GEORGE CHAUNCEY, Jr., *Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era*, in: *Hidden from History. Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, (ed.) Martin Duberman, New York 1989, pp. 295–299; OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, *Krieg als sexuelle Zäsur? Sexualmoral und Geschlechterstereotypen im kriegsgesellschaftlichen Diskurs über die Geschlechtskrankheiten. Kulturgeschichtliche Annäherungen*, in: *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Alpenraum*, pp. 351–366.
- 36 J. HUTEČKA, *Muži proti obni. Motivace, morálka a mužnost českých vojáků Velké války, 1914–1918*; CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, *Zur Relevanz des Connell’schen Konzepts hegemonialer Männlichkeit für Militär und Männlichkeit/en in der Habsburgermonarchie (1868–1914/18)*, in: *Männer – Macht – Körper. Hegemoniale Männlichkeiten vom Mittelalter bis heute*, (ed.) Martin Dinges, Frankfurt am Main 2005, pp. 103–121. Also outlined by CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, *Von den Geschlechtern der Kriege und des Militärs. Forschungseinblicke und Bemerkungen zu einer neuen Debatte*, in: *Was ist Militärgeschichte?*, (eds.) Thomas Kühne, Benjamin Ziemann, Paderborn 2000, pp. 226–262; on Great Britain, see JESSICA MEYER, *Men of War. Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*, London 2009; for a recent summary of the gender history of the First World War, see *Gender and the Great War*, (eds.) SUSANE R. GRAYZEL, TAMMY M. PROCTOR, Oxford 2017.
- 37 See *Kindheit im Ersten Weltkrieg* (ed.) CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, Vienna, 1998; *Kindheit und Schule im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (eds.) HANNES STEKL, CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, ERNST BRÜCKMÜLLER, Vienna 2014; STÉPHAN AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, *La guerre des enfants*,

The research of the past twenty years has managed to close the massive gap found in traditional military histories when it came to state violence, repressions, and atrocities against non-combatants during the war. Wolfgang Dornik and Stefan Karner edited a collection on the wartime occupation of Ukraine,³⁸ while Jonathan Gumz wrote a revealing study on the Austro-Hungarian campaign and occupation practice in Serbia.³⁹ Similarly, a group of authors around Hannes Leidinger focused on how the Austro-Hungarian state turned against its subjects with increasing force and violence, both in the occupied territories and in the hinterland,⁴⁰ while a number of historians tackled the issue of wartime escalation of violence in numerous European conflicts, including the Great War.⁴¹ As a part of our understanding of non-combatant experience of the war, the issues of forced relocation and war refugees, which had important consequences for the way war was experienced in Bohemia and Moravia as well, have also received substantial attention in the past two decades.⁴²

As we have already mentioned, “new military history” began with studies of the so-called war experience, which a number of authors such as George L. Mosse and Paul Fussell see as key to the creation of a modern – for some, in-

1914–1918, Paris 2004; *Vše pro dítě! Válečné dětství 1914–1918* [Everything for a Child! Childhood in War, 1914–1918], (eds.) MILENA LENDEROVÁ, MARTINA HALÍŘOVÁ, TOMÁŠ JIRÁNEK, Prague 2015.

- 38 *Die Besatzung der Ukraine 1918. Historischer Kontext – Forschungsstand – wirtschaftliche und soziale Folgen*, (eds.) WOLFGANG DORNIK, STEFAN KARNER, Graz 2008. See also MARK VON HAGEN, *War in a European Borderland. Occupations and Occupation Plans in Galicia and Ukraine, 1914–1918*, Seattle 2007; or, for a cultural analysis, ALAN KRAMER, *Dynamic of Destruction. Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*, Oxford 2007.
- 39 JONATHAN GUMZ, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918*, Cambridge 2009.
- 40 HANNES LEIDINGER, VERENA MORITZ, KARIN MOSER, WOLFRAM DORNIK, *Habsburgs Schmutziger Krieg. Ermittlungen zur österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsführung 1914–1918*, Vienna 2014.
- 41 OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, “Verbrannte Erde” und “baumelnde Geheunkte”. Zur europäischen Dimension militärischer Normübertretungen, in: *Kriegsgreuel. Die Entgrenzung der Gewalt in kriegerischen Konflikten vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, (eds.) Daniel Hohrath, Paderborn 2007, pp. 241–278; BJÖRN OPFER-KLINGER, *Ein unaufgearbeitetes Kapitel südeuropäischer Nationalgeschichte. Bulgarische Kriegsgreuel 1912–1918*, in: *Kriegsgreuel*, pp. 279–292; STEFFEN BRUENDEL, *Kriegsgreuel 1914–1918. Rezeption und Aufarbeitung deutscher Kriegsverbrechen im Spannungsfeld von Völkerrecht und Kriegspropaganda*, in: *Kriegsgreuel*, pp. 293–316.
- 42 See DIEGO LEONI, CAMILLO ZADRA, *La Città’ di Legno. Profughi trentini in Austria, 1915–1918*, Trent 1995; ALAN KRAMER, *Italienische Kriegsgefangene im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Alpenraum*, pp. 247–258; *Europe on the Move. Refugees in the Era of the Great War*, (eds.) PETER GATRELL, LIUBOV ZHVANKO, Manchester 2017.

