DANGEROUS SUBJECTS:
U.S. WAR NARRATIVE, MODERN CITIZENSHIP,
AND THE MAKING OF NATIONAL SECURITY, 1890-1964

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

“What if we approach war,” Leerom Medovoi asks, “not as an exception to or the opposite of regulation, but rather as continuous with it, as the point when regulation’s militarism has surged into the open air?” Taking that question as my point of departure, this research explores literary accounts of U.S. warfare—from post-Reconstruction nationalization through the first phase of the Cold War—as rhetorically convergent with an evolving discourse of public regulation and national security. As I suggest, war narrative performs a distinctly pedagogical function, one seemingly native to the genre. Given the established preference for laissez-faire governance and a reluctance toward foreign “meddling,” U.S. citizens traditionally evinced little love for either “standing armies” or the bureaucratic state, relics that they were of European tyranny and corruption. To supplement that intolerance toward state interference, war writing supplies a “felt sense” of collectivity and danger able to bypass the embedded esteem for liberal autonomy and rational self-ownership. A collectivity that once excluded women and nonwhite actors, the nation-in-crisis widens its circle of “inclusion” and “recognition,” incorporating a plurality of competing identities into a narrative of harmonious collaboration, what Srinivas Aravamudan dubs “a contract of security for quiescence” that is “the ideal limit of the pacification project of the state.” Transnational in representational scale, enmeshed in crises of political valuation (both internal and external to the nation), portraying citizens at work outside the normative order of the liberal contract: together these features imbue war narrative with a distended structure of imagining topically suited to address changing orientations toward civic life and foreign policy.
Compelled by the turn toward the state in American Studies, “Dangerous Subjects” interweaves its account of almost one-hundred literary texts with currents in cultural history and political theory. In interdisciplinary fashion, it presents an interpretive history of the American “body politic”—a remarkably dynamic entity—as it is constructed out of a basically “stateless” Progressive Era, developed in response to Wilsonian internationalism and the public regulation of the New Deal, and established full-bloom in the so-called consensus society of the Cold War. Because it traces developmental continuities across time, this project reorients the prevailing assessment of war narrative in established literary history. Generally speaking, scholars have discussed American war-making and the literary responses to it as a sequence of military events fastened to corresponding aesthetic modes: the Civil War gives rise to realism and naturalism; modernism derives from the fallout of World War I; and together World War II and the Cold War hail the appearance of the postmodern. While acknowledging the general truth of some of these claims, my genealogy is less segmented and more consecutive, regarding all of these phases as stages in the longer development of an imperial modernism.

I begin with an introductory chapter that theorizes the relationship between war participation and the logic of national belonging. Three interpretive strands of thought animate my discussion: war narrative’s interaction with (a) the dichotomous imaginary structure of the nation’s inside/outside form; (b) the more “sacred” or “erotic” nature of collective life masked by the vagaries of the social contract; and (c) the more flexible “art of government” Foucault detects in the modern “biopolitical” state’s simultaneous drives toward individuation and totalization. Among the central interlocutors here are Wendy
Brown, Susan Buck-Morss, Brian Massumi, Claude Lefort, Etienne Balibar, Lauren Berlant, and Paul Kahn, who help elaborate the relationship between a discourse of danger and the socializing structure of state power.

That constitutive relationship is considered at length in Chapter 1, which describes how middle-class reformers in the late nineteenth century altered the partisan memory of the Civil War to bypass impediments to nationalization. Central to that task, I claim, was the way a host of novels like Harold Frederic’s *The Copperhead* (1893), Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), Winston Churchill’s *The Crisis* (1901), Ellen Glasgow’s *The Battleground* (1902), and Mary Johnston’s *The Long Roll* (1911) recast the “creative” war story (revolutionary, dialectical) as a parable of mutually-endured affliction tempering a stronger, more reconciled union (preservationist, providential). Essential to that textual translation is their idealization of the corporate personality as a salutary renovation of the sovereign, self-ruling individual. Obliged to accept more modestly aggregated roles within a coordinated professional stratum, male and female characters alike model versions of collective identity validated by nativist and masculinist blood lore, spiritual assurances of profit-through-sacrifice, and the consolations of membership in the nation’s transhistorical body, its “mystical corpus.”

Chapters 2 and 3 extend this train of thought. How, they ask, did a generally isolationist polity come to regard transcontinental events, events occurring in domains long-considered “inauspicious to liberty,” as fungible aspects of their own national life? Here, I trace literature’s investment in the Preparedness Movement, a conservative wing of the progressive program. A “public health project” in Theodore Roosevelt’s terms, preparedness promoted permanent war training and global military intervention as means
to stabilize an unraveling social order, an order threatened by labor uprisings, women’s rights activism, and racial-ethnic diversity, around therapeutic notions of an endangered common life. I consider the socializing role bestselling potboilers played as they summoned metaphysical appeals to sacrifice to channel a diversity of political loyalties into a concordant public mainstream. I also treat neglected “preparedness texts” like Leonard Nason’s *Chevrons* (1926) and better-known examples like Edith Wharton’s *A Son at the Front* (1923) for their visions of mystical self-conferment in the incorporated life alone. Harlem Renaissance fiction like Jessie Fauset’s *There is Confusion* (1924) and Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928) as well as modernist works like Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Laurence Stallings’ *Plumes* (1924), and e.e. cummings’s *The Enormous Room* (1920) receive substantial attention as I contend with the politics of modernist “backlash.” The central contribution here is showing how modernism’s alleged culture of protest, a culture reactive to the rhetorical challenges of mobilization, actually reconciles the crises of the Fordism and “mass society” in ways convergent with the social optic of the liberal-pluralist state.

My final three chapters assemble a large archive of Spanish Civil War and World War II writing to address how the literary memory of antifascism was transformed by and harnessed to the geopolitical realism of the national security paradigm. Although these democratic struggles were waged against infamous authoritarian regimes, the liberal universalism that emerges masks an increasingly normative discourse of capitalist expansion evinced in the “managerial cosmopolitanism” of works like John Hersey’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Bell for Adano* (1944) and Herman Wouk’s *The Caine Mutiny* (1951). Facilitating that process, homefront war representation increasingly captures
contrarian desire in a conservative undertow, acclimating citizens to the Cold War consensus and its culture of consumption. One of the central objects of my critique involves the de-politicization enabled by the psychic puzzling of the “inward turn” in novels like James Gould Cozzens’s *Guard of Honor* (1948)—also a Pulitzer-winner—but even Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) and Irwin Shaw’s *The Young Lions* (1948). My final chapter, however, describes the political pressure a diversity of writers applied to the orthodoxy of national security, especially at a time when such dissent was deeply unpopular. Central to that discussion are renowned examples such as Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* (1955/61), but also lesser-known works by women, nonwhite, and queer writers such as John Horne Burns’s *The Gallery* (1947), Maritta Wolff’s *About Lyddy Thomas* (1947), John Okada’s *No-No Boy* (1957), and John Oliver Killens’s *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1961). Refusing to confirm mobilization’s idealization of the heteronormative nuclear family or the “metonymic nationalism” of cultural pluralism, these novelists open the way for an emerging ethos of political opposition.

I close, however, with an Afterword that considers the lingering effects of national security culture in recent decades: its odd conjoining of neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities. Crucial to that discussion is my assessment of the “quiet” militarization of everyday life, the development of an American “affective public” enabled by what Brian Massumi calls the “political ontology of threat.”
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While the title page of this project lists only one author, it is the product of years of intellectual collaboration with others. Indeed, what could be more fitting at the outset of a work devoted to trumpeting identity’s contingency than to acknowledge the rich interrelational life from which it sprung? This enterprise originated at the University of Kentucky, and I am particularly grateful for the many conversations and encouragements which nourished it in those inaugural years. Of great help at this incipient stage was time spent with a bright group of burgeoning literature scholars: Jeff Osborne, Katherine Rogers-Carpenter, Rachel Simon, Emily Dotson, Matt Godbey, Rynetta Davis, Chris Green, Joe Sutcliff-Sanders, Lisa Schroot, Mark Wood, Jeff Birkenstein, and Jason McEntee. Especially generous were the friends I made there who have continued with me along the way and whose countless input, often late into the night, has fueled me every step of the way. This work wouldn’t exist without the considerable and considerate time and input of Anna Froula, Sean Morris, Keith Woodward, Danny Mayer, Pete Williams, and Michael Benton. I wish also to single out the Social Theory collective there, which was a vital and challenging resource and crucial to the incubation of this research. I credit that group not just with showing me a different way to understand the power of culture but for renewing my sense of what the humanities (and my role in it) could be. I also thank those excellent professors who provided tireless advice and suggestions in the planning stages: Dana Nelson, Steven Weisenburger, Virginia Blum, Armando Pratts, Michael Uebel, Andy Doolen, Wolfgang Natter, and Gordon Hutner.

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Preface to Part I

“A Native and Spontaneous Fire”:
Revolutionary Republicanism and Early American Nationality

The essence of the State is that it is the repository of the collective force of its citizens. This force takes two forms, one internal and one external. The internal form is the law and the police; the external form is the power of waging war, as embodied in the Army and Navy.

--Bertrand Russell, Why Men Fight

War, that is to say, is becoming the primary organizing principle of society, and politics merely one of its means or guises. What appears as civil peace, then, really only puts an end to one form of war and opens the way for another.

--Hardt and Negri, Multitude

We have inherited an onto-theology of security, that is, an a priori argument that proves the existence and necessity of only one form of security because there currently happens to be widespread, metaphysical belief in it. Indeed, within the concept of security lurks the entire history of Western metaphysics...[as] the shifting site from which the forces of authority, order, and identity philosophically defined and physically kept at bay anarchy, chaos, and difference.

--James Der Derian, “The Value of Security”

In his Life of Franklin Pierce (1852), a campaign biography of the Democratic presidential candidate, Nathaniel Hawthorne paused to reflect on the “spirit” of American voluntarism evinced during times of crisis, an ingenerate national character reconfirmed in 1847’s mobilization for the Mexican-American War. “There is nothing in any other country similar to what we see in our own when the blast of the trumpet at once converts men of peaceful pursuits into warriors,” he declared. “[T]he valor that wins our battles is not the trained hardihood of veterans, but a native and spontaneous fire, and there is surely a chivalrous beauty in the devotion of the citizen soldier to his country’s cause, which the man who makes arms his profession and is but doing his duty cannot pretend to rival.”¹ An endorsement of mid-century expansionism, his gleeful tribute to the elective nature of the citizen-soldier also expressed a widely shared tenet of nineteenth-century American liberalism: in the metallurgic alchemy of the national self, military readiness and collective belonging were coextensive traits.²
The reverence for self-motivation as a kind of national genius—a gritty, intrepid entrepreneurship of identity devolved from laissez-faire’s disencumbered citizen—derived in at least one respect from a revolutionary imaginary that linked military mobilization to the voluntary will alone. For opponents of Federalism, the more centralized approach to nation-building, voluntarism was the cornerstone of democracy itself. Thriving in the first century of the country’s existence, this implicit willingness to serve formed the heart of the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian mythos, which espoused a general suspicion of militarism—the “implaceable foe of democracy”—as a threat to popular sovereignty (Cook 45). Impulsively violent as Americans could be, “standing armies”—those unmistakable symbols of corruption, hierarchy, and tyranny marching through the war-ravaged histories of modern Europe—were clear symptoms of political decadence and a menace to the health of civil society.\(^1\) Having recently dispensed with an occupying mercenary army forcibly quartered in American homes, the inhabitants of the aspiring nation exhibited little love for military professionalism. Even by mid-century, not much had changed. Henry David Thoreau’s well-known “Resistance to Civil Government” expressed an emblematic share of libertarian scorn for the “machines” of the standing army as the gullible “arms” of the state.\(^2\) Citizens would be soldiers, as they commonly professed, only “when they chose to be” (Chambers 13).\(^3\)

Rather, fraternal ideologies of a spiritualized republican essence forged in the revolution’s “trial by fire” imbued propertied white men with an imagined inheritance of linked mutual purpose sufficient to repel both foreign and internal threats to the security of the republic. During the constitutional sequel to the revolution’s abolition of monarchical authority, the Continental Army was reduced to a ramshackle garrison of
eighty-three veterans, the feckless wardens of West Point’s and Fort Pitt’s accumulated arsenals. The almost complete disbanding reflected the widely sensed dread that a thuggish standing army would compromise the individual liberty and republican virtue the war had so recently engendered. Generally lacking a “sense of the state,” early ideologies of the national self were hatched in an environment mostly unaffected by institutional pressures. G.W.F. Hegel’s commentary on the peculiarities of early American government went as far as to claim that the U.S. did not have a state at all. Bound only by a “subjective unity,” the foundational unit of constitutional republicanism was what it said it was: the free individual endeavoring “after acquisition, commercial profit, and gain.” Because the agrarian-pioneer legend of autonomous citizenship worked only in a bureaucratic vacuum, notes Cecilia O’Leary, the “process of establishing new identities and allegiances more often than not reflected people’s lived reality rather than the work of self-conscious nationalists”—“land, bread, protection, and consequence” as J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur succinctly summarized (15). “Given the nation’s vast reserve of undeveloped land and natural resources, and the energies of a rapidly increasing and mobile population, economic growth could be fostered by granting wide freedom of action to pioneers and entrepreneurs and considerable autonomy to local governments” (Slotkin, Lost 14). “Until such a time as the subjective unity of this society was threatened and the need for a higher form of unity offered by great institutions became manifest,” claims Stephen Skowronek, “the United States would remain stateless” (7).

That sense of American statelessness was everywhere recognizable. At ease in their hemispheric privacy, insulated by Atlantic and Pacific moats and a wilderness with
“no neighbors,” citizens enjoyed the good “Fortune” of U.S. isolation, a detachment which prompted Alexis de Tocqueville’s admiration for the absence of a “turbulent spirit” in the public commons which, he warned, military coercion would only aggravate. Honoring George Washington’s 1796 valedictory address—a cautionary denunciation of “overgrown military establishments” and “foreign entanglements” as “inauspicious to liberty”—the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 formally substantiated military reluctance in the nation’s code of law. Wrote Monroe: “Of all enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.” Even as late as 1860, the distrust of standing armies rendered the War Department a sickly and forgotten wing of the state with federal appropriations identical to those of 1808. As for the professional soldier, he accrued little or no social prestige, disparaged as a parasitical “rough sort” in a country dedicated to the private acquisition of wealth. Authoring a legend of minuteman spontaneity and Yankee “know how,” the revolutionary imaginary—“armed farmers defeating professional hirelings”—proved sufficient to stabilize republican order as the founding myth of white manhood (Finnegan 7). The loaded long-rifle atop the mantle—that resplendent cultural signifier of the early American self—cobbled dispositions toward war, nationality, and citizenship into one consubstantial symbol of the de-centralized democratic soul: the self-governing, at-the-ready patriot harboring internally war’s “native and spontaneous fire.”
The Civil War and the Rise of the State

The emergency of the Civil War produced the structural mechanisms—social, economic, and ideological—for a state bureaucracy that fundamentally reorganized American political life. As a “total war,” it drew upon every possible sector of American production—domestic, industrial, agricultural, governmental, and legal—for its operation. What it lacked, it created. The ballooning of the state’s organizational apparatus constituted nothing short of a “fiscal-military revolution,” the advent of “the most powerful war machine in the history of the world to date” (Porter 258). Among the many state intrusions into public life was the rise of an entirely new “financial complex” bundling citizens, government, and industry into permanent coalitions as the Union rose to become the largest single purchaser within an interdependent network of influential businesses. A further “revolution in taxation” founded the Internal Revenue Service and implemented the Federal Income Tax. The federalization of currency in the form of paper “greenbacks” restructured finance in lasting ways as well. When war bonds became available, they “broadened the base of national debt and gave tens of thousands of ordinary citizens a stake in their government.” Cutting in the other direction, President Lincoln’s “authoritarian” suspension of habeas corpus, his seizure of the railroads, and the unthinkable passage of national conscription by Congress under the Enrollment Act of 1863 (which led to widespread dissent and suppression during the New York Draft Riots) were overnight indoctrinations into an intensified and compulsory political order.¹² Once reviled as the excesses and abuses of 1798, the emergency tactics of an imperiled governmental body were powerfully reconstituted as essential to order and expediency in the tumult of liberty’s advance.
While the end of the war saw a rapid de-escalation and deflation of the bloated war machine, as Richard Bensel claims, the story of American state formation “can begin with the Civil War with little lost in historical continuity or theoretical generality” (ix). Martial law continued unabated in the occupied South until 1877, but it was in particular the last decade of the nineteenth century that proved the need for further implements to achieve tighter social control. The crisis of public order unleashed with the announced demise of the regenerative frontier; with America’s “triumphant emergence onto the international stage” through imperial wars with Spain and the acquisition of colonial territories; with intensified nativist concerns over an anemic, enervated white establishment; with “dangerous classes” of immigrants and the unruly political ideas they tooted pouring in from Europe; with the decline of a traditional agrarian emphasis on locality and community as farmers and African Americans migrated toward industrial centers; with “innovations in finance, production, communications”; and with the “increased momentum of women’s suffrage and African American civil rights agitation,” challenged the security of Anglo-Saxon civic foundations and the consensus solidarity of entrenched cultural ideals (Hansen 74). It was a viral period of social instability.

To make matters worse, the sectional division culminating in the Civil War and incubating during Reconstruction threatened to erupt anew as a crisis between capital and labor. Beginning with the “Great Uprising” of railroad strikes in 1877, extending through Haymarket and the “Great Upheaval” of 1886, and arriving full-bloom in the depression of 1893 and Pullman Strike of 1894, the unstable dialectic between workers and owners threatened to turn the country once more into a space of bloody conflict and war. The presidential election of 1896 only highlighted further potentials for national collapse as
Mark Hanna and the Republican committee, working on McKinley’s campaign, pilloried Democrats and Populists for their pro-silver monetary policies which, they argued, “threatened to divide the country along the explosive fault lines of section and class” (Kelly 181-184). Fearing that factionalism and class war would rend open a tenuously united national community, middle-class American Victorians looked out upon a country infected with rampant political corruption, an economy dominated by ruthless capitalist trusts, and cities they believed to be deteriorating into illiterate, “polyglot slums” of poverty and vice (Finnegan 9). What was to be done?

**Progressivism, Nationalism, and the Reinvention of War**

Mutating into apostles of a new liberalism, one entwining “right” and “centrist” strains of progressive reformism, an emergent class of influential liberals advocated reform and compromise as palliatives for a nation unraveling into discordant, combustible enclaves. Pledged to rationalize and democratize American life, they extolled “expertise” and scientific planning as ideals for social regeneration. Some—“Neo-Hamiltonian Republicans”—championed strong centralization of power and the consolidation of authority in a body of “professionals who could guarantee efficiency in an age of increasing complexity” (Barr 2). New cults of “leadership” and “public relations” emerged to chaperone the hulking industrial crowds they regarded rancorously with fear and distrust (Susman, *Culture* xxiii). “They sought to comprehend, to purify, and above all to direct their rapidly transforming world by building a range of new organizations and professions, from scientific corporate managers and public administrators to scientific lawyers, economists, political scientists, sociologists, social psychologists, and social workers, as well as theologically liberal social reformers”
(Smith, Civic 412). Conceived variously as “administered uniformity” or “institutionalized rationality,” governance sought “mastery” over what Walter Lippmann (a few years down the road) denounced as the breezy levity of a population in rudderless “drift.” The ubiquitously invoked “Armageddon” could be avoided, but its prevention mandated the blazing of a middle way, one that could flank the “rising tide” of radicalism on one wing while constraining the rapacious monopolization of capital on the other.

Lurching after any nostrum to secure social equilibrium, the collective “search for order” emerged as Progressivism’s undivided purpose.16

Resulting from that search was a complex negotiation between the prevailing ideals of nineteenth-century liberalism and the accruing demand for national allegiance, an allegiance to collective life outlying laissez-faire’s monadic political subject. What was needed was a new ideological cartography, a corporate vision that could coordinate a diverse society along a predictable and standardized grid, a single complex of regulated unanimity. Pioneering the construction not just of the imagined community but of the “manageable community,” a cohort of social planners and bureaucrats set out better to orchestrate a corporate national body (Brennan 229). Eager to curtail the centrifugal energies of a dispersed and ruminant society, they evangelized a doctrine of “identity of interest,” a quarantining ideology, as Nell Irvin Painter describes it, that could mollify and tame the nation’s more dialectical political tensions. Whatever specious antagonisms the American social organism set loose were aberrant ruptures within an otherwise “harmonious whole,” glitches in an immutable arrangement “decreed by laws of God and Science” and ultimately amenable to “the good of all” (xl). Cohesion, continuity, and loyalty emerged as the watchwords of the day as the Progressive Movement’s sumptuary
enterprise, the terser incorporation of American life, invented new ways to extract unity out of diversity (Wiebe 160).\(^{17}\)

Striding into view, however, were profuse conceptual problems. How was such a “social bargain” to be transacted? What successful, emulative models existed from which to fashion such a collated version of public life and common good? How would leaders exact obedience and loyalty from a citizenry whose ideals stood at odds with precisely those alleged virtues? How could authorities coerce consent from a citizenry that reverenced “liberty” and “independence” with an almost religious relish?

