

Introduction

Death, grief and bereavement in wartime Britain

Mrs Lane's loss

By the end of the Second World War, approximately 369,405 British nationals, both combatant and civilian, had been killed.¹ Among these were the four sons of Mrs Lane, a middle-aged woman from North London. Mrs Lane's sons had all been members of the Royal Air Force (RAF): Donald had been killed during the retreat to Dunkirk in June 1940, Desmond in September 1942, John in March 1943 and Patrick, her oldest son, in a flying accident in January 1945. Only her daughter, Sheila, had survived the war. The loss of four of her five children must have been devastating, yet, according to an interview in the *News Chronicle* soon after Patrick's death, she 'felt no bitterness'. Instead, she claimed, 'it is a glorious thing to have brought up and educated four sons who never gave me a moment's trouble and who have now so willingly given their lives for their country'. In her pride in her sons and their sacrifice, Mrs Lane gave voice to a form of maternal, wartime bereavement which chimed with the mood of a nation that had endured over five years of war, with all its losses and heartaches. Like so many others, her sons had died for the nation. Now her grief had to work for the national war effort.

Yet a closer reading of Mrs Lane's interview in the *News Chronicle* does tell us more of the impact of wartime loss. While her sons may have been dead, their presence was still visible in her home. The interview took place in her Hampstead flat, next to 'a sideboard covered with photographs and snapshots of "the boys"'. The ongoing emotional labour of grief, and Mrs Lane's daily struggle with her loss, also became clear in her remark, 'in a voice little more than a whisper', that 'the future seems so frighteningly empty, but I try not to think about it. If

I give way to my feelings I feel that I should be letting the boys down.’² Surrounded by material reminders of her sons’ lives, Mrs Lane faced a daily struggle not to yield to her feelings of loss, fear and grief, as such a capitulation risked not only undermining her efforts to make pride in their sacrifice her foremost emotion, but also ‘letting down’ their memory. If she surrendered to her grief, she felt, she would be undermining both the victory that her sons had died for and the imagined collective of the wartime nation. Grief, particularly in wartime, has a political value, and the grief of bereaved mothers – when it can be put to work for the nation, mobilised to support ideas of willing sacrifice and parental pride – is of especially high value.

Mrs Lane’s bereavement, and her grief, occurred in a particular time and place and, as such, have a history. The outbreak of war in 1939 meant that the violent death of loved ones in conflict once again became a reality for many, just twenty-one years after the end of the First World War. The emotional economy in which these deaths were anticipated, experienced and mourned shaped the ways in which people gave voice to grief, bereavement was experienced and loss was felt. Like Mrs Lane, many laboured to control their feelings, worried that by ‘giving way’ to grief they would be both letting down the memories of those they had lost and undermining the stoicism and determination to ‘carry on’ that was articulated again and again during the war years. This book tells something of their struggle, writing the history of death, grief and bereavement into the wider history of Britain’s Second World War.

Death and the ‘people’s war’

This book places death, and the grief that so often accompanied it, at the heart of our understanding of Britain’s Second World War. The dominant cultural memory of the British experience of this war that circulates in Britain in the second decade of the twenty-first century has little space for representations of death, of grief or of bereavement. It is, as all memories must be, a partial story of the war years – one that centres around stories of national unity, decency, stoicism and good humour that work to illustrate how the vast majority of the British people united across divisions of class and political affiliation to fight the common enemy of fascism. At the war’s end they were rewarded for their steadfastness by the creation of the welfare state promised by economist William Beveridge in the *Social Insurance and Allied Services Report* of 1942. While the cultural memory of the Great War at

its centenary between 2014 and 2018 continued to be shaped by stories of death, sacrifice and suffering, there is little space for such stories in British imaginings of the Second World War.