herently totalitarian – consciousness. This idea of studying the First World War “from below” was not new, of course, as it reached back to Jean Norton-Cru’s critical analysis of French soldiers’ accounts of their experience.⁴³ However, shifts in the historical profession during the 1970s and 1980s added a dizzying range of manifold interdisciplinary approaches to the previous limited efforts searching for objective “truth”, focusing instead on the notion of subjectivity. Textual analysis, group psychology, various forms of psychoanalysis, military psychology, gender analysis, and social and cultural anthropology were all methods that came to the foreground in the process. In addition to the works already mentioned, Rachel Duffett applied anthropological and social analysis to the way British soldiers ate – and what it meant for them and their morale; Rok Stergar later applied a similar approach to Slovenian-speaking soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army.⁴⁴ Bernd Ulrich studied the everyday subjective experience, motivations, and disillusionment of German soldiers, while Michael Roper focused on the issue of the emotions and “emotional survival” of their British counterparts.⁴⁵ Robert L. Nelson analyzed the content and socio-cultural importance of trench newspapers published in the German army in the West, while Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau used the same primary source to analyze motivation and “national sentiment” in the French army.⁴⁶ The Habsburg officer corps’ pre-war sentiments, class identity, and self-perception were recently analyzed by Martin Schmitz.⁴⁷ Soldiers recruited from among demographic minorities have increas-

43 JEAN NORTON-CRU, *Témoins. Essai d'analyse et de critique des souvenirs de combattants édités en français de 1915 à 1928*, Paris 1929.

44 RACHEL DUFFETT, *The Stomach for Fighting. Food and the Soldiers of the Great War*, Manchester 2012; ROK STERGAR, *Hrana na bojiščih 1. svetovoj vojne. Izkušnje slovenskih vojakov [Food on the Battlefields of the First World War. Slovenian Soldiers' Experience]*, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 55/2015, no. 2, pp. 22–53.

45 BERND ULRICH, *Die Augenzeugen. Deutsche Feldpostbriefe in Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit*, Essen 1997; BERND ULRICH, *Kampfmotivationen und Mobilisierungsstrategien. Das Beispiel Erster Weltkrieg*, in: *Töten im Krieg*, (eds.) Heinrich von Stietencron, Jörg Rüpke, Freiburg 1995, pp. 399–419; BERND ULRICH, *Die Desillusionierung der Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914*, in: *Der Krieg des Kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten*, (ed.) Wolfgang Wette, Munich 1992, pp. 110–126; MICHAEL ROPER, *The Secret Battle. Emotional Survival in the Great War*, Manchester 2009.

46 ROBERT L. NELSON, *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War*, Cambridge 2011; STÉPHANE AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, *Men at War, 1914–1918. National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, Oxford 1992.

47 MARTIN SCHMITZ, *„Als ob die Welt aus den Fugen ginge.“ Kriegserfahrungen Österreichisch-ungarischer Offiziere 1914–1918*, Paderborn 2016. For a classic study of the Habsburg officer corps in the “long 19th Century”, written in the best tradition of “war and society” approach, see

ingly come to the focus of recent research, with the stinging issue of their loyalty always close to the surface.⁴⁸ The very question of what exactly motivated men to fight became a hotly debated issue, with opinion oscillating between coercion – where men were passive victims of the system – and consent – where men more or less acted on their own will to fight, for various reasons.⁴⁹

In the Austro-Hungarian context, the issue of motivation is inextricably linked to the wider problem of loyalty to the Habsburg state, which became the focus of a number of works dealing both with servicemen and with other specific social groups.⁵⁰ Frontline experience on the Isonzo and in the Alps, both in terms of everyday existence and of its subsequent (re-)interpretation in history and memory, was examined by several authors.⁵¹ Mark Cornwall has covered the

ISTVÁN DEÁK, *Beyond Nationalism. A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918*, Oxford 1990.

