



# Rethinking Conflict in History

UCL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL  
EDITION III

# Dear Reader,

This month's issue of the History Society Journal has taken inspiration from this past Remembrance Month to recognise the pivotal role played by historians in shaping national narratives, and to explore conflict throughout history from as various a perspective and origin as possible. Our writers have devoted themselves to articles approaching warfare and conflict from the angles of social, cultural and political histories so, whether your preferred interest includes military history or not, you will be sure to find in this edition of the History Journal, some new and unfamiliar corners of the past to engage with.

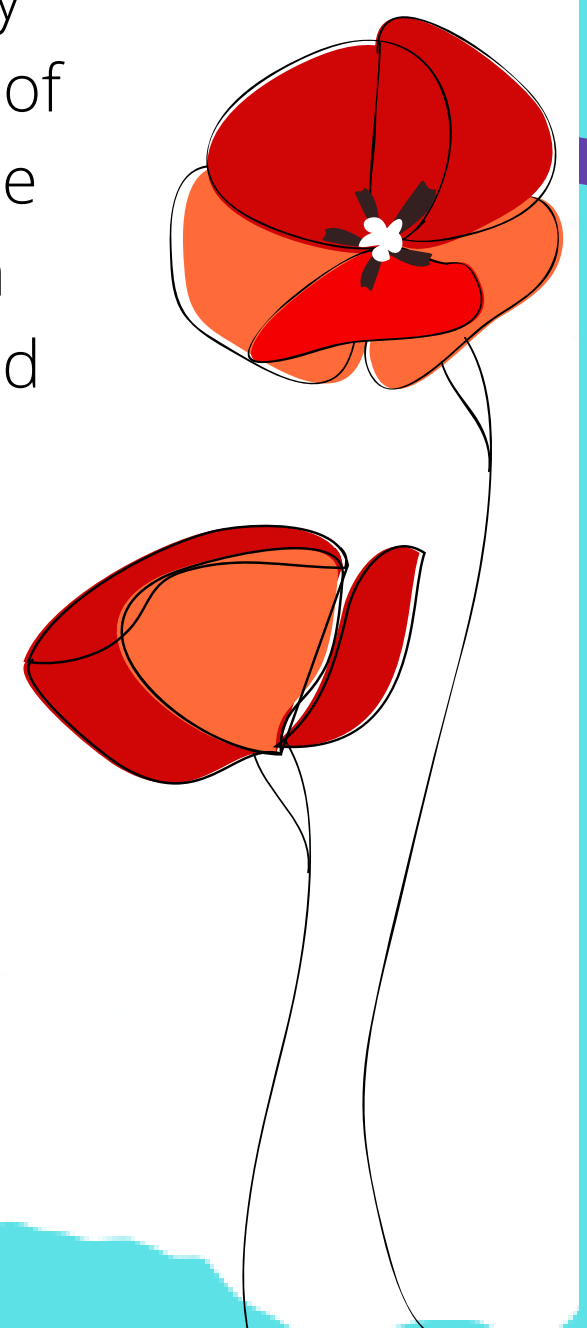
I am once again proud to welcome new faces to our writer room, and encourage those wanting to contribute their own work to check our contact pages at the back in order to get involved in future issues.

This edition of the History Journal spans from articles on the wartime experiences of nurses in the First World War, to more recent conflicts such as the 1973 Chilean coup. Our writers have explored the effects of warfare on gender roles, art and music, as well as approaching military history more generally with explorations into the politics of heritage and remembrance.

Alongside some book, film and pub reviews we continue our section of student advice with some tips on money-saving as everyone's student loan wears thin. Whatever your personal and academic interests, I hope you find something that speaks to you in this publication.

As academic life intensifies, I would like to thank the History Journal's writers again for their dedication to the production of this issue. Inspired by Remembrance Month, this issue of the History Society Journal seeks to commemorate the faces in history lost to violence and conflict, and to better understand the effects on warfare on other aspects of the human experience.

India Wickremeratne, Editorial Officer





# Unlikely Combatants

## Wartime Nurses and their Experiences with Combat Fatigue

Emily Tubbs

Medical advancement in the First World War, or World War One, has been extensively researched. Historian Mark Harrison wrote in detail about wartime medicine in his book, *The Medical War*. Less well covered are the experiences of those nurses that performed these advancements. Some historians, such as Christine Hallett and Margaret Higonnet, have produced brilliant work on nurses' roles in the war but there is still much more to discover about its effect on nursing personnel. In light of the current pandemic, and as we begin to better understand the sacrifices modern medical practitioners make for us, it is important to remember the emotional toll enacted on nurses one hundred years ago.

This article will examine two specific American nurses' trauma – that of Maud Mortimer and Mary Borden. Maud Mortimer's book, *A Green Tent in Flanders*, largely covered her time in a field hospital in Belgium from 1915 to 1916. First published in 1917, not much is known about its author, other than what can be gleaned from its contents. Contrastingly, Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone* was originally published in 1929, about ten years after the armistice. In literary and historical circles, Borden's work is renowned for its brutal depictions of warfare, offering a more emotional and less clinical approach to nursing than Mortimer's. That coupled with its publication long after the war, when anti-war sentiment was commonplace, possibly explains its larger popularity.

When we think about combat fatigue in the First World War (1914-1918), nurses are not the first to come to mind, but they did experience it. So, what, exactly, was their emotional trauma, and why have we forgotten?

Borden and Mortimer worked primarily in Belgium, but nurses' work spanned from the battlefields of Eastern Europe to the Mediterranean. Wherever they served, however, increasingly mechanised forms of warfare left unprecedented amounts of physical trauma. Dangerous infections, such as gas gangrene - caused by bacteria in open wounds - and tetanus spread rapidly amongst soldiers. To control them, medical innovations were introduced, including increased rates of amputations and the introduction of a system to prioritise the wounded, known as triage, in 1914. Dealing with severe physical trauma left an undeniable impression on nurses.

Before we examine, however, how nurses experienced emotional trauma, we must understand why we have forgotten. Partly, it is because of their physical removal from that pervasive symbol of the First World War - the trenches. In her article, "Authenticity and Art in Trauma Narratives of World War I," Higonnet distinguished between soldiers' "lived"

trauma and nurses' "secondary" trauma. (103) Since most nurses did not endure actual fighting, some dismiss whether they could have had any significant trauma at all. Evidence proves, however, that proximity to fighting, alone, had negative side effects. In *A Green Tent in Flanders*, Mortimer described one operation as more similar to "horror" than "surgery". (104) Mortimer may not have fought on the battlefield, but she served on another front - the hospital operating room. That was clearly distressing enough.