The reasons for this are complex. In Britain, despite the ubiquity of war memorials in shared public spaces and civic sites, there is no national memorial to victims of the Blitz. Furthermore, although there were earlier regional sites of remembrance, including the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede, a central London memorial to the dead of Bomber Command was only erected in 2012, the decision to do so shedding light on the ongoing debate about the legitimacy of the 'bombing war' and the targeting of German and other civilians by Bomber Command between 1942 and 1945.³ The war's military dead are largely remembered in public culture in the lists of names added to the memorials erected following the Great War. The decision taken in the years following the war's end to officially commemorate the dead of both wars on Remembrance Sunday, the Sunday closest to Armistice Day on 11 November, and to maintain the rituals of remembrance developed for Armistice Day in the 1920s, meant that it has usually been the dead of the First World War, outnumbering the military dead of the Second by almost half a million, who are at the centre of this shared ritual. More broadly, while the end of the Cold War saw the unravelling of many 'official' memories of the war in Europe and the destabilisation of some foundational myths of national unity and resistance, British cultural memory remained largely unchallenged, able to maintain the affectionate, nostalgic and congratulatory tone that had shaped many popular and influential cultural texts since the 1950s.⁴ While the growth of public interest in the Holocaust, and the centrality of this genocide to understandings of the Second World War in Europe and North America, worked to open up space for other memories of trauma, death, fear and grief on the public stage, these have remained marginal to the cultural memory of the war, at least in Britain.⁵

In part, this is because there was little space for images of death or narratives of grief during the war itself, or in its immediate aftermath. To maintain morale, and to avoid providing information to the Luftwaffe on the success or otherwise of bombing raids, numbers of casualties and names of towns and cities targeted by the bombers were often withheld, leading some in heavily bombed cities like Liverpool and towns like Clydebank to feel that their suffering was secondary to that of London. When the aftermath of air raids was reported, as it was in Coventry in November 1940, coverage included the dead but

emphasised the determination and steadfastness of the survivors. In contrast, the experience of Bristol, described by Mass Observation in the social survey organisation's report for the Ministry of Information as showing 'quite open defeatism' and 'wishful thinking about the war soon being over' after repeated bombing raids, received little coverage in the national media.⁶ However, descriptions of death and injury were not entirely absent from the war years. While letters from friends and relatives in the military were censored to avoid the accidental disclosure of battle and strategic plans, many of the sources drawn upon in this study show that letters home and memoirs written during the war, such as that of the soldier poet Keith Douglas, often contained graphic descriptions of the impact of weaponry on the human body, and reflections on the death of comrades and friends.⁷ As Mary Lou Roberts and Alan Allport have both shown, the physical and sensory presence of the human corpse on the battlefield both fascinated and repelled combatants, reminding them not only of what war had done to the bodies of others, but what it could, potentially, do to their own.⁸ It is testament to the powers of the dominant emotional economy and of wartime popular culture, in which death was usually marginal, often unseen, and news of which almost always received with stoicism, that personal reflections like these have made little impact on the dominant cultural memory of the war.

The emotional economy of wartime, which valued stoicism and self-control over emotional expressiveness, shaped both these cultural representations and the ways in which individuals and families discussed death and grief. In the war's aftermath, the dead had little presence on the public stage. Unlike the dead of the Great War, they were not remembered through new national rituals of shared mourning and remembrance, and few new war memorials were erected, names instead usually being added to the existing memorials to the dead of the Great War. The prevailing mood favoured what were termed 'living memorials' over stone edifices whose only function was to memorialise; the dead of the Second World War were to be remembered through the work of the living to build a better world, more prosaically through the creation of new recreation and sports grounds, the building of homes and hospital wings, and the opening up of tracts of land for public leisure through the establishment of the Land Fund in 1946. While this desire to remember the dead through improvements in the lives of those they fought and died for tells us something of the meanings of the 'people's war' for those who lived through it, it also meant

that, as the dead being commemorated slipped from living memory, the lack of memorials ‘visibly and permanently’ associated with the dead meant that they also, often, slipped out of public consciousness.⁹ With so little public and cultural space for remembrance of the war’s dead, personal memories of those killed only rarely found a larger audience. Sometimes the war’s dead were not even spoken of in their own families, the lack of a language of grief, or a formal architecture of remembrance, acting to silence memories and make the articulation of loss impossible.¹⁰ The emotional culture of restraint and the concurrent lack of public space for expressions of wartime grief and postwar loss have combined to marginalise the war’s dead, and the grief of the bereaved, in the dominant British cultural memory of the war.