- 48 See *Minderbaiteten-Soldaten. Ethnizität und Identität in den Armeen des Ersten Weltkriegs*, (ed.) OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, Paderborn 2018.
- 49 LEONARD V. SMITH, *Between Mutiny and Obedience. The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I*, Princeton 1994; LEONARD V. SMITH, *The Embattled Self. French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War*, Ithaca 2007; ANDRÉ LOEZ, 14–18. *Les refus de la guerre. Une histoire des mutins*, Paris 2010; WILHELM DEIST, *The Military Collapse of the German Empire. The Reality Behind the Stab-in-the-Back Myth*, *War in History* 3/1996, no. 2, pp. 186–207; ANNE LIPP, *Meinungslenkung im Krieg. Kriegserfahrungen deutscher Soldaten und ihre Deutung 1914–1918*, Göttingen 2003; ALEXANDER WATSON, *Enduring the Great War. Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918*, Cambridge 2008.
- 50 *The Limits of Loyalty. Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, (eds.) LAURENCE COLE, DANIEL L. UNOWSKY, Oxford 2007; MARK CORNWALL, *Traitors and the Meaning of Treason in Austria-Hungary's Great War*, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25/2015, pp. 129–141; MARK CORNWALL, *Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army*, in: *State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (ed.) John Horne, Cambridge 1997, pp. 167–188; RICHARD LEIN, *Pflichterfüllung oder Hochverrat? Die tschechischen Soldaten Österreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vienna 2011.
- 51 JASON C. ENGLE. *'This Monstrous Front Will Devour Us All' The Austro-Hungarian Soldier Experience, 1914–1915*, in: 1914. *Austria-Hungary, the Origins, and the First Year of World War I*, (eds.) Günter Bischof, Ferdinand Karlhofer, Samuel R. Williamson, New Orleans–Innsbruck 2014, pp. 145–164; CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, *Opferhelden? Zur Geschichte der k.u.k. Soldaten an der Südwestfront*, in: *Krieg in den Alpen. Österreich-Ungarn und Italien im Ersten Weltkrieg (1914–1918)*, (eds.) Nicola Labanca, Oswald Überegger, Vienna 2015, pp. 155–180; CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, *'Es ist immer der Mann, der den Kampf entscheidet, und nicht die Waffe...'* *Die Männlichkeit des k.u.k. Gebirgskriegers in der soldatischen Erinnerungskultur*, in: *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Alpenraum*, pp. 35–60; FERNANDO ESPOSITO, *Über keinem Gipfel ist Rub. Helden- und Kriegerturn als Topoi medialisierter Kriegserfahrungen deutscher und italienischer Flieger*, in: *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Alpenraum*, pp. 73–90.

effects wartime propaganda had on the Habsburg war effort, while several classic works analyzed the issue of morale in the Austro-Hungarian army through the stinging issue of desertion and various other ways in which soldiers resisted the Imperial and Royal authority during the war.⁵² The experiences of Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war were successfully investigated by Alon Rachamimov, Hannes Leidinger and Verena Moritz,⁵³ while the latter two authors also brought to light the treatment of Russian POWs in Austro-Hungarian prisoner-of-war camps.⁵⁴ And although it has been given only passing attention in the context

- 52 On propaganda, see MARK CORNWALL, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary. The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, London 2000; also OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, *Kulturelle Mobilisierung. Die österreichisch-ungarische Kriegspropaganda gegen Italien*, in: *Krieg in den Alpen*, pp. 259–280. On morale and desertion, see GERHARD SENFT, *Resistance Against the War of 1914–1918*, in: 1914. Austria-Hungary, the Origins, and the First Year of World War I, pp. 187–212; RICHARD PLASCHKA, HORST HASELSTEINER, ARNOLD SUPPAN, *Innere Front. Militärassistenten, Widerstand und Umsturz in der Donaumonarchie 1918*, 2 vols., Vienna 1974; JAKUB BENEŠ, 'Zelené kádry' jako radikální alternativa pro venkov na západním Slovensku a ve středovýchodní Evropě 1917–1920 [*The Green Cadres' as a Radical Alternative for the Countryside in Western Slovakia and in East-Central Europe, 1917–1920*], *Forum Historiae* 2/2015, pp. 1–18; JAKUB BENEŠ, *The Green Cadres and the Collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918*, *Past & Present* 236/2017, pp. 207–241; also CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, *Desertion vor Gericht. Zur Quellenproblematik von Militärgeschichtsakten am Beispiel der k.(u.)k. Armee 1868–1914/18*, *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* 8/2008, no. 2, pp. 33–52; OSWALD ÜBEREGGER, *Politik, Nation und Desertion. Zur Relevanz politisch-nationaler und ideologischer Verweigerungsmotive für die Desertion österreichisch-ungarischer Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* 8/2008, no. 2, pp. 109–119. For a comparison with Germany, see CHRISTIAN JAHR, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten. Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914–1918*, Göttingen 1998; WILHELM DEIST, *Verdeckter Militärstreik im Kriegsjahr 1918?*, in: *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten*, (ed.) Wolfgang Wette, Munich 1992, pp. 146–167; BENJAMIN ZIEMANN, *Enttäuschte Erwartung und kollektive Erschöpfung. Die deutschen Soldaten an der Westfront 1918 auf dem Weg zur Revolution*, in: *Kriegsende 1918. Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung. Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte*, (eds.) Jörg Duppler, Gerhard P. Gross, Munich 1999, pp. 165–182.
- 53 ALON RACHAMIMOV, *POWs and the Great War. Captivity on the Eastern Front*, London 2002; ALON RACHAMIMOV, *The Disruptive Comforts of Drag. (Trans)Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1920*, *American Historical Review* 111/2006, pp. 368–372; HANNES LEIDINGER, VERENA MORITZ, *In russischer Gefangenschaft. Erlebnisse österreichischer Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vienna 2008.
- 54 HANNES LEIDINGER, VERENA MORITZ, *Zwischen Nutzen und Bedrohung. Die russischen Kriegsgefangenen in Österreich (1914–1921)*, Bonn 2005; VERENA MORITZ, *The Treatment of Prisoners of War in Austria-Hungary 1914/1915. The Historiography of Prisoners of War in Later Habsburg Empire*, in: 1914. Austria-Hungary, the Origins, and the First Year of World War I, pp. 233–248. See also HEATHER JONES, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War Britain, France, and Germany, 1914–1920*, Cambridge 2011.