When we think of First World War nursing, we likely conjure wartime propaganda images of motherly, saviour-like figures. Nurses, also, may have deliberately given us this impression, but it also links to how they coped with distress. In Borden's *The Forbidden Zone* she describes herself as being "in a trance" where she did not see "wounds or...blood." (99) What stands out is her clear emotional detachment. To some, her lack of visible emotion might suggest that she is unaffected by the scenes of injury, but she is affected. As Hallett writes in her book, *Containing Trauma*, First World War nurses practiced the art of "self-containment", concealing their own feelings to protect their patients. (194) We see this in Borden's writing. When she is away from the patients, however, her real feelings emerge. She writes:

"I seemed to be breaking to pieces...I ran...and cowered, sobbing...hiding my face." (103-104)

Mortimer is no different. When confronted with a soldier's soon-to-be amputated foot, she states that the soldier's "pluck" was too much for her and she "fled." (230) For many, the "horrors" of wartime operating rooms are more unfamiliar than those of the article, "Authenticity and Art in Trauma Narratives of World War I," Higonet battlefield, which helps account for why we have forgotten about its very real effect on those who served within them.

There is one area, however, where war's effect on nurses can be seen definitively, and which we should be able to relate to - that of the anxiety of returning to "normal". Before the pandemic, many would have struggled to relate to our early twentieth-century counterparts, but have we not also seen a different kind of international conflict? Faced with increasing restrictions, how often have we questioned when, or if, "normality" will resume, and how our old "normal" now seems arbitrary. First World War nurses further showed their trauma through contrasting their home life with the reality of the Front. Mortimer wrote that "civilian life [seemed] as far from [her] as a skin long ago sloughed off." (239) These lines, written in her final days of service, are likely intended as a last reflection. Most importantly is her comparison to a "skin long ago sloughed off". (239) Here, Mortimer proves that nurses' personalities changed noticeably because of the conflict. That her service was traumatic enough for her to feel disconnected from her previous life, within just a year, proves that nurses were affected emotionally. They just did not show it.

Overall, we have forgotten nurses' trauma because they are generally removed from our traditional images of the war. Acknowledging their emotional struggles goes against enduring images of First World War nurses as visibly unaffected by what they witnessed. Despite this, we can tell that nurses actively hid their emotions from patients and colleagues, and we know that they practiced emotional detachment to cope with their situation. Finally, they were so impacted that they worried for their eventual return to "normal" life. Indeed, most nurses were not on the battlefield, but they did witness war's effects. That alone was enough to change them.



# Historic pub of the month

**Stephanie  
Cunningham**

**The Ye Olde  
Mitre**

1 Ely Court,  
1 Ely Place,  
EC1N 6 SJ

Possessing a history which lives up to its old-timey name, The Ye Old Mitre was built in 1546 and is decidedly more cramped than other pubs we've reviewed for the journal, but great things come in small packages. Among its many historical claims to fame, Queen Elizabeth I is said to have danced around the cherry tree outside the pub with her loyal subject, Sir Christopher Hatton. Until the late 20th century, the area around the pub belonged to the Bishops of Ely, technically making this area a part of Cambridge. This unusual fact was allegedly exploited by criminals, who used the pub as a sanctuary from the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police. Guy Ritchie fans might recognise it as Doug the Head's local in *Snatch*. Just one thing to note – the Mitre is regarded as one of the hardest pubs in London to find. Good luck!





# The Other 9/11: The Chilean Coup of 1973

Isabelle Churchill



It is 2pm on the 11th of September 1973 and the Chilean president has just committed suicide. Beside a gun allegedly fixed with a gold plate reading, 'To my good friend Salvador Allende from Fidel Castro', his dead body lies within La Moneda and the burning Presidential Palace, soon to face Allende's fate. A military junta claims the remains and General Augusto Pinochet assumes presidency. The United States are quietly pleased; for them President Allende had to die.

Some back story is needed. After winning the 1970 Chilean presidential election, Allende quickly began to implement La vía chilena al socialismo, the Chilean Path to Socialism. Nationalisation was the primary aim of the programme; with the copper industry as well as the healthcare and educational system being taken swiftly into public hands. The Chilean president began to demand that copper mines, 80% of which were U.S. owned, pay reparations for profits that the government had lost. Characteristically, the US reacted dramatically using diplomatic means to crush the Chilean economy, which was already flailing. Nixon created a dedicated interagency

task force, organising economic collapse, by sinking the world price of copper and persuading the World Bank to stop providing economic aid to the country. In fact, the American attack on Chile ran much deeper than just economic destruction; the U.S. was set on bringing down all traces of socialism in the country and by any means necessary. They saw Allende's leftist policies as little less than full blown Marxism. In the context of the Cold War, under no circumstances could Marxist political projects be left to fester. American paranoia was manifested in the clandestine backing of preparations for the 1973 military coup. Though there is disagreement over the extent to which the U.S. was directly responsible for the military overthrow, Latin American historian Peter Winn argues that the CIA helped to engineer a conspiracy against the Allende government. Winn further asserts that in the three years running up to September 1973, the U.S. created an environment in Chile that consequently led to the success of the coup. Jack Devine, a CIA agent in Chile at the time claims that the White House directly instructed the agency not to attempt to stop Pinochet.

General Pinochet, the coup's right-wing leader swiftly claimed presidential power, not letting go of it until 1990. He was covertly supported by the United States, with materials and intelligence. The CIA had an intimate relationship with the Chilean secret service, DINA, allegedly providing them with finance support. Such assistance allowed the military to incite human rights atrocities in Chile. Within the first months of the dictatorship, 40,000 political enemies



were imprisoned in the National Stadium, many of whom were tortured and murdered. And, within the first three years, 130,000 people were arrested. Eventually in 1998, Pinochet was arrested in London with charges of human rights abuses - but died before being convicted of any crimes.

The Chilean coup set the precedent for U.S. involvement and backing of Operation Condor, a covert campaign coordinated by many right-wing South American rulers to eliminate opposition by any means necessary. Officially implemented in November 1975, Condor employed political repression, intelligence operations and state terror. The Archives of Terror chronicle the killings of 50,000, the disappearance of 30,000 and the imprisonment of 400,000 in the region. To historians, these documents illustrate that the United States supported a genocide in South America to ensure that its sphere of influence remained inhospitable to socialism. The U.S. government is also known to have provided training on torture in addition to supplying military aid to the Juntas for over 20 years.

