Une propreté qui n'est pas la nôtre préexiste aux travaux de Pasteur. Mais, entre le besoin de se débarrasser de la crasse qui démange, la recherche d'une netteté qui se voit, le désir de se sentir bien dans sa peau, se noue une histoire que l'étonnante documentation de ce livre exhume et explique.

Les exemples fourmillent de ces vagabonds qui cherchent à se débarrasser de la vermine qui les habite et les harcèle en trempant leur chemise dans la rivière, sans songer un seul instant à s'y plonger eux-mêmes. C'est que le bain ne lave pas, alors que la chemise, en revanche, va absorber par imprégnation cette faune grouillante.

Le Grand Siècle nous émerveille de spectacles aquatiques dont, à Versailles, bassins et fontaines marquent l'acmé du raffinement. La cour de Louis XIV baigne dans le luxe; mais il s'agit des plaisirs de l'œil, pas question de vulgaires ablutions.

L'idée que l'eau décrasse est récente; ou plutôt, on ne peut en saisir l'évidence qu'à la lumière des imaginaires que son histoire dévoile: histoire des sciences et des techniques, où la maîtrise des canalisations de la cité pose des problèmes passionnants; histoire des mentalités où les artifices didactiques peinent pour transformer les comportements.

Restent à connaître les parties du corps à préserver, pas seulement de la saleté, mais aussi du microbe. Les yeux? La bouche? Les mains? Le visage? Voilà une axiomatique de l'anatomie où le sain et le malsain sont en prise avec la morale et les directives de la pudeur. Voilà aussi une aventure où l'intériorisation de ces exigences, liées à l'intimité, embarrassent parfois les éducateurs eux-mêmes.

Le livre ne manquera pas de surprendre. On imagine la propreté comme une valeur de culture; mais une fois rassemblés les alliés de la crasse, elle apparaît bien comme l'occasion de se faire rencontrer le politique et l'éducatif, les imaginaires et les forces sociales qui le portent.

Le raffinement d'exemples, où la poudre et les parfums font et défont les distinctions, fera réfléchir sur la signification inchoative des sensibilités à l'intimité corporelle, que développe si remarquablement G. Vigarello.

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ROBERT WELDON WHALEN — *Bitter Wounds. German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984. 245 pp.

Bitter Wounds depicts the experiences of German disabled veterans and war widows and orphans, 1914-1939, concentrating on war's psychological effects and on the victims' struggle to obtain adequate pensions.

Whalen provides a compelling picture of the war's physical and psychological impact. Soldiers experienced years of horror, with one-third of the army wounded each *year*. Being wounded meant not only terror and pain, but a complete loss of control to often insensitive medical personnel. For over 800,000 Germans, it meant permanent disability. For wives and children, a husband's or father's departure for the front brought prolonged anxiety, while his death meant devastating personal loss and severe economic difficulties.

Germany's political and social divisions fragmented the war victims' efforts to organize. Conservative attempts to co-opt the victims convinced Erich Kuttner, a disabled veteran and SPD member, to found in 1917 a grass-roots victims group to lobby for better treatment. Unlike France

and Britain, Germany was so polarized that six major victims groups developed, each tied to a political party. Periodic efforts to unify the victims floundered in the face of fundamental ideological conflicts and the self-interest of the competing leaderships. Whalen argues that efforts to organize contributed to Weimar democracy because the largest victims group was republican and because each group involved Germans in political activity and in attempts to control their own lives. He argues similarly that widowhood and widows' participation in political activity strengthened feminism in Germany.

Wilhelminian Germany never made adequate provision for the war victims. The pre-war welfare state, Whalen argues, was purely an instrument of social manipulation for the elites. Existing military pensions were tied to military rank — to preserve the military hierarchy — and were administered on a volunteer basis at the local level. Even when the war victims' anger at their inefficiently administered and niggardly pensions began undermining the war effort, the central government refused to acknowledge a victim's *right* to a pension or to centralize administration and pension levels. Instead, it introduced minimal administrative changes and marginal pension increases, while awaiting the war's outcome.

After acknowledging a national responsibility for war victims in provisional decrees, the Weimar Republic finally enacted a pension law unanimously in April 1920. The law's extremely complex procedures for determining disability and payment levels took years to implement and entailed so many subjective judgements as to raise doubts about their fairness. The law provided variable pension rates for war victims based partially on a soldier's pre-war income, to maintain the existing social structure.

The victims could not defend this settlement. Pension increases lagged hopelessly in the galloping inflation of 1920-23. In 1923-24, the government reduced pensions in real terms and tightened eligibility, as it sought desperately to balance its budget. To victims' dismay, they were now handled with other "welfare" recipients. The government did subsequently increase pensions but without consulting victims' representatives and without any serious parliamentary debate. Even though war victims' pensions consumed 30 percent of the central government budget, many recipients had fallen in social class or were below the poverty line. Already angered by red tape and bureaucratic officiousness, pensioners were devastated and alienated when the Republic re-examined eligibility and slashed pensions again during the Depression, cutting pension expenditures by one-third.