of Austria-Hungary, it would be inappropriate to summarize the “new military approach” to the study of the First World War without mentioning the seminal works by Joanna Bourke and Sabine Kienitz on the ways in which bodily trauma and disability were understood and interpreted in wartime and post-war Britain and Germany, respectively.⁵⁵ Indeed, the approaches behind those works were a prime mover of historiographic interest in the ways individuals, medical and military institutions and indeed whole societies dealt with the even more pressing and ill-defined issue of psychological trauma, i.e. shell shock.⁵⁶

If we look at this brief summary of the “new military history” of the First World War with particular attention given to Central European experience, we note that the topic of battle and combat violence is, perhaps conspicuously, almost entirely missing. With the notable exception of John Keegan, whose seminal study *The Face of Battle* has inspired a rather limited following (see below for an overview),⁵⁷ it seems as if today’s historians of warfare have fallen into the trap Carl von Clausewitz described in his criticism of his predecessors: “Kind-hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed.”⁵⁸ In fact, if we attempt to outline the picture of war painted by the research above, we see a pattern – we see societies succumbing to militarism, study men spending long days longing for their loved ones at home, as well as those loved ones falling victim to worsening economic conditions or, worse, state repression. We see armies committing atrocities and generally operating in enforcing their often harsh idea of internal security. We analyze the way society has changed under external pressure, the shifting roles expected of men and women, and we see men having a hard time

55 JOANNA BOURKE, *Dismembering the Male. Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*, London 1996; SABINE KIENITZ, *Beschädigte Helden. Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914–1923*, Paderborn 2008.

56 From the massive body of predominantly British historical writing on the issue, see for example FIONA REID, *Broken Men. Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain 1914–1930*, London 2010; PETER LEESE, *Shell Shock. Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War*, London 2002; PETER BARHAM, *Forgotten Lunatics of the Great War*, New Haven 2004; PAUL LERNER, *Hysterical Men. War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890–1930*, Ithaca 2003. For more comparative summaries, see for example *Psychological Trauma and the Legacies of the First World War*, (eds.) JASON CROUTHAMEL, PETER LEESE, London 2017; *Psychische Versehrungen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, (eds.) GUNDULA GAHLEN, WENCKE METELING, CHRISTOPH NÜBEL, Portal Militärgeschichte, www.portal-militaergeschichte.de/psychische_versehrungen, accessed May 21, 2018.

57 JOHN KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle*, London 1976.

58 C. VON CLAUSEWITZ, *On War*, pp. 75–76.

accommodating the process. There is a focus on women being economically and sexually exploited, as well as an interest in the emotional, mental, and physical consequences of modern warfare. Soldiers' loyalty to the cause and their experience of captivity are given extensive treatment, as is their resistance to the war. Yet the closest we get to combat is in the analysis of motivational structures that served to get the men fighting in the first place or to keep them at it for long periods of time – which, as we all know, was happening a lot. Only the gruesome reality of what that fighting entailed was apparently not noticed by “new military history”.

“Non-Combat” Military History?

In fact, a quick look into various collections of scholarly essays focusing on military history in the Central European context only further confirms this conclusion. A collection entitled *What is Military History*, edited by Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann in 2000, includes essays on culture, gender, economy, politics, and even operations (which is as close as it gets to combat), but lacks any specific analysis of *how* the war was actually fought.⁵⁹ Similarly, a more recent collection putting together contemporary research on *Pomp – Violence – Obedience* as primary concepts reflected in the history of the Habsburg military and society between 1800 till 1918, while openly claiming to represent all the possible approaches in “new military history”, does not include any essay on combat or the violence involved in it. Instead, the major focus is on the way societies as well as individuals prepare (or are prepared) for war, how they experience military service in peacetime as well as in war, their resistance, cultural representations, and accommodation of war's consequences.⁶⁰ Also, while some essays in the inspired, thoroughly comparative collection on the perception of war experience (mostly) on the Eastern Front edited by Bernhard Bachinger and Wolfram Dornik in 2014, came close to analyzing the immediate socio-cultural context and direct emotional consequences of combat, they still did not tackle the very issue of men *in* the process of combat.⁶¹

59 *Was ist Militärgeschichte?* (eds.) THOMAS KÜHNE, BENJAMIN ZIEMANN, Paderborn 2000.