As a template for consolidating America’s “promise,” the custodians of the revitalized republic looked ultimately to the history of American war mobilization, in particular the regulatory potential of the wartime state, as a blueprint for the good society and a prototype for political reform. It was a complicated rhetorical maneuver. In the U.S. in particular, incidents of war recalled stories of partisanship and division: origin myths that most certainly could not be ritually re-enacted. Although the American Revolution was imbued, for instance, with all the power of a creation story, the Declaration of Independence’s guarantee of the right “to alter or abolish” governments deemed “destructive,” its trumpeting of “nature’s law” as entitling “the people” with power to “dissolve political bonds,” sent exactly the wrong message. That many of the dismaying political philosophies immigrating from Europe contained their own recourses to revolt and upheaval made identification with the revolutionary tradition an even more volcanic prospect. Furthermore, the nation was still deeply afflicted by the scarring sectional wounds and colossal devastation of the Civil War, the single most destructive
event in the nation’s history. A vexing reminder of severance and dis-unity, its specter of secession and rebellion was the very tormenting devil reformers looked to exorcise.\textsuperscript{18}

The prospect of \textit{future} war, however, presented alternative possibilities that, if properly maintained, could establish the affective climate to nurture these more ideal national subjects. As a metonym for the nation itself, the warfare state could secure public allegiance precisely because it could manufacture the ideological levers required to operate the two-pronged mechanism of national affiliation: a vision of domestic unity held in a state of tension against a combination of perceived external threats and opportunities. Entwining the dual vectors of internal reform and imperial provocation were a host of influential cultural luminaries and political observers who shepherded broad shifts in public sentiment. Frederick Jackson Turner’s ubiquitously cited “Frontier Thesis”—a solemn delivery on the “closing” of the North American West and the need for “landed expansion” to prevent stagnation—was a pivotal decree, presciently delivered as the depression set in during the spring of 1893 (LaFeber 66). Josiah Strong, in a sequence of leading texts published between 1885 and 1900, lauded the unique Anglo-Saxon propensity for spiritual vitality and civic order as sanctions to “remake the world” in America’s image, a globalization of Social Gospel remedies in which a divinely deputized “mission” replaced the wayward “drift” of private interest.\textsuperscript{19} Brooks Adams, “a prophet for leading figures of the McKinley administration,” defended the creative energy of the “martial spirit” as a revitalizing infusion of force into the timid universe of “economic man”—a point of view joining him to Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge as one of “three musketeers in a world of perpetual war” (LaFeber 84-85).
Apprehensive of American vulnerability, Lodge advocated an expanded navy throughout the 1890s as the necessary instrument to address an impending international crisis, a crisis accelerating at a rapid pace as rival home markets exhausted and dried up. Another furious stumper for navy reform was William Kimball. But it was the highly regarded Alfred Thayer Mahan who, in *The Influence of Sea-Power upon History* (1890), gave perhaps the most compelling argument for an increase in military scale. Restricting his discussion exclusively to an account of the sea’s military importance, Mahan insisted that the security of any collective body depended on its ability to control nautical movement. Furthermore, with Lodge, he warned (in a tellingly anticipatory phrase) that modernity’s “industrial complex” was producing prodigious surpluses that made sea-power vital to international competition and market survival. The country was a mechanic concordance necessarily expanding outward by the irrevocable laws of its own internal dynamics. Accordingly, Americans would need to “look outward” not only to secure national interests but to prevent upheavals at home, an observation made only more pressing by the fact that “the United States has not that shield of defensive power behind which time can be gained to develop its reserve of strength.” Mahan’s treatise became Theodore Roosevelt’s cause when, in 1897, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy.22

Although often cloaked in the language of defense and vulnerability, the cultural fascination with “force,” “power,” “dynamism,” and “energy,” discovered its ultimate rhetorical cognate in the more forward-leaning discourse of war itself. Northeastern Republicans like Roosevelt, Lodge, and John Hay (McKinley’s future Secretary of State) adamantly campaigned for a more assertive foreign policy, a “large policy” of foreign
intervention that would release Americans—mired as they were in trifling, quotidian affairs—into the restorative fresh air of adventure and conquest. As Indiana Senator Albert Beveridge expatiated, “God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration.” Rather, he crowed, “He has made us master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns….He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples….He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world” (Coffin1). A stimulant better quaffed than sipped, the invigorating tonic of battle promised a social remedy in line with other cultural diagnostics of the time: among them, “the Social Darwinist emphasis on struggle,” “the discovery of Nietzsche,” G. Stanley Hall’s detection of the “neurasthenia” syndrome, and “the success of Bismarkian methods in western Europe.” Professors and lecturers joined the fray. John Fiske and Yale’s William Graham Sumner gleefully evangelized white supremacist versions of Spencerian Darwinism as an imprimatur of rejuvenating violence, the regenerative measure needed to revitalize a listing and anomic public weal. Oliver Wendell Holmes enjoined Americans to “pray not for comfort, but for combat” (Sherry 3). His rousing speech, “The Soldier’s Faith,” delivered at Harvard’s Memorial Day commemoration in 1895, presaged against the perils of “liberal negations” like cosmopolitanism and labor unions—“the temptations of wallowing ease”—as impediments to men’s “destiny” for “glory” in battle. “I do not know what is true,” he admitted. “I do not know the meaning of the universe. But in the midst of doubt…the faith is true and adorable which leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to a blindly accepted duty, in a cause which he
little understands, in a plan of campaign of which he has little notion, under tactics of which he does not see the use.” A renunciation of liberal ideology’s foot-dragging appeals to reason and just cause, Holmes’s anti-democratic encomium to unthinking military submission echoed down the halls of government that same year as Richard Olney’s legal reinterpretations repaired long-honored precedents in U.S. foreign policy.

Having attended to the Venezuela boundary dispute with England as President Cleveland’s attaché, the former corporation-lawyer-turned-Secretary-of-State was ready to amend the prized conjectures of Washington’s “Farewell Address.” The first president had not intended that Americans exempt themselves militarily from world affairs, Olney divined; he had only encouraged external isolation until such a time as the country could control its own destiny, and that moment had surely arrived.

Converting the “open door” of international trade into the more bracing “large policy” of military intervention, politicos orchestrated a two-fronted transformation of the political field. They established that jointed, symbiotic social arrangement that, conjoining the domestic and foreign, could stabilize national order by propping it against the identity-conferring margins of a “new frontier.” For Amy Kaplan, the arrival of such an “imperial context,” a relationship in which the foreign and the domestic “mutually constitute one another,” anchored collective stability since, to “secure the borders of its own identity,” the American metaphor requires “the release from geographic bounds.”

The election of McKinley in 1896 and the expansionist adventure with Spain that ensued two years later turned the cultural logic of Manifest Destiny outward, launching into existence a refurbished political enterprise that advanced American interests abroad while ensuring a more governable polity at home. The occupation of Cuba under Leonard
Wood’s military direction inspired reams of experimental sociology, wistful accounts of the “great lessons” such a regulatory project represented for the United States domestic planners. As municipal reform specialist Leo Rowe wrote, colonizing efforts in Cuba functioned as a “workshop” in which to test new political ideas that, if applied at home, “would turn America’s political philosophy away from limited protection of individual liberties to one of activist intervention for national development.” As Rowe explains: “The readjustment of the country’s international relations, which must follow the recent struggle with Spain, develop a broader view of the country’s relation to the larger affairs of the world, and react upon domestic politics, with the result of raising the level of public life.”

Emergent as the “primary function of the nation,” war and its metaphysical purview offered the transcendental self-refractions and ontological opacity that could streamline contending versions of American political belief (Slotkin, *Lost* 21). Far from becoming disruptive, war—imagined, anticipated, or actual—could be synergetic.

**War and the American Political Imaginary**

The delivery of the United States into a militarized international nexus marks a significant historical emergence, a point of political intensity knotting together a tangle of social, historical, and cultural circuits. I have described that political conversion as the outgrowth of a blustery drive by prominent Progressives at the turn of the century. But though they appear as warfare culture’s most visible executors, the efficacy of the imperial context derived less from the ministrations of a few zealous prophets prodding along a docile commonwealth than from their ability to tap into a residual (if dormant) political will already in existence. Commonly abjured as an outrageous hijacking of
democracy, the accession of the imperial context is typical reproached by liberal historians as a betrayal of the nation’s founding values, a betrayal signaling “the end of the republic.”\textsuperscript{28} For conservatives and militarists, conversely, the period’s splitting off of “the military cast of mind” from the naïve optimism of liberal antecedents betokens the grateful arrival of a security policy able to cope with the grimmer realities of human nature and its “substantial streak of cussedness.”\textsuperscript{29} More advantageous, however, might be to consider the nation’s arrival at a domestically corporatized, globally interventionist circumstance as the spontaneous convergence of desires immanent to American personhood. To assess properly the “dominion of war” in the U.S. story, argue historians Anderson and Clayton, requires that one identify “imperialism and republicanism as inseparable twin influences in the creation and growth of political culture in the United States” (xxi).

Less an origin story than the culmination of a process, the convergence of the various stratum that mark the arrival of an “American warfare state” harnessed a subjective propensity that had always linked ideologies of war and citizenship. The warlike “state of nature” that Hobbes once posited to have been transcended by civil society’s “social covenant” is—as numerous recent state theorists have discerned—merely repressed, “dissimulated and redeployed by liberalism as a state prerogative,” penetrating the presumably quarantined domains of law and politics, and reappearing as a permanent, contingent aspect of international relations.\textsuperscript{30} “Modern sovereignties,” Susan Buck-Morss insists, “possess a supralegal or perhaps prelegal form of legitimacy, precisely the wild zone of arbitrary, violent power…at their very core” (4). Founded in a declaration of war, fortified by regenerative reenactments in a vanishing frontier,
tempered further in the furnaces of the Civil War’s “second revolution,” American national identity was ritually re-fueled by contests of arms.\textsuperscript{31} As violent conflicts perennially stoked the smoldering embers of the “native and spontaneous fire”—be they the repercussions of “internal colonization” or the threatened torments of renewed strife with Britain—they summoned a mythical realm effective at marshaling collectivist versions of the body politic auxiliary to the penuries of laissez faire (Rowe 5). More than enabling a comparatively benign “patriotism,” war, that is, may more accountably be seen to inhabit the nation’s negative space as its ascriptive, aporetic shadow. As Buck-Morss elaborates, the political imaginary, as \textit{the} mode for constructing collectivity, involves a topographical form of seeing that correlates three “icons” of collective being: “the common enemy, the political collective, and the sovereign agency [the state] that wages war in its name” (11-12). From affinitive recesses unseen, its omnipresent tendency toward ultimatum patrols the more altruistic good-will of its liberal-democratic twin operating in the clear light of day. Prioritizing national identification as an overarching subjective value, war’s power to suspend liberal commitments renders legible features of self-apprehension apart from the orders of democratic citizenship. As mutual expenders of risk or reciprocal targets of foreign enmity, citizens gain a more cogent reckoning of their familial codependence. Arrayed with value only in relation to other similarly fungible selves, besieged Americans become cellular isotopes of a national “superperson,” an ontological enlargement made substantive by a shared sense of endangered encirclement.\textsuperscript{32}

What else might explain the transmutation of the musket over the fireplace into the colossus of the omnipresent American warfare state over a span of roughly only
seventy years? A decade and a half after World War II, as another ominous presidential “Farewell Address” presented Americans with news of a coactive “military-industrial complex,” C. Wright Mills mourned the astonishing velocity with which monstrous, alienating symbols had come to replace the plucky patriot of an earlier epoch. Towering out of the “interlocked” and triangulated sectors of government, industry, and the military loomed pugnacious new monuments to a full-blown U.S. belligerency: universities “reformed” into actuarial “branches of the military,” a permanently vigilant Department of Defense installed along the Pentagon’s eighteen labyrinthine miles of corridors, and an economy and foreign policy seized by a metaphysic of permanent “emergency” in which war assumed the status of the “only reality.” “To the optimistic liberal of the nineteenth-century,” Mills wrote, “all this would appear a most paradoxical fact” (198-224).

In the last years of the nineteenth century, however, popular discourse on the subject of war begins to swerve sharply away from the revolutionary-heroic tradition that preceded it in the accommodation of a more constabulary state. Issuing from numerous outlets, a pervasive “de-revolutionizing” of the war myth took place as a unified national personality gained in prominence over democracy’s more dialectical, individualist sentiments. Crucial to that task was the recasting of war as a collective event disposed more toward the conservation of “universal” democratic ideals than the creative eruption of the popular will in search of liberty and independence. True, the Civil War’s incendiary memory made it a shaky platform upon which to ground such a project. But who could argue with the fact that the social amalgam it engineered and the institutional infrastructure that survived it fostered much of the “patchwork” infrastructure of the extant American state? Reinventing the hostility as a shared memory of redemption and
renewal, progressive authors translated the Civil War’s tale of division—both regional and racial—into a parable of mutually endured affliction annealing a stronger, more reconciled union. As an ordeal through which a weary but hopeful country had mutually passed, in the end its “baptism” had purged an infected national body and tempered a stronger national cohesion. By the early twentieth century, the disciplinary power of the besieged society led William James to discern in the “war-party” the very criteria for a society at peace. Searching for war’s “moral equivalent,” he yearned for a social algorithm that could galvanize the same personal “disinterestedness” as war mobilization, a transfer of sovereignty and consent in which citizens could be “owned, as soldiers are by the army” in “obligatory service to the state.” “Martial virtues must be the enduring cement,” he averred, “intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of private interest, obedience to command, must still remain the rock upon which states are built.”34 “So far,” he finally concluded, “war has been the only force that can discipline a whole community.”
**Introduction**

**War, Literature, and the American Political Imagination**

When the citadel or fortress is besieged, it is not simply a military, or even political, event, but a social one.  
--Paul Virilio,  
*Speed and Politics*

In the face of horror and pity, which is where it necessarily ends up, there would be no war without a warlike momentum of the imaginary.  
--Jean-Luc Nancy,  
*Being Singular Plural*

Whether one cares specifically for the American condition or not, it is not enough to trace the genealogy of violence in modern society. Rather, one must understand what lends the relationship between violence and our contemporary world an almost natural quality. Surely, to examine a social phenomenon that achieves the status of nature means facing the work of society’s imaginary. Which is to say, we must be prepared to address society’s mythic domain, the interminable flux of the self-representations out of which and by which society alters itself.  
--Stathis Gourgouris,  
“Enlightenment and Paranomia”

**The Cultural Labor of U.S. War Narrative**

“What if we approach war,” Leerom Medovoi asks, “not as an exception to or the opposite of regulation, but rather as continuous with it, as the point when regulation’s militarism has surged into the open air?” (54). To put pressure on and elaborate the historical significance of that question in the field of U.S. literature, this project explores the cultural and political work performed by American war narrative between 1890 and 1964. Its animus derives from the idea that, by the moment of the imperial context, the war novel (and some memoir) begins to assume a specific narrative form, one uniquely suited to address broad changes occurring in the American political imagination.

Bracketed on one end by the post-Reconstruction movement for military professionalization and, on the other, by the advent of the Vietnam War, this project tracks the way military events and the ideologies that mobilized them contributed to the reinvention of nationhood and its imaginative structure of belonging: from the faltering martial establishment propped up at century’s end to the potent, muscular edifice
squatting squarely in the middle of the Cold War. Evolving out of earlier incarnations—the romance, the adventure tale, the cavalier novel—a broad archive of widely consumed war narratives, I suggest, convened a pedagogical public forum amenable to and coeval with the growth of the American warfare state. Braiding many strands of middle-class desire, war writing’s rhetorical skein interlaces many strands of a multivalent national discourse aimed at both intensifying conservative versions of domestic reform and vivifying a languid foreign policy.

Generally speaking, prevailing cultural history charts the American war chronicle along a crisis-response axis as a sequence of military effusions fastened to corresponding aesthetic modes: the American Civil War gives rise to realism and naturalism, World War I establishes conditions amenable to modernism’s emergence, and together World War II and the proxy engagements of the Cold War effectuate the appearance of the postmodern. Less segmented and periodic, the story I tell unfolds a more consecutive genealogy. At center stage, I argue, the war novel negotiates a primary encounter between the political subject and his or her boundary of “interest” as the individual comes into contact with terms of “obligation” advanced by an inchoate but developing warfare state and extrinsic to prior valorizations of liberal self-ownership. Revealing insuperable gaps endemic to liberalism’s “contractual” political culture, war representation hoists into view a litany of competing meanings typically submerged during more placid periods. Yet at the same time, it helps to engineer the branching system of ideological channels necessary to ford those conceptual fissures as the American political complex grows denser, more consonant.
Certainly other artifacts—sermons, speeches, tracts, poems, songs—as well as differently plotted novels—the domestic, the romance, the urban, the Western—do comparable cultural labor. But because the war novel’s principal themes orbit the most basic postulates of individual and national life, they display the political architecture’s latticework at its most structurally vulnerable points. As Thomas Myers confirms, because of its “historical configuration of maximum crisis,” the war novel occupies a “special place” in the larger body of historical fiction because it records “the disruption of the apparent harmony or congruity” of a society that “makes readable and testable the deepest structures of national myth and belief” (10). Making “the leviathan of the national cultural paradigm sound and surface,” the war novel, he asserts, bequeaths “a lasting cultural document as it responds to the rending and reconstituting of the national mythos” (10). “[C]onflict,” Walter Hölbling corroborates, “becomes the occasion for questioning the validity of those individual and collective values and concepts of self and other.” “Thus, the literature of war brings forth models of a nation’s (or a people’s) ‘storifying of experience’: acts of ‘literary sense-making’ (or the lack of it) performed in response to particular historical situation—situations that, effectively, require the suspension of norms crucial in peaceful societies and sanctify the use of collective force” (212). Consequently, the literary dispatches that survive such political upheavals furnish cultural history with a rare perch from which to observe and gauge the multitude of logics that accord the national community its aura of coherence and continuity.

Disclosing the mutability of political rationalities across time, a diachronic approach to the story of Americans at war—a portrait of both the agglomerated and individual body at its most distended extremity—traces shifts, often inversions, in the
cultural semiotic as, decade by decade, new exigencies demand revised forms of national symbolization. Thus, my treatment understands war narrative as a rhetorically portable stage, a historically mobile venue, where subsequent generations renew an established but advancing transaction with the authenticity of the governmental order. Perhaps it is this feature—seemingly innate to the genre—that supports a popular perception of war writing as a contrarian arena of protest. My own earliest literary memories, for instance, recall reports scribbled on Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* (1945)—works assigned no doubt with the well-intentioned hope of thwarting such calamitous repetitions in the future.¹ For many, to be sure, the most recognizable war novels—Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), Ernest Hemingway’s unambiguously titled *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), and Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* (1961)—vouchsafe bitter chronicles of dissent against a dehumanizing, even absurd military machine. However, a wider consideration of the genre’s history reveals a different body of writing and more complex thematic transactions. Elastic and adaptable, the account I give is of an archive—including aspects even of the familiar texts above—evolving in tandem with an expanding state, theatrically arbitrating a multi-generational border dispute over perennial crises of authority and national “legitimation.” Frequently brokering ideological compliance with the imperial state’s conservative mandates, the American war story refines and streamlines its stakes, establishing more congenial cohabitations of once conflicting ideals. Its rhetorical nexus conjoins the politics of citizenship, nationalism, and public governance into one synergetic social grammar, the dividend of which is finally the gradual, hesitantly consensual transfer of sovereignty
from a locus founded in The People’s spontaneous will-to-power to the hegemony of the
capitalist nation-state and the dominion of national security.

I. Preparedness Nation—Literature Confronts a “New and Hostile World”

American war literature, then, involves itself in three distinct but overlapping
“theaters.” The first concerns the structural courtship between the nation’s bordered,
territorial “inside” and its spectral “constitutive outside” in affixing and delimiting more
tautly demarcated perimeters of identification. As once loosely associated states
confederate into a more fully merged corporate partnership—one tying subjective loyalty
to a domain exceeding the certitudes of the local community—the national unity of the
late nineteenth century generated a more robust collective sentiment than abstractions
like “patriotism” or “nationalism” can by themselves provide. Akin to the mythical unity
Etienne Balibar theorizes as the “nation form,” turn-of-the-century U.S. nationalism
fortified a structure of dual “fronts”—internal unification and outward expansion—as
mutually reinforcing zones of collective activity.² Not new exactly, this hinged artifice
drew on prior forms of belonging as progressivism merely innovated upon the
dichotomous metric of the settlement-frontier, jogging the “wilderness” imaginary onto a
telescoping international spatiality that could best mimic its identity-conferring form.
The nation-form (and the experience of war that produces it), that is, is ontogenetic. It is,
for Balibar, an interpellating apparatus: “external frontiers” are “imagined constantly as a
projection and protection of an internal collective personality, which each of us carries
within ourselves and enables us to inhabit the space of the state as a place where we have
always been—and always will be—at home.” Both “a mass phenomenon and a
phenomenon of individuation,” this alliance with the nation’s mythical corpus augments
the meager endowments of one’s singular biography, attaching identity to a more eternal, historically continuous narrative of concordant group selfhood, what Claude Lefort calls the more “substantial identity” of “the People-as-One” (Balibar 94). Becoming “primary” to self-representation, claims Balibar, it generates “affects of love and hate”— “the effectiveness of which” can best be measured “in collective mobilization in wartime”—so that in every case “it is the symbolic difference between ‘ourselves’ and ‘foreigners’ which wins out and which is lived as irreducible” (94-95).

