



# **After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed (Critical Global Health: Evidence, Efficacy, Ethnography)**

*Zoë H. Wool*

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# After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed (Critical Global Health: Evidence, Efficacy, Ethnography)

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In *After War* Zoë H. Wool explores how the American soldiers most severely injured in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars struggle to build some kind of ordinary life while recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center from grievous injuries like lost limbs and traumatic brain injury. Between 2007 and 2008, Wool spent time with many of these mostly male soldiers and their families and loved ones in an effort to understand what it's like to be blown up and then pulled toward an ideal and ordinary civilian life in a place where the possibilities of such a life are called into question. Contextualizing these soldiers within a broader political and moral framework, Wool considers the soldier body as a historically, politically, and morally laden national icon of normative masculinity. She shows how injury, disability, and the reality of soldiers' experiences and lives unsettle this icon and disrupt the all-too-common narrative of the heroic wounded veteran as the embodiment of patriotic self-sacrifice. For these soldiers, the uncanny ordinariness of seemingly extraordinary everyday circumstances and practices at Walter Reed create a reality that will never be normal.

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