60 *Glanz – Gewalt – Gehorsam. Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1880 bis 1918)*, (eds.) LAURENCE COLE, CHRISTA HÄMMERLE, MARTIN SCHEUTZ, Essen 2011.

61 *Jenseits des Schützengrabens. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten. Erfahrung – Wahrnehmung – Kontext*, (eds.) BERNARD BACHINGER, WOLFRAM DORNIK, Innsbruck 2013. While most essays in the collection do, often in enlightening ways, deal with a multitude of the “classic” themes

While works that analyze World War I combat are scarce, they are not entirely non-existent. As we have mentioned, some of the studies listed above do come close to doing so, from their specific points of view. In my own study of wartime soldiers' masculinity, the reality of combat is analyzed as a means of understanding its possible influences on the ways soldiers experienced their own sense of being men, which in turn influenced their willingness to participate in the fighting.⁶² Richard Lein used a rather traditional tactical analysis of a specific combat situation to help us understand the background of the myth of the k.u.k. Infantry Regiment 28 deserting *en masse* to the Russians in April 1915.⁶³ Even more importantly, Marian Füssel and Michael Sikora recently edited an inspiring collection of essays linking battlefield violence with broader cultural analysis and covering numerous combat engagements throughout European history.⁶⁴ While Lutz Musner analyses the combat reality of the Isonzo battles as a source of a specific culture of war and its memory, Christoph Nübel makes violence an integral part of his case study of the German Spring Offensive in 1918.⁶⁵ As for the Western Front, we have an inspiring study of combatants on both sides and how they coped with their everyday experience of the frontline, written by Frederic Rousseau, albeit with only casual reference to the realities and practices

of "new military history" (such as memory, trauma, POW experience, cultural perception, or various forms of identity under stress), the essays by Lutz Musner on the experience of the Isonzo front and by Sabine Haring on the German army in the first few months of war in the East are of particular interest here. See LUTZ MUSNER, *Carso Maledetto. Der Isonzo-Krieg 1915–1917*, in: *Jenseits des Schützengrabens*, pp. 267–284; SABINE A. HARING, *K.u.k. Soldaten an der Ostfront im Sommer und Herbst 1914. Eine emotionssoziologische Analyse*, in: *Jenseits des Schützengrabens*, pp. 65–86.

62 J. HUTEČKA, *Muži proti ohni*, pp. 166–189.

63 R. LEIN, *Pflichterfüllung oder Hochverrat*, pp. 39–348. Regarding tactical developments, there exist numerous studies dealing with the Western Front in particular, most of which see tactics in technical terms and soldiers as mere (albeit unreliable) executive tools. See for example PADDY GRIFFITH, *Battle Tactics on the Western Front. The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916–1918*, New Haven 1994; BRUCE I. GUDMUNDSSON, *Stormtroop Tactics. Innovation in the German Army, 1914–1918*, London 1989.

64 *Kulturgeschichte der Schlacht*, (eds.) MARIAN FÜSSEL, MICHAEL SIKORA, Paderborn 2014.

65 LUTZ MUSNER, *Der Isonzo-Krieg 1915–1917. Kriegslandschaft, Gewalterfahrung und Erinnerungspolitik*, in: *Kulturgeschichte der Schlacht*, pp. 205–230; CHRISTOPH NÜBEL, *Die Geschichte der Schlacht. Methodische Überlegungen am Beispiel der Michael-Offensive 1918*, in: *Kulturgeschichte der Schlacht*, pp. 231–258.

of combat itself.⁶⁶ There are also interesting approaches to combat motivation and morale, the key precursors to the successful combat performance of any military unit, such as Alexander Watson's comparative study of psychological endurance in the British and German armies,⁶⁷ or Tony Ashworth's semi-sociological analysis of the "live and let live system".⁶⁸ However, in Ashworth's case, the main focus is actually on men finding ways to *avoid* combat and on the military machine pushing them into it. In Watson's case, at least, we get a close look at the agency of men, as he rightly sees them as willing, active participants in organized violence.

The issue of agency is not only crucial to the debate over consent versus coercion; it is symptomatic of the whole discourse of "new military history". As it turns out, and a quick glance over the aforementioned literature only confirms this, recent research has tended overwhelmingly to study "the devastation and casualties of war, both military and civilian".⁶⁹ While a legitimate approach, particularly in the light of the fact that these themes were all but omitted – or perhaps nonchalantly taken for granted – by "old" military history, it is particularly striking when we consider soldiers. In the case of the First World War, we know for certain that millions were killed in the line of battle – but in the eyes of much of the recent research, there seem to have been essentially no *agents of war* causing this damage. Instead, most recent research has studied military subjects as hardly consenting, mostly dissenting, *victims of war*, overlooking the enormous complexity of their position. Many fully legitimate aspects of soldiers' experience – their everyday life, desertion, captivity, resistance, suicide, shell shock, disability, memory and remembrance – dominate the field of research, reinforcing this tendency towards victimization in a sort of infinite loop, where agency only appears in connection with efforts to escape warfare rather than to participate in it. Here, we must agree with Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Anette Becker, who wrote eighteen years ago that "a peaceloving, indeed pacifist, ideology about the war to end all wars had prevailed for a long time. (...) In the context of personal or family memory, it is better to be a victim than an agent of suffering and death. Death is always inflicted, always anonymous, never dispensed; one is al-