The argument for war as a socializing spur—creating a collectively embodied “we”—probably comes as little surprise given that numerous theorists of modernity have detected an “intimate connection” between war and national belonging (Hutchinson 9). From Hegel and Fichte on, war has been described as a “necessary dialectic” in nation-building, a “principle determinant.” Even if one opposes war, that opposition is often framed, as Sonja Rose claims, as a correspondingly emotional “defense of ‘the nation’” (12). Charles Tilly’s famous essay identifies the “organized crimes” of “war-making” (“eliminating or neutralizing…rivals outside the territory”) and “state-making” (“eliminating or neutralizing…rivals inside the territory”) as the modern nation’s twin engines of government. For Tilly, governments—as large-scale “racketeers”—practice a “double-edged” deception using “protection” as a mystifying wedge. They rhetorically produce an external phantom while simultaneously offering to be the “shield” to protect the constituency from the monster it just uncaged. The state thus acquires society’s conferral of political “legitimacy,” the accumulation of governmental power as an earned right to a monopoly on legitimate violence. Tilly’s assessment is as much a modern updating of Marx’s characterization of the “democratic swindle” whereby “the
bourgeoisie hoodwinks the people into believing the state is representing them” (Buck-Morss 5). As a collective event, then, war activates a “heightened significance” in determining a national sense of “we-ness”—not, in Stuart Hall’s words, as “the sign of an identical naturally-constituted unity,” but “as the product of a marking of difference and exclusion” emerging “within the play of specific modalities of power.”

In the late nineteenth century, the United States entered such a spatial configuration as imperial intervention in global affairs strengthened the border’s conceptual power to produce internal similarity, enclosing a territorial ambit and reifying the national body. A process of “spatial socialization,” the procuring of the nation-form prompted a kind of magical transference. Instead of the population defining the territory—as westward expansion had done—the territory began to define the population. Positing both a line of demarcation and, beyond it, a concentric scale of national interest, the U.S. entry into an international domain boomeranged citizen desire into an unknowable “beyond,” retroactively recodifying citizens’ more local, individual modalities of self-apprehension (familial, occupational, denominational) as requisite parts of a larger existential entity. Objectless yet omnipresent, the menace of potential invasion and the prospect of aggressive foreign involvements dislocated sensibility, sublimating desire in ways that fundamentally altered prevailing symbolizations of the national self. Such an unbounded scale of self-imagining (distinct from the more tactile impressions of the walled city-state or the regional identifications of the Civil War era) permitted modifications of political perception formerly disparaged by nineteenth-century liberalism, germinating the geopolitical “realism” and abstract militarization of everyday life that would define U.S. foreign policy across much of the twentieth century. Coeval
with this moment and an insignia of this shift, the rise of the Preparedness Movement—a subject I address in Chapters 1 and 2—convened defensive structures of mutual affection able to complete a vision of national unity unavailable to liberal notions of independent self-government and economic self-interest. In a curious conversion, to put it another way, it maintained allegiances to liberal values—freedom, the individual, the family, the free market, constitutionalism, the rule of law—but cast the nation-state as their ultimate guarantor and thus soldered them to sturdier national-military foundations: love for the flag, respect for the president, fealty to Independence Day as a commemoration of national continuity rather than an homage to revolution.

As mutually supporting indices of a changing national ideal, political realism and literary realism—especially the latter’s naturalist subset—maintain an intimate linkage within this context. Emerging perhaps as early as 1867 with *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*—John William DeForest’s proto-realist doxology to masculine leadership, professional discipline, and the brutal realities of war—a changed template for Americans to comprehend war’s nature and hardships began to take literary form. Deliberately freeing war narrative from the conventions of melodrama, DeForest conceived a form distinct from the chivalric representations popularized by Sir Walter Scott and antithetical to what one critic decried as “the crude and mawkish pathos” of bestsellers by women writers: Augusta Jane Evans’s *Macaria; or, The Altars of Sacrifice* (1864), Jane G. Austin’s *Dora Darling; or, The Daughter of the Regiment* (1865), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *The Gates Ajar* (1868), and E.D.E.N. Southworth’s *How He Won Her: A Sequel to Fair Play* (1869). From the fictional notebooks of Captain Edward Colburne and the surly communiqués of Colonel Carter, DeForest describes the
“masculine hardness” occasioned by the war as “an agreeable relief” to “scenes of domestic felicity, not very comprehensible or interesting to bachelors” (333). Written on the battlefield in 1865 (DeForest was a captain in the Union army and, later, military superintendent of a Freedman’s Bureau in South Carolina), the novel openly documents war’s most antiheroic features: troops caked with filth and mud, blown about mercilessly in severe weather, marched until they collapse with fatigue, withered by starvation, jabbering in states of dementia (335). In gruesome detail, he portrays men shrieking in restraints while their legs are amputated, soldiers mutilated and flailing in death throes, “claret-colored” cadavers with brains “bulging” from their shattered skulls, piled in heaps in makeshift hospitals, “soaked from a carnation stain of life blood drawn from the femoral artery” (267, 269). “Underneath [the operating table] were great pools of clotted blood,” he writes, “amidst which lay amputated fingers, hands, arms, feet, and legs only a little more ghastly in color than the faces of those who waited their turn on the table” (269). In addition, the novel’s frank-for-the-time inclusion of sex, drunkenness, and coarse language rendered it unprintable in Harper’s which, though it owned rights to the piece, finally found it “too difficult to make the story proper for family reading” (vii).

The novel’s often dolorous tone frequently marks it as an early (some claim the earliest) example of literary Realism and anticipatory of the naturalism set forth in Stephen Crane’s The Red Badge of Courage (1895).¹¹

*Miss Ravenel’s* stark rendering of such unenviable circumstances might suggest a literary critique of war, cataloging as it does the inevitable pageant of horrors that it engenders. But DeForest has no such intention, evidenced by his powerful nostalgia for the fervency of war’s “clamors uttered in mortal earnest” (319). Embracing war’s
unrivaled encounter with risk and adventure, his representation addresses one of the great paradoxes of modern liberal democracies: that the more brutal and devastating the war, the more generally popular it is.\textsuperscript{12} Although focalized through Northern sympathies, the novel’s politics are guided less by the pieties of abolitionism or the resolution of democratic ideals than by a sense of the war as a national investment, a historical transaction fortifying the need to secure more aggressively that Union’s future. In a way that will come to characterize whole swaths of war writing in the decades to come, the harsh documentation of combat’s brutal reality has an interpelling, conservative undertow for the national community—both as a “consecrating” monument to collective debt, to invoke Lincoln’s preferred word, and as a forecast of future travails to which readers should be alerted. A prognosis of reality’s more nefarious character, that is, it commands the rigorous modernization of outmoded liberal precedents better to observe the submerged “nature” war levitates into view. From the title on, as Lillie Ravenel’s attainment of a purely abstract “loyalty” guides her quasi-religious “conversion” from personal repositories of belief to more sacramental visions of nationhood, DeForest’s portrait flaunts war’s unifying vitality as much as its destruction. Restoring an economy of separately gendered spheres, as will numerous texts discussed in Chapter 1, the “total” war’s distribution of concerns renders identifications with sacred, transcendental forms of personal meaning for women while men, inversely, perform the messier work of harvesting initiative from repressed primordial resources. Careful to praise Confederate valor and Virginia’s “sacred soil,” its broad tribute to American manhood venerates a more solemn, resolute masculine substance, one “tempered to steel by hardships, by discipline, by a profound sense of duty” (335). Still allegiant to the “soldier citizen”—“It
is in millions of such men that the strength of the Republic exists”—DeForest’s novel nonetheless integrates those figures into one configuration, appending the quantifying gauge “in millions” (484-485). Emphasizing an interactive, corporate language of subordination and cooperation, it appeals to the same internalized propensities for individual spontaneity reverenced by the citizen-soldier tradition, while measuring that latent energy as a provisional one, “hardened” into leagues of mutuality by war’s revelation of sterner realist truths (278).

II. The Military Subject: War Writing’s Sacred Characters

The second “theater” of American war narrative, consequently, considers the nature of that provisional, collaborated subject. As a literary record of Americans performing acts of “risk,” “duty,” and “sacrifice” for the preservation of the political order, war writing documents expressions of a tribal will unexplainable from the comparatively banal registers of liberal-capitalist citizenship. Because—according to liberalism’s contractual legend of the “social covenant”—one enters modern democratic societies for their guarantees of protection and the preservation of individual rights, governmental precepts for citizen “sacrifice” violate essential grounds upon which citizenship and capitalist rights to self-profit are founded.13 The sovereign, self-interested individual in pursuit of his or her own particular species of happiness lacks a corresponding fidelity to anything exterior to the integrity of that interest. Why should one assume personal risk in order to defend a political community that ostensibly exists precisely to prevent that obligation? From where does the political authority derive that can command citizens to protect their protection? To what gratifications beyond the parameters of self-interest can the state appeal if it is to recruit bodies to perform tasks
and accept responsibilities yielding them little gain and perhaps even necessitating the "ultimate sacrifice"? One of liberalism’s most glaring conceptual caesuras, a chasm in political rationality persistently rediscovered and traversed anew by the very nature of war narrative’s topical concerns, the evidence for more binding orders of belief is never more vividly on display than in periods of intense emotional trial like the nation at war.14

Culling from “pre-political,” extra-liberal resources—religious, familial, racial, gendered, national, mythological—the state of emergency licensed by the imperiled nation reveals and fashions a supplemental character of belonging, one able to capture a host of ascriptive, affective valuations and fit them to circumstances at hand. A study of war literature, consequently, has to reckon with what Lauren Berlant calls the “erotics of political fellowship,” what legal philosopher Paul Kahn calls, variously, the “erotic” or “sacred” character of the political. In times of extreme danger, Kahn argues, liberalism’s “forgotten ultimates”—the residual, virtuous “faculties of soul” distillated from sovereignty’s repressed origins in divine and monarchical precursors—erupt again anew under the returned signs of “love” and “sacrifice” as miraculous addenda to liberalism’s politically feeble culture of rational disinterest.15 “The problem for political inquiry,” he ascertains, “is to grasp the character of the political as a form of experience within which the modern Western citizen—particularly the American citizen—has imagined the possibility of sacrifice not as an alien eruption of violence into his or her life, but as the realization of an ultimate meaning” (230). For Moira Gatens, sacrifice is expressly linked to a patrimony—dating back perhaps even to “the original covenant between God and Abraham”—that provides men in particular with a more “‘total’ enactment of subjectivity,” granting fuller “admission to the political body being that one could make
the appropriate forfeit [sacrifice]” (25).16 A more affectively resonant, value-laden conception of the will, the metaphysics of sacrifice, that is, summons a symbolic domain able to redirect citizen desire into smoother compliance with the state, supplying that more “substantial identity” in collective embodiment that negative concepts of liberty cannot reach (Lefort 20).17 If border intensification uses a spatial imaginary of interior/exterior to bolster a “nation-form,” sacrifice conjures a cultural-historical imaginary as an inclusion/exclusion rationality, one that binds the subject to that “mystical corpus” as an apportioned, dependent organ in a broader corporeal “We”: to defend the life of the community is to defend one’s own. Divulging the residual Christian origins of some modern nationalisms—a secularization of the metaphistorical “body of Christ”—Kahn remarks upon the national community’s transtemporal character: the “atemporality of Christ has moved from church to sovereign monarch to the popular sovereign. Such a nation cannot be conceived on the model of reason or interest. It is the product of a revolutionary act of will that has become a self-validating source of revelation. It is the nation-state become a church in which all citizens are part of the body—the mystical corpus—of the state” (162-163).18 The appearance of the modern citizen thus announces not a leapfrogging of metaphysical forms of sovereignty but the return of precisely that repressed master narrative of self-valuation.

The literary record of Americans at war makes legible these many accessorial attributes as instances of that subjective patrimony able to bypass gaps in liberalism’s sunnier civic creeds. In so doing, it ideologically overwrites submerged lacuna within the political order that mobilization, conscription, and state-planning frequently rend apart. Overcoming breaches in the collective will enabled by liberal identity’s dutiless notions
of contract and the “right” to an uninhibited pursuit of private goods, sacrifice’s mythic historical memory gathers social energies in ways convergent with state power. \(^{19}\) Such supra-rational displays compelled literary critic Edmund Wilson—on the centennial of the U.S. Civil War in 1961—to launch his own critical inquiry into war writing as an account of war’s power to convert “a divided and arguing public opinion” almost instantaneously into a “near national-unanimity, an obedient flood of energy” (xxxii). It is perhaps this social aspect of war-making—the seemingly instinctual “herd mentality” it exhibits—that has most gripped the imaginations of modern war and violence theorists from Carl von Clausewitz, to Randolph Bourne, to Elaine Scarry. “The unanimity of men [sic] at war,” Wilson mused, “is like that of a school of fish, which will swerve, simultaneously and apparently without leadership, when the shadow of an enemy appears, or like a sky–darkening flight of grasshoppers, which, also compelled by one impulse, will descend to consume the crops” (xxxii).

His natural metaphors resound with those emanating from a host of both older and more contemporary writers who behold within the legal quietude of the social contract a muted, loitering survivor from antiquity: Hobbes’s postlapsarian “state of nature.” Inverting Clausewitz’s classic formulation of war as “the continuation of policy by other means”—a definition which regards war as a temporary suspension of an otherwise peace-driven society—a miscellany of modern thinkers level suspicions at liberalism’s comprehension of state violence as marginal or exceptional to the body politic, viewing it instead as perhaps “the principle structuring force in society” (Arendt 9). Not “transcended,” they claim, the primordial bedlam of each against all is, in fact, internalized by the liberal regime and distributed throughout the polity. \(^{20}\) “To put it
another way,” writes Catherine A. Holland, modern political thought does not so much
dispense with the prediscursive state of nature as distill it and invest it in the body of the
citizen” (xx). Politics, in this recalibrated world, emerges as war by other means.
Because war co-opts the “poetic” tendencies of self, claims Paul Virilio (to invoke a
variant of Kahn’s terms), liberal-capitalist nations invariably develop into militarized
societies, political bodies able to transform their citizens into the “armed body” of the
“soldier-monk.” As instruments of the state in an “adventure of military monasticism,”
citizens become “metabolic vehicles,” “perverted priests” at last capable of sacrificial
acts.21

War writing, though not always in such ornately conceived ways, ponders the
problem of sacrifice and obligation as a disclosure of more primary motives and
meanings than liberal conventions typically admit. Acknowledging the enduring
intimacy between modern citizenship and prior modes of identification—religious, racial,
tribal, patriarchal—the primal scene of most war texts involves the political subject
grappling with compulsions uncontainable by or at odds with normative democratic or
civic ideals. As military encounters suspend liberal prohibitions—in particular the ban
on killing—they bring to light latent cultural edicts buried during periods of otherwise
relative calm.22 Because narrative is highly unstable, such portrayals, it is true, can have
contradictory outcomes, unmasking the national order for which one executes such state-
sanctioned crimes as fiction, as artifice. Indeed, this is what Elaine Scarry sees as the
“referential instability” of war itself, its “world-unmaking” deconstruction.23 But in
canceling out the nation as an invented reality, uncovering its contrivance as it rids its
subjects of civil content, war also erects the rhetorical stage upon which that community
is again “allowed to become real,” reconstructing itself in a “fiction-generating” reversal that, through the act of war-making itself, brings the object of the nation back into existence (121). As an act of love, adds Kahn, sacrifice commandeers a “double movement” that is both self-unmaking and self-realizing (144). It is, in short, “a huge structure for the derealization of cultural constructs and, simultaneously, for their eventual reconstitution” (137). Thus do the events that most harass the coherence of the national body become the episodes most exulted in the histories, monuments, and anthems that proceed from them.

The late nineteenth-century drive for nationalization forms the starting block for this study as Progressives re-imagine the Civil War as a distinctly national story, one populated by passionate, ecclesiastic subjects in a fraternal ordeal of nation-making. Their ministerial project would prove lasting, draping the event with a holy mantle that will inspire generations to come. Precisely a century later, as the United States enmeshed itself militarily in the Middle East in the early fall of 1990, the national imagination was again enflamed by Civil War legend and lore. For five consecutive nights totaling over eleven hours, fourteen million Americans crammed together in their family rooms—urged on by some unnamable instinct toward collectivity and comradeship—to observe the handiwork of filmmaker Ken Burns’s re-enactment of the “American Iliad” (Blight, “Quarrel” 121). Accompanied by the mournful strains of a violin and the hushed, metronymic intonations of its invisible voiceovers, The Civil War presented a dilating collage of wistful, sepia-toned photographs—gawking, hat-tilted youths propped against their rifles; emaciated veterans bunched for warmth on the field; wearied nurses administering makeshift treatments to wounded soldiers; corpses entangled amid a snarl
of weathered picket fences—as a vital reminder of one inspired generation’s allotment on the earth. Parsing the shift in the United States’ grammatical modifier from an “are” to an “is,” Shelby Foote’s avuncular commentaries testified to the war-forged singularity that emerged from the national baptism as a fervent and anointed people underwent their redemptive second birth.

Although their personal biographies were five generations removed from the events that passed across the screen, for the audience, it was a story unequivocally about them. The progeny of this gaunt but nimbus-wreathed family peering back at them from slave cabins, field tents, and the steps of a Capitol still under construction, they recognized transparencies of meaning and substance their contemporary world lacked. It was the most watched documentary in U.S. television history. Today, if one ventures to Springfield, Illinois to tour the Abraham Lincoln Museum—a reliquary to the nation’s “savior”—a similar aura of sanctimony hangs about the halls and exhibits. Catering to large groups, in particular to assemblies of American school children, the displays unfold a providential tale of sacrifice and national completion as the President’s assassination on Good Friday unfolds as a restorative crucifixion. The avatar of the nation’s great atonement, the sacrificial Son’s lonely wandering through the wilderness of war, his freeing of the captives, and his grace-instilling death are depicted as fulfillments of the creationist work begun by Washington the Father. The famous holograms, narrated by ghosts of the Civil War, conclude solemnly with admonishments that perhaps this generation too will be asked to take up sacred obligations and duties, urging the audience to scrutinize its own wanting reserves of courage and sacrifice.
From the rise of the Progressive Era’s imperial adventurism, through the international interventions of the First World War, into the various prosecutions of World War II and its Cold War fallout, war narrative chronicles the story of Americans compelled by or at least wrangling with motives distant and distinct from those endorsed by liberal-democratic citizenship. As Wolfgang Natter attests, war stories are often as much love stories—“transforming attachments from personal to ‘higher’ forms of love, independent of individuals and, of course, class interest” (14). Be they the masculinized codes of regimental hierarchy subtending George Washington Cable’s *The Cavalier* (1901), or racialized conceits of an imperiled “civilization” governing Edith Wharton’s *A Son at the Front* (1923), or the impulses toward bureaucratic conformity suffusing James Gould Cozzens’s *Guard of Honor* (1948), war narrative umpires conflicts within a national apologue as the dialectic of self and nation contends for stronger consolidating forms. Even books that may challenge the legitimacy of sacrifice, that portray disgust at war’s atavistic resurgences and violations of humanistic ideals, often find themselves caught in the vortex of a deepening national mystique. Laying bare that hidden structural kinship between war-making and citizenship, war writing intercedes in a “sacred,” “erotic” semiotic of political affiliation.

**III. The Biopolitics of the American Warfare State**

Proctoring the zone of indeterminacy between the nation form and the monastic subject of war is the oscillating third theater addressed by war narrative: the agonistic contention between “civil society” and the more affective structure of the state.²⁴ Resisting the institutional confinements of state bureaucracy, a more elastic and supple management of social life penetrates and overlaps the once discrete provinces of citizen
and nation, reinforcing their mutuality to the point where each loses its distinction and seeps into the other. “It is within the mass-conscripted, national army,” claims Buck-Morss, “that a synthesis between the citizen and the state is subjectively experienced, and the gap between civil society and the state appears to disappear” (27). Elemental to the state’s growth and social infiltration, then, are the creative, self-fashioning events of war. As Marc Eisner explains, states were not “designed” but generally grew out of war’s “undeniable demands” that could not “be satisfied under existing institutional arrangements and patterns” (30). By the nineteenth century in particular, as Deborah Cowen and Emily Gilbert observe, “war and citizenship became increasingly organized and linked through the nation-state. The duty of defense became a core feature of citizenship” precisely as it “became less associated with the civic state than with the nationalist state” whose “biopolitical form of rule”—to borrow a Foucauldian locution—made of it also “a tool for managing the population” (12-13). Granting the nation-state “a sense of primordial being,” they claim, “the nexus of war, citizenship, and territory” reproduce “the monumental and mundane of political life” alike (2, 4).

The perceived climate of risk and danger, the accruing discourse of “security” and “defense” arriving out of the dawning national culture of the Progressive Era and evolving at a miraculous pace throughout the twentieth century, suggests the relevance of Foucault’s concept—as well as its amplifications by his interlocutors—in addressing the evolution of the American social order. Disarticulating his earlier emphasis on discipline from the site of individual bodies, Foucault’s notion of the biopolitical considers the population at large as a subject of surreptitious governmental calculation. Consequently, the biopolitical and its corollary phenomenon of “governmentality” refer to conceptions
of social control developed by Foucault—early in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* and later in lectures delivered late in his life at the Collège de France—that expose the “art of government” less as the top-down procedure of state pressure than as a fluid, symbiotic collaboration of de-centralized techniques moderating the overall coherence of a social system.\(^\text{25}\) Integral to the effectiveness of biopolitical rule are its simultaneous dual tasks—related to the nation-form—of individuation and totalization. The main characteristic of modern political rationality as a “technology,” he ascertains, is not merely an act of the subject’s “integration,” but an *effect* rendered by “a constant correlation between an increasing individualization and the reinforcement of this totality.”\(^\text{26}\)

As a “government of all and each,” liberalism, Foucault believed, was particularly compliant in this regard because its un-essential state—“never a fixed and closed regime, but rather an endless and open strategic game”—could accommodate the “non-totalizable multiplicity” of civil society and the universalizing tendency of its ideals in one harmonious social organism.\(^\text{27}\) Blurring the distinction between an autonomous “civil society” and a view of the state as “an alien, incursive force,” liberal government in the nineteenth century developed what Colin Gordon calls a “transmutation” of the state, a more pliable state order which is “at once activist and disengaged, interventionist and neutral.” As Catherine Holland attests, its “policing function” emerges “less as a means of exercising the sovereignty of rulers than as techniques for generating and optimizing citizens’ capacities for autonomy, self-sufficiency, and political engagement” (73). Addressing itself to “the ensemble of a population” through a “simultaneous relativization of state and individual,” governmentality conditions the “society of
security” able to avert the hazards of too much emphasis on either. This “governmental” complex can be seen in the United State’s imperialist-exceptionalist tendency toward abstract liberal universalism at the same time that neoliberal citizenship, a kind of regulatory technology, “pulverizes the structures of social community into a mass of anonymous and impotent individuals.” According to Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, “The elaboration of liberal doctrines of freedom went hand in hand with projects to make liberalism operable by producing the subjective conditions under which its contractual notions of the mutual relations between citizen and society could work” (9).

