

# Textual Analysis of The Gendered Veterans Body in Self Representations

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**I. Purpose:** In spite of a record of progressive social integration policies, gender remains an important concern for any discussion of the U.S. military and the military veteran. In part, this importance derives from the media coverage and congressional action highlighting Military Sexual Trauma (MST), the end of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the end of the ban on women in combat arms, and the full integration of transgender service members. Within these discussions, blame often falls onto a toxic masculinity associated with the military. When reviewing the literature of transition to civilian communities, scholars find that women, who were forced to negotiate gender norms in this predominantly male institution, must again make decisions about how to perform gender in the civilian context.

**II. Learning Objectives:** Through challenging reading assignments, intense class discussions, and multiple iterations of the writing process, students will:

- ✓ Encounter a variety of challenging texts representing a range of literary and non-literary genres;
- ✓ Learn and practice strategies for reading carefully, closely, and critically;
- ✓ Discuss gender as a social construct maintained by ritual and norms.

## III. Initial Observations:

- A. Veteran as a politicized body marked by service; as spectacle of the masculine warrior, it is marked by gender.
- B. Gender is about how you feel and perform, but it is also about how others respond to you.

## IV. Primary Sources:

- A. The Veteran Art Project: <http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/featured/on-reflection-the-veteran-art-project/ss-BBgby4>
- B. Devin Mitchell series on PTSD, MST, and suicide: [https://www.buzzfeed.com/emaconnor/this-is-what-a-veteran-looks-like?utm\\_term=.umLb9YVGI](https://www.buzzfeed.com/emaconnor/this-is-what-a-veteran-looks-like?utm_term=.umLb9YVGI)

## V. Supplemental or Secondary Sources:

- A. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- B. Demers, Anne L. "From Death to Life: Female Veterans, Identity, Negotiation, and Reintegration Into Society." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 53.4: 489-515.
- C. Suter, Elizabeth A., et al. "Female veterans' identity construction, maintenance, and reproduction." *Women and Language* 29.1 (2006): 10+. Literature Resource Center. Web. 27 July 2016.

**VI. Methodology for Visual Analysis:** Composition of the image and the viewer work together to achieve an effect and to communicate a message.

- A. Work within a common terminology and process in discussion of visual texts:
  - ✓ Picture plane (foreground, middleground, and background) via thirds
  - ✓ Proportions (size and size ratio)
  - ✓ Symmetry/asymmetry
  - ✓ Light
  - ✓ Use of space (layout)
  - ✓ Use of types and colors
  - ✓ Images, graphics, signs, and symbols
- B. In analysis of photographs or drawings, consider the following:
  - ✓ Type of photograph or drawing
  - ✓ Distance from the subject
  - ✓ Orientation of the image/camera angle
  - ✓ Use of color
  - ✓ Special effects
  - ✓ Juxtaposition of images
  - ✓ Manipulation of images
  - ✓ Settings and props
  - ✓ Characters, roles, and actions
  - ✓ Means of presentation

**VII. Questions to consider:**

- A. What is the relationship between the veteran and the military service member as implied here? What are the visual clues or details that create that impression?
- B. How do these images perform gender? Are there differences between the gender performed by the person that depends on their situation or context? Do these performances meet your expectations or the dominant gender stereotypes?
- C. What do these images imply about the transition from warrior to civilian?

**VIII. Assessment:** Assessment may vary from an in-class writing or discussion board posting to a formal textual analysis essay. In general, the student should

- A. Describe the work with appropriate terms and to an appropriate level of detail.
- B. Discuss how elements of the visual work to achieve meaning.
- C. Engage in discussion of rhetorical appeals.
- D. Reflect on cultural context of this war and this time period.

**IX. Point of Contact:**

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