Counting the dead

As a ‘total’ war, using new weaponry and involving entire populations of nation-states around the world, the costs of the war were almost unimaginably high. In Britain alone, the first two years of the war saw government expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product leap from 19.6 per cent in 1939 to 47.2 per cent by 1941. In the same period, spending on defence grew from £626 million in 1939 to £4,085 million by 1941.¹¹ In 1941, 75.1 thousand tons of raw materials were lost at sea, most of it to the U-boats prowling the ocean during the Battle of the Atlantic.¹² The rural landscape was changed irrevocably, with large areas of southern grassland being lost to the plough and hundreds of acres in the east of England requisitioned for use as bases by the RAF and the US Army Air Force.¹³ By the war’s end, the Lend-Lease programme, in operation since 1941, meant the British Empire was in debt to the United States to the tune of \$30,073 million.¹⁴ Other costs, and costs outside Britain, were even greater. The American air force lost 6,571 of its aircraft in the bombing war over Europe; in the most deadly air raid of the war, on Tokyo in March 1945, 16 square miles of the city were burnt to the ground, and more than 100,000 people were killed in one night.¹⁵ Japan itself lost approximately 12,000 aircraft during the war, and over 5 million tons of shipping.¹⁶ Over 30 million people lost years of their lives as prisoners of war.¹⁷ The costs of war were multiple, complex and vast.

The most important cost was in lives lost. The war came at a time of falling mortality rates in Britain, when rising standards of living together with the introduction of mass vaccination programmes

had, for example, brought about a fall in the annual number of deaths in infants under one year old from 89,380 in 1915 to 34,092 in 1935. The year 1940 saw 581,000 deaths registered in the United Kingdom, excluding military deaths overseas, the highest figure since 1918 – when the Spanish influenza epidemic contributed to the 611,000 deaths registered – and an increase of 103,000 on the last full year of peace in 1938.¹⁸ While the majority of these deaths were not directly attributable to the war, the rise in mortality was nonetheless an aberration in a long-term trend of declining death rates. Though the 1945 tally of all the British war dead was substantially lower than that in 1918, it encompassed civilian as well as military victims: 63,635 civilians died as a result of ‘operations of war’, some lost at sea but the majority killed in air raids. The majority of these were killed in the wave of air raids known as the Blitz between September 1940 and May 1941, but others died in the 1942 Baedeker raids on small provincial towns and cities; the ‘little Blitz’ of 1944, which targeted London and its environs; and the V1 and V2 rocket attacks of 1944 and 1945.¹⁹ The majority of those who died, however, were combatants. Bomber Command, with its multinational crews – made up of men from Britain, Canada, Australia and other Commonwealth countries, Poland and Czechoslovakia – had the highest fatality rate of any of the armed services. Over 55,000 of the 125,000 men who served with Bomber Command were killed, some in accidents but most shot down while flying on the bombing missions that devastated towns and cities in Germany and Occupied Europe, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians on the ground.²⁰ In total, 264,443 members of the armed forces, the women’s auxiliary services and the merchant navy were killed during the war. Most of the military dead, 144,079, were killed while serving in the army, and the majority of these, 121,484, died in Europe, in the war against Germany.²¹ Of the soldiers who died as a direct result of enemy action, 68,401 were infantry, at the front line of most battles.²²

Large though these figures are, they are small in comparison to the numbers of dead in many other combatant countries. The chaos of war, and the sheer scale of the numbers involved, means that accuracy in the counting of the dead has often proven impossible. Between 10 million and 20 million are estimated to have perished in China between 1937 and 1945, and 27 million to 28 million of the war’s dead were citizens of the Soviet Union.²³ Many millions were murdered in Nazi death camps or by units of the SS, the *Einsatzgruppen* and local collaborators. The Bengal famine of 1943 led to the deaths of 2.1 million to 3 million.²⁴ It is

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estimated that the total number of war dead by 1945 was in excess of 60 million.²⁵ More, of course, would die as a consequence of the war's multiple legacies: of cold and hunger in Europe, of disease and war wounds, and while trying to travel home at the war's end. The Second World War caused the deaths of more people than any other war in recorded history.

The figures pale in comparison to the numbers anticipated in the interwar years. The imagined 'war to come' was envisaged as killing hundreds of thousands in Britain alone. The experience of death and loss in the Great War combined with the fear of aerial warfare to produce a potent and apocalyptic vision of any future war. Memories of poison gas and explosives on the Western Front, the legacies of which were still visible in the bodies and minds of many veterans, together with the rise of the bomber, framed expectations of deaths that would be both numerous and horrible. In the 1930s, wars in China, Abyssinia and Spain demonstrated that in the age of the aeroplane, nobody would be safe. In the future, front lines would run through homes, schools and factories rather than trenches.