Conditioning the arrival of a “police state,” national security discourse, a rhetoric effectuated by liberalism’s biopolitical form of government, posits “an immediate identity between the state and the whole body of civil society”—a transference from *homo economicus* to “social citizen,” from a creature whose activities “must remain forever untouchable by government” to a “manipulable man” [sic], “man who is perpetually responsible to modifications of his environment.” In this regard, “twentieth century government postulates not an identity but an isomorphism, an intimate symbiosis between the cares of government and the travails of a society exposed to the conflicts and crises of a liberal economy.” In the end, the liberal individual gives way to “individual as enterprise,” pre-occupied (in the full deterministic resonance of that term) by the neoliberal “care of the self” that constitutes the ultimate “managerialization of personal identity.” Becoming self-governing, the liberal subject discovers his or her “common good” ultimately in “obedience to the law” and “submission to sovereignty,” a sovereignty ostensibly still located in the popular will but a will made predictable, capitulating, *governable.*
In the courses of the late 1970s, especially in *Society Must Be Defended* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault arduously disentangled the many threads of this political weft regarding specifically the role of war in society—too many to reproduce here. But what he generally detected was a more “primary” relationship of war to society, its more “generalized” omnipresence as a determinant of human subjectivity, than modern political theory had thus far given account.32 “For Michel Foucault,” claims Julian Reid, “the problem of war is the problem of political modernity par excellence” (65). His highly controversial and controvertible theses echo through a host of provocative writings from thinkers on the theoretical Left convinced at an inherent tendency toward militarization in liberal orders of government. Consider Ben Anderson’s description of morale during total war: “It enables the otherwise unimaginable heterogeneity or bewildering abundance of modern societies to coalesce into an undifferentiated whole—a whole that thereafter acts in concert even as it resists clear and stable form” (175). “In light of this new [pastoral] objective of modern government,” argues Holland, “danger takes on new importance and new meaning. Minimizing danger, whether that issuing from within the populace or from external sources like competing national states or destructive national phenomena, was always an object of government. With modernity, however, the apprehension of danger and the minute investigation of its causes and its consequences…[becomes internalized] so much so that we might say the internalization of danger is central to the structure of modern citizenship itself’” (73). Paul Virilio, for one, noticed liberalism’s “police function” as driven by a quest for “social transparency,” a “telluric surveillance” of the national body aiming for “the dispersal of the army corps within society itself” making citizens “bodies without will.”33 An “extremely liberal”
faculty, war mobilization’s emphasis on security meets “a crushing need for manpower” as it “puts the population to work” and “domesticates them with state bureaucracies” (Virilio 132). For Pierre Bourdieu, similarly, “national consciousness” derives from “the requirement of territorial defense” decreed by “the State’s monopoly on the warring function.” Like Foucault’s double optic of individuation and totalization, war itself conditions a “totalization” of the nation since it views it “from above” as a statistical and endangered entity while also molding “mental structures” comprehensive of “common principles of vision and division.” Through a unique exercise of “symbolic power,” an original “concentration” of the national body “gives way to differentiation.” Thus the state, substantiating the self’s “primordial political belief,” imparts “a tacit, prereflexive agreement over the meaning of the world” as an indivisible extension of the self, a fact driven home by the monstrosity of “supreme sacrifice,” of “pro patria mori.”34

Perhaps it is this story that war narrative unveils more than any other as an accumulating tale of citizens becoming more limber and ductile in response to the increasing omnipresence of the state of siege. Exposing them not as overtly dominated and mastered but “willing obedience,” to use Elizabeth Samet’s term, war narrative describes a process of gradual consent compelled paradoxically by what Edmund Burke once dubbed a “liberal obedience” (6). “Used to governing rather than being governed,” Samet explains, “the enlightened citizen of a republic would no longer surrender an abject obedience”; they “could not be managed and disciplined in traditional fashion.” Mindful of General Grant’s description of Sherman’s army, she describes the “liber” citizen’s “connection to the state” as that of a “thinking machine,” a body solicited not by coercion but by the freely expressed attributes of an “intellectual enlargement”—the
“deep stake” of “love,” “love of country,” “love of the people” (6-7). Indelibly binding the democratic monad to the national *ecumene*, the affective structure of love takes on all the strategic attributes of power optimizing forms of subjectivity necessary to regulate the biopolitical ensembles of population. For Matthew Hannah, it is the late nineteenth century in the United States when this particular form of regulatory sociality takes shape as “the centerless thickets of micro-level power relations composing ‘state’ and ‘society’ would come increasingly to be circumscribed and organized by the durability of their creations” (38). Responding to a powerfully sensed “loss of control” signaled by the “accelerating scale, pace, and interconnectedness of material life,” new subjects, inspired by masculine fantasies appropriated from Civil War memory, aligned with militarized conceptions of manhood as restoratives for a culture in perceived decline (85). As “military manhood” became a predominant form of “governmental subjectivity,” the emphasis on order, character, and self-sacrifice molded a society more disposed toward the regulatory exigencies of modern life (Hannah, 96-106).

As a chronicle of the evolution of a more “governmental” political community, of a society increasingly shaped by the metaphysics of national security, this interpretive inquiry into the history of war representation traces mutations in the structure of American political identity from the period of its active *construction* at century’s end, through its *intensification* in the period straddling World War I, to its *dispersal* and *diffusion* into the mythos governing the early Cold War and its ubiquitous global front. As it oversees the growth of a more collaborated society, the war story testifies to processes of self-adjustment on the level of population and in line with changes occurring in the political-historical field of its composition. Hijacking enfeebled forms of liberal
political belief, the “political technology” of the war narrative’s “performative” structure, as Anthony Burke describes all security discourse, develops the adaptable but generally conservative variants of American nationalism regnant throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (28). As an account of liberalism’s militarization, to be clear, this is not a story of how liberalism defaults necessarily on its central tenets as much as a consideration of how American liberalism’s negative or valueless appraisal of liberty, or better the Western privileging of the capitalist version of liberty, proves a frail reed against the juggernaut of states of emergency and compulsory nationality. Too weak to ward off the many phantoms menacing the imperiled society, U.S. liberalism—the dynamic and constantly morphing ideology structuring the political mainstream—leaves open the prospect of constant supplementation as emergency circumstances supply it with missing rubrics of value. Thriving alongside intervals of political mutation, the war story reveals a history of American thought that persistently succumbs to equations of warfare with notions of teleological progress, or that sees in acts of destruction evidence of historical completion. As a chronicle of sovereignty’s gradual transference from popular to institutional foundations, finally, it submits clues to one of the great paradoxes of U.S. political life: that the more involved in the defense of their society citizens become, that the more inclusive and tolerant the state becomes, the more generally helpless citizens are to do anything about their governance.35
Chapter 1

Preparedness Nation: Civil War Narrative, Military Manhood, and the Crisis of the Progressive State

The unique contribution of the Civil War was not national consciousness but the irrevocable commitment of that consciousness to the constitutional structure established in 1787. The population in the North was initially ambivalent about fighting to preserve the Union, but the fact of the war itself generated a surge of nationalism that both won the war and redefined the nation. Prior to 1860, America had been a sovereign state, if a loosely structured one; only after 1865 did it become a nation-state as well.

--Bruce Porter, War and the Rise of the State

A crisis is a sporadic, disruptive event that suddenly challenges a state’s capacity to maintain control and alters the boundaries defining the legitimate use of coercion. Crisis situations tend to become the watersheds in a state’s institutional development. Actions taken to meet the challenge often lead to the establishment of new institutional forms, powers, and precedents. Students of political development have called attention to war, the most extreme environmental crisis, as “the mother of all states.”

--Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State

It would be difficult to imagine an American episode more invested in by custodians of historical memory than the Civil War. A glance at the list of bestsellers from any decade since it ended is likely to reveal at least one textual resurrection of a familiar cast: Blue and Gray-clad youth departing from hand-wringing girlfriends, mutton-chopped orators proselytizing to crowded pavilions, broken trains of manacled slaves prodded from auction block to cotton field. From “Gettysburg Address” recitals in school assemblies to the immense popularity of Ken Burns’s The Civil War, the “American Iliad” has preoccupied the imaginations of American citizens in many different ways for many different reasons. 1 1915, for instance, saw what some consider the birth of modern cinema in Birth of a Nation, D. W. Griffith’s adaptation of Thomas Dixon’s white supremacist novel, The Clansman, an Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan (1905). Recollecting antebellum prosperity as homologous with the “American way of life” and the promise of future abundance, the Depression Era found a remedy for its own experience of privation and suffering in the perseverance lessons of Margaret Mitchell’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Gone with the Wind (1936). History classes in recent
decades supplement their textbooks with MacKinlay Kantor’s *Andersonville* (1955) or Michael Shaara’s *The Killer Angels* (1974), Pulitzer-winners themselves. That the National Book Award for 2006 went to E. L. Doctorow’s *The March*, threads still one more ribbon onto the long string of accolades accorded American writers and archivists of the war.

The memory of the American Civil War and its political uses has changed vastly over time, however. Remarking on his own navigation of its serpentine historiography, David Blight acknowledges that “[t]he historical memory of a people, a nation, or any aggregate evolves over time in relation to ever changing needs and present contexts.” At “the roots of identity formation,” “ceaselessly constructed versions of a group past” establish a “source of coherence” from which individuals fashion a sense of “heritage” (“Quarrel” 120). Certainly a consequence of attaching personal meaning to collective biographies, such telescopic expansions of historical selfhood become even more curious when affixed to events of war. When generations removed from the primary scene claim stakes in the Civil War as part of *their* story, they annex themselves not simply to a past or even a national past but to a past poised ambiguously at a point of crisis, a moment of rupture and breakdown when the “coherence” of the national community was precisely not synthetic. How is it, then, that recollections of national discontinuity contribute to its myth of historical continuity? War’s persistently paradoxical seductions—its calls for sacrifice to maintain a contractual social order presumably grounded on assurances of security, its sanctioning of violence outside the moral order to preserve the moral order, its suspension of law to protect the rule of law—bears continued consideration for its socializing role in the production of national belonging.
Building on pioneering earlier work by Paul Buck, Edmund Wilson, and Daniel Aaron, recent “reunion” studies of the late nineteenth-century’s culture of reconciliation have recuperated a vast and forgotten literary record. Mending wounds left agape by the internecine brawl, popular fiction, they show, went to work “rehabilitating” and “reconstructing” the severed national body in the painful, confusing decades that immediately followed. Most prominent were “romances of reunion” mushrooming across the 1860s, ‘70s and ‘80s, which dramatized cross-sectional marriages between Union soldiers and once-prodigal-but-now-tamed Confederate belles as restorative portraits of a healed national “family.” As the “domestic” quarrel wreaked havoc in the “house divided,” so the romance plot mended the “bonds of affection” that divorce unraveled. The romance’s spatial cartography of gendered spheres and sexual divisions of labor lent an astonished postwar readership models of a refurbished social order from which to rebuild. Also accomplished in much literary symbolization was the whitewashing of the war—especially after the collapse of Reconstruction. Subtracting inflammatory causal recollections of race and slavery from popular representations like those of Thomas Nelson Page, postwar amnesia foreclosed upon the “emancipationist” aspects of the war for legends of white fraternity and “Lost Cause” plantation nostalgia.

Yet in many ways the literary portrait of reconciliation was not a backward glance. Nor did it seek simply to convalesce and restore the social sensibilities of a prior epoch. The emergency of the Civil War had forced the structuring premises of the American political complex to appear in their baldest, most ideologically revealed forms, exposing fissures in bedrock American ideas about national organization and the nature of public belonging. The persistent call for “sacrifice” exacted by the war, for instance,
was an anomaly under prevailing conceptions of the laissez faire state (or lack thereof).\textsuperscript{5} Viewed essentially as a protective agreement based on a “social contract”—one that guaranteed the pursuit of self-interest as a natural right—liberal citizenship statutes had little legitimate premise upon which to overrule the dictates of conscience or compel the abstention of one’s well-being, health, or life. This discomforting reality was put starkly on display during the New York draft riots of 1863, an incident of intense racial violence in which drafted “Copperheads”—Northern “Peace Democrats” recalcitrant to abolitionism, conscription, and an executive “tyrant”—brutally retaliated against black city residents. That they targeted African Americans symbolized a refusal of allegiance not just to Lincoln but also to what they viewed as his “nigger war.” The President’s dispersal of federal troops to quash the dissent and restore order was worrisome evidence to many that the citizen-soldier tradition, faithful as it was to the unsolicited service of self-abnegating individuals, needed revision. Furthermore, that many of the dissenters were German and Irish immigrants led established interests to see in an increasingly diversifying polity the need for better measures to regulate public order.\textsuperscript{6}

Building on the work of reunion scholars but concentrating on a period further removed from the war, this account considers the way Civil War representation from the 1890s through the first decade of the twentieth century figured in public speculation about the relationship of warfare itself to the governability of citizen-subjects, the maintenance of social control, and the accruing exigencies of international expansion. It explores, that is, the way images of citizens engaged in war-making promoted specific versions of a newly emergent national identity that, more than merely projecting “nationalism” or “unity,” were bound up with a complex range of changes in domestic
and foreign policy restructuring political subjectivity. Popular discourse, it is true, was at times busy “forgetting” aspects of the conflict involving women’s contributions or issues of race.7 But far from forgetting the war itself, even as a divisive and “dialectical” moment of national collapse, Progressive Era writers were inspired by its socializing possibility, by its story of political “exception,” for the ways in which it inspired more systematized patterns through which to conceive the nation’s growth. Suspending laissez-faire’s looser mode of affiliation, the individualist priorities prevailing in the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian discourse of the nineteenth century, the Civil War’s symbolic registers presented progressives with extra-legal, supra-individual identifications able to overcome anti-state variants of liberal idealism and their recalcitrance to collectivity.

Rather than reassess the colossal machine of war mobilization, the managerial echelon rising to political prominence in the later decades of the nineteenth century—themselves often veterans of wartime administration—used the bureaucratic apparatus of wartime emergency as a blueprint upon which to fashion a massive expansion of the U.S. state. Both an instrument for controlling the homefront’s unruly industrial crowds and a bulwark of “preparedness” set against real and imagined enemies abroad, a newly professionalizing military gained more lustrous carriage as the guardian of American “wholeness.”8 Forerunning the New Nationalist movement—at a time when “constituting Americans” demanded “official revisions of We the People”—compulsory ideologies of incorporation, professionalization, and homogenization increasingly triumphed over individualist and isolationist precedents.9 As personal fantasies of Spartan rejuvenation combined with restorative notions of group integration, militarized versions of national belonging forged subjects more responsive to desires for social
cohesion. Both privately and publicly self-regulating, the corporate logic of a militarizing brand of citizenship increasingly recast political selfhood as a contingent strut in a much larger existential structure. Buttressing its ideological scaffolding were the conceits of “identity of interest” nationalism, organicist metaphors which scripted race problems, labor crises, and lingering party loyalties not as exploitative systemic contradictions or dialectical points of impasse but as aberrant, evanescent conflicts within an otherwise harmonious composite. At the moment of empire’s ascent, that is, national reconciliation was not simply reparative. Rather, it was bound up with a massive confabulation of both past and present, with new conceptions of the nation as a historically continuous, providentially ordained coherence and with new conceptions of the political subject as a necessary though partial element in that fuller totality.

Transitions in Belonging: Harold Frederic’s and Joseph Kirkland’s Civil War

As a newspaper editor, Northern Democrat, and intimate of Grover Cleveland, Harold Frederic represented one of the many figures shaping public discourse in the late nineteenth century. Greatly esteemed by Stephen Crane, Frederic employed episodes of his war fiction to make the case for a more interrelational public life. In the great mechanic societies of the rising industrial age, Frederic repeatedly suggests, political subjectivity is no longer singular but bracketed within lengthened chains of influence, arrayed with value only in relation to other similarly reciprocal selves. In his short story “The War Widow,” for instance, a family’s favorite son is killed in battle at Cold Harbor. His distraught father fetches him home packed in a coffin, and the anguished household gathers in the barn to view him one last time. Lifting the lid, they discover with dismay that they have retrieved the wrong body, that “the stranger in the red barn” is only “a
yeller-headed man, all packed an’ stuffed with charcoal” (203, 208). Collecting themselves, however, they elect to claim him as their own. It is only fitting to bury him in the family plot, they concur, since the war has taught them that individual specificity and family distinction pale in significance to one’s larger relation to other mutually sacrificial members within the national aggregate. If their own son happens to be buried in someone else’s plot or even in some forgotten, unmarked trench, “it’s good enough for the best man in the army” (205-206). No one, not even their kinsman, deserves the dignity of distinctions unevenly distributed. Frederic’s sentiments were consonant with “Copperhead” opponents of abolitionism, who disparaged the war as a consequence of Northern prying and violation of state’s rights. Every part of the totality, they believed, was necessary to reproduce the sanctity of the whole. Like the “democratic” mourners in the red barn, citizens should come to understand their interests not within the clannish, sectioned frameworks of individual or family life but as local points of light within a glimmering national constellation. Frederic’s efforts forecast much writing to come, rendering images of “sacrifice” and “unity,” but also modeling “democratic” selfhood as a dependent variable in a much more disciplined, efficient social machine—a sameness able to accommodate and incorporate difference.

He explores this theme further in *The Copperhead* (1893), a novella about Abner Beech, a staunch Northern Democrat sympathetic to the Confederacy and its struggle against Northern violations of core democratic principles. In a nightly reading circle with members of his family, Beech, a strident Jeffersonian, lectures on two cardinal points: “One was that Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall were among the most infamous characters in history. The other was that every true American ought to hold himself in
daily readiness to fight with England” (9). Beech’s admiration for military readiness, however, like his disdain for Northern aggression, expresses only his desire to protect an inviolable American unit. When the Civil War finally erupts, he comes forth as the lone voice of pacifism in a region sabotaged by a divisive new philosophy—the “monstrous proposals” of abolitionism. The “Sons of Belial” spouting abolitionism’s “wickedness” are led by Beech’s neighbor, Jehoida “Jee” Hagadorn. In revolt, Beech burns Theodore Parker tracts and delivers frenzied pro-slavery sermons (13). His hatred for abolitionism, however, flows from a deeper loathing of anything threatening to agitate the national concordance. As an “identity of interest” drama, every unit has its place in the reproduction of the whole, even slavery. Eventually his difference of opinion renders him a “pariah,” and he is shunned by the remaining residents of Dearborn County, many of whom myopically enlist in the war. Most tragically, the novel implies, Beech’s own son Jeff is among those who join “Lincoln’s nigger-worshippers” on the “Woolly head ticket” (20, 73).

A series of events culminate in violent outbreaks between Beech and his neighbors. A vicious brawl at the election booth and the incineration of his house by a morally reprobate abolitionist contingent are among them. Soon, though, the town’s inhabitants come to comprehend the wayward divisiveness of their emancipationist enthusiasms, and reconciliations abound between the community and Beech, now revered as “the best man in Agrippa” for his wisdom in advocating solidarity with the union—the “unity,” that is, of North and South together—above socially fracturing racial sympathies (128). Hagadorn and Beech make amends; their children become engaged; and the town sponsors a “raising-bee” to build Beech a new and improved house. Most importantly,
commerce is resumed, and the once-alienated factions rejoin in a harmonious circuit of mutual dependence through cooperative industry. Proclaims Beech in a folksy effulgence of reconciliationist abandon:

I’ve said it to myself that when American citizens, born and raised right on the same hillside, got to behaving to each other in such an all-fired mean and cantankerous way, why, the hull blamed thing wasn’t worth tryin’ to save. But you see I was wrong—I admit I was wrong. It was jest a passing flurry—a kind of snow-squall in haying time. All the while, right down at the bottom, their hearts were as sound and sweet as a butter-nut. It fetches me—that does—it makes me prouder than ever I was before in all my born days to be an American.

(160-161)

Deploying all the tropes of the reconciliation formula, forgiveness restores peace and prosperity to the region and rekindles the fires of romance for once-dissident parties, an intersectional marriage (now displaced entirely onto the North) cast in miniature between the children of rival families.

Written in the same decade that witnessed the passage of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the ascent of Jim Crow, whites-only novels like *The Copperhead* are unequivocal indices of the racial amnesia David Blight describes as characteristic of the moment, a phenomenon in which “race, black participation in the war, the very idea of slavery as cause and emancipation as result of the war might be said to be thunderously conspicuous by their absence” (127). For critics like Walter Benn Michaels, such tales are merely symptomatic of what Progressivism seemed always prone to do: dissolve the “sectional differences between North and South,” displace divisiveness onto African Americans (or,
in this case, those who would seek to abolish their servitude), and ultimately reconstitute the “white nation” (67). In this regard, Frederic’s Dearborn County tales certainly beat with the pulse of their time. After Reconstruction, narratives of cross-sectional harmony and condemnations of civil rights activism were integral contributions to a culture of national rapprochement trafficking in identity of interest conceits. At the same time, however, Beech also represents the state of U.S. political consciousness in a transitional threshold. His Jeffersonian individualism and disdain for the pressures of a centralized state were holdovers from an earlier period unmatched to the institutional interests of a changing milieu. Considering that The Copperhead’s publication was contemporaneous with the worst economic depression in the nation’s history, Beech’s willingness to cut against the grain of community feeling and stand on private principle was a receding political virtue in an age far more concerned with instilling consensus, compromise, and “Hamiltonian” structures of government.

