



The Art of Surrender: Decomposing Sovereignty at Conflict's End

Robin Wagner-Pacifici

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How do we know when a war ends? For many, the resolution of a conflict comes not with the last traces of smoke left on the battlefield, but with the formal ceremonies of surrender: possession and repossession, the signing of treaties, and the pomp and circumstance that mark them. Historically, most conflicts have ended with such rituals. But, as Robin Wagner-Pacifici reveals in *The Art of Surrender*, they should not be seen as merely a matter of giving up. They also offer ways of holding back and signal early fault lines that give rise to later undoings and conflicts.

The Art of Surrender explores these ritual concessions as acts of warfare, performances of submission, demonstrations of power, and representations of shifting, unstable worlds. Wagner-Pacifici analyzes three significant military surrenders in the history of warfare—the Thirty Years' War of the seventeenth century, the American Civil War, and World War II—through the use of period documents and forms, maps, literature, witness accounts, photographs, and paintings that were left as proof of victory and defeat. In her analyses of such archival material and iconic works of art, she considers the limits of sovereignty at conflict's end, showing how the ways we concede loss can be as important as the ways we claim victory.

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