66 FREDERIC ROUSSEAU, *La guerre censurée. Une histoire des combattants européens de 14–18*, Paris 1999.

67 ALEXANDER WATSON, *Enduring the Great War. Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918*, Cambridge 2008.

68 TONY ASHWORTH, *Trench Warfare 1914–1918. The Live and Let Live System*, Basingstoke 1980.

69 JEREMY BLACK, *Rethinking Military History*, London 2004, p. 6.

ways a victim of it. Or a victim of one's leaders. By transforming combatants into sacrificial lambs offered to the military butchers, the process of victimization has long impeded thought.⁷⁰ As urged by Leonard Smith in his study of French soldiers' agency, we must ask: "What is excluded if we consider the Great War as a tragedy and the soldier as a victim? What do the war, and the soldier, look like if we put whatever is excluded back in?"⁷¹ While he means re-introducing agency in analyzing soldiers' motivation to fight, we may as well broaden his appeal to the whole issue of combat – what would the war look like if we put killing, dying, and fighting back in? How would it change our understanding of the past?

The process of excluding the violent essence of war – combat itself – from most scholarly accounts and analyses even of the combatants themselves may well be traced to the sources themselves. In general, analysis of combat experience primarily relies on more or less personal accounts of participants from various levels of military hierarchy, and as is clear to anyone who has ever worked with these sources in bulk, the theme of combat receives conspicuously similar treatment in those first-hand accounts as it does decades later by those who analyze them. Whether out of guilt, sensitivity or the sheer inability of communicating the details of what they have gone through, combat soldiers do not voluntarily recount their direct encounters with warfare. Of course, there are exceptions, as Joanna Bourke has shown (see below), but overall this may be a reason why historians are not able to study combat violence – the soldiers themselves often prefer to see themselves as victims of war rather than agents of destruction, and "new military history" mirrors the nature of the available sources.

On the other hand, it seems that in many a historical account of war, there is also an invisible wall, a line that most historians would not cross, and it is connected to its very physical nature: "The violence of war inevitably takes us back to a history of the body. In war, bodies strike each other, suffer and inflict suffering," wrote Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, adding: "The history of warfare – particularly academic and scholarly history, but also traditional military history – is all too often disembodied (...) [which leads to] unacceptable way of sanitizing war". Fittingly, they equal this discursive treatment to a similar cultural "Puritanism" in academic histories of sexuality, claiming that while most historians would agree that there are plenty of positives to be taken from a thorough analysis of combat

70 STÉPHANE AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, ANETTE BECKER, 1914–1918. *Understanding the Great War*, London 2000, p. 1.

71 L. V. SMITH, *The Embattled Self*, p. 12.

violence, “one must be willing to *look* closely”.⁷² It seems that most historians, in the end, simply do not look, mirroring their sources the soldiers, perhaps out of the same combination of guilt, sensitivity, and inability to properly communicate what seems incommunicable. The problem is that this approach may end up distorting the images of history they create. As Clausewitz said – although he was not talking about historians, but rather contemporary military thinkers – “it would be futile – even wrong – to try and shut one’s eyes to what war really is from sheer distress at its brutality”.⁷³

There are in fact several exceptional works that, while not particularly interested in the First World War *per se*, do cover it out of necessity as it presents them with suitable primary sources – using these sources to analyze, fully or at least in part, the very essence of war: killing. Richard Holmes devotes a chapter of his seminal study of men in war to what he calls “the epitome of war”, i.e. combat. While the results are mixed because of an apparent lack of methodology, he still brings us tantalizingly close to what soldiers generally experience and *feel* during combat, i.e. while killing and being killed.⁷⁴ More than a decade later, Joanna Bourke finally devoted a full book to the “intimate history of killing” in 20th century warfare. While arguably selective in her approach, both in picking off non-typical behavioural patterns as well as in relying on the accounts of those who willingly remembered and perhaps even enjoyed close combat, she is right in insisting that contrary to what both old and new military histories tend to tell us (each in a different way), “the characteristic act distinctive of men at war is not dying, it is killing.”⁷⁵ Only, we may add, in modern warfare, this usually no longer involves close personal contact.