Beech’s attitudes toward war and social cooperation, however, were more of a piece with evolving trends in the national domain, especially regarding the culture of Anglophobia gaining renewed traction in the ascending imperial situation. Eschewing any hint of crisis within the domestic realm, the at-the-ready posture toward activity abroad dovetailed with the swelling tide of proto-militarization taking shape among a small but powerful band of political luminaries. As a panacea for internal stagnation, the prospect of the nation at war could play a vital role in securing domestic cohesion and igniting common interest, especially through its socially emulsifying lens of national defense. As Walter Karp suggests, politicos had been nervously “rattling sabers” for a while, “determined to transform America into an active world power and thereby make
foreign affairs the preeminent factor in American politics” (32). A little over a year after
*The Copperhead*’s publication, Grover Cleveland, responding to embarrassing public
accusations of political indecision from Henry Cabot Lodge, claimed stakes in the
boundary dispute between England and Venezuela over British Guiana. Precursor to the
Platt Amendment and Roosevelt Corollary, Secretary of State Richard Olney had been at
work “stretching” the parameters of the Monroe Doctrine to codify any domain within
the hemisphere as parceled to American interests and any interference from European
militaries as an infringement upon U.S. sovereignty. Although not particularly warlike
himself, Cleveland’s tenuous position made him ever more vulnerable to public sentiment
and public sentiment, Karp insists, was “[a]vid for war with someone” and “any war
agitation would do” (43). The surge in military interest had a domestic component as
well. Cleveland, to suture hemorrhages in the national body, dispatched soldiers to
squelch the uprising of disgruntled laborers in both the Pullman Strike of 1894 and the
insurrection led by “General” Jacob Coxey and his eponymous “army” of out-of-work
railroad employees that same year.

Yet militarizing the liberal personality at the moment of the international turn
especially meant reckoning with the citizen-soldier as a prized democratic ideal. A
popular novel released in the last year of the Civil War, for instance, was James K.
Hosmer’s *The Thinking Bayonet* (1865), an encomium to the independent soldier-patriot
as a free-thinking, rights-bearing agent and the heart of a thriving democracy. The phrase
returned in June of 1899 in an editorial exchange in the *New York Times* between the
editors and one of the founders of the Anti-Imperialist League, socialist Edward
Atkinson. Like Mark Twain, Atkinson had authored tracts denouncing the imperial
adventurism in the Philippines and endeavored to send them to key military commanders through the mail, an action the Postmaster General quickly suppressed. One of Atkinson’s opinions was that “thinking bayonets” in Manila—once they had informed themselves by “reading and attending public meetings so as to cast an intelligent ballot”—should be allowed to vote on the “righteous or unrighteous” nature of the conflict in which they were engaged. To this celebration of the deliberating soldier, the Times responded that “the thinking bayonet is an excellent weapon so long as it confines itself to thinking how most effectively to execute orders.” “When it wanders into meditation,” they concluded, “it is getting its owner in the way to be tried and executed for mutiny.”

As early as 1891, however, rising literary figures like Joseph Kirkland were addressing this changed temperament toward warfare and obedience with novels like The Captain of Company K, a work based on the adventures of an Illinois volunteer infantry (surely similar to the one in which Kirkland actually served), which won a lucrative writing contest sponsored by the Detroit Free Press. Although Kirkland was dismissive of its merit, the novel received solid reviews, particularly in Chicago, the author’s hometown and the center of a developing interest in Midwestern literature as an untapped wellspring of distinctively American themes and voices. Reviewed favorably by William Dean Howells and energetically boosted by Hamlin Garland, Kirkland gained his place among what Alfred Kazin terms an evolving cohort of “primitive” or “pioneer” realists possessed with the “indispensable maturity” of an “elementary nationalism” (13-14). Although a republican, the author, like Frederic, was heavily involved in politics. A member of the committee notifying Abraham Lincoln of his 1860 nomination for the
presidency, he was an epitomic “man of affairs”—an un-“pedigreed” man of public influence—who worked for coal bureaucracies and the Internal Revenue Service for much of his career. Akin to that functionary work, *The Captain of Company K* represents a symbolic adaptation of the Civil War as a literary occasion to acclimate citizens to the virtues of personal subordination within a smooth-functioning corporate body.

Shirking the popular fashion of venerating the “great men” of the war, Kirkland opens his text with a dedication to the common soldier on the front lines: “To the surviving men of the firing line, the men who could see the enemy in front of them with the naked eye while they would have needed a field-glass to see the history-makers behind them.” Yet Kirkland’s nod to the populism of trench democracy, like Frederic’s, is hardly libertine in outlook. Features of Kirkland’s novel do honor convention with tales of gallantry at Shiloh and an occasional recollection of U.S. Grant’s Solomonesque leadership—vestiges of the heroic courtly romance gleaned from the nearly hegemonic influence of Sir Walter Scott. But far more prominent is the way his narrative cuts through such lingering obligations while propounding lessons on efficient group discipline, proper hierarchical regimentation, and standards of manly white behavior. As a militarization drama, the novel portrays the prim Captain of Company K, William Fargeon, in his transition from a meek temperance orator and Sunday School superintendent—“with hands white, linen spotless, and well-brushed hair going thin in the front”—to a well-oiled marshal of discipline, decisiveness, and authority on the field (11). Shedding the overcivilized decorum of the Victorian parlor, Fargeon embarks on a quest to become “a man of deeds, not words” (15). He replaces his Bible and hymn book with copies of *Hardee’s Tactics* (1862) and the *Army Book of Regulations*. Leaving the
“pulpits and piano-fortes” of his formerly squeamish self in the rear, he accepts the flintier resolutions of leadership and command (38). The taxing strain of life at the front leads him to acquire coarse habits—swearing, smoking, and drinking—indulgences the author frequently implores his audience to grant the hazard-bearing soldier. Banishing any scintilla of panache and glory, Fargeon’s Civil War is one great “beastly job”; to properly execute it, he becomes a “cog in a machine” (37, 120).

As fragmentary parts in the colossal machine of modern war, however, the soldiers of Company K are hardly to be pitied. The reader increasingly understands that diminishments of individualism and autonomy—bygone hallmarks of a moribund age—are welcome relief in an adjusted order of operation. Gauged by one’s capacity for absorption and adaptability, the light of manhood’s favor falls most favorably upon those unthinking bayonets steeling themselves to self-denying tasks of amalgamation. Occupying a major section of the novel, for instance, is a “mutiny” exacerbated by a company of working-class youth who, from their limited vantages, refuse to follow what they perceive to be the draconian orders of a despotic captain. Although Fargeon admits the truth of their complaints, subjugation to “regular channels” precludes assertions of private principle and personal will. Sensing the “necessity of discipline at any cost,” he quashes the dissent (71). The emphasis on obedience to chains of command and the disrepute hung on expressions of personal “genius” represents a further cultural inurement to the corporate ideals of efficiency and smooth-functioning. Routing shiftless desires for self-preservation into the sanative reprieve of group solidarity, Fargeon enforces a merciless and unceasing routine of “marching, wheeling, facing, ploying, deploying, loading, firing, charging, halting, dressing, skirmishing, saluting, parading for
days and weeks (not to say years)—“all for the single purpose of bringing men into a double line, shoulder to shoulder, facing the foe; knowing enough (and not too much) to load and fire until they fall in their tracks or the other fellows run away.” “To such simple, mechanical, dull, dogged machine-work,” he avers, “has the old art of war come down” (83). Inherent in such tributes to duplicative activity is Kirkland’s more than hinted suggestion that group coherence and uniformity spring not from voluntarily tendered goodwill but from well-managed inculcations of custom-built habit.

Fargeon’s conversion to the new “religion of force” extends well into the civilian commons. Emblematic of a growing alignment with military values as palliatives to the nation’s cultural decline, Fargeon’s furloughs and return home are marked by vital exertions of administrative moxie, rectifying local feuds enabled by a culture of liberal license and disinterest. Contrasted with the degraded bands of ethnics and profiteers skulking on the homefront, citizens so spiritually handicapped as to pursue private gain and leisure in the face of war’s calamity, Fargeon towers as a paragon of masterly authority and manly grit. Flush with purpose as a marshal of public order, Fargeon rights a capsized commonweal roaming with Jews (Meyer Ross-Rosen) who dawdle peevishly behind the battle, squeezing established families out of their businesses. To the adoration of female onlookers and other “inefficient, fussing spectators,” he subdues brawls perpetrated outside grog shops, ostensibly by drunken Irishmen. The chasm of political devotion opened between white war participants and the inept clans of African Americans and immigrated ethnics is further evinced when Fargeon’s army, now “splendid in size, equipment, and preparation,” descends on the town of Corinth where unsupervised “darkys” occupy the streets “in great comfort and hilarity” (333).
imaginatively dulled to realize their implication in the cause for which men like Fargeon sacrifice, Kirkland’s pageant of dissociated delinquents forecasts impending spectacles of social disaster if the nation fails to discover more mordant political cement. The concluding pages of Captain lampoon a bureaucratically corrupt Washington D.C. and War Department—“a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight”—not to condemn bureaucracy but to promote better efficiency and more proficient professional standards (326, 340). Published in the dawning years of the Progressive Era, to put it bluntly, The Captain of Company K’s complains not so much about the organized society as it does the mismanaged society. At its conclusion, Fargeon, hardened now into a “vigor manhood,” keeps sober, sacrificial watch over the nation. Although the war deprives him of a limb, he refuses to collect on his pension since “money cannot pay for such things” (347). Unrewarded and neglected, he and his partner Mac “tend gate” on the edges of a vanishing frontier. Prepared and at-the-ready, Kirkland’s war-seasoned men know that peace is only fleeting and that stealthy, menacing forces are already on the prowl.

The Liberal Confronts More Pugnacious Habitats: Military Masculinity as Corporate/Corporeal Integration

Written amid the international conflict with Spain and its colonies and as capitalist ventures surged through the threshold of the “open door,” Civil War narratives increasingly evaded the literary confines of the traditional battle romance. Foreclosing on its full “domestic” contexts, their concentration almost exclusively on the masculine domains of the battlefield made war imagining abstractable from historical, domestic contexts and thus transferable to distant locales. Describing their accumulating appeals to “adventure,” Kathleen Diffley claims that war novels “traded old homesteads for wider
spaces and delayed romance in favor of the open road.” Although the domestic marriage plot endured well into the twentieth century, the adventure story, as a mode through which to reimagine collective belonging, was “enlisted in a nationalistic campaign,” one that looked to “to reinvent the self” on lines “defined by the State instead of the family” (125). Kirkland’s text is an embryonic example, defying the conventional nuptials at its finale and, curiously enough, taking another detour in its dedication to “the survivors” of his company rather than to those who lost their lives. As Alice Fahs attests, the 1890s witnessed an “emergent masculinized and racialized culture” that “increasingly foreclosed the association of Northern women and African Americans with participation in the war.” Establishing the national feud “primarily as a white masculinist conflict, rather than a cataclysmic event that rent and remade the fabric of life for all Americans,” the erasure of the war’s “total” imprint galvanized a “military revival” based exclusively on masculine rituals of remembrance.15 Membership in the all-male Grand Army of the Republic—a Civil War veteran’s organization—bloomed from a mere 30,000 in 1878 to 428,000 in 1890. While Century had already published “Battles and Leaders of the Civil War” beginning in 1881—an enormously popular series focused entirely on the domains of camp and field—new journals like The Roundtable and McClure’s were further remanning the war through their serializations.16 In the end, a resurgence of masculinist war culture ensured that “the central meaning of the war was the shared bravery of white Union and Confederate soldiers”—a “whites-only brotherhood” (Fahs 314-315).17

Yet regardless of how esoteric and masculine that vision of brotherhood was, of how attenuating its scale of inclusion, the identifications it promoted were yoked to a wide-ranging culture of governmental intervention that, though selective in its memory,
nonetheless found in the war story a modality reflecting the “totality” of the population and targeting the affections of every citizen. Seizing on the resurgence of interest in battle themes, mythmakers increasingly drew from war’s tale of spontaneous subordination and collaboration to bind more tautly triangulated, mutually constitutive versions of citizenship, nationhood, and loyalty to the state. Substantively transforming the Civil War from a story of liberation (freedom from bondage) to one of social containment (acquiescence to the law), they looked to enhance a normative culture of social predictability and corporate solidarity. It was a difficult prospect in a culture reared on legends of the self-reliant citizen. Oppressive images of discipline and loyalty more closely paralleled the figure of the slave than the free and self-determining individual.  

Believing war participation to instill a “restoration of purpose,” however, advocates like Oliver Wendell Holmes argued for military fellowship, in Jackson Lears’s words, as a kind of “secular conversion,” a “collective initiation into larger life” (123).

Numerous Men of the State superintended such a turn, many of whom, like Holmes, were veterans, and saw in the comprehensive aspect of war mobilization solutions for a society crumbling into divergent, often inimical coalitions. Progressives like Frederic Olmstead, head of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, a Civil War supply organization, became powerful bureaucratic administrators and urban planners in the late years of the nineteenth century.  

Francis Walker, a four-year veteran, had keenly observed the stratifying power of military operations and the panorama of their social scales. Matthew Hannah describes him as enamored with the “self erasure” of “military manhood,” with a sacrificial personality paradoxically oriented toward “self-affirming self denial.” Seeking to usher in an age of the “expert” and the “specialist,” his
commandeering of the U.S. Census—its own plenary surveillance of the population—sought means to constrain individual interests within a more “governmental” complex (12-13, 100). Like Charles Francis Adams, another fellow veteran turned politico, Walker had a public career that was “a straightforward continuation of the military struggle, prosecuted in precisely the same way as a battlefield campaign” (Hannah 93). As Jeanie Attie suggests, the primary task of these “cosmopolitan rationalists” was “to provide a political education to the people,” meaning the Herculean “transfer of loyalties from local to national institutions” (“War” 250). As the war itself had shown for the first real time, “it was critical to replace the narrow sense of community felt by most Americans with devotion to a structure that encompassed the entire geographical extent of the United States.” “Strengthening the American state meant transforming traditional loyalties from the village, county, and individual state into a stronger attachment to a distant federal power” (Attie, *Patriotic 74*). Despite his reputation as a “trust buster,” Theodore Roosevelt’s influence in consolidating a more systemically aligned nation was unparalleled. “This is an age of combination,” he surmised in his Annual Message to Congress in 1905, “and any effort to prevent combination will not only be useless, but in the end vicious, because of the contempt for law which the failure to enforce law inevitably produces” (Weinstein 71).²⁰

Nationhood’s abstract geography and the hollowing out of citizen subjectivity for masculine group merger found their consummate expression in one of the period’s most beguiling fictions, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). As perhaps the ur-text of twentieth-century American war narrative, Stephen Crane’s impressionistic novella is a study in the micropolitics of identity management and the macropolitics of self-
combination. *Red Badge’s* deliberately antiheroic tableau has long assured its status as an “antiwar” novel. Henry Fleming—reduced to animal-like participation in the “machine” of mass warfare, mentally convulsed by fears of cowardice and panic-stricken flight, considered with only zoo-like indifference by remotely calculating officers—gives access to war’s most degrading forms of experience, draining it of verve as an utterly base and inhuman activity. The mocking title, so baroque in its “Greeklike” nobility compared to the scene of lumpenprole misery unfolded within, reads snidely back upon the heroic tradition, a caustic accusation leveled at its silences and excesses. For Daniel Aaron, Crane’s nightmarish warscape—“a religious revival in hell, all sound and fury”—constitutes “a profane parable against war and against its glorifiers and apologists” (215, 217-8). Writing during the Vietnam War, John Fraser found in Crane’s lusterless depiction of war’s “abomination” and “atrociousness” a parable of guilt that could stave off the seduction of war for a generation facing its own military resurgence.²¹

More recently, Amy Kaplan suggests the text’s power to criticize the general “militarization of American culture” occurring across the 1890s. Divulging masculinity’s “spectatorial” dependence on a “theatrical” exterior, Fleming’s “need for an audience” to accrue agency, she contends, “subverts the interpretation of the battlefield as a crucible for virility, as well as the concept of manhood as an internal primal quality” (“Spectacle” 79, 100). Pointing beyond the boundaries of the novel, Elizabeth Young argues that the “abject pulp” of spectatorial subjectivity that is Henry Fleming might have as much to do with the emasculation represented by an encroaching female readership, an audience that threatens “not only to reject but literally consume him” (8-10). *Red Badge* thus reveals
war writing to be a fundamentally “defensive” enterprise, remaining an anxiety-riddled textual domain from threats of impotence and castration (10).

Crane’s revelation of the heroic tradition’s deceit and thorough ousting of the cogitating individual are unquestionable features of the narrative. Yet observed from another vantage point, one less assured at the symbolic capital that such dystopian depictions would have levied by the turn of the century, Crane’s challenge to identity’s imperviousness and autonomy might transact in different currencies. What is the first half of the text if not the vertiginous exorcism of precisely that “stalled” liberal subject inhabiting the nation’s citizenship ideal? In her treatment of Red Badge, Jennifer Fleissner considers its role as “degenerate fiction” in which Fleming, the “recalcitrant individual,” emerges—in one of the preponderant diagnoses of the time—as a “neurasthenic” subject, “stalling the trajectory of history” by delaying regeneration in more composite formations. His “stuckness,” his fidelity to individuality, “can only be a liability” in that ultimately his “purpose is to become one with a gendered collectivity that precedes [his] individual story.” The “forgetting” accomplished in the war group’s “ferocious automatism,” the prosthetic contingency with their weaponry, the yearning for “completeness” through battle itself (an endlessly reenacted alternation between “impotency” and “becoming men”) beckons from beyond the lone individual’s fund of possibility for self-establishment.^{22} Like Kirkland’s Fargeon, Fleming—working to flee the paralysis of his Victorian self-riddling and to brandish a self in unthinking, spontaneous motion—contorts within his consciousness, bargaining with intractable instincts for self-preservation that preclude his capacity for collaborative self-exertion. Relieving the fatigued individualism of the liberal subject, military manhood (and
naturalist aesthetics) ventilates the privacy of that insulated world, opening it into vistas of combinatory restoration in the compound personality of the war tribe.

The therapeutic metaphors are omnipresent throughout the text. Becoming “merely a part of a vast blue demonstration,” Fleming—the “unknown quantity,” the “slang phrase”—emerges triumphantly as “another thing.”23 Nowhere do principled motivations or causes intrude upon the “swarms,” “currents,” “floods,” “stampedes,” and “thongs” of collated human matter that “drunk with fighting” contend only for empty signifiers like flags or pieces of land (24-25). In a well-worn but characteristic battle passage, Fleming gratefully attests that, through war participation, “He became not a man but a member.” Dilating perspective, Crane writes: “He felt that something of which he was a part—a regiment, an army, a cause, or a country—was in a crisis. He was welded into a common personality which was dominated by a single desire. For some moments he could not flee no more than a little finger can commit a revolution from a hand” (26). That metaphors of the hand’s inseparable fingers appeared in Booker T. Washington’s “Atlanta Compromise” address that same year—a politically distinct but subjectively similar rendering of striated sociality—is hardly incidental, yet another emblem of identity of interest mandates which were shaping public discourse.24 Fixed by nature into rightfully allotted “herds,” no individual is distinct from the society in which it is entrenched. For Crane, however, war uncloaks human existence as a complex of interaction and interdependence. Commanding a “sublime absence of selfishness” in its “mysterious fraternity,” Fleming swells with an “enthusiasm of unselfishness” unperturbed by the meddling “vanities” of his untried earlier self who sought only refuge from potential extinction (77). In self-abnegation is gain. Those who slough their
autonomy achieve corroborating corporeality within the restorative collective body of the
“composite monster”: “the army sat down again to think,” “the army awakened,” “the
regiment snorted and blew.”25 For Fleming, in “such a change” is “salvation” (20).

As a socialization drama—an “initiation” or “conversion” narrative as it is
frequently distinguished—The Red Badge of Courage describes not merely the
acquisition of a “quiet manhood” but a graduation of that manhood from colloquial to
corporate-military versions of national belonging (98). It exchanges the individual
corpus for the shared physique of the phalanx. Fleming’s early intimations of
claustrophobic enclosure within a “moving box” give way to recognitions that, on his
own, life is “very insignificant” and that all hope lies in being but a “little piece” of a
more powerful enterprise.26 Embarrassed by gaudily outmoded strivings for “reputation”
and “fame,” Fleming crushes out all penchants for self-care. When one battle subsides,
he reflects with “a sort of humor” on the chastening fact that he and his fellows “had
taken themselves and the enemy very seriously and had imagined that they were deciding
the war.” “Individuals must have supposed that they were cutting the letters of their
names deep into the everlasting tablets of brass,” he jeers, “or enshrining their reputations
forever in the hearts of their countrymen” (37). Like the “loud youth,” once full of brag
and bluster—those outdated efforts for a status linked to “personal prowess”—Fleming’s
war education grants him the stolid gaze of “new eyes.” Climbing to “a peak of
wisdom,” he sees himself finally “as a very wee thing” (62). Perspective, Crane
continuously suggests, is always only partial, and thus requires coordinated massification
to best survey a wider expanse. Having railed against the “merciless government” at the
start of the campaign for callously putting him out to slaughter, Fleming finally discerns
that, from the officers’ point of view, what looked to him originally like incompetent strategy eventually achieves the wiser outcome (86).

