



**Patrick Brugh.** *Gunpowder, Masculinity, and Warfare in German Texts, 1400-1700.* Melton: University of Rochester Press, 2019. 272 pp. \$150.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78744-608-3.

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In perhaps no other field has the so-called military and society approach so dominated recent historiography as in the history of early modern Europe. Under the moniker of the “military revolution,” a wave of scholarship from the 1980s to the present has sought to understand how militaries in Europe from 1400 to 1800 both reflected and contributed to the societies that made them. Because of this work, we have a much greater understanding of how gunpowder and tactical changes resulted in more capital-intensive armies and led to the formation of more centralized states. Yet only much more recently have scholars of European militaries begun to investigate how militaries shaped and were shaped by broader *cultural* understandings of the early modern period. In this book, Patrick Brugh makes a significant contribution to the burgeoning field of cultural military history through a cultural history of gunpowder weaponry.

Brugh’s study is as capacious generically as it is temporally. He consults satirical epics, specialized military treatises, broader compendia of military thought called *Kriegsbücher*, broadsheets, war novels, plays, poetry, engravings, paintings, and physical weapons to understand the ramifications gunpowder weaponry possessed for contemporary German understandings of warfare. Brugh argues that gunpowder refashioned the ways Ger-

mans fought and imagined warfare in its aesthetic, gendered, and ethical-moral dimensions.

Brugh opens the book with two suits of armor, both in the St. Louis Art Museum. One, from c. 1510-25 was designed for cavalry charges with a lance. The other, from 1625, was designed for use with a pistol. From the elements of the armor, Brugh charts out the changes in warfare that Germans witnessed from 1400 to 1700. In chapter 2, Brugh explores the tactical developments that the Hussite Wars brought and how military treatments of gunpowder demanded more technological competence as the fifteenth century wore on. Both testify to the increased centrality of gunpowder to warfare, both actual and imaginary.

Chapter 3 surveys the genre known as *Kriegsbücher* and allows Brugh to make sense of their conceptions of loaded peace in chapter 4, which focuses on sixteenth-century German military theorist Leonhart Fronsperger’s gargantuan 1573 *Kriegsbuch*. Fronsperger interpreted gunpowder weaponry as a plague that destroyed heroic German masculinity and engendered weak German soldiers. Fronsperger responded by urging soldiers to look towards the past to adopt older styles of military masculinity. For Fronsperger, gunpowder’s efficacy mandated its continued use on the battlefield even as it presented clear dangers to

older forms of martial masculinity and ethical warfare.

Chapters 5 and 6 investigate the role of gunpowder weaponry in German broadsheets from 1630 to 1632. Chapter 5 argues that gunpowder served both narrative and symbolic roles insofar as it conveyed details about battle both verbally and visually. Gunpowder also served allegorical purposes in broadsheets. Reminiscent of Fronspenger's critique of gunpowder's role in destroying heroic German masculinity, broadsheets represented gunpowder in ways that connected gunpowder weaponry to gluttony and sloth. Chapter 6 reads broadsheets about the death of Swedish King Gustav Adolf (r. 1611-32) as a case study in which gunpowder destroyed a noble hero. Brugh also includes an appendix of the subtle differences between different broadsheets that will be useful for specialists of this medium.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the fictional works of Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, Johann Michael Moscherosch, and Eberhard Happel. These chapters demonstrate how German authors coped with the moral ambiguity of gunpowder through new narrative strategies. In short, gunpowder was not only responsible for the reevaluation of ideal military masculinity and ethical conceptions of just warfare; it also opened up space for the creation of new narrative techniques.

In sum, gunpowder refashioned both actual and imaginary German warfare between 1400 and 1700. As Brugh concludes, "With the help of gunpowder weapons, anyone (no matter how novice, weak, unmasculine, or ignoble) could kill anyone else (no matter how veteran, strong, manly, or honorable)" (p. 196). The fundamental anxiety German writers possessed about the effects of gunpowder on masculinity and ethical warfare allowed them to create new aesthetics, masculinities, and conceptions of moral warfare.

Although at times unwieldy—not all chapters have conclusions and the book itself has introductory and concluding chapters rather than a proper

introduction and conclusion—Brugh's work is an important contribution to the cultural history of early modern warfare. While its comprehensiveness presents challenges of organization, Brugh's book is closely argued, richly documented, and of great significance to the fields of literary studies, military history, and gender history of early modern Europe.

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