Those tasked with the counting of the war dead would have to include civilians alongside combatants, themselves only really deemed worthy of counting and naming by the British state since the Great War.²⁶ The responsibility assumed by the state during this war, for naming, burying (where possible) and commemorating the war's dead, was driven by the impact on Britain of total war. In a newly democratic age, when the vast majority of British men and women were able to vote, the sense that the state would protect them to the best of its abilities, and that it would honour their sacrifice if they should die, was crucial to the successful prosecution of war. Newly central to war, civilians would lie with combatants among the dead at the war's end. As the world moved inexorably towards a second total war, the political importance of the dead to the state was matched only by the strength of their emotional significance for the living.

Managing the dead

The ongoing impact of death and loss in the Great War, together with changing technologies of warfare and the increasingly apocalyptic imaginings of war in the 1930s combined to ensure that both the state and people recognised that the coming war would have a high cost in lives lost, and that the management of this would be key to morale.²⁷

Total war threatened the very notions of liberty and freedom that Britain and its allies claimed to be fighting for; individual agency was curtailed by the multiple demands of war which included, crucially, that the individual citizen be ready to give up their life, and the lives of loved ones, for the wider, collective war effort. Wartime thus demanded enormous sacrifice from its citizens, but for these sacrifices to be borne, the state's obligations to its citizens had to not only *be* practised, but be *seen* to be practised.

One of these obligations was the management of the war dead. The best ways to prevent and manage the mass death of combatants and civilians in the war that was to come were widely debated across government departments in the late 1930s. However, while civil defence was widely publicised, through the establishment of the Air Raids Protection Department of the Home Office in 1937, planning for the management of the war's civilian dead was highly secret. Fears about morale, the undermining of which was understood as central to the practise of modern warfare, meant that while mass death was widely anticipated, official preparations for war focused on its prevention. The evacuation of civilians, mainly young children, from towns and cities; the provision of gas masks and air raid shelters; and the establishment of civil defence bodies all helped to protect civilians from harm. Civilians who joined the armed services, recruited under the National Service Acts, had to rely on their training and the training of those around them to protect them, while the Imperial War Graves Commission's management of the dead of the Great War was widely understood as evidencing the state's care for, and honouring of, those who died as combatants. If badly managed, death was bad for morale; if managed well, the dead could continue to work for the war effort.

Morale was important because the lives, thoughts, feelings and actions of the people were important. This was especially true in a democracy facing total war. While authoritarian states like Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union could rely to an extent on coercion to ensure the participation of their citizenry in the war, democracies relied to a greater degree on consent, seen as both more appropriate, and more effective, than coercion alone.²⁸ If people felt unprotected by the state, then they also felt undervalued and were thus less likely to be willing participants when asked by the state to take on the burdens of warfare. If they felt that their death or the deaths of loved ones in war was a likelihood, and if they felt that these deaths were not properly valued by the state, consent was again less likely to be forthcoming. The state thus had

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to convince people both that it would do its utmost to protect them and that, if they died, it would honour this sacrifice.

The state could thus plan for the management of death in war and attempt to convince people that it would try to protect them and that the sacrifice of the dead was both worthwhile and valued by the nation. But this planning, and the management of death, could only go so far. The management of grief – itself central to the war effort – could not be legislated for. Instead, the feelings of the people at war were to be self-managed within an emotional economy that valued restraint, stoicism and self-control.

Feelings in wartime

By the middle of the twentieth century, the management of feeling was important. And it was even more important in a war that drew on the participation and sacrifice of a democratic citizenry. The social survey organisation Mass Observation, which was employed by the Ministry of Information during the war to collect and assess information on morale, certainly saw people's feelings as central to the war effort. In its first publication, *Mass Observation*, the organisation was described as a 'weather map of popular feeling'.²⁹ By 1940 Mass Observation was promoting itself as having observers who were 'in close touch with the feelings, rumours, behaviour in ordinary homes', and a national panel of directive respondents and diarists whose value lay in their position as 'subjective reporters' whose responses to and feelings about the conduct of the war provided valuable access to shared attitudes and thus to morale.³⁰ The work of Mass Observation, drawn upon throughout this book, both tells us of the interest in feeling, in emotion, during the war and allows us to explore not only the ways in which people experienced war but how they *felt* about this experience.