The American fin de siècle was an associational time, a time of self-combination. As prospects for private entrepreneurial success withered with the ascent of the corporation and private trusts, a culture of affiliation and joining superseded an earlier esteem for unmanaged independence. Historical change was a feature of a rising culture of masculine self-renewal, what E. Anthony Rotundo terms “passionate manhood,” were accumulating enthusiasms for organized sports, “muscular” Christianity, and wilderness conservation movements with their newly popular scouting societies. Admiration for stoicism and self-deprivation de-emphasized rational thought as an inhibitor of manly action. Seeking an “absence of complex emotions,” men evolved preoccupations with “leadership” as part of a larger regard for social regeneration and a developing emphasis on “the obligations of citizenship” (Rotundo 225, 238). But unlike the “Great Man” hagiography of the romantic past, “leadership” in this instance was increasingly measured by one’s capacity for submission, sacrifice, and a faceless devotion to service. Professionalization and discipline, progressives believed, were virtues that could revive a culture exhausted and stultified by the spiritual enervations of the Gilded Age. To recuperate the “whole man,” they looked not only to a revival of individual subjects but also to the elevation of that “whole man” in the eternal phoenix rising of the corporate national body.

Crane’s naturalistic tale of subjectivization, with its competing tendencies toward comprehensive abstraction and interior ministration, presents the perfect vehicle for the reconciliation of national subjects to more “enforceable” forms of political “combination.” A literary instance reflective of broader national drives, it portrays a
search for more pliable dispositions in line with shared desires for public governability and commonwealth. Distending scales of affiliation from local coordinates into abstract topographies of self-allocation within the collective, Crane’s allegory of association dovetailed with emergent Progressive drives, as Matthew Hannah describes them, to gain “comprehensive epistemological access to all parts of the territory and everything within it” (39). Although Fleming initially resists “the society that probes pitilessly at secrets until all is apparent,” his final recognition that he is “good” only for having been publicly “witnessed” represents the more bracing corporate manhood of “his new condition” (47, 96).

Crane’s logic was congruent not just with nationalist reform but also with particularly conservative strands gaining strength within the political weft. Seeing in the military a template for civic resurgence, a coterie of Universal Military Training activists led by Theodore Roosevelt, Leonard Wood, Alfred Mahan, Elihu Root, Emory Upton, and Henry Stimson considered military service fundamental to a reformation of citizenship standards. At the center of their platform was the insistence on the “military ethic” as a necessary updating of the liberal worldview, a political philosophy increasingly understood as an impediment to national integration. Lauded by military historians like Samuel Huntington as the nation’s salutary acceptance of geopolitical “realism”—a bleaker global outlook stressing “the permanence, irrationality, weakness, and evil in human nature”—political expeditors saw in the war imaginary the chance to corral liberal vagaries more squarely around statutes of authority and obedience. “What was required,” says Huntington, “was a perfected machine, not a brilliant individual.” The “triumph of organized mediocrity”—his preferred state of equilibrium—meant “the
personification of teamwork, in which ‘the efficiency of every part is constantly developed but subordinated always to the efficiency of the whole’” (257). Stressing “the supremacy of society over the individual and the importance of order, hierarchy, and division of function,” the conservative-military cast of mind perhaps found in naturalism’s “din fit to the universe” an analog for its own metaphysic of struggle and countervailing power and the means to constrain it through managerial channels (79).³¹

The Hobbesian state of nature, out of whose dark maw liberal society first lurched, returns again anew, not as a realm of chaos and flux but as a reminder of creaturely fixity, imposing form and structure on the very unwieldy society that once escaped its bedlam of each against all itself in search of some steadying ballast.

Finding the Man in the State: Military Crisis, “Characters” of “Force,” and the Regimentation of Citizenship

Militaristic progressives were fully aware that their calls for permanent martial readiness and universal war training represented a conceptual break from longstanding traditions in both domestic and foreign policy. In the introduction to the posthumous publication of General Emory Upton’s The Military Policy of the United States (1904), Secretary of War Elihu Root predicts a bristled public response to the argument Upton will advance. Urging the book’s audience to check its initial resistance, however, he implores readers to consider the author’s analysis in light of a changed global template, one which acknowledges the grave and pressing need for institutional and military expansion if the nation is to remain both solvent and competitive. The author’s central plea for a massive standing army—long a recognized symptom of “Prussian” corruption and decline—may derive, he admits, from the saltier “feelings of a man who had been a
participant in the great conflict of the civil war” and, consequently, from his “failure to appreciate difficulties arising from our form of government and the habits and opinions of our people.” But alert to “facts, which it is sometimes unpleasant to consider,” he warns, Upton’s more pragmatic, realistic reckoning with the imperatives of the international scene “ought not to be ignored” (v).

Upton’s facts, as it turns out, insist that citizens accept the unpopular but inevitable truth that, if the political community is to survive, “individual life” will have to be “sacrificed to the life of the state.” He warrants that only the state and not the people can exercise “absolute power,” a reality which necessarily favors “centralization and strong government.” It is the Constitution, a document proscribing principles of law and order, he reminds them, and not the Declaration of Independence, a promiscuous certificate with an overly flamboyant fixation on liberty, which truly founds the country. Instituted “in the affections of the people, the Constitution in time of danger,” he assures, “gives Congress absolute power to raise and support armies and to lay its hands on every man and every dollar within the territory of the nation.” It gives Congress and the President “power not only over life and property but over the liberty of every citizen of the Republic,” and mandates that, in the wrench and buckle of precarious new political scenarios, “it should be our policy to suppress every riot and stamp out every insurrection before it swells to rebellion” (xiv). Although the drive for UMT was unsuccessful and Upton’s controversial text went officially unheeded, lingering in many pockets of the culture was the lurking sense that change was inevitable and that the nation’s security required an altered popular mood. As a “closed” territorial body now sharpened into focus as a vulnerable conceptual whole, the nation could no longer house
a public temper that failed to see its stakes as parceled inviolably with those of the state. The lessons of military life and concession to permanent threat would have to rise to greater social prominence if the nation was to perdure in a stormy, often hostile international domain.

Returning to a domestic context while abandoning the reconciliation-marriage plot, Edward Bellamy’s “An Echo from Antietam” (1898) surfaced just as troops were embarking toward their various colonial destinations in the Spanish-American-Philippine War. Focusing on two engaged lovers, Grace Morton and Philip King, the author unfolds a tale of King’s painful extraction from local “happiness” to assume responsibilities of “risk” in a greater “cause” (8). Becoming a “single organism” in the “rhythmic movement” of the army’s “imposing mass,” however, King attains gratifications unavailable to the private soul. “The mind is slow to realize,” Bellamy expatiates, “that this great dragon, so terrible in its beauty, emitting light as it moves from a thousand burnished scales…is but an aggregation of men singly so feeble.” For the rapturous onlookers, “There is a thrill of voluptuous sweetness in the thought of dying for [the flag],” Bellamy writes; “Life seems of value only as it gives the poorest something to sacrifice. It is dying that makes the glory of the world, and all other employments seem but idle while the regiment passes” (13). Making good on his wager, Bellamy has King give his life in the “bloody baptism” at Antietam as a grateful release into the “tonic air” of a larger national life (15, 17). This “heroic instinct of humanity,” he assures, “testifies to a conviction deeper than reason, that man is greater than his seeming self; to an underlying consciousness that his mortal life is but an accident of his real existence, the fashion of a day, to be lightly worn and gayly doffed at duty’s call” (16). Sacrificing the
miniature world of private existence, one gains access to “real existence” in the fellowship of the collective.

Lest one presume that images of self-sacrifice and death would have been anathema in a moment of military activity, Bellamy spends the remaining half of the text coaching Americans—men and women equally—on how to comprehend such a seemingly unlucky event as the loss of one’s life. Returning an inclusively gendered context to the war story, he proclaims, “Many pictures of battles have been painted, but no true one yet, for the pictures contain only men. The women are unaccountably left out” (19-20). He centers especially on Grace’s effort to cope with the devastating loss—her “wounds” as “deadly as any [of] the combatants,” a “ransom” appointed “half in blood of men and half in women’s tears”—as she learns “the lofty wisdom of self-sacrifice,” that “none make such rich profit out of their lives as the heroes who seem to throw them away” (20, 25, 27). Studying the corpse at the funeral, the minister channels Bellamy’s message: that “this dead soldier was not pitiable” but rather “a wise young merchant of his blood, who having seen a way to barter his life at incredible advantage, at no less a rate indeed than a man’s for a nation’s, had not let slip so great an opportunity” (25-26). As Grace accepts the verity of his message, that “the same fire of self-sacrifice had consumed them both,” she harkens as well her own “mystic gain,” that “this exchange they had made of earthly happiness for the life of their native land” brought forth “divine gravitations ever pulling at the soul,” and relief that she was not so blind as to “keep her lover back” from such a “high calling of martyrdom” (27).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Civil War writing surged into the bestseller ranks, tilting its social optic more thoroughly to consider this “constitutional”
character—man or woman—capable of sacrifice for the state. Although adopting few of Crane’s stylistic innovations and though not always as bombastic as Bellamy, many novels marshaled portraits of the nation at war to address similar concerns with citizen subjectivity and the scope of political identification. Released in 1901, Winston Churchill’s *The Crisis*, for instance, earned immense critical acclaim. Like Frederic and Kirkland, Churchill—an acquaintance of Roosevelt’s—was heavily involved in politics, serving in the New Hampshire state legislature and twice running for governor as a Progressive candidate. Selling over 320,000 copies in the first months of its publication, *The Crisis* celebrated the war’s rending of the national body as a necessary tempering process, one more powerfully fusing the intersectional alloy that emerged. Focused in St. Louis, where “Puritan and Cavalier” mingle equally on the “clay bank of the Louisiana Purchase,” his war epic invokes all the hackneyed conventions of a classic reconciliation story (10). Recruiting a female readership allied to germinal New Woman sensibilities—what Edmund Wilson decried as an “embarrassing” concession to the tastes of the moment—it presents Virginia Carvel, a fiercely independent, hotly opinionated Confederate belle, stomping all over the public sphere with political commentary and critiques of male leadership. Faithful to reconciliationist form, however, the novel traces her discovery of a counteractive salve in the calm, masterful composure of her Brahmin suitor, Stephen Brice, to whom she eventually submits in cross-sectional marriage. Although slavery returns condemned as the war’s primary cause and one of the novel’s prominent themes, the repugnance toward carpetbaggers and testimonials to Southern valor perhaps served as counterpoint enough to make the text palatable to a white Southern readership—reconstructed or not.
Apart from reunion themes, however, Churchill found in the Civil War’s history of national discord a parable of sacrifice and leadership able to curtail troubling platitudes of nineteenth-century liberalism and their private scale of interest. *The Crisis* assembles a cast of characters divided less along Northern and Southern axes than split between loyalties to individual (negative) and collective (positive) goods. Indeed, what brands Confederates and Yankees alike with badges of shame and dishonor is a feckless dissociation from collective purpose, irregardless of what that purpose might be. The novel, for instance, introduces the Confederate Clarence Colfax, one of three solicitors for Virginia’s affection, whose delight in boozing, fighting, and horse racing—exclusively personal gratifications—eventually unfits him for the rigors of deeper social commitment. His mercurial lawlessness and rowdy adventurism entice Virginia since they render him a promising candidate for Yankee blood-letting. Yet, in the end, his “selfish” nature and “wild spirit” expose a soul incapable of attachment to ideals beyond the pale of personal pursuits (378-79). A mere “soldier of fortune,” his narrow purview renders him unable to become the “man” Virginia implores him to be (59). Yet most reprehensible is Eliphalet Hopper, a parasitic carpetbagger and second candidate for Virginia’s hand. An opportunist—like Myer Ross Rosen in Kirkland’s *Captain*—he lacks commitment to either Yankee or Confederate factions, lingering behind the lines to tend only “to his own affairs” and let “the mad country take care of itself” (223).

Virginia, having discovered Hopper’s extortions from the family business, admonishes her father: “Eliphalet Hopper will serve you so long as he serves himself” (249). Hopper is publicly rebuked by none other than Ulysses S. Grant, briefly a St. Louis resident, who pronounces him “a disgrace to a citizen of the United States” (233). “I have some respect
for a rebel,” Grant chastises, “I have none for you, sir” (233). Resorting to bribery and subterfuge in a vain effort to coerce Virginia into marriage, Hopper acts most egregiously in exempting himself from military service by paying a substitute. Unable to affix loyalty to an extrapersonal cause, Hopper’s withered “atomity”—the liberal’s original sin in Churchill’s barometer—yields a creature disowned from the sustaining bonds of common fellowship (3, 345).

In contrast, Churchill orchestrates a pageant of more vital beings able to outstrip the petty uncertainties of private diversions and entrust themselves to connective “forces” pulsing through the arteries of associational life. One of Churchill’s signal innovations, for instance, is an adaptation of older cultural values. In nineteenth-century success literature—a genre devoted to strengthening the individual’s entrepreneurial “power” over others—preoccupations with “force” and “character” often abounded as part of the good leader’s “animal magnetism.”35 Using these same conceits but rescripting their terms, Churchill routes the same “virtues” into more publicly socializing channels. Adapting earlier literary obsessions with individualist “magnetism,” he remakes the “force” of private “character” into a shared property accessible only to those who suppress their private interests for the betterment of the group. Offsetting the licentiousness of Colfax and Hopper are Judge Silas Whipple and his two prodigies—Stephen Brice, the promising young lawyer and Virginia’s third suitor, and Carl Richter, a German immigrant and hero of the 1848 Revolution. Together, the triumvirate represents Churchill’s vision of a restored American future. Principled, meritocratic public servants, the collective attunements of their supra-personal “characters” and capacious aptitude for loyalty to the state invest them with heightened powers of
perception better to survey history’s broader designs at work. As one of his duties for Judge Whipple, for instance, Brice is sent to Illinois to report on the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Spelled by Lincoln’s magnanimous “force” and his radiant gift for “superb self-sacrifice,” Brice perceives a “man with a purpose” and correspondingly bends his will in line with the leader’s (122, 124). Juxtaposed with Stephen Douglas, whose “theatrical” political commitments chase only “personal ambition,” Lincoln’s seemingly infinite largesse—the self-renunciations of a true steward of the common good—endows him with a moral amplitude that only the rightly adapted may perceive. “That which passed before Stephen’s eyes and to which his ears listened,” Churchill pronounces, “was the Great Republic pressing westward to the Pacific. Crudeness he saw, vulgarity he heard, but Force he felt, and marveled” (125).

The conflation of personal and national aggrandizement in the expansionist metaphor resonated with impulses streaming through the period of the text’s composition, a national “maturation” into expansionism Churchill is never loath to endorse. “In the city by the Father of Waters where the races met,” he writes, “men and women were born into the world, who were to die in ancient Cuba, who were to be left fatherless in the struggle soon to come, who were to live to see new monsters rise to gnaw at the vitals of the Republic, and to hear again the cynical laugh of Europe.” “But,” he adds, “they were also to see their country a power in the world, perchance the greatest power. While Europe had wrangled, the child of the West had grown into manhood and taken a seat among the highest, to share with them the responsibilities of manhood” (149). Braiding masculine, national, and imperial identifications, Churchill’s epiphantic vision of maturing nationality, like Crane’s, finds its best expression in civic unity during times of
war, supplying those who give their lives for that collaborative body with spiritual compensations in the larger life of the collective. Akin to the melting pot “pluralism” of Roosevelt’s military “democracy,” Churchill’s nativist and assimilationist ideologies magnify notions of political subjectivity from singular to more leagued expressions. The national “force” Brice discerns in the “heaving human sea” at Freeport flows from an inherited origin in “ancestors who had left their farms to die on the bridge at Concord, or followed Ethan Allen into Ticonderoga” (129). But it is accommodating enough to absorb fresh infusions of imported “stock,” men like the “blue eyed and great-chested Saxon” Richter who, inflamed with the “striving life,” are “so wholly Americanized” as to lay down their lives gladly for the “new Vaterland.”36 “I would die willingly for the country,” Richter proudly announces. “We Germans will show whether or not we are foreigners when the time is ripe. You will not think of us as foreign swill, but as patriots” (71-3). Churchill’s homage to Americanization thus acknowledges cultural plurality not to champion heterogeneity but, rather, its conversion into homogeneity.

Richter indeed gives his life for the country in the early days of “the crisis” that finally erupts. But it is the concentration on Stephen Brice and his rise to prominence through the union army, a rise paradoxically dependent upon his capacity for self-denial, that subsumes the preponderance of the text. Unlike liberals who see only an abundance of opportunities for advancement, Brice is able to spurn contentment, delaying happiness to attend to duties external to his own career. He refuses to accept patronage appointments, rising through the ranks of his own accord. His keen eye for management and heart built for sacrifice are boons to his growing public “character.” Exerting a mesmerizing “force” over all who surround him—a power hailing from resources beyond
the scanty dowers of the private self—his every act of self-erasure bestows him with
more of “the air of one who conquers” (91). For Churchill, these are uniquely American
propensities adapted to a modern age. “Away with your Napoleons and your
Marlboroughs and your Stuarts,” he exults. “These are the days of simple men who
command by force of character, as well as knowledge. Thank God for the American! I
believe that he will change the world, and strip it of its vainglory and hypocrisy” (414).
Like Henry Fleming, who accrues value only as he is “witnessed,” Brice’s acts are
admired from a distance by Sherman and Grant and eventually reach Lincoln, the
unrivaled example of limitless self-sacrifice (165).

*The Crisis* increasingly enfolds the war within a patently Christian metaphysic,
one evolved from an almost Elizabethan grid of social correspondences within a great
“chain of being.” As a metric of personal allotment, its calculus of “forces”—not to
mention their sometimes actual congruity with military and governmental ranking
systems—lets characters behold their rightful place in a tiered national gradient. More
compound than unity, Churchill’s corporate logic of hierarchy and subordination takes
shape as the war impresses subjects into prescriptive identity of interest roles. An
underling of Brice’s mother and a nurse for soldiers on both sides, Virginia uses her war
education to make deeper sacrifices in lieu of the self-banishing humility war teaches. As
she surrenders more and more of her habit of self-regard, spectators note a concomitant
rise in her character, a sanctifying “force” which wreaths her with an angelic nimbus.
Although she once revolted at the thought of marrying a Yankee, she finally accedes that
she is “woven of one piece” with Brice, submitting to his own more prodigious levels of
“force”—“the strength to suffer, to put aside the thought of self.” Together, bearing “the
smile of the unselfish,” they crest individualism’s social divisiveness to apprehend the underlying spiritual unity of all things. Traveling to Washington to secure a pardon for her Confederate cousin, Virginia learns what Brice has known all along: that the vitalism she felt coursing through him flows more powerfully still through the messianic sacrificer par excellence—Abraham Lincoln. As “the “Savior of the Nation,” “the one who bore a cross,” “the bearer of a crown of thorns worn for a world that did not understand,” Lincoln’s sacramental stature as the Great Physician is beatified in his “binding up of the nation’s wounds.” His assassination on Good Friday only authenticates the Christian allegory Churchill has been building toward all along. Ratcheting the string of associations up yet one more notch, well into the stratospheric beyond, Lincoln’s ultimate sacrifice floods the nation with torrents of redeeming grace when he surrenders “his life for the country even as Christ gave his for the world” (439).

The conflation of religious and national symbolism was not just Churchill’s literary innovation but a symptom of the political unconscious of his age. As part of the “conservative revolution,” Churchill’s literary credentialing of “social responsibility” was part of the great “mugwump” refusal to accept the “tooth and claw competition” of laissez-faire Social Darwinism: the favored doctrine of an ascendant nouveaux riche. His social philosophy jibed with that of numerous Progressive reformers, particularly Charles Horton Cooley, who looked to reconcile the tradition of American individualism—“the atomistic man of the Lockean tradition and the Gospel of Wealth”—to more bracing ideas of meritocratic “cooperation” and “the need for social planning.” In effect, the Social Gospel movement transformed into the movement for social engineering. Nothing short of a “new religion” was needed, one that would “teach man to blend himself into
society, to cherish that part of himself that contributed to the whole”: “The idea of God would merge with that of the social state. The individual awakened to his spiritual unity with God and with society, would be the agent of God in an evolutionary process which would remake the world in his image.” The compound personality he advocates metaphysically binds expansions of personhood in the social collective to that collective’s project of expanded influence across the globe.

For Josiah Royce, writing in the same decade, war itself inspired unparalleled images of “loyalty.” Responding to one of many “American problems”—especially considering the “millions of foreign birth and descent” squatting in the public commons—he searched for an “ethical doctrine” in the “synthesis of individualism and loyalty” (93, 98-99). “When can the ordinary American citizen say in time of peace,” he wonders, “that he performs notable acts of devotion to his country, such that he could describe those acts in terms...involving personal risk or sacrifice?” Having entered an age in which the “national government” was “at best” a lessor of “safety” and at worst “a force with which everybody must reckon,” citizenship, he decried, had assumed “a character of self-estrangement.” Like Cooley, Royce believed a “social consciousness” of “religious motives” was necessary to apprehend in the “power of the state” one’s “own loyal self, writ large”; something like the “intense sentiments of loyalty” rife in Japanese culture, in their more “vital” “devotion to the nation and to their emperor” (110-113). Although claiming reluctance to war as a panacea, it is “the furious ecstasy” of “the war-spirit” which excites Royce’s most inspired example of a social consciousness properly attuned (20).
That war and conquest played so powerfully into Progressive efforts to bridge private and public interests suggests just how elemental the nation’s dyadic structure of inside/outside was to shoring up a formative sense of common purpose. Although the Civil War constituted the most discordant episode in the American genealogy, its story of cooperation, as figures like Churchill adapt it, lent a future generation a symbolic lexicon from which to interpret its own strivings in areas as disparate as Cuba and the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico. Generating cultures of loyalty, war invents palpable kinships through the very sameness-producing experience of defending (or attacking) mutually shared (or desired) things. “Because men in arms defend the same things without distinction,” claims J.G.A Pocock, “they come to have the same values; because they are all disciplined to accept the same authority, they are all obedient to the res republica.”