While it is undeniable that the United States meddled intensely in South America's political affairs, this perspective can be dangerous. Joaquin Fernandois has argued that this North American centred concept of world affairs invariably labels Latin American countries as severely lacking agency over their own politics. Furthermore, though it is easy to have a binary view of the Chilean coup, Allende was far from innocent. His election was hardly democratic as he was appointed by the Chilean Congress as a result of the election's failure to produce a clear majority. Historians including Paul N. Rosenstein-Rodan reason that Allende's demise had nothing to do with socialism, instead being caused by poor leadership and planning. Put simply, without Allende, Pinochet would not have come to power. What cannot be disputed however is that the U.S. actively supported a long and extensive genocide.

## A New Expression of Freedom: War as a Liberator of African American Art.

**Anouska Jha**

In 1896, a Philadelphia Times reporter visited the house of the son of a runaway slave, the young William Dorsey. What he found was a lavish museum of sorts, overflowing with ancient mosaics, archives, paintings. An exquisite collection of books and sculptures lined the walls of the "humble dwelling". The reporter later wrote in the piece:

"One must confess to a feeling of surprise when it is found that a large majority of the excellent oil and water color paintings upon his walls are the work of negroes."

It is not common to look at war through the lens of its cultural aftermath. Often, as perhaps should be the case, we focus on the destructive, political occasions of the war, asking questions of its origins and immediate repercussions. Any post-war cultural occasions seem almost separated from the notion of war itself, a subject of its own accord. However, art, especially in the context of war, has the power to shift our understanding of the individual actors in periods of war. This article looks at the fascinating role of African American artists in war, and how



they engaged with concepts of destruction, freedom, and connection through their talent. In exploring the role of individuals such as William Dorsey during the American Civil War, and African American jazz musicians and artists in Europe and America after World War One, I hope to bring a new dimension to the link between war and art.

Going back to the story of William Dorsey, his legacy is largely driven from the array of artistic scrapbooks and memorabilia he collected during and after the Civil War of the 1860s. His younger years consisted of cooperating with groups such as the Black Philadelphian bibliophiles, and this grew into building later connections with artists such as the writer and suffragist Frances Ellen Watkins ( who would later found the American Negro Historical Society). The reporter's aforementioned remarks point to Dorsey's extensive scrapbooking and curative capabilities. His rowhouse consisted of walls hung with engravings and glass paintings of the British Parliament, hung alongside mosaics of St Peter's Basilica and paintings by black artists such as Robert S. Duncanson.

He would hang his own oil paintings of slaves and black achievers within close proximity to white-authored articles and propaganda. This counternarrative aestheticization of the War symbolises Dorsey's use of art as a weapon of agency. As the historian Laura Helton mentions, the war gave African American artists the opportunity for a 'quiet infrastructure of black thought'. By this, Helton is perhaps pointing to the dual nature of war. On the one hand, it is a moment of physical and psychological [destruction]. On the other hand, it is a moment of reflection about the freedoms and power black artists could assert. Interestingly, Dorsey didn't limit himself to scrapbooks and domestic exhibitions. He was also part of a group that established a monument of Octavius Cato, a black educator who was murdered by an Irish immigrant in Philadelphia during the Election Day violence of 1871. This was the first Election Day after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment and marked the first time in decades where Black Philadelphians had been enfranchised, and Catus' murder represented the ongoing conflict that persisted even when the political Civil War had passed in the 1860s. Dorsey's monument yet again reminds us how art can be a translator for those in a liminal state of existence; not at that moment physically hampered by war, but also not fully liberated from its effect.

From another perspective, WW1 was a chance for African Americans to transport their artistic desires and cultures across continental borders. Paris, based in a country that had been ravaged by the war and its economic and political repercussions, represented a space for the expression not only of art, but national identity. In the post war period, American foreign policy displayed its unilateral stance from international affairs by its non-ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and non-membership of the



**R.S. Duncanson Uncle Tom and Little Eva (1853)**



League of Nations. However, the movement and migration of African Americans, particularly of musical performers, to Europe (for which there is little census recording, but it is estimated that there were approximately 500,000 black performers between 1919-1931), shows a different ideology within the USA. War came to represent, not unlike artists such as Dorsey in the Civil War, a chance to voice the emotions that had been suppressed for so long. But in this particular case, the globalised nature of the war meant black artists could use the global space to channel their domestic frustrations. As a group of individuals whose previous experience of large-scale transatlantic migration had been the slave trade, the post war period was a critical turning point.

Jazz musicians, such as Earl Granstaff who was a trombone player and spent many years in Europe from the early 1920s, wrote of the glee he felt in performing to an audience who was not inclined to the segregationist and prohibitive restrictions of the USA. Opal Cooper, a banjo player who performed with the army band during the war, similarly lived and worked in Europe during the interwar era. For these individuals, their experiences as African American soldiers in the war, wherein many travelled to European countries such as London and Paris to fulfill their military duties, led to a new kind of freedom emerging from the destruction being caused around them. Their Allied experiences with France during the war gave them a unique insight into the contrast in racial attitudes between home and abroad; for the first time, travelling artists such as Granstaff and Cooper were able to reside in equal lodging accommodations, gain tickets to entertainment venues, and express their artistic passions to an audience that viewed them with a kind of excitement and interest that the artists would not have been able to achieve at home.



**To make his scrapbooks, Dorsey often pasted images, handbills, and tickets onto printed pages.**

The 'New Negro' movement, which has been credited to the philosopher and Howard University professor Alain Locke in the publishing of his 1925 book *The New Negro*, is symbolic of this new generation of emerging black writers and artists who utilised the ideologies derived from the war, such as that of democratic stability, self-government and liberal internationalism, to discover a new strand of humanity in both America and Europe.

These examples offer a new perspective when looking at the consequences of war. African American artists saw war as being fought on two fronts; the political front, and the ideological front. It was this second aspect that was the core of the rise in black art during periods such as the civil war and first world war. Art perhaps represented what the motivations of war missed out; expression, freedom and a chance to regain an identity that had been lost in the present destruction and throughout history.



# Becca's Words of Wisdom

## Becca Moore

Hey everyone and welcome back to my words of wisdom. This month I am going to be sharing my money saving tips (as I'm sure I am not the only one that is burning through that student loan). Hope you find these helpful!

Take advantage of freebies and discounts – here is a list of student freebies we should all have a browse through:  
<https://www.savesthestudent.org/shopping/ultimate-list-free-stuff.html>

Have at least one no spend day per week – this can give you a little more flexibility for when you want to splash out.

As always, have the right apps – OLIO is great for finding food that will be thrown away from local cafés for free, TooGoodToGo helps you find super cheap restaurant leftovers and OnePoundMeals on Instagram gives great budget recipes.

Ask for help – if you are really struggling, UCL might be able to help you though the Financial Assistance fund. Reach out to someone in the department or a Student Funding Advisor for more info.