We may well now ask whether there is, after all, any grain of truth in the criticism wielded against the concept of “new military history” by the more traditionally oriented military historians, who have always suspected it, in the words of Jeremy Black, of a “tendency to de-militarize military history”, “forgetting too easily that fighting was a prime concern of the military, its special function, and should therefore play a central role in military history”.⁷⁶ “Escaping from war” and “ignoring combat itself and performance in war” are common criticisms from those who pit themselves against “new military history”, which, at

72 S. AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, A. BECKER, *1914–1918. Understanding the Great War*, pp. 14–17.

73 C. VON CLAUSEWITZ, *On War*, p. 76.

74 RICHARD HOLMES, *Acts of War. Behavior of Men in Battle*, New York 1985, pp. 136–175.

75 JOANNA BOURKE, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face-to-face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*, London 1999, p. 1.

76 J. BLACK, *Rethinking Military History*, pp. 6 and 79.

times, is “accused of being interested in everything about armies except the way they fought, interested in everything about war except campaigns and battles.”⁷⁷ To summarize this criticism in the words of John Lynn, “these approaches had a tendency to divert us from an essential nature of military history at the same time that they promised to enlighten us. To me, the essence of military history is combat.”⁷⁸ As it happens, Lynn was also one of the few exceptions among the self-defined “traditionalists” who actually focused on combat in his inspiring study of the way organized violence has been culturally conditioned throughout various stages of history and different human cultures, and managed to connect his cultural analysis with the traditional (and, in the end, historically important) issue of combat performance, i.e. “winning” and “losing”.⁷⁹ Otherwise, “old military history” remained mostly where it was, ignoring the complexities of war such as combat and its violence: “All too often military historians consider it indecent to deal with the problem of violence in combat or to study violence as such. Battles and warfare are discussed only from the tactical or strategic angle; military events are viewed only from a social or political standpoint. On the whole, the reality of war is kept at bay” even by those who take particular pride in giving it all their attention.⁸⁰ As a result of these scholarly developments, the history of combat remains, rather ironically, stuck in a methodological no man’s land of current trends in the historical study of warfare.

Which brings us back to the roots of “new military history” and John Keegan’s *The Face of Battle* which, and I do not want to sound defeatist, while a bit dated, I still consider the best and most inspiring historiographic treatment of combat, violence, and warfare ever written. Keegan, a British military historian, used a comparative approach to analyze three “battle pieces”: Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Battle of the Somme, to see “what actually happened in battle”. He combined psychology (both individual and that of crowds), class analysis, medical analysis, and technical analysis with more traditional insight into the mechanics of military tactics. His conclusion, as groundbreaking today as it was in 1976, was that battle is and always has been a story of fear and instinct, confusion and chaos; of stress and emotions; of human bodies pushed to the limit of their ability, integrity, and beyond; of blood, pain, and suffering; of sensory overload and

77 ROBERT M. CITINO, *Military Histories Old and New. A Reintroduction*, American Historical Review 112/2007, p. 1071.

78 J. A. LYNN, *The Embattled Future*, p. 783.

79 JOHN A. LYNN, *Battle. A History of Combat and Culture*, Boulder 2001.

80 S. AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, A. BECKER, 1914–1918. *Understanding the Great War*, p. 16.

crowd behaviour; and of the limited ability of all involved to control the intractable chain of events. Even more importantly, he concluded that these factors, dependent on cultural, social, and psychological structures as much as on tactical manuals, commanders' decisions, or available technology, shaped history at least as much as the "grand themes" such as strategy or policies did.⁸¹

Various historians over the past four decades have praised Keegan's work for the way it uncovered these truths "with power, subtlety, and technical authority",⁸² bringing "breathtaking results" where "readers can almost hear the screams of men and horses", the "'fog of battle' was transformed into a storm of emotion", and "the humanity of the individual soldier was laid bare."⁸³ For others, the author defied "the discipline's most established rules of caution (...) focusing *exclusively* on violence," and authors such as Tony Ashworth or Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau took direct inspiration from his effort.⁸⁴ Of course, the same four decades saw substantial criticism and revision of Keegan's work, much of it deserved, as while thoroughly inspiring in its original idea, the work suffers from sloppy sourcing and many imperfections in detail. On the other hand, its success in picking apart the historical experience of combat in war has hardly ever been emulated both in military history in general and in the study of World War I in particular.

Conclusion

The basic question that remains to be answered, of course, is what can be done to alleviate this situation? I will now try to offer some ideas, and following John Keegan's steps may well be a good start. We should try and look at what is behind the words we, as historians, conventionally use to describe military events, and ask what *actually happens* on the battlefield, *how* violence is wielded in battle, and *why* combat happens in this way and not another. In short, a sort of an anthropology of combat is welcome, as it is necessary to fill the gap left between the positions of traditional and "new" military histories.

81 J. KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle*. For a more psychologically oriented study, see the following work by an American World War II veteran on 20th century warfare, which can be seen as a precursor of both Keegan's and Richard Holmes' texts: J. GLENN GRAY, *The Warriors. Reflections on Men in Battle*, Lincoln, NE, 1958.