Overcoming the socially inertial tendencies of turn-of-the-century plurality, coordinating its variety, war provisioned the U.S. public with a vision of its reciprocal common life.

**Southern Cosmology and the Confederated Union**

Framing secession less as an apology for slavery and white supremacy than as a defense of state’s rights and an approbation of centralized power, Southern culture was generally more antagonistic to images of national incorporation than were Northern progressives. To be sure, white supremacy and free labor were primary causes for the rebellion. Often, it was “don’t tread on me” remnants of the liberal imaginary that most acutely voiced disdain for the many violations of “Northern aggression.” Solicitous of federal infringement though the South generally may have been, however, Civil War novels by Southern authors in the early twentieth century nonetheless shared in
Progressivism’s cultural interventions, indicting ideas of autonomous personhood as unwieldy relics insufficient to the needs of modern life. Although maintaining some features of the cavalier tradition and plantation romance, a new generation of novelists aligned their works with broader associational values and, at times, limned outright endorsements of big government that bore the indelible imprint of an ascending state.

In the same year that Churchill released his reconciliationist saga, for instance, George Washington Cable published *The Cavalier* (1901), his only bestseller. Selling 100,000 copies in its first two months, it likewise catered to New Woman sensibilities by following the exploits of the “adventuress” Charlotte Oliver (also known by her anagram Coralie Rothvelt)—expert rider, wielder of swords and carbines—working incognito as a spy for the Confederacy. Like Churchill’s Virginia Carvel, Oliver’s activities are eventually unmasked as the “licenses” of times “fearfully out of joint” (57). Once the hostilities have subsided, she is only too grateful to relinquish her “outgrown” enthusiasms, settling into her proper matrimonial station as a paragon of true womanhood where her “finer spiritual nature” can flourish (191). Prominent also is the text’s focus on a scouting patrol of cavaliers led by Edgard “Ned” Ferry-Durand and his band of loyal underlings. As with Kirkland’s Captain Fargeon, one of the central tasks all characters must undergo is parting themselves from the “unsoldierly” gentilities of an overly scrupulous “religionist” ilk. The novel concentrates expressly on the self-machinations of the young scout Dick Smith as he divests himself of such defunct pieties. But it is Ned Ferry, the man most possessed of the “fitness to lead,” whose dauntless courage and thick-wristed resolve casts a swarthy “spell” over the men. With a host of tributes to Northern “cunning,” and a rendition of Charlotte Oliver singing “The Star-Spangled
Banner” as a nurse to wounded Yankees, the Louisianan’s fictional depiction splices together the very divide the war once cleaved (160, 180).

At front and center of Cable’s often swooning war text is, like Churchill’s, a “character” study in the political self’s more magnanimous allegiance to “a sense of public duty” (204). As sanctimonious discourses on the states of one’s soul—vestiges of a bygone nonpartisan age—give way to the more pedestrian cares of war prosecution and group preservation, Cable unfolds his theory of natures in transition. Traversing a moral network of upper and lower “forks” in a tiered system of spiritual “roads,” “levels,” and “spheres,” his cast gauges and engages each other by standards measuring “the pure waters of character”—yet another instance of war’s “spectatorial” theatrics (60). As Churchill modified older individualistic concerns with “force” and “character” to delineate communitarian tempers, so Cable’s cosmology of selves “jostled and torn between two opposite, unappeasable tendencies of soul” schematizes his text (30). Rifling through their motivations to ascertain only the “noblest, truest plane of convictions, affections [and] aspirations,” the members of Ferry’s Scouts demonstrate Cable’s “fundamental scheme” as a search for the “upper fork” along which properly to calibrate their behavior. “Such a frame of mind may be quite without religiosity,” he assures, “as unconscious as health, but the proof of its religious reality will be that, as if it were a lighthouse light and we its keeper, everybody else, or at any rate everybody else out on the deep, will see it plainer than we” (30). As they rightly or wrongly travel through the branching network of choices the war manifests between personal and collective goods—enticements to self-satisfaction versus loyalty to “precept”—they enter a system of ascending and descending spiritual ducts through which they arrive at
summative estimations of their self-worth (60). Some, like Lucius Oliver, roguish husband of Charlotte Oliver from whom she has fled (virginity intact!), is able only to “simulate” character since he is a conniving war profiteer and abuser of slaves (whom Cable’s Confederates finally emancipate) (98). Working for both sides of the conflict, “Federal, Confederate, guerilla as it may suit his bloody ends,” his scope of interest orbits a periphery of self-satisfaction exclusively, the esoteric precincts of the “lower fork” (206). Yet some characters have emotions more “advanced” than others, “traits” that access higher “planes.” Ned Ferry’s emotions are so advanced that, “coerced by his sense of a soldier’s duty,” he is able to “put passion’s dictates wholly aside” and take the upper fork “every time it divides” (85, 100).

“Who and what are you?” is the text’s omnipresent question (70). For actors and readers alike, Cable stages a variety of character tests. As the war presents participants with an array of risks and dangers, the members of Ferry’s scouts—much like Crane’s Fleming—sift through their motives to assess the rightness or wrongness of their self-comportment. Yet against naturalism’s fixed ontological primitivism, Cable’s collaborative story world offers opportunities for participants to scan each other for evidence of progress, reading for signs and tokens of each others’ advancement or decline along the “road.” Even if one character is further along the moral continuum, another less advanced can help another choose between paths leading to despondence and those toward salvation. Dick Smith helps the meekly Ghoulson, hindered as he is by his piety, “take the upper fork,” a dispositional adjustment that, in his case, releases a caged inner berserker able to mete out vengeance upon the malfeasant Lucius Oliver. But he is also able to help Charlotte Oliver, though as he measures it, she and Ned Ferry meet “on
ground far above” him (128,135). Charlotte returns the favor by helping “create” Dick Smith through a process of emotional and sexual diversions that let him better mark the path toward his own upper level (140).

All activity is bound within Cable’s socializing constellation, a vision of the good society in which selves are furnished with value only in their relation to the whole and as they subordinate personal whimsy to the maintenance of its overall well-being. “It seems to me,” concludes Dick Smith, “that in every problem of moral conduct we confront we really hold in trust an interest of all mankind” (137). Charlotte Oliver, once beleaguered by the “private war” of her struggles with the rakish Lucius, is transformed through her war service and proximity to Ned Ferry—through whose reparative influence (and eventual marriage) she can be made “whole.” She learns “at whatever self-hazard” to seek only “the fairest possible outcome for all God’s creatures,” transferring loyalties to points, she declares, “infinitely beyond myself” (171, 177). Joining parts and wholes, Charlotte attends to wounded Yankees, reassuring them that “no beauty and no joy can be perfect apart from a love that loves the whole world’s joy better than any separate joy of any separate soul” (178). Ferry’s patrol—discovering the fitness of the ranking system and their subordination within it—exults their leader as exceptionally true to the upper fork in “that he seemed never to regard any one as the mere means to an end—except himself” (293). As with Churchill’s cosmically orchestrated unity, Cable’s subdivided order of correctly allocated personalities shapes another identity of interest drama desirous of the harmoniously functioning body. Elevating characters each above their “private war,” the higher fork is populated only by those who transcend particularity.
Doubtless such celestial meandering was consonant with literary trends of an earlier age and sprang from Cable’s Presbyterian roots. But his use of the war novel to substantiate a vision of corporate cooperation and mutual interest addressed needs unique to his own time and represents a distinct evolution in Southern war memory. As a civil rights activist promoting “equal justice and equal liberty to all people,” certainly features of Cable’s political life challenged the embedded attitudes of his native environment. Yet his yearning for more egalitarian “inclusion” expresses exactly the kind of harmoniously regulated “democracy” endorsed by conservative strands of the Progressive Movement. Framing his plea for black equality as necessary to preserve a “lasting national peace, fellowship, and wealth,” Cable’s principled stand on “the negro question” was as much a mollifying innovation.43

Reverend Thomas Dixon Jr.’s *The Clansman, An Historical Romance of the Klux Klan* (1905) wades through no such racial ambiguity. Its brutal racism, as well as D. W. Griffith’s cinematic adaptation in *Birth of a Nation* (1915), is well-known. Depicting African Americans as incontinent brutes “wrapped in the night of four thousand years of barbarism,” guided by “no authority save the savage instincts,” Dixon’s nightmare of the “Black Hand” seizing upon vestal white women symbolically charges his bestselling portrait of a ravished but rising white South.44 Northern characters, errantly possessed of egalitarian racial idealism, mend their impaired judgment once they behold the “havoc” of “sensuousness” exercised by “the League,” a consortium of newly empowered freedmen reeling drunkenly about the town. Recognized even in its moment as the needless resuscitation of sectional spite during a time of national recovery, *The Clansman*’s fist-shaking at Thaddeus Stevens and general resentment at Reconstruction
marked it as a generic aberrance in a largely reconciliationist age. Its further endorsement of extra-legal vigilantism in the Ku Klux Klan’s resurgent defense of “civilization,” especially the characterization of its rise as a curative “revolution,” was further imprecation in a nation squaring itself more securely around the “legitimate” authority and guardianship of the official government (275, 374).

Nevertheless, Dixon’s scurrilous tale is no mere atavism. With two nuptials crossing the Mason-Dixon line, its drama of white solidarity in the Klan’s “invisible empire” fortifies new forms of nationhood—even in the harsh redrawing of the war-smudged color line—more than it venerates antebellum culture. While the critical conversation has, of course, understandably focused on the novel’s implication in the cultural history of race and gender in the U.S., its many scenes of black misrule and anxieties about Reconstruction’s sexual economy are just part of the text’s more catholic concerns with good leadership and adept governance. A North Carolina state legislator, campaigner for Theodore Roosevelt’s governorship of New York, and close friend of Woodrow Wilson, Dixon represents yet another personage of public influence turned war novelist who saw in states of social emergency the imperative for more adhesive social codes. Despite the text’s many egregious distinctions, in many ways its racism takes part in the same general urge toward collective order that energized other less overtly racist novels. Redirecting sectional hatred into racial demarcations, its lore of synergy in mass violence follows the same cues as other militarization dramas conjoining military and national ideals, dramas concerned as much with fifth columns within as without. As menaced white citizens rise up against Silas Lynch and his League, Dixon writes, “A gale of chivalrous passion and high action, contagious and intoxicating, swept the white race,”
a “fusion” at last revealing “the racial life of the people” (341). “Society was fused,” Dixon explains, “in the white heat of one sublime thought and beat with the pulse of the single will of the Grand Wizard of the Klan at Memphis” (343).

The representation of fused white blood beating consonantly with its leadership retrieved older logics of collective belonging while at the same time training them into characteristically modern molds. Where others found extra-liberal sustenance in the self-protractions of “manhood,” “force,” and “character”—themselves often racially encoded as gathered from a shared cultural “stock”—Dixon’s more explicit evocation of whiteness (and its homologous consubstantiation in “civilization”) discovered other surrogate means to augment the republic’s political deficits. What inaugurates so much of The Clansman’s search for social coherence is really the loss of centralized power, of the symphonic “wholeness” of a corporate national body in the assassination of President Lincoln. Just as Churchill led Virginia Carvel to Washington to bask in Lincoln’s benevolence, so the author from North Carolina escorts Southern readers to “The Capitol of the Nation” to observe in the “incarnation of the Triumphant Union” the “care-worn face” of one whose love bridges all sectional boundaries (81). As the country’s “Great Heart,” murdered, the author notes, by a wayward Southerner following undisciplined personal instincts, Lincoln’s demise is rendered as the collapse of a collective, interactive organ through which citizens North and South “had come to feel their own hearts beat in his breast and their own life throb in his life. The assassin’s bullet had crashed into their own brains, and torn their souls and bodies asunder,” Dixon avows. “The masses were swept from their moorings, and reason destroyed. All historic perspective was lost” (85-6). Dixon’s representation of Reconstruction’s pandemonium is merely the outgrowth of
the “frenzy” that follows the “crazed” scene of Lincoln’s execution, a hysteria enlarged upon in his charge—mirroring the text’s racial symbolic—that with his death the “seat of empire had moved from the White House to a little dark house on Capitol hill, where dwelt an old club-footed man, alone, attended by a strange brown woman of sinister animal beauty and the restless eyes of a leopardess” (62). The fuse that detonates the democratic excess of Reconstruction, Dixon suggests, is not centralized government (Lincoln being the most “despotic” president in U.S. history to that time), nor necessarily the abolition of slavery (the Dixon family allegedly doubted the rightfulness of the peculiar institution), but the “lawlessness” of “radical” meddling with established norms and customs.47

Like New York’s Harold Frederic, Dixon’s attitudes toward state intervention were holdovers in a culture generally warming to the influence of corporate bureaucracy. But his racialized blood lore and fond characterization of corporeal interdependence in the executive figurehead were correlatives of advancing national trends toward association and centralization. As prodigal sons returning to the national banquet, both Cable and Dixon—dissimilar though features of their politics may have been—saw in wider nationalist purposes the future of regional hope. But in the masculinist culture thriving at the turn-of-the-century, none exerted more brawn and muscle than Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston.

**Mercurial Women and the Militarization of “Reality”**

*The Battle-Ground* (1902) was Ellen Glasgow’s first bestseller and rose to instant acclaim. As if in answer to Willa Cather’s challenge to female writers, she channeled the war theme as means to confront “Reality with a capital R.” “I have no faith in women in
fiction,” a young Cather had decreed in 1895. “When a woman writes a story of
adventure, a stout sea tale, a manly battle yarn, then I will hope for something great from
them, not before.” Metatextually, *The Battle-Ground* stabs at women readers as weepy
lingerers over volumes of “trash” enthralled only with “pretty sentiment” (198-199, 202).
Rather, in line with the rough war education Betty Ambler receives by the close of
Glasgow’s narrative, women should accept the moderate challenges of new age, an age
steeling itself to the grubbier trials and hardships of a changed universe. Distinguishing
the novel from the maudlin romances of Thomas Nelson Page and John Esten Cooke,
reviewers praised *The Battle-Ground* for its “historical accuracy.” One went so far as to
cautions readers with milder temperaments that its “minutely realistic account of the war”
might make it “a little too much for their nerves.” Glasgow gleefully embraced such
readings and, according to Susan Goodman, often “bragged that military officers in Great
Britain studied its descriptions of battle” (Goodman, “Introduction,” xviii).

Returning reality to the war story, however, meant returning the repressed theme
of slavery. A prominent character in the text is the big-hearted Big Abel who bravely
attends to his “master,” Dan Mountjoy, at one point saving his life. As a major figure in
the literature of the New South, Glasgow was nominally opposed to slavery as an
anachronism of the old “aristocracy” and its restrictive conservative codes (63). But in
restoring African American participants to the fore, Glasgow’s text meditated less on
themes of social justice than, as early century Civil War culture tended to do, on the
relationship of such issues to more ecumenical concerns with social order and collective
political belonging. Like other writers, she was enamored with Progressivism’s
revisionist pursuit of transpersonal ideologies of the subject—in her case often framed in
quasi-racialist rhetoric as bound irrevocably to kinships of blood and soil (442-43). Big Abel, as it turns out, actually opposes the war as a “low-lifeted one” because it “jumbles de quality en de trash tergedder” (393). Its “democracy,” however, is suffused with all the mandates of identity of interest. As Big Abel summarizes, “somebody got ter be w’ite folks en somebody got ter be nigger” (403).

As another Southern writer to take up the war theme in the early twentieth century, Glasgow valorized the Confederacy not as a regional isolate but as a powerful wing of a modern national edifice rousing itself to “begin again” (512). As in The Crisis and The Cavalier, her war hymn promoted not secession’s cause but rather the national soul’s capacity for commitments to “cause” itself. Ridding personhood of its claustrophobic confinement in lonely realms of self-interest, the characters of The Battle-Ground find modes of existence anterior to the liberal individual as the war calls them to urgencies of duty beyond those of family and estate. Exposing both historical and cultural contingency, her subjects are drawn from shared estuaries of character, genomic fonts of “stock” running laterally across the ranks and piped up from inherited reservoirs receding back into time immemorial. With Crane-like flair, she sketches a group of privates as transfigurations of a common bloodline: “They were all young—the eldest hardly more than three and twenty—and the faces bore a curious resemblance in type, as if they were, one and all, variations from a common stock. There was about them, too, a peculiar expression of enthusiasm, showing even in the faces of those who slept: a single wave of emotion which, rising to its height in an entire people revealed itself in the features of the individual soldier.” “As yet the flower of the South had not withered on its stalk,” she adds, “and the men first gathered to defend the borders were men who
embraced a cause as fervently as they would embrace a woman; men in whom the love of
an abstract principle became, not a religion, but a romantic passion” (283-4). Their
visages rippling with species kinship, the soldiers’ interpermeable membranes magnify a
collective personality while channeling that shared potency into undefined (and thus re-
definable) causes.

Glasgow’s primitivist biologism carried a particularly modern cant, however.
Racing through the “hot-blooded” veins of The Battle-Ground’s Dan Mountjoy are pan-
generational proclivities prompted by the “School of War,” by its arousal of “the sleeping
brute within” (283, 312). At first, Glasgow registers the blood tie as one of ancestry, a
gift for military action inherited from Dan’s grandfather Major Lightfoot. Preparing for
his first battle, Dan senses that “The major’s fighting blood had stirred within his
grandson’s veins, and generations of dead Lightfoots were scenting the coming battle
from the dust” (296). Yet, by turns, the sanguinary metaphors expand as flowing from
“an inward pressure” connected to “Southern ardor” (299-300, 360). Anticipating a trope
in early World War I narratives, Dan is joined in battle by dead heroes who spring to his
aid from the mists of family history. “The hot old blood of his fathers had stirred again,”
Glasgow writes, “and the dead had rallied to the call of their descendent. He was not
afraid, for he had been here long before” (312). Rushing into the fray, “Behind him, and
beside him, row after row of gray men leaped from the shadow…the dead fighters lived
again.” The transhistorical consciousness—“he had been here long before”—awards him
access to the furthermost reaches of the Rooseveltian-Cromwellian primordial. “All the
primeval instincts, throttled by the restraint of centuries—the instincts of bloodguiltiness,
of hot pursuit, of the fierce exhilaration of the chase, of the death grapple with a resisting
foe—these awoke suddenly to life and turned the battle scarlet to his eyes” (312). For Glasgow, war unleashes historical recognitions of deep associational roots.

As the war proceeds, however, Dan’s “hot” temperament begins to cool. Attending vigilantly to war work and its many hardships, he learns to subordinate such spontaneous inflammations. By war’s end, the shared experience of their joint encounter endows Union and Confederacy alike with a corroborative fullness of spirit. “As the long winter passed away,” Dan confesses, “he learned, not only much of the spirit of his own side, but something that became almost a sunny tolerance, of the great blue army across the Rappahannock.” Bouncing back and forth across the river, exchanges of dialogue lead opposing troops to recognize their “wide curiosity” in each other, that their enemies “have souls in their bodies like the rest of us” (447). Dan eventually confesses desires for a shared “influence” able to “fuse individual and opposing wills into a single supreme endeavor” (446). And Glasgow closes with scenes of exhausted but chummy Blue and Gray soldiers sharing stories of each others’ adventures over a repast dished out of Yankee rations. In the end, Dan declares, “a shadow was lifted from his people and it was worth the price” (485). What begins as a blood saga surging from the roots of a pedigreed family tree mutates into a system of region-based capillaries and ends as a testament to war’s national transfusion in the collective body grown to maturity.

The telescopic perspective works simultaneously backwards, enlarging consciousness within the multiplied collectivity. Men and women alike gain synergetic temperaments able to surpass the confusions of private dissociation. After their first skirmish, Dan is astonished to observe his company as “a loosened mass, without strength and without cohesion,” displaying “the undisciplined ardour of raw troops.” But
as time and routine impress them further into a mutuality of purpose, war teaches him that “the sinews of an army are wrought not by a single trial, but by the strain of prolonged and strenuous endeavor” (317). Betty, Dan’s love-interest, blends her soul with his in battle as a “dual consciousness,” a release of perspective freeing her from the solitudes of “her bodily presence” (328). One year after the release of Glasgow’s novel, W.E.B. Du Bois published his social history, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), which advances his own famous assessment of “double consciousness”: a split in African American subjectivity, another “spectatorial” two-ness, caused by the internalization of the white gaze. Longing for the liberal ideal denied African Americans in U.S. history, he expresses a powerful desire for masculine autonomy in the “merger” of a whole, “true” self. For Glasgow’s white figures, however, hybridity announces a maturation of perspective. Speeding the arrival of an interrelational nationality, war’s preponderant scale conditions participants to observe a “kinship with external things” (346). “To Dan these terrible days were as the anguish of a new birth,” Glasgow asserts, “in which the thing to be born suffered the conscious throes of an awakening life” (342). Repurposed for a new generation, the story of the Civil War was summarily refigured as the national body’s growing pains.