Budget (and stick to it) - Divide what you have left of your student loan over the number of weeks it needs to last in order to work out where you need to make savings or find the difference.

Save on food – Buy from Lidl or Aldi, bring a packed lunch to uni rather than grabbing that meal deal and cook bulk meals for the freezer.





# Heritage: Different Meanings of the Past in Popular Mentality

**Jonas Lim**

Heritage is often narrowly defined; in her discussion of public history, Maza limits heritage to physical sites. However, this essay discusses heritage in historical writings, where it takes on an abstract form. Conceptually, heritage is the shared identity of the past that a community chooses to remember and celebrate as a part of the 'us' in history. Consider Maza's example of the exhibition of the Enola Gay – the US aircraft used in the bombing of Hiroshima – in 1995. The controversy regarding the Enola Gay's exhibition was not just about the aircraft itself, but what it represented to different generations that had varying ideas of what it meant to be American. To the generation that defined America as a guardian of international order against the axis, the Enola Gay represented the 'valor and sacrificial service' of the American people during the war effort. On the other hand, for the post-war generation, the aircraft represented a painful legacy of civilian deaths during the war, in which the Allies' partake was often overlooked. Hence, history is not heritage until the people assign meaning to it so that it forms part of 'our' identity – whether it be identities of nations, ethnicities, or generations. As seen in the controversy around the Enola Gay, the 'we' in heritage is often highly selective. Heritage chooses to forget as much as it chooses to remember the past, and it is history's role to complement that forgetfulness.

Some academic historians have condemned heritage for being selective in a way that emphasises nationalistic or ethnocentric moments of the past – as

David Lowenthal puts it, 'History is for all, heritage is for us alone.' However, academic history does not contradict heritage by definition; it complements heritage. Heritage is fundamentally about representation in the present – what the people choose to remember and celebrate of the past as their shared identity – a social construct that changes according to how the contemporary public chooses to remember the past. As heritage forgets as much as it remembers the past, it is particularly important to view heritage as a concept rather than conceptualising it in physical locations. Heritage sites commemorate a historical event or civilisation through its physical remains, but merely relying on the physicality of heritage can easily make us forget history in the absence of its physicality. For instance, the history of slavery and its involvement in the US Civil War was quickly erased by successive governments that. As the physicality of slavery disappeared, the suffering of African Americans before and during the war became a 'sacrificial offering on the altar of the reunion' and was forgotten in the political discourse of the late nineteenth century. As is the case with public museums, the physicality of public history is often state-controlled. Moreover, the way that history is taught in relation to heritage and nationality through public education – which is also state-controlled in most nations – makes it harder for the public to recognise the difference between the two. The fact that these sources of public history are state-controlled is especially dangerous because it puts the process of selecting what will form part of 'our' heritage in the hands of a single entity



– an entity that often does not hesitate in using nationalistic sentiments to congregate the people in times of national crisis. On the other hand, in writings of history, heritage can be examined in a way that does not ‘forget’ the marginalised who have been excluded in heritage. This is where historians of microhistory, gender, and race can (and already have, in numerous social movements such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020) engage the public in an inclusive manner, without being considered remote and inaccessible.

Especially in recent years, history has often been at the centre of debates regarding the public representation of different minority groups after the BLM movement in the US. Confederate statues that represent histories of white individuals that oppressed black people in Antebellum America have been protested against and removed in the light of the movement. In Britain, voices that petitioned for the removal of statues that depict figures of imperialist involvements (such as the statue of Cecil Rhodes in Oriel College, Oxford) have gained momentum as people from non-white backgrounds seek representation in

these figures of public history and heritage. The fact that people are discontent with the representation in these public exhibits of history by the ‘dead white elite men’ proves that heritage is not a definitively fixed concept. Much like postmodernist ideas of text, heritage is not a fixed set of ideas that the public regards as ‘ours.’ Instead, heritage is a socially constructed identity, constantly changing to include more people according to how the public remembers and celebrates the past.

Understanding heritage through academic historical inquiries, we can see that heritage is not only for the majority in society. Ethnic and racial minorities of diaspora groups and urban centres have often strengthened their identity by redefining their heritage through history. Heritage is for ‘us,’ and academic history is about making that ‘us’ more inclusive; neither is necessarily contradictory to the other by nature. As we define heritage as a conceptual, constantly expanding representation of the people, it is evident that academic history is still relevant to the public. As academic history has changed to represent society in its entirety, forms of public engagement on the historian’s part are also changing as more people are challenging the conventional exclusivity of heritage in public history.



# The soldier and the housewife?

## Challenging gendered memories of wartime

**Zoe Lewis**



**'The girls lived like men, fought their fights like men and, alas, some of them died like men.'**

**Sir Frederick Pile, 1942**

The 11th November 2021 marked 103 years since the end of the First World War. Much has been done to become more inclusive of women's histories in broader, public narratives of wartime. Though the valorised role of the male soldier remains an important memory, its persistence has unfortunately served to marginalise other equally significant memories evident in the spheres of education and public history.

The words of Winston Churchill, the stories of male soldiers in trenches and in the sky, and memories of nationalistic propaganda punctuated my history textbooks. It is not enough to add in a chapter on how women valiantly contributed to the war effort through the embodiment of the quintessential housewife. Actively challenging gendered memories of wartime involves highlighting examples of women who served in the military, men whose roles were not confined to strategising or pointing weapons, and queer histories.

Women who 'fought for their lives like men'

Rosie the Riveter iconified the extent to which feminism could be pursued at the time. Often used as evidence that women enjoyed freedom from regulated gender roles, she owes her significant popularity to modern-day liberal feminism. The image was on display for two weeks in Westinghouse factories, and whilst many were encouraged 'come into the factories,' British propaganda epitomised the demarcation of gendered memories that remain in the education of World War Two. Telling the stories of women who subverted these expectations and not just 'filled in for the men' but defined their place in the War on their own terms is important.

The army with the most significant female population was that of the Soviet Union. Over 800,000 women served alongside men in the War. The 588th Night Bomber Regiment, or the not-so-affectionately named 'night witches', flew over 30,000 missions. Whilst 2,500 Soviet women were trained as snipers, ATS women operated in mixed Royal Artillery batteries with men in the British army. Anti-aircraft units also proliferated in Germany, but women were barred from using weaponry. Later, desperate stages of the conflict forced Hitler to employ female pilots. Though the reluctance to employ female pilots was due to the taboo surrounding *flintenweiber* or 'gun women' of the Soviet Union is characteristic of Nazi patriarchal policies, the fact they existed challenges interpretations of singular, unique women who managed to 'fight like men.' The intense popularity of Amelia



Earhart and Rosie the Riveter as icons has inversely fed into traditional gendered narratives by postulating their role as rare and unique.