Emotions are at the heart of war. Their mobilisation and management can enable members of collectives like the nation-state, the military battalion and the munitions factory to feel a sense of shared identity, aims and purpose; if they are not mobilised or managed effectively, they can undermine morale, and lead to a lack of support for war aims and operations. Pride, fear, anger, love, hope and grief have all proven to be effective drivers of individual and shared war enthusiasm. Equally, these emotions can act to challenge and weaken support for war.

Historical interest in emotions in war can be traced back to the work of the *Annales* historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Bloch and

Febvre both understood that not only did emotions have a history but they could help to *shape* history. Their own experiences of total war, and of the success that the demagogues of the mid-twentieth century had in mobilising emotions, undoubtedly shaped these early historical studies of the role of emotions in wartime. Bloch's 1921 essay on the power of rumour in war linked this to the feelings of villagers in France living close to the front line, scared and exhausted by years of war.³¹ The linguist Albert Dauzat, writing in 1919, had made a similar argument, suggesting that a popular belief in France that the deadly Spanish Flu of 1918 was, in fact, cholera gained purchase through a combination of grief and a lack of trust in authority after four long years of war.³² Febvre, writing at the outbreak of the Second World War and observing the popular appeal of fascism and Nazism, urged contemporaries to analyse feelings and sensibilities in their historical research.³³ It was not until the emergence of social, and then cultural, history, however, in the second half of the twentieth century that historians began to take up this challenge. Social and cultural history provided the tools to examine the history of warfare beyond the parameters of military strategy and high politics. Gender and feminist history, and oral history, with their interrogation of experience, subjectivity and memory, enabled a wave of writing on the ways in which individuals experience, imagine and remember wars and on the impact this can have on their sense of self. From this work emerged a body of writing that has explicitly set out to explore a wartime history of emotions.

This research has taken many different avenues. Some scholars have examined the history of what psychologists term 'primary' or 'basic' emotions in wartime: Jan Plamper, for example, traces the evolution of a language of fear among Russian soldiers, showing how fear was absent from soldiers' descriptions of battle in 1812 but central to their stories of the First World War. Richard Bessel has shown how hatred, as a powerful legacy of war, can motivate individual action and be mobilised by the nation-state seeking to build new alliances and loyalties in the aftermath of conflict. But war can also provide the conditions for other forms of emotional experience and expression. Holly Furneaux and Claire Langhamer have explored, respectively, the emotional, empathetic impulse towards care-giving expressed by participants in the Crimean War, and the centrality of the social, cultural, political and economic shifts of the Second World War to changing experiences and expectations of romantic love in Britain. Others have studied the

ways in which individuals experiencing the often violent disruptions of wartime, and finding ways to live with its multiple legacies, have sought emotional support or have communicated their experiences in an emotional language, or through an emotional performance, that is historically situated within, and shaped by, these very disruptions. As this growing body of scholarship shows, not only do emotions have a history and a politics, but this history and politics shape the ways in which historical actors are able to comprehend, and express, their experiences.³⁴

Studies of emotions in wartime have drawn upon a rich body of research that has worked to conceptualise and explore the wider history of emotions. Peter and Carol Stearns' ground-breaking work on the social meaning of emotions, William Reddy's *The Navigation of Emotion* and Barbara Rosenwein's concept of emotional communities have all shaped the field of the history of emotions.³⁵ These texts, and others that followed them, have provided tools with which to explore the historically specific meaning of terms like 'fear' and 'love', and the multiple ways in which historical actors have used a language of emotion to try and articulate the subjective impact of experience, both to themselves and to others.³⁶ The feminist theorist Sara Ahmed has urged work on the emotions to explore the kinds of work that emotions themselves can do. Ahmed argues that the pertinent question for a study of emotions should not be 'What are emotions?', but rather 'What do emotions do?'³⁷

Ahmed's assertion has been particularly useful to this study of death, grief and bereavement in wartime, as it foregrounds the labour that emotions can undertake. Emotions can be put to work by the state, as seen, for example, in the creation of official rituals of remembrance and in the organisation of the mass burials of victims of air raids. People can be encouraged to work on their own emotional self-knowledge and self-management, enabling many in wartime to exhibit stoicism and self-control when faced with the multiple and often terrible effects of war. And emotions can be a form of work in themselves, as individuals work hard to communicate their feelings in a manner that is acceptable not only to others but also to themselves as they labour to control, endure and survive the impact of disruptive emotions like grief. These emotions are felt, and expressed, in the world, shaped by environment and by cultural process. As Laura Kounine has argued, 'we need to understand emotions not just as inchoate feelings but as bodily practices that are culturally and historically situated'.³⁸ Emotions are

historically specific, and as such they have historically specific meanings and value.

