

Jennifer Wingate. *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials.* Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013. 244 pp. \$153.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4094-0655-6.

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What is the best form for a military monument? How long should that monument last? What makes the difference between a “living memorial” and one that is forgotten? As the people of the United States look to conflicts in the Middle East and think ahead to their memorials in the future, they would do well to look back a hundred years in the past.

As World War 1, the “Great War,” as it was once called, reaches the centennial mark for America’s involvement, Jennifer Wingate offers a deeply contextual look at how the United States chose to remember its war dead, often with sculpture, and what became of that work over the last eighty or more years—what monuments are still cared for and something of why they might still be with us today. The introduction does not shy away from the issues of race; a resurgent romantic nationalism in the 1920s; the ideal of the male warrior as northern European, coincident with the increase in immigration; and the fear of international communism.

In the introduction and first two chapters the author introduces the styles of the time, from a simple honor roll of names to the sculpted male body. Wingate notes that living memory of the Civil War and its forms of remembrance still carried influence, often trumping the modern ideal

of a building, bridge, flagpole, or other non-body form of remembrance. Working with a database of some eight hundred works of three-dimensional art that came to dot the landscape of the nation (between 1918 and the run-up to the Second World War in the 1930s), the author found more than 60 percent were American “doughboys” (p. 9). Many were commercially made, much like in the Civil War, while many notable figures were highly crafted, one-of-a-kind works of custom art commissioned at great expense. While the warrior ideal was widespread, many of the works “reflect a surprising degree of individuality” (p. 11). Just as surprising was the quick counterreaction.

The next chapters cover art that took the forms of non-heroic figures of men mourning the loss of a comrade in arms, dying male nudes, allegorical art, and grieving mother figures. Then came the Second World War, making the Great War a forgotten war, which it largely has remained. The reviewer wonders at a brief period of time when another “lost” generation, of the Vietnam era, rediscovered, if only for a few years, a connection with this other war of attrition. Vietnam is mentioned, albeit in passing, but the author wisely does not try to make connection between the honor roll monument on the national

Mall, “The Wall,” and WWI. A major treatment is, sadly, beyond the scope of the work.

Wingate has identified several factors in the life or death of a memorial, within the scope of three-dimensional works of art. These main factors are proximity to auto traffic, the interest of local war veterans, and the involvement of some caretaking organization such as a city park or school. Next to the looting of public art for the price of scrap metal, the largest danger was destruction by cars. If a doughboy figure is too close to traffic, the odds seem good that it will be knocked off its stand by a crash. Yet if it is located too far from public view, too isolated, it falls prey to theft or decay. A change in the urban neighborhood can also have an unexpected comic effect, as in the case of a doughboy in Brooklyn, New York, who “fearlessly guards the Dunkin’ Donuts across Myrtle Avenue” (p. 195). One solution seems to be in the idea of “heritage” and tourism. Wingate notes that the impact of visitors and veterans helps to honor these works: “tourism and commemoration are not necessarily incompatible” (p. 195). As to the work that has yet to be done, one area is the number of uncounted or documented honor rolls in the nation. In the end Wingate counsels us, in light of her own survey, that these works, mostly the efforts dating from the 1920s, represent “opportunities to forge links between the sacrifices” made in our first modern war and “the losses that communities continue to endure today” (p. 205).

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