### Conscientious Objectors

Men's role on the Homefront has long been emphasised. Their crucial role in industry was reaffirmed with ideals of manhood and physical depictions of muscular workers. The true antithesis to gendered narratives of wartime were those 'conscientious objectors' described as weaklings, cowards or, most interestingly, 'effeminate' or homosexual.

This image of a conscientious objector seated in his lounge surrounded by the roles his family are taking displays exactly the familial-national tension that ought to be covered in history books. The role of COs was not just defined as cowardice as traditional narratives would posit. Leonard Hewitt of the Leicestershire Regiment simultaneously 'didn't admire them at all' but admitted 'they do for humanity perhaps more than the average man would.' A more complicated narrative allows for histories of wartime to be less dictated by concepts of masculinity or femininity.

### Queer histories

The taboo surrounding queer histories in the military is long upheld, but perhaps most potently signified by the Clinton administration's debates on adopting the policy of 'don't ask, don't tell' in 1993. Much more open discourse percolates contemporary understandings of the LGBT community in modern western armies, but during the Second World War, gay and lesbian service members endured the threat of persecution.

The section 8 blue discharge embodied the apex of the military's suspicion of homosexuals as psychopaths. Those persecuted with such a discharge would be sent to mental institutions, hence many lied about their sexuality. Coming Out Under Fire (1994), a documentary based on Allan Bérubé's book of the same name, is a fascinating investigation into how those who defied conventional gendered categories created their own sub-culture within the army.



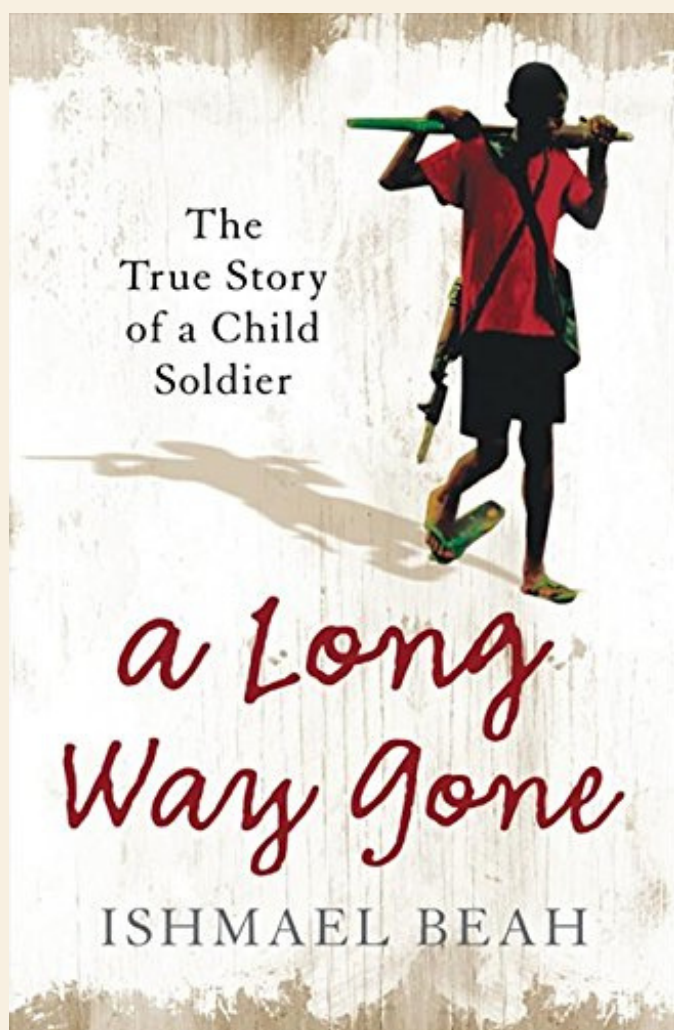
Drag shows, new gay lexicons invented by Dorothy Parker and underground newspapers meant soldiers occasionally gained relief from the rigid gender roles inherent in the army. Though under the guise of falsity, as such service members were forced to lie about their sexualities, memories of queer histories allowed such identities to co-exist.

These challenges to gendered narratives are not only fascinating insights into certain histories otherwise rarely documented, they also illuminate exactly why traditional narratives of wartime persist. It is not enough to include a webpage on unique individuals in wartime. It's time to include them in the broader narrative.



# 'A Long Way Gone: The True Story of a Child Soldier' by Ishmael Beah, a review

**Book Club with  
Molly Wear**



A truly heartbreaking yet uplifting account, 'A Long Way Gone' provides a detailed insight into the civil war in Sierra Leone, as well as what it was like to be involved in war as a child.

In late March 1991, the rebel army the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attempted to overthrow the government, led by Joseph Momoh. This led to the takeover by the RUF of large areas of eastern and southern Sierra Leone, as well as a war that led to the death of over 50,000 people. Ishmael Beah was one of 10,000-30,000 children who took part in the conflict over 11 years, and 'A Long Way Gone' tells his story, from the ages of 12-16, of being conscripted into the army on the side of the government. Most obviously, the main factor that sticks out to the reader is the fact that you're given an insight into a horrific event from the perspective of a child. Even though Beah is fully aware of the circumstances he is thrown into, there are aspects of life he still doesn't fully understand. He talks about his first ever feelings of 'the sharp aches in my head, or what I later came to know as migraines', as well as the curiosity of his first time ever seeing a snowfall. This makes his situation, and the things that he

is forced to do as a soldier, even more disturbing. The contrast of our narrator supposedly feeling nothing whilst having to kill people and having to go to a rehabilitation centre, whilst still portraying this sense of childlike innocence, is enough to break the heart of any reader, and prompts questions of the effects of warfare on the shaping youth.

**'I am not a soldier anymore; I am a child. We are all brothers and sisters. What I have learned from my experiences is that revenge is not good'**

Whilst portraying a tragic story, one can't help but feel inspired after reading this book. Despite everything that he has gone through, the reader sees Ishmael go on to speak at the United Nations in New York and take his first steps towards his current occupation of a human rights activist and author. Furthermore, with his love for his family and friends, as well as his questions, he is an extremely loveable narrator that the reader cannot help but adore.

It's important to note that this book is a very heavy read, and includes graphic violence and explicit drug use. However, if you are anybody who is more interested in memoirs and nonfiction texts, this book is a one that I would highly recommend. I found myself engaged throughout, and found that by the end, not only had I learnt a great deal about both the civil war of Sierra Leone and the experiences of child soldiers, but I felt inspired by the amazing things Ishmael Beah was able to go on to do after his experiences in war.