To explain the apparent ineffectiveness of a victims movement that represented nearly ten percent of the population, Whalen argues that their political fragmentation hurt, as did their shrinking membership (as orphans became adults and disabled and widows died). But he emphasizes in particular what he sees as a widespread perception by 1929 that many pensioners were shirkers who really could work or had other incomes; he argues that this perception undercut popular support for the victims' demands.

The Nazis transformed the victims' situation. They co-opted victims groups that did not dissolve themselves. They improved pensions marginally (easy after the Republic had decimated the rolls). Most important, they offered considerable psychological benefits by vigorously touting victims as "first citizens of the state" and providing other signs of honor and social approval.

The victims, Whalen argues, needed that psychological boost. Loss of the war had made the accompanying death and suffering seem useless, and the Republic's political divisions precluded any national consensus on the meaning of the victims' sacrifices. Whalen argues that by 1933 the victims had fallen into a melancholia, a dysfunctional inability to come to terms with loss. The Nazis offered a short-term solution in a nationalist mythology that structured the loss — only to produce new war victims from 1939 on.

Whalen's work offers some valuable insights into his subject. His sensitivity to the victims' psychological traumas contributes significantly to understanding them. His discussion of widows offers a more rounded picture of war's effects. He provides a considerable amount of information on the issues he discusses, and the illustrations are very well-chosen.

Whalen's arguments do raise a number of issues that he does not address. He never discusses fully why Germany should have or did offer social welfare to war victims. The Empire refused to recognize any "right" to recompense, while the Republic acknowledged "responsibility" for disabled and survivors. This fundamental shift in attitude merits analysis. Whalen never discusses why the Independent and Majority Socialists joined in voting for a pension system designed to preserve the existing social hierarchy. He did not have time to evaluate the latest literature on the apparently inescapable economic and fiscal constraints which Weimar Germany faced, but war victims' political ineffectiveness may actually have reflected the society's simple inability to finance their demands. In this context, comparing the victims' gains with those of other groups in Germany and with war victims in other countries would be illuminating. Adopting Freud's model of melancholia, Whalen argues that victims groups responded to the Nazi seizure of power with either suicide (dissolving themselves) or mania (vociferously committing themselves to Nazi ideology). As the Nazis would undoubtedly have imprisoned any victims group leader who tried to pursue any other option, this analysis conceals more than it reveals.

Although *Bitter Wounds* leaves a number of broader questions unanswered, it provides an informative and stimulating view of a significant social group in inter-war Germany.

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GORDON WRIGHT — *Between the Guillotine & Liberty: Two Centuries of the Crime Problem in France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. pp. ix, 290.

Gordon Wright has written a history of the intellectual, political and institutional responses to the problem of crime in France from the end of the eighteenth century to the present. The enigmatic title does not imply any progression, during those years, from one mode of punishment to another, but rather derives from the title of a nineteenth-century drawing meant to satirize the penal reformers' promotion of imprisonment as the "golden mean" between capital punishment and simple release. Moreover, the subtitle is somewhat misleading: Wright does not focus on the problem of crime *per se* so much as reactions to it. Although the author's stated goal is "to discover and explain how a society has grappled with the problem over time, and to understand how and why attitudes toward crime and punishment have evolved" (p. vii), he has neither concentrated on changes in popular *mentalité* nor written a social history of prisons from the inside out such as Patricia O'Brien's *The Promise of Punishment* (1982). Instead, he has focused on the more readily discoverable reactions of the articulate minority that recorded its views and provided the activists and politicians who promoted reform and formulated legislation, a task which, Wright admits, is "naturally easier, and not necessarily unimportant or elitist" (p. vii).

As a result, Wright's study is methodologically traditional, treating what he considers a "faddish" subject in a conventional manner. Whereas O'Brien views reactions to the crime problem within the evolution of class relationships, Wright dismisses system-builders as naive reductionists who explain the complexity of reality by simplistic single causes that are more "plausible than persuasive" (p. 21). The ghost of Michel Foucault, whose *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (1976) set the agenda for subsequent discussions of penology, seems to haunt Wright's narrative. The author does not hesitate to wrestle with his foe in the first chapter, where he discusses Foucault's view that the prison was the capstone of a disciplinary society. Foucault, he asserts, only avoids the appearance of "reductionism" by making his hypothesis part of a larger theory of cultural change that can be accepted only on the basis of faith, not evidence. Wright's approach logically determines