



An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-face Killing in Twentieth-century Warfare

Professor Joanna Bourke

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It is almost universally accepted among writers on warfare that battle is a terrible experience, and that men who fight are at the very least sobered, and often deeply traumatized, by the horrors of combat. Bourke uses the letters, diaries, memoirs and reports of veterans from three conflicts - World War I, World War II and the Vietnam War - to establish a picture of the man-at-arms. What she suggests is that the structure of war encourages pleasure in killing, and that perfectly ordinary, gentle human beings can become enthusiastic killers without becoming "brutalized". Bourke forces the reader to face some disconcerting truths about society that can so easily organize itself for war.

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