# Power and Passion: Music in Warfare

Phoebe Thomas

**"Music should strike fire from the heart of man and bring tears from the eyes of woman."  
- Beethoven**

What would life be without music? It is the form through which emotions are communicated, experiences shared, and stories told. Composers shape and define music, while music in turn carries the power to shape one's emotions and affect communities. Music has featured distinctly in warfare since perhaps its conception – primarily to communicate within armies but also to strike fear into their enemies. In times of war, many have often said that if you have hope, you still have a chance to win. However, music is one of the means that this hope is undermined through psychological warfare. An example of this can be found in Spartan accounts of battle, where a flautist played alongside the singing of the King to keep the marching line tight and orderly, as detailed in Thucydides. In Mexico, the Aztecs created an instrument known as the "death whistle", which when used emulates the sound of human screams, with the pitch at the frequency necessary to send a shiver down one's spine. As a more recent example, at Stalingrad there are reports of the Soviets playing Argentinian tangos to put the Germans on edge throughout the night.

Not only do instruments such as brass and drums, used for communication, have connotations to advancing armies with the drum beat often syncing with individual's heartbeats. This kind of synced heartbeat not only makes the

army move as a single body, but it can also be used to slowly elevate the heartbeat of the opposing army, sending them naturally into a state of panic. Furthermore, we must remember also that instruments that are foreign to a soldier's ears can be easily misunderstood as something other than an instrument, perhaps a ghost or threatening animal. Even as late as the 1950-53 Korean War, American soldiers became unnerved by the Chinese bugle calls, which were already eerie due to their foreign nature but also reverberated around the hilly region for an even more unsettling effect.

Music today has become less utilized in open warfare, but has become part of covert operations and information extraction from prisoners. This noise torture is coupled with stresses on the body and either sensory overload or deprivation, with rumours of well known songs such as Baby Shark making their way into Guantanamo Bay questioning chambers. Furthermore, Rock music is often played, with Metallica featuring in the United States questioning for torture. Positions are mixed on the usage of music in warfare – where on one side you have musicians acting in a coordinated move to oppose its usage, through the Zero dB initiative and the Musicians Union, but they are going against governments working in covert operations. Music is a preferable tactic as it leaves no outward marks and is a fairly low-effort and low cost means of interrogation. It cannot be a question of whether it is ethical or not to utilize these tactics, as realistically warfare will never be ethical. Instead, it is fascinating to see how warfare permeates so much of what is daily life, using common songs against their own enemies, controlling the physiological and mental responses of opposing forces and creating cohesive fighting groups.



# Diary-writing in the Great War: A tale of two young women

**Anonymous**

Like knitting, baking, and jogging, diary-writing saw a surge in popularity during the pandemic. For some, writing a diary was a useful way to pass the time. For others, it was a way to make sense of the changes around them, process personal loss, or keep a record of an unprecedented time in their life. In March 2020, the Mass Observation Project even invited people to send in their 'Covid-19' diaries, thereby providing future historians with a valuable glimpse into how 'ordinary' British civilians experienced such an 'unordinary' situation.

However, the practice of writing a diary during a time of upheaval is far from new. During World War I (1914-1918), many Europeans took up the practice of diary-writing, for a variety of different reasons. Thanks to rising literacy rates in the early 20th century, thousands of soldiers kept diaries whilst serving at the front, often as a way of recording the shocking events they had witnessed, or simply to stave off boredom in the trenches.

Yet soldiers were not the only ones to write down their experiences. Back at home, civilians also took up their pens to write about the novelties of wartime, or to express their fears and hopes for the future. Two such civilians were Vera Brittain, a young woman from Buxton, England, and Piete Kuhr, a schoolgirl from north-east Germany. By reading their diaries, (*Chronicle of Youth: Vera Brittain's Great War Diary, 1913-1917*; *There We'll Meet Again: A Young German Girl's Diary of the First World War*), we can gain an intimate and moving insight into how writing helped two young women to come through the war.

Vera Brittain was born in 1893 in Newcastle-under-Lyme, attending a boarding school in Surrey before gaining a place to read English at Oxford University in 1914. Brittain had already been keeping a diary before war began in 1914. This is not surprising: she was raised in a relatively wealthy English family, and diary-writing was common amongst the English middle-classes. From a young age, Brittain had also harboured ambitions of becoming a writer. Keeping a diary was therefore a useful exercise in authorly discipline, and it enabled her to practice her craft.

However, with the outbreak of war in August 1914, Brittain's diary took on multiple new functions. Whereas before the war she had primarily written about her daily life in Buxton, she now felt the need to document the rapid developments in international politics. On August 3rd, the day on which Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium, Britain exclaimed: 'to-day has been far too exciting to enable to feel at all like sleep... That which has been so long anticipated by some and scoffed at by others has come to pass at last – Armageddon in Europe!'

As the conflict went on, her diary also became a place to manage the difficult emotions caused by war. In December 1915, Brittain's fiancé, the aspiring writer Roland Leighton, was fatally shot by a sniper on the Western Front, and writing helped Brittain to process her grief. Working full-time as a nurse in Camberwell Hospital, London, she was unable to express her sorrow during the day, but returning to her diary in the evening, she could admit: 'I am crushed – altogether crushed – by life.'



Exhausted by the pressures of war, and busy with her nursing work abroad, Brittain stopped writing her diary in May 1917. Nonetheless, fuelled by her dream of becoming an author, and determined to use her experiences to highlight the futility of conflict, she continued writing throughout her life. She published the highly-acclaimed *Testament of Youth* in 1933 – a powerful pacifist memoir, which was based on her diary. The original wartime diary was then published posthumously in 1982.

Piete Kuhr was born in Schneidemühl, Germany (now Pila, Poland) in 1902, and was raised by her grandmother. Upon the outbreak of war, Kuhr's estranged mother instructed her to begin a wartime diary, hoping that Kuhr would write a patriotic account of Germany's military victories.

At first, Kuhr was excited at this prospect. She also imagined that her diary might be useful to future generations, noting in October 1914 that 'it will perhaps be important later on to learn how children in particular came through this war'. This was not uncommon: many Europeans were prompted to begin wartime diaries by the realisation that they were living in historically significant times.

Yet Kuhr soon became disillusioned with the conflict, and began selectively choosing which pages she showed to her mother. Whilst she admired the bravery of soldiers, she began to privately doubt the purpose of war, confiding in her diary in May 1915: 'Instead of moving towards peace, the war gets worse and worse. There is no end in sight.' Although Kuhr seemingly enjoyed writing about school, friendships, and romance, she promptly finished her diary when the war ended in November 1918, explaining that that it would be the 'last war diary that I write in my life, for never again must there be a war, never again.'