This study uses the term 'emotional economy' to discuss the meaning and value of emotions in wartime Britain, as it provides a means of thinking about the worth and importance of emotions when they were expressed and performed in particular ways, the ways in which emotions and emotional guidance circulated and the emotional labour that often underpinned this. For example, Mrs Lane's expression of pride in her sons' wartime deaths was obviously of high value in a nation at war: her claim to find consolation in the belief that their deaths had been for a shared cause acted as a model for the many other bereaved. But this consolation was hard won, the emotional labour that underpinned it clearly shown in the description of her surroundings and her voice.³⁹ If the interviewer for the *News Chronicle* had found her tearing her hair and rending her clothes, both in themselves means of communicating grief deemed appropriate in different times and places, then her grief would have been of little value to the emotional economy of wartime.⁴⁰ Its value lay in the ways in which her performance of bereavement followed a model that, as this study will show, was to be found in many wartime texts: control, restraint and the claim to find consolation in sacrifice. In wartime, the ways in which the British people expressed emotion were experienced within, valued and shaped by the demands of a nation at war. One of these demands was that grief should be borne in a manner that worked to support the collective war effort.

Death, grief and bereavement in wartime

This book traces the history of death, grief and bereavement in Britain in the Second World War, and in the years preceding and immediately following the war's end. This period is a time when British practices around bereavement, and ways of expressing and communicating grief, underwent profound shifts. Broadly, as shown by the historian Pat Jalland, British attitudes to death, grief and bereavement have been understood as moving from the expressive grieving, elaborate bereavement practices and familiarity with death of the mid-nineteenth century to the virtual disappearance of death and its surrounding rituals from everyday life by the 1960s.⁴¹ Falling mortality rates and the increased medicalisation of death saw the deaths of many move from the home to the hospital, with medical staff and undertakers increasingly more likely than family members to care for the dead body and

to prepare it for disposal. The anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer argued in the 1960s that this shift, together with increasing secularisation and an emotional economy that valued stoicism and restraint, had led to a silence around death and an embarrassment at grief that caused misery and isolation for the bereaved, not only unable to communicate their sorrow to others but denying its impact on themselves.⁴² At the heart of these shifts was the experience of the Second World War.

Three arguments are developed in this book, interwoven throughout the chapters and interlinked with one another. The first argument is that in a democracy at war, death matters. It always matters, of course, to individuals faced with the chance of their own death as a result of conflict, and to the bereaved and those threatened with bereavement. But it matters in wartime more to a democracy than to other political formations, as the thoughts, feelings and commitment of the people to the war effort are crucial. When states at war rely on consent as well as coercion, they have to work hard to ensure this consent. And in times of total war, with its multiple and often unrelenting demands, they have to work still harder. The Britain that fought the Second World War was a mass democracy, but this was a democracy that was new, and whose coherence and stability could not be taken for granted.⁴³ While war helped to unify the nation against external enemies, it also tested this cohesion. The ways in which the British state managed the death of its civilians killed during the war, in the military and in civilian life, was crucial to the maintenance of consent.

The second argument developed in this book is that the dead can continue to work for the nation in wartime. The dead bodies of kings, queens and other political leaders have long done this work, interred in cathedrals and mausoleums and functioning as symbolic sites of national history and identity, as well as tourist attractions. Such bodies, however, can also be disruptive and divisive. The Spanish government's plans to remove the remains of the dictator General Franco from the Valley of the Fallen outside Madrid, and the angry and emotional responses to these plans, for example, demonstrate the political power that can be imbued in a body and the ways in which these bodies can still divide people and societies, long after their death. In the two total wars of the twentieth century, the bodies of 'ordinary' people were also put to work. While the burial of the body of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey in 1920 is probably the best-known instance of a body being put to work by the British state, functioning as a symbol of sacrifice, of shared loss and of imperial gratitude, the Second World

War saw multiple bodies working for the nation, the 'ordinary' dead serving to represent steadfastness, dedication and a shared determination to win the war. This work, however, was by no means assured; at times the dead were understood as representing the failures of the state, most notably its failure to care for and protect the bodies of its citizens.

