

**John M. Kinder, *Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015. 358pp.**

**EVAN P. SULLIVAN – THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBANY, SUNY\***

To be held in similar high esteem as scholars like Beth Linker, David Gerber, and Joanna Bourke is a rewarding accomplishment, requiring as prerequisite an historical work of substantial quality. John Kinder is deserving of such esteem due to his new book *Paying With Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran*. The topic of veteran disability has all too often been relegated to the outskirts of historical accounts of war. Kinder's work contributes to a growing scholarship that redresses this relegation by focusing on war disability in modern American society.

*Paying With Their Bodies* begins with the emblematic story of Christian Bagge, a disabled veteran of the Iraq War. Bagge had refused to wear pants at his Purple Heart ceremony, instead donning shorts that revealed his injuries. Officials had requested long pants, saying, "They didn't want the public to be disturbed" (1-2). Less than a year later the young veteran accompanied President George W. Bush on a jog around the White House wearing his Army shirt and shorts, displaying his prosthetics. Bagge's story is emblematic of the individual and societal processes of coming to terms with the human cost of war, a struggle that has roots in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The novelty of Kinder's work lies in its heavy implications for American society today. Steeped in Progressive Era ideals, the disabled veteran was caught in limbo. "While disabled vets continued to be singled out for public praise," as Kinder states, "many in the United States came to associate war-related disability with a host of social ills: pathological dependency, compromised masculinity, and the crippling legacies of foreign intervention" (3-4). The author points to the anti-war writer's use of the disabled veteran as a way to prevent war. "In bringing attention to such men," Kinder explains, "peace advocates hoped to remind Americans of the lingering pain and alienation of the Great War's forgotten combatants" (226). By writing and portraying disabled veterans as one of many "problems" resulting from war, anti-war advocates contributed to the image of the disabled veteran as a "problem" to society.

Kinder situates the disabled veteran within the framework of the rehabilitation movement after the First World War and looks at how the war shaped veteran identity.

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\* Evan P. Sullivan is a graduate student at the University at Albany, SUNY. His research charts the intersection of gender, disability, and war in the twentieth century. He looks specifically at disabled veterans of the First World War. Evan can be reached at [esullivan@albany.edu](mailto:esullivan@albany.edu).

Progressive Era leaders expected veterans to undergo vocational training and return to a life of productivity so as to not rely too heavily on pensions. The text examines themes as diverse as the emergence of industrialized medicine on the battlefield, to camaraderie among disabled veterans and rehabilitation efforts through publications like *Carry On*. The author takes the story further, introducing political implications. The American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), both products of the First World War, contributed to growing veteran collective identity and lobbied for veteran issues. The legacy of the Great War looms large in contemporary veteran care and representation because of these connections.

Kinder's work challenges disability scholars both present and future in their endeavors, advising professionals to focus on how society may more effectively take care of disabled veterans. The implications of his book are clear for veterans throughout the twentieth century. Veterans of the Second World War confronted many of the same obstacles as their predecessors. The "Problem of the Disabled Veteran" as Kinder proves, was very much born out of the culture of the First World War. Advocating for the implementation of Veteranology, Kinder writes, "Until Americans tackle this final project head on – until they are willing to reexamine their own complicity in war's devastation of bodies and minds – the disabled veteran will remain an ever pervasive Problem" (300).

The "Problem" of the disabled veteran therefore is a social construct bred through successive wars and successes and failures of veteran policy. Kinder depicts the continued struggle to grapple with the hard lessons of warfare in the modern age. They are lessons not only for the United States in the twentieth century, but also for the world in the twenty-first.

John Kinder's book is a benchmark for the study of war and disability. It has as much to do with the rehabilitation of the soldiers as it does about the ongoing rehabilitation of American society. He articulates the social and cultural constructions of the disabled veteran with clarity and gives the reader a sense of what is at stake for contemporary society. *Paying With Their Bodies* is a must read for any scholar interested in the First World War, American society, and disability history.