Like Brittain, Kuhr became a pacifist in later life, but she chose not to write about her wartime experiences. Instead, she moved to Berlin and later fled Germany due to her opposition to Nazism.

She re-discovered her wartime diary in the 1980s, and published it in 1982.

While Brittain and Kuhr were just two of the millions of people who experienced the Great War, their diaries ultimately provide us with invaluable information about what it was like to be a young woman during the conflict. They show us that war could be just as challenging and emotionally taxing for adolescent women as it could be for young men, and reveal that something as simple as writing a diary could help people to cope with war. So – if you started a diary in response to Covid-19, let this be an incentive to keep on writing.



**Piete Khur**  
**1902-1989**



**Vera Brittain**  
**1893-1970**



# Editor's Picks

## V&A Museum

Whenever the weather turns cold, South Kensington starts to feel like London's most festive borough. The white front houses and blinking lights outside the tube station seem to recreate the London from one of the cheerier scenes of a Dickens novel. This is why the V&A Museum is one of my top picks for a day trip this November. Even if you haven't booked in for an exhibition, the general admission rooms are breathtaking, and the cafe is the perfect spot to people watch. I used to spend lunchbreaks in their garden and, although it might be too chilly to sit down for long, it would still be a lovely place to catch up with a friend over a hot drink.

Whether you're new to the city, or just looking to make the most of your new-found freedom, I've collated some of my favourite spots in London for you to explore this month.

### Special Mention

Nothing will get you ready for the holidays more than visiting the Natural History Museum's Ice Rink. Having missed out last year, I can't wait to go back and see the lights in an evening slot.

## Ice Skating



## Ramo Ramen

### 157 Kentish Town Road

This has quickly become one of my favourite late night dinner spots. The restaurant has a cheery, cosy feeling for escaping the cold and the Chicken Sopas Ramen would be the perfect takeaway for anyone under the weather this flu season. Be sure to keep an eye out on Deliver or pop in for a mid-week treat with some friends.

### 63 Judd Street WC1H 9QT

It breaks my heart that I only found this cafe the week before we went into lockdown in March 2020. Not too far from campus and only a 10 minute walk from Kings Cross, this spot is nicely tucked away from the chaos of touristy London. Unfortunately, they now only seem to open on the weekends - but if you find yourself nearby be sure to stop in for something sweet.

## Patisserie Deux Amis



# Voices from the writing room

**“But in times of peace and all things righted/  
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted”  
Isabelle Bull**

In response to Kipling's A Time for Prayer we should consider the dichotomising effect of Remembrance Day. More than a hundred years since WWI, we continue to argue over how to remember those we lost.

Heuser writes on the concept of defeat as a moral victory, in which we glorify the dead and their cause. In many ways, the victory of WWI reflects this. We have beautified the men who died in a similar fashion and, because the losses were so great, it can be viewed as a quasi-defeat. Britain won, but should have won better.

Remembrance Day is, ostensibly, opportunity for people who haven't studied history to ensure it doesn't repeat itself. Heuser notes that the most appropriate response to defeat is "lamentation" or "resignation and pure mourning" while acknowledging that this is "psychologically, the least acceptable". But in a nation hungry for greatness, to merely accept loss is hard to stomach.

In recent years, responses to Remembrance Day have become increasingly divided. We have seen both protests against the day, decrying it as a celebration of Empire and outdated ideals while to others, it is an opportunity for national pride. These two arguments embody two interpretations of Kipling's poem. To some, the soldiers and, synecdochically, the war is beyond reproach. To criticise is unpatriotic and ungrateful. Failing to adequately celebrate Remembrance Day is to slight the soldier. On the other, in peacetime there is a danger of glorifying the past, slighting the fallen soldier with a glamorisation of his suffering.

As we move further away from history, we inevitably find the initial meaning of the day transformed into something else. Removed from the carnage, we revert to the old lie: dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. It is a sweet and noble thing to die for one's country.

The biting irony of Owen's words is often ignored in the same way we forget the 600, slaughtered in the Valley of Death. If we're not careful, time gilds the past.

Britain, as a nation divided by Brexit and battered by Covid-19 is in need of a reason to be proud and there is something undeniably noble in the willingness of these men to die. But this country, both then and now, have a responsibility to such men. They told them they fought for something noble when they did not. This does not make their sacrifice less honourable, they each held a "humble and contrite heart". But when the current government sends its soldiers out to beg donations for the Poppy Appeal on Remembrance Sunday we have to consider how much we have actually learned from their sacrifice in the "war to end all wars". Why is the military asking for funding on a day firmly under the shadow of death?

We need to strip away the grandeur of Remembrance Day. It is in equal parts a day of national pride and a day of tragedy. Good men died. Be thankful, as a nation, for those men, but never forget that they fought for a lie that people are still capable of believing.



# Voices from the writing room

**Nishtha Saraf**

If you are anything like me and the darkest, tensest moments make you want to laugh, then open Netflix and watch *The Death of Stalin*. Nobody other than Armando Iannucci, creator of HBO's *Veep* has a better idea. By abandoning decorum and thinking out of the box, he proves to make the audience laugh in what can be considered one of the grimmest moments of World History. In the midst of numerous documentaries and other movies about Stalin's purges and the magnitude of destruction as a result of his policies, *The Death of Stalin* proves to be a breath of fresh air. However, the satire in no way undermines the horrific impact of Stalin's policies. You have to give it up to Iannucci for pulling this off.

The movie commences with what is called a 'normal musical emergency' where Stalin desires a recording of the live concert of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23. However, the problem is that the performance was not recorded. In true totalitarian fashion where the leader gets what he wants, the performance is redone. The dark yet comedic assurance of the director is 'Don't worry. Nobody's going to get killed' accurately represents the level of fear in the general public of the USSR at the time. Living up to the name of the movie, Stalin dies within twenty-odd minutes in and there is total chaos among his closest members to jockey for his throne.

The eccentricities brought about these scared yet cunning men is what makes it difficult for the audience to hit the pause button. Michael Palin (Molotov) brings out the character who sacrificed his marriage and dignity at Stalin's altar. Steve Buscemi brings out the nervy Khrushchev. Whereas, Andrea Riseborough as Svetlana underscores the trauma and dread. Jeffery Tambor hilariously does justice to Malenkov. Drunkard Vasily played by Rupert Friend does not go overlooked. With a northern-English accent, Jason Isaacs brings out Zhukov. Last but not the least, the dark heart of the film, Simon Russell Beale as Beria truly highlights the darkness and strong character.

