Genders and Sexualities in History

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Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe’s Twentieth Century integrates military history with the histories of gender and sexuality in twentieth-century Europe. Wartime exigencies expose the contingency of both masculine and feminine gender roles. In a series of thoughtful essays, the authors unpick the complex intersections between sexuality (both coerced and consensual), war, and politics. They construct carefully historicized arguments, all of which pay attention to the specificities of each conflict, from the Armenian genocide to the conflict in Bosnia. Innovative uses of primary sources (many of which have rarely been used by historians before) contribute to the analytical persuasiveness of the chapters. As with all volumes in the series Genders and Sexualities in History, the authors present multifaceted and subtle analyses of the past within narratives that are sophisticated methodologically and theoretically.

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Brutality and Desire

War and Sexuality in Europe’s Twentieth Century

Edited by

Dagmar Herzog

Professor of History, Graduate Center, City University of New York
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Brutality and Desire had its origins in a conference on ‘War and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Europe’ held in Esbjerg, Denmark in June 2006. The conference was organized by historians Flemming Just and Henrik Lundtofte, and was the third and final event in a sequence of conferences which addressed the non-military aspects of war. I thank Professors Just and Lundtofte for their warm hospitality, superlative organizational skills, and for the extraordinary experience of the conference itself. Papers from the conference were supplemented with commissioned pieces from experts on the histories of sex and sexual violence in wartime – not least with a view to rounding out the geographical and chronological breadth of the volume while heightening its conceptual coherence. I am grateful to Michael Strang at Palgrave Macmillan and the Genders and Sexualities in History series editors for accepting and shepherding the project and for their terrific suggestions for strengthening the volume. Finally, I thank the contributors for their hard work and deep seriousness of purpose, and Todd Shepard, Miriam Intrator, and Will Bishop for their particularly felicitous skills in translation and editing.

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