82 J. WINTER, *Introduction*, in: *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 1, p. 4.

83 J. BOURKE, *New Military History*, p. 266.

84 See S. AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, A. BECKER, *1914–1918. Understanding the Great War*, p. 18; T. ASHWORTH, *Trench Warfare*, p. 226.

By anthropology, I do not mean only a limited import of anthropological approaches. While the performative, ritualistic quality of battlefield violence, representing a very specific form of inter-personal and inter-group communication, is readily apparent in many anthropological studies of warfare and in works by Joanna Bourke, Tony Ashworth or Petr Wohlmuth (to go back to Czech historical writing on war), we need to look beyond just one theorem.⁸⁵ Mobilizing the interpretative powers of many of the “new military history” approaches and applying these to the issue of combat is obviously the way to a fuller understanding of the First World War as a historical experience. Disentangling the web of individual motivations, psychology, gender and class identity, ideology, societal values and expectations, group dynamics, institutional practices, technological limitations, and geographical and environmental context – to name just the most important issues influencing battlefield performance – may seem almost impossible, but it is necessary to further our understanding of various experiences, attitudes, motivations and practices when it comes to exerting violence in war.⁸⁶ Of course, the massive obstacle of biased, fragmented, insufficient, or outright silent primary sources will have to be overcome in some way, either by enlarging our samples, through rigorous textual analysis, or by employing other sources of information, be that official, medical or iconographic. We may also need to take archaeology into account, with its ability to enlighten us about the very physical dimension of our subject matter and judge our written sources, such as personal or medical accounts, against the physical remains of past reality. In the same way, serious considerations of geography are necessary to understand the physical and spatial context of the battle scene properly. Even so, personal accounts and

85 See for example the works of R. Brian Ferguson, who argues for cross-cultural approach, where research into less complex societies may bring us important insights applicable to the modern era. R. BRIAN FERGUSON, *A Paradigm for the Study of War and Society*, in: *War and Society in Ancient and Medieval Worlds. Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, (eds.) Kurt A. Raaflaub, Nathan Rosenstein, Cambridge 2001, pp. 389–437; R. BRIAN FERGUSON, *Explaining War*, in: *The Anthropology of War*, (ed.) Jonathan Haas Cambridge 1990, pp. 26–55; *Troubled Times. Violence and Warfare in the Past*, (eds.) DEBRA L. MARTIN, DAVID W. FRAYER, Amsterdam 1997. For Wohlmuth’s rather different, analytical take on the anthropology of war, see P. WOHLMUTH, *Krev, čest a brůza*, pp. 73–112.

86 As inspiration for this somewhat holistic approach, we may look at John Lynn’s seminal study of the French army in the Revolutionary Wars, in which he creates a complex, systematic model of combat effectiveness in an attempt to cover some of these themes, offering us an interesting framework open to further tweaking. See JOHN A. LYNN, *The Bayonets of the Republic. Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–94*, Urbana 1984.

their textual analysis will probably always remain the main source in any effort to understand what human beings *feel* (or *think* they feel) in the maelstrom of war.⁸⁷

Last but not least, broader cultural analysis, similar to that conducted by John Lynn in his study of combat during the past two thousand years, may be applicable to the First World War as well, both in a specific variation on Alan Kramer's call for transnational research of the conflict,⁸⁸ and as an interpretative framework that sees combat violence as both forming and reflecting cultural practices, bringing victory or defeat in the process.⁸⁹ This "cultural approach to the history of war", as defined by John Shy as early as 1993, which is not dissimilar to what John Keegan did in *The Face of Battle*, may be particularly useful in the study of combat in the Austro-Hungarian context.⁹⁰ During their last war, the armies of the Habsburg Empire fought in many different geographical areas against radically different enemies. Also, although they supposedly constituted one military institution, their heterogeneous nature and the even more heterogeneous nature of the society they represented meant that multiple military cultures co-existed on the battlefield. And, in the meantime, technological and tactical developments constantly changed the patterns of violence that emerged out of these various, dynamically interacting cultural frameworks. Consequently, such an approach may help us to better understand the dynamics and practice of combat violence as experienced by the monarchy's soldiers throughout the conflict. The nature of battlefield violence, still mostly shrouded in the "fog of war", will then hopefully cease to be the great unknown in the military history of that conflict, and the metaphorical no man's land where it lingers would be at least partially conquered.

87 For similar conclusions regarding the importance of archaeology and battlefield geography, see *Kulturgeschichte der Schlacht*, (eds.) M. FÜSSEL, M. SIKORA, p. 22.

88 A. KRAMER, *Recent Historiography of the First World War (Part I)*, pp. 7–9.

89 *Kulturgeschichte der Schlacht*, (eds.) M. FÜSSEL, M. SIKORA, pp. 17–21.

90 JOHN SHY, *The Cultural Approach to the History of War*, *Journal of Military History* 57/1993, no. 5, pp. 13.–26.