Dialogues like Zhukov bragging 'I fucked Germany. I think I can take a fresh lump in a fucking waistcoat' or on receiving the news of Stalin's death, Khrushchev running away in his pyjamas makes the film one you will not forget in the near future. The political circus, private meetings and counter-plots were the truth however, adding this comedic edge makes the film so much more intriguing.

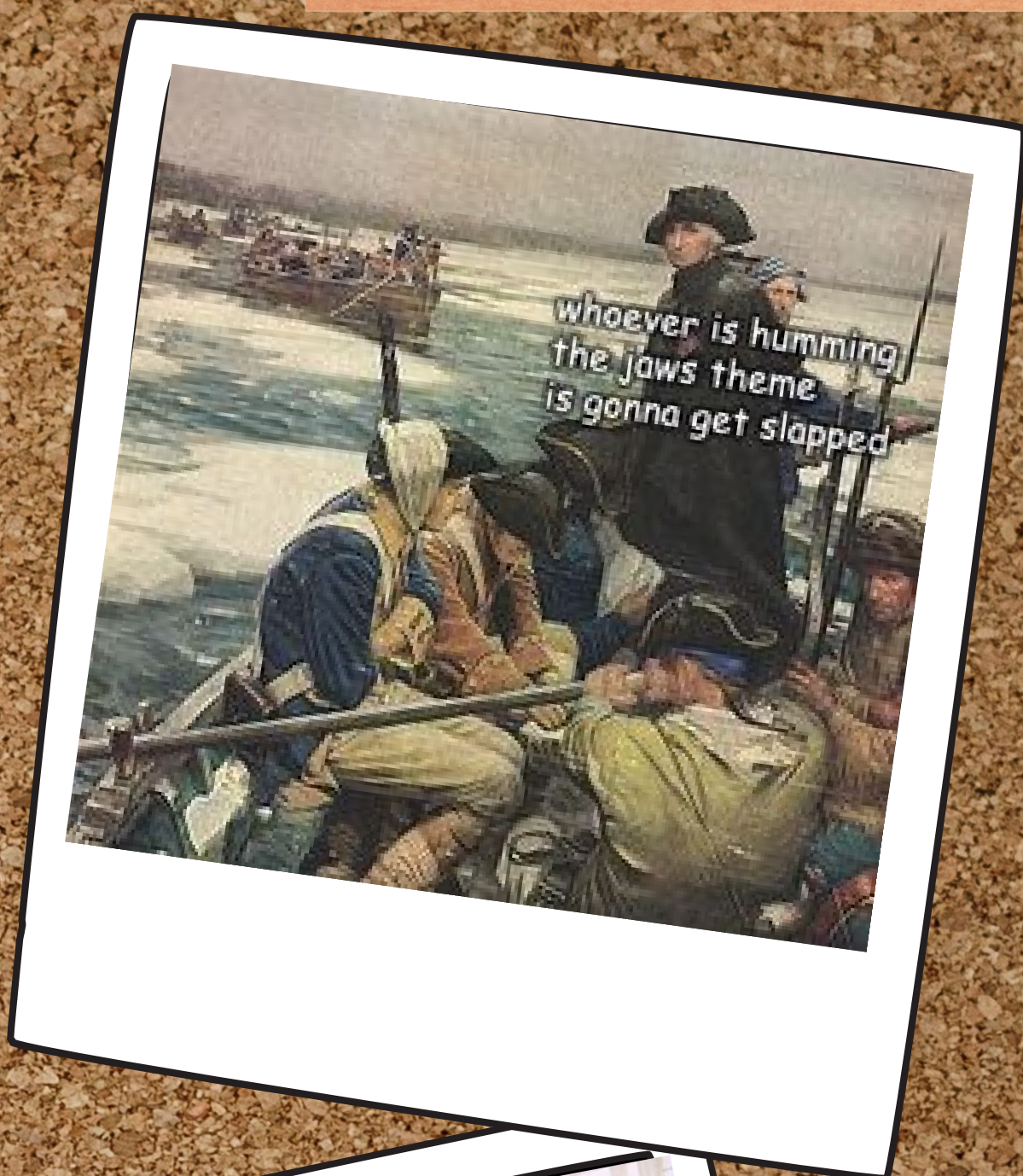
Full of absurdities and kinds of situations only when too few people have too much power, *The Death of Stalin* is still extremely successful in hitting a home run signify the true magnitude of what was at stake. Beria's extreme sense of evil is only possible when there is a lack of checks and balances in place. However, in the final ten minutes, the comedy dries up and the film is brought to reality. This hits the audience hard. Without diminishing the historical worth, adding few shavings of extremely dark comedy and confrontation with reality, Armando Iannucci proves to be pure genius.



72411

# COMEDY CORNER

72411



How was the Roman Empire cut in half?

With a pair of Caesars!

I am leaving you

Why does Jeremy Bentham overlook the UCL student centre?

For the greater good.





# Coming up in History Soc.

23/11

**Bruce A. Ragsdale Book  
Launch:  
Washington at the Plough  
18:00**



24/11

**Dr Nathaniel Morris  
Talk on the Mexican  
Drug Trade  
18:00**

08/12

**History Society  
Christmas Ball**

**20:30 - 02:30**

**Check out the website's  
Upcoming Events page  
for more details**

**Send us your  
favourite history  
jokes to be  
featured on the  
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# B BRITISH ONLINE ARCHIVES

## Memories of War: The Public and the Personal

In line with this month's theme, we're bringing special attention to collections from British Online Archives which highlight both official records and personal testimony of warfare and its consequences.

As a UCL student, you have full access to these collections until the end of this academic year, and we recommend you take advantage of this incredible database.

For students undertaking Special Subject Modules on the American Revolution, Wartime East Asia, and Memory and Identity in 20th Century Europe, these collections may be especially useful.

### This month's highlights:

British Officers' Diaries from World War 1, 1914-1919

Conscientious Objection During World War 1

Asia at War, World War 2 as Described by USPG Missionaries, 1914-1946

American Prisoners of War, 1812-1815

Colonial Law in Africa, 1920-1945

The American Revolution from a British Perspective, 1763-1783

**If you'd like to find out more information, and even start researching, visit the collections' webpage at:**

**<https://microform.digital/boa/collections>**







INDIA WICKREMERATNE  
EMILY TUBBS  
STEPHANIE CUNNINGHAM  
ISABELLE CHURCHILL  
ANOUSKA JHA  
BECCA MOORE  
JONAS LIM  
ZOE LEWIS  
MOLLY WEAR  
PHOEBE THOMAS  
NISHTHA SARAF  
ISABELLE BULL