The final argument is that war, and especially the Second World War, is central to the development of an emotional economy that valued stoicism and restraint over a more expressive emotional culture. In this, it built on the changes brought about by the experience of the Great War. It may seem strange that a book focusing on the period between 1939 and 1945 begins some twenty-five years earlier, with the war of 1914–1918. However, British people in the Second World War experienced the conflict within an emotional economy that did not emerge fully formed in 1939, but which itself had a history, one that was profoundly shaped by the need to manage grief and bereavement during and after the First World War. The emotional economy of mid-century Britain, this book argues, was one that not only placed a high value on stoicism in the face of death, and restraint in the articulation of grief, but asked its citizens to manage this through careful work on the self. The bereaved of the Second World War experienced and felt their bereavement in an emotional economy that emphasised the desirability of controlling individual grief as a means of both overcoming individual sorrow and contributing to the war effort.

The structure of the book is broadly chronological, and it has three themes: emotional responses to death in wartime, and the management of these responses by individuals, by an emotional culture and by the British state; the management of death and the corpse in wartime, and attempts to ensure that the dead continued to work, symbolically, for the nation; and the commemoration and memorialisation of the dead in the immediate postwar period. Chapter 1 examines the multiple legacies of the Great War for the emotional economy of the following decades, but also traces the history of death, grief and bereavement in Britain back to the nineteenth century, considering the ways in which the Great War furthered pre-existing shifts in understandings of bereavement and expectations of grief. Chapters 2 and 3 look at the interwar period. Chapter 2 explores the management of feeling in this period and the growth of an emotional economy that encouraged individuals to be self-reflective to cope with the multiple demands of modern life, while Chapter 3 examines the ways in which a growing awareness of the need to manage mass death in wartime shaped

plans for war in the 1930s. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 focus on death, grief and bereavement during the war years. Chapter 4 considers the extent to which people facing another total war drew on ritual, superstition and religion for emotional support, and outlines contemporary beliefs about death, life after death and the ongoing presence of the dead in the world. In Chapter 5, the multiple ways in which modern warfare could injure and kill the human body are outlined, together with the ways in which the state attempted to use these bodies and to protect them from harm. Chapter 6 focuses on wartime burial practice, considering the ways in which the state tried to ensure the symbolic stability of the dead, and how the bereaved responded both to violent wartime death and to the state's treatment of the bodies of their loved ones. In Chapter 7 attention turns to grief, the emotional response to bereavement, the emotional economy within which grief was experienced and articulated and the individual experiences of some of those bereaved by war. Chapter 8 examines the immediate postwar period, assessing the emotional and memorial afterlife of the war and considering the multiple ways in which the war's dead were remembered, grieved for and memorialised.

Outside the historical arguments of this book, its central purpose is to remind us that war destroys lives. In this it is not alone. Thomas Laqueur's wide-ranging exploration of the cultural work of mortal remains details the necessity of remembering the dead, and the drive to inscribe the names of war's dead on to the tombstones and monuments of the twentieth century's total wars.⁴⁴ Jay Winter's work on mourning and the aftermath of war reminds us of the impact of this destruction long after peace treaties have been signed.⁴⁵ Thomas Dixon has traced the history of tears in Britain, showing the influence of the two World Wars on the spread and gradual decline of a 'death taboo', and a culture of isolation in bereavement, in the second half of the twentieth century.⁴⁶ Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* placed death and grief at the heart of the experience of the US Civil War.⁴⁷ Pat Jalland's history of death and bereavement in England highlights the ways in which mass death in wartime shaped both bereavement practices and individual lives.⁴⁸ Other historical studies have examined wounding in war, both wounds of the body and wounds of the mind, and have worked to remind us that the central purpose of military training is to enable men to kill or maim the enemy.⁴⁹ This book looks at what happens when wounds are not healed, and when the aim of killing becomes a reality.

Notes

- 1 Central Statistical Office, *Fighting with Figures: A Statistical Digest of the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. vi.
- 2 'Mother of 4 dead sons feels no bitterness', *News Chronicle*, 16 January 1945, p. 2.
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