Although Glasgow’s Civil War contains many “realistic” images—battlefield vistas blighted by starvation, sickness, and death—*The Battle-Ground*’s equating of “war” and “reality” also exhibits all the cultural experimentation with forms of interactive consciousness nineteenth-century antecedents were ill-equipped to convey. As a turnstile into a lifeworld thrown open to vaster expanses of self-knowledge, war participation grants access to transpersonal perspectives that the culture at peace lacks. In
choosing the war subject as literary material more approximate to reality than everyday life, Progressive Era writers may have helped drain the culture of its bourgeois Victorianism, but in so doing they also charted inroads into more conservative domains. That women authors blazed such typically masculine terrain was, to be sure, part of a “progressive” effort to break into the auspices of an off-limits public sphere, a tendency which further belies the structural intimacy between war participation and national integration. But to safeguard their entry, they often mimicked rather than challenged the militarist culture of the state and, as a consequence, a measure of political contradiction was lost in the exchange. As a junction point, a pyrrhic victory, “inclusion,” that is, often slacked dialectical pressures compelling dissent in the first place, a fact in which broader public proxy often mandated deeper “representation” before the state. Suffragists, in short, were often the eagerest patriots.

Glasgow only tentatively embraced the Women’s Suffrage Movement, a movement stifled by the Civil War but rising to its fullest showing in the years surrounding World War I. But for Mary Johnston, whose “famousness and large sales” cast the “shadow” under which Glasgow wrote as the “second Virginian,” linkages between war culture and the franchise were more obvious. The daughter of a captain in the Botetourt Artillery and the niece of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston, she was a prominent organizer in the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia. Although she self-identified as a socialist and stood with pacifists during World War I, her bewitchment with war and the collective structures of subjectivity it generated were crucial aspects of her writing, an endeavor she once described as an “adventure in consciousness.” “Mine is no isolated experience,” she tellingly wrote, “many persons have been and are aware of
a widening and deepening of consciousness. My experience is of value to me, but it has no special prominence in that enlargement of life into which we are all sweeping.” In years immediately prior to the Great War, Johnston published a massive Civil War epic spread across two highly influential volumes: *The Long Roll* (1911) and *Cease Firing* (1912). That influence would prove durable. Thirty years later, in the midst of operations in World War II, General Dwight Eisenhower remarked that, “If I want to read military tactics for pleasure, I choose to read Mary Johnston.”

Johnston’s war literacy is beyond impressive. As a history of Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s campaign, *The Long Roll* is without question the most “manly” Civil War text of the Progressive Era, and proves her deftness at portraying “a side of war which Walter Scott had never painted” (158). Her uber-masculine representation of the Confederate general managed to land her on the wrong side of “Mrs. ‘Stonewall’ Jackson” who took out ads in the *New York Times* upbraiding the author for her novel’s “hideous caricature” of her husband. Recognizing in Johnston’s lemon-sucking, slovenly dressed war zealot only “some brutal prizefighter, of physical figure and countenance, all animal without one spark of illumination,” Mary Jackson censured Johnston for having drunk too deeply the “heavy wine” of “literary success.” As “proof that he was not descended from plebians and boors as would be inferred from ‘The Long Roll,’” she appended a “brief outline” of the good general’s ancestry and assailed Johnson for grievously letting her “sense of the dramatic…beguile her into doing a grave wrong to the truth of history.”

But Johnston’s reality-more-real-than-the-real lent her text the very quality of historical truth which favored it to the militarizing culture of her time. Her familiarity
with tactics and maneuvers is unmatched by any male writer, veterans included; her battle
descriptions are studied to the minutest detail; her understanding of equipment and
procedure is mimetically exacting. Yet Johnston’s attention to the accuracies of military
minutia corresponds more with the social concerns of her own moment, namely the
frangibility of the political community, than with the historian’s delight in verisimilitude
and reenactment. Indeed, her strapping war texts might best be seen as the consummate
example of Progressive desire laid bare. In their sheer corpulence, painstakingly plotting
every coordinate of the social field, they present a dynamic vision of the national
assemblage from multiple points of view. Not only does her epic not evade the “total”
aspect of the war, it faithfully depicts every strata of the American scene operating in a
cooperative galaxy of identity of interest. Furthermore, the inclusion of fold-out maps as
appendices teaches readers to observe domestic territories as sites of geographical
collectivity, places best remembered topographically as strategic points of interest always
potentially under siege.

As its title suggests, *The Long Roll* unfolds a war story of grueling duration
fuelled by the many mundane activities necessary to execute it. When the conflict first
breaks out, Johnston maligns the confusion displayed by the unfettered society. In addition
to the helter-skelter of the rank and file, she chides the “rabble of camp followers, sutlers,
musicians, teamsters, servants, congressmen in carriages” roiling in confusion about the
field as if they are out for a sporting event. About them hangs “the strut and folly and
civilian ignorance, the unwarlike softness and misdirected pride with which these Greeks
had set out to take in a night that four-years-distant Troy.” “There was no cohesion,” she
writes, “They looked like a swarm of bees; but there was no Spirit of the Hive” (92).
That search for the Spirit of the Hive shapes every tilt and contour of the remaining narrative and, in many ways, charts a course toward the “preparedness imaginary” of early World War I literature that I describe in the following chapter. Omnipresent among her principle themes is the argument that the Confederate defeat was due more to a lack of resources and planning than any failure of nerve. Lamenting the outcome of their “christening” at Manassas, she blames Confederate troops, victorious though they may have been, for not pressing “the pursuit to the Potomac” and sacking the “terror-stricken city” of Washington once and for all. Characteristically, however, she acknowledges that it was their depleted resources and fatigued numbers that prevented them from accomplishing a decisive victory (95). Frequent reportage on troop shortages drives her argument for the power of “quantity” over “quality,” the pragmatic necessities of modern military-national needs over soldiers’ more singular estimations of martial prowess.

“How confident we are with our ‘One to Four,’ our “Quality, not Quantity,’ our contempt for the ‘Brute Mass’,,” she declares, maligning unrealistic myths of a special Confederate bravado ratio (101). Like Richard Cleave, the main character, she prefers simply a reserve of competent field officers rather than the heroics of the “great man” (309). Anxiety about foreigners as a fifth column of potential spies—“all Europe’s here”—confers further suspicions about a diverse nation’s ability to exact consent during times of crisis (118-119, 330). But it is in consolidating a distinctly anti-liberal trust in indisputable structures of authority and group loyalty that her cardinal theme comes forth. As with Crane’s characters, scenes of marching, injury, and hunger lead to anxious doubts and bickering about the fitness of their leadership (152, 162). The first quarter of the text is shot through with numerously voiced worries about the competency, even
sanity, of “fool Tom Jackson.” In the end, however, Stonewall and his chain of
command are discovered to have rightly foreseen every contingency, and the accusers
learn the error of their more solitary, limited points of view.

The clear targets of Johnston’s meditations are liberalism’s political shortages.
Like Oliver Wendell Holmes, she extols the antirational stoicism of men who walk
instantly into death without hesitating (299). As counterpoint, she parades Private Steven
Dagg through the text, a whining shirker who thinks only of food, drink, and sleep, as an
unenviable example of self-interest’s homeliest nature. But in lessons on the perils of
“insubordination, or disobedience, or neglect of duty” does she offer her most earnest
rebukes. Maury Stafford, a character more disposed toward his own interests than the
Confederacy he serves, gets a lesson on the excellent nature of Stonewall Jackson’s
“iron” leadership from Allan Gold. Gold tells him the story of “some poor fools of the
twelve month men” who enlisted for a year, served their term, and demanded to return
home at its end. When their discharge was denied, they threw down their arms and
refused to re-enlist, haplessly having “forgotten all about the conscription act that
Congress had just passed.” Pitiless to the end, Stonewall has them shot “where they
stand” and, “rigid in his discipline” though he may be, Gold declares, his officers would
“rather be led by Stonewall Jackson than by an easier man” (248-49). Unlike Stafford,
his adversary in the quest for Judith Cary’s love, a man who would wish him harm as
means to his goal even though both are Confederate officers, Richard Cleave surfaces as
the novel’s ultimate man of vision able to delay and sublimate private desire. “When the
country bleeds one must put away private grief,” he declares (439). Rising rapidly
through the ranks and winning Judith’s hand, Cleave could not be more inappropriately
named. Welding his whole being into the machine, he is the summary of the incorporated self.

Representatively assembled within the novel, within its comprehensive span, the total war’s many different domains return to the stage to present models of social cohesion and identity of interest amenable to the corporate state. Black characters—like Glasgow’s, also opposed to the war and bewildered at the meaning of the white fuss—are happy in their allotted stations, contributing generously to the Southern effort and, in one instance, even rebuffing captured Yankees for their defamations of the Confederacy.52 To prosecute the war adequately, everyone must summon reserves of loyalty to points distant and unknown at scales exceeding individual desire. The “keystone of the arch,” declares one commentator, is “a composition of three—the armies in the field, the women of the South, and the servants” (402). In the ferment of the new national order, state bureaucracy wants all hands on deck.

**Conclusion: Civil War Representation and the Democracy of the State**

Richard Pells succinctly summarizes Progressives as “radical innovators with profoundly conservative goals” (3). As reformers, they urged solutions to political corruption and the fiscal asymmetries of unregulated capitalism while simultaneously unleashing a formidable undertow of desire for civic management and social regularity.53 The chief obstacle to the arrival of that geared and levered public machine was, among many things, the liberal political imaginary itself—an indifference toward collectivity enabling the “rogue” tendencies of Wall Street and Rum Alley alike.54 That the Civil War gained status during the Progressive Era as a mnemonic of national incorporation and cooperation can be attributable only to the power of that movement’s managerial
imagination. It is in reference to this politically opaque era, however, that much of the
critical and historical commentary on Civil War memory suddenly falls silent, perhaps
because the interpretive paradigm so richly chronicling previous decades no longer seems
to make sense. In a way, the complaints hurled against the amnesiac culture of
Reconstruction and its immediate aftermath—its erasure of racial and emancipationist
themes, its masculine colonization of a literary sphere once occupied almost exclusively
by women, its forgetting of the common soldier for the “elitism” of the Great Man—no
longer hold, or at least not with the tenacity and transparency of earlier years. Moreover,
as if to anticipate their critics a century hence, many turn-of-the-century writers “equally”
populate their texts with as “inclusive” and “representative” a cast as one could wish.

What no longer works, that is, is the interpretive gauge prevailing among most
reunion critics: the quantifying standard that counts bodies—authors’ and characters’—
only for their somatic ability to “stand in” for their race, class, or gender. What no longer
works is an interpretive priority that probes narratives primarily for their skill at
“representing” the Civil War’s diversity as measures of a text’s greater or lesser
“democracy.” What no longer works is the obstinate liberal-national rubric unable to
account for liberalism’s own moderation of an “inclusive” but constabulary state, its
socially regulating elasticity. David Blight’s Race and Reunion, for instance, offers a
typical example. He recalls Century magazine’s solicitation of prominent generals for
contributions to their series on the Civil War, an “elitism” prompting a backlash as rank-
and-file veterans rushed to author their own reminiscences. The “flood of writing,” the
“sheer volume of this material,” “the variety of people yearning to be heard,” Blight
argues, demonstrates “a kind of democratization of memory” in that a “vast reservoir of
stories” was at last logged by “people from across the economic and social spectrum who wanted to be counted as participants” (179). Although Elizabeth Young concedes how war’s “mirror” conditions women’s compliance—imposing “self-surveillance” and “fracturing the woman”—similar interpretive strategies support her work. Reading Frances Harper’s Civil War-themed *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892), she detects a “recoloring of the national allegory,” changing “the ‘orbit’ of war narrative so that eclipsed female faces could appear.”55 Recuperating the works of forgotten figures who “want to be counted,” who want their faces to “appear,” forms the basis of much of the work by Nina Silber and Alice Fahs, who retrieve “lowbrow” texts and women’s war narratives to contest the hegemony of war memorialization by elite and patriarchal ideologues.

There is no question that war memory is a contested terrain, and that oppressive forces were and are at work, especially because war, especially the self-valuation strategies of its inclusion/exclusion dialectic, figures so powerfully in shaping the national mythos. Recovery within such a regime constitutes a necessary practice in restoring a more representative picture of military episodes to American discourse. But one of the more baffling traditions in American historiography is the continued practice of testing the nation’s political “progress” by its propensity for military inclusion. Lost as the result of such a historical optic, one burdened by the need to referee persons vying for equal “representation” in military arenas, is the fact that more egalitarian roll calls only gather more thorough lists of names paying duties to the state. Ensnaring the figures in American war narratives in dichotomous tugs-of-war—men vs. women, blacks against whites, privates with generals—pays tribute to the dialogic nature of citizen belonging
but, ultimately, fogs the existence of an overarching war imaginary that legitimates such activities, an imaginary virtually uncontested by the many merely trying gain access to war’s self-conferring power. That all are contending to participate in or to be recognized through institutions devoted to state violence suggests not a political community evolving ever-better versions of its democratic charter but the power of the state’s hold over the political rationality of that culture, its potency in sanctioning an authentic structure of political personhood.

Oscillating between militarization and democratization, the Progressive slight of hand is revealed here in its fullest light, yoked to the liberal state’s penchant for what Wendy Brown calls exertions of “prerogative” power (186). Indeed, this study begins in the 1890s, at precisely the moment when military policy is shifting from a patronage system of appointments based on family and “breeding” to a “meritocracy” that more competently measures the individual’s aptitude for military performance, that surveys individual bodies for their martial fitness and spontaneous displays of loyalty. Should one discern in such a social “leveling” the national fulfillment of its rhetorically professed commitment to equality, its incremental arrival at a democracy long hedged upon but gradually made manifest? Or can one notice in such a flexible residuum the double work of the state, one that grants broader and broader inclusion even as it withdraws sovereignty and autonomy from that more expansive national body? In the disappearance of the heroic tradition and its romantic militarism, furthermore, should one detect a literature draining war of its mythic power, or in its more generally accessible depiction of war’s more quotidian aspects can one not also see realism’s ideological adaptations, its encircling of violence with the aura of the everyday, naturalizing
warfare’s transition from exceptional event to human norm? Stubbornly, dominant
traditions in American historicism insist on viewing war service as a vehicle to increased
“rights” for formerly excluded groups. But can one not also read a corollary to that
basically liberal transaction, the making of a different sort of military-national subject
who can be trusted never to cash in on them? Put differently, can one see how the
military’s ever-widening gateway to the public sphere erodes the possibilities inherent to
that sphere the wider it swings open the door? In the final analysis, the most democratic
war text, an artifact seemingly longed for, arrays not a picture of liberty, but a
multicultural portrait of diverse identities laboring obediently for Uncle Sam—a
celebration of “difference” in which everyone is the same.

Returning to Ken Burns’s The Civil War, finally, one must reflect on whether its
tremendous textual power derives from its “democratic” ability to convey a plurality of
stories—revitalizing the voices of culturally disremembered slaves, returning women and
the repressed domestic sphere to their place of prominence in the production of the war,
etching the words of mud-encrusted soldiers onto the hearts of an audience five
generations away—or from its ability to capture such multivocality under the sign of the
nation-state and its metaphysical historiography. In the quavering recital of Lincoln’s
and Frederic Douglass’s most eloquent speeches, in the elliptical rehearsals of Mary
Chestnut’s diaries and rough-and-tumble parochialism of soldiers’ letters, Burns
reproduces the plenary spectacle of the domestic war in a way that desires precisely not
to forget a single aspect of the national tragedy. Effecting a symbolic transference,
representations like The Civil War conscript their audience into elongated versions of the
national biography, investing them with the relational value of its totalizing imaginary.
As Burns’s ghostly portraits inch further and further toward the screen, beckoning the viewer to behold in their visages all the affecting pathos of that tested age, to trace in the disconcerting candor of their eyes their encounter with war’s “shocking ultimacy,” his peripherally omniscient question aims always at the audience huddled on the other side of the screen (Trachtenberg, “Reading” 74). In reference to such a moment of decision and fortitude—as much a “conversion” story as Crane’s *Red Badge*—it asks a shiftless generation to consider its own ineffectual existence and the sacred substance of which it is a part. Who and what are you? But should the viewer be allowed to reverse the advances of that dilating screen, turning it back on the diversely represented story of 1860s America, and pan out from Burns’s many-textured individuations, the multiple swatches of color would give way to one accreted, monochromatic block—an assemblage of creatures in the uniform of the state. The most “democratic” Civil War representation of all time made its way across the Atlantic later that year when then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney sent General Norman Schwarzkopf a copy of Burns’s epic to boost his resolve in the first Iraq war.

But the way was prepared a century before. Anchoring their construction of the common good to a conservative-martial metaphor of national corporeality, it was Progressive precursors who earlier equated notions of democratic progress and the summons to military order. In Harold Frederic’s family gathered about the national synecdoche in their red barn, in the isotopic characters discovering themselves as part of greater collaborations of “blood” and “force,” in the “spectatorial” subjects gaining homologous existence with other nationals, the Progressive Era found in the U.S. war story literary analogs for their dream of social amelioration. Through their aesthetic
alchemy, war, the very event which most reveals the ideological limits of liberal political structures, becomes the very vehicle through which those limits are traversed and reconciled. This is perhaps why the liberal recourse to a “moral equivalent of war” yearned for by William James in 1906 found so little mutual footing. James sought to go to war against nature rather than, as his contemporaries, to understand war as nature. That eleven years later, thousands of ecstatic Americans would pour themselves from European trenches into German firepower suggests how short James came to understanding war’s seductive, self-constituting power.
Chapter 2

Subjects of Sacrifice:
World War I Narrative and the Militarization of American Discourse

These things form our imagination; it is our disposition to think of the war as a great conflict of physical forces in which the best mechanic won, and in which the nation that was strongest in material things, which had the largest accumulation of wealth and the greatest power of concentrating its industrial factors, was the victorious nation. Yet, as I said at the outset, I suspect the future historian will find under all these physical manifestations their mental cause, and will find that the thing which ultimately brought the victory of the Allied forces on the western front was not wholly the strength of the arm of the soldier, not wholly the number of guns of the Allied nations; but it was rather the mental forces that were at work nerving those arms, and producing those guns, and producing in the civil populations and military populations alike of those countries that unconquerable determination that this war should have but one end, a righteous end.

--George Creel, *How We Advertised America*

If World War I was a critical juncture in American history, political obligation was the switch-man.

--Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*

**World War I: A “Plastic Juncture” in History**

In April of 1917, Frank Cobb, editor of the *New York World*, asked Woodrow Wilson what it meant to go to war. “An attempt to reconstruct a peace-time civilization with war standards,” the President replied, “and at the end of the war there will be no bystanders with sufficient power to influence the terms. There won’t be any peace standards left to work with. There will be only war standards.”¹ His gloomy prognosis forecast a more accurate sense of war mobilization’s outcome than his more familiar promise of “a war to end all war.” The two seemingly antagonistic views, however, reflected not so much an overt contradiction as a more covert crisis in the tangled political intersections of liberalism, nationalism, and militarization taking shape in the last years of the Progressive Era. Despite acceding to a second term on a platform of non-intervention, Wilson galvanized support for the war effort as both a potential spur to domestic reform and as the only way of ensuring American influence in the rapid international restructuring that would surely follow. War standards, in effect, were peace standards.
As the entry into World War I demonstrated, Americans during the Progressive Era underwent a synergetic knitting together of state and society in ways previously unimaginable. The looser affiliations of Jeffersonian liberalism and laissez faire autonomy that once confederated American life were merging into a more integrated national framework. Although still a “patchwork,” to be sure, statist versions of collectivist virtues—cohesion, continuity, and coordination—accrued increasing political capital across much of the public weal. Replacing prior valorizations of entrepreneurial individualism, citizens understood themselves as cellular dependents within a larger, more incorporated national body. Although numerous Progressive organizations remained committed to typically liberal, middle-class values—among them anti-imperialism and capitalist regulation—war preparation promised to cement republican solidarity by which to coordinate an unruly hodgepodge of private and social urges. Routing viral insurgent longings for reform into the military-national variants offered by Herbert Croly’s *The Promise of American Life* (1909) and the “New Nationalism” campaign it influenced, early twentieth-century nationalist movements used mobilization and intervention—corollaries to civic “engagement”—as a blueprint for the well-functioning society.

Croly, for instance, aiming to achieve “Jeffersonian ends through Hamiltonian means,” called upon American liberals to “transcend their individual interests” in favor of an aroused “public interest.” Reconstructing a new American creed on a corporate-military model, he prevailed upon images of Americans at war as the regenerative medicine by which a flabby, self-interested population might learn to constrain democracy’s vagaries and ambiguities beneath the uniformity of the flag. Interlacing the
languages of military might, racial superiority, and providential decree, he crafted what Michael McGerr calls an “irrational state religion,” a deification of the Nation “to make his system work.” By 1917, even Progressive reformers like John Dewey began to agree that war could “help reconstruct America” (Pearlman 6). The war, he argued in column after column through 1916 and 1917, represented a “plastic juncture in history,” a moment when the world was made more “malleable to the guiding influence of reason.” Intellectual foreman for a coterie of social engineers, Croly and Dewey erected the “bridge on which many a [Progressive] conscience crossed” (Kennedy 50).

The “plastic juncture” of war mobilization represented a political crucible conjoining both top down and bottom up pressures, the development of what Christopher Capozzola calls “an improvisational hybrid state that reconciled its coercive and voluntarist elements by concealing the conflict between them” (210-211). What emerged was a fundamentally new political formation. Stressing national welfare over factional strife, an “identity of interest,” the Progressive reconstruction of America hobbled more radical political solutions in favor of public order and a bureaucratically constellation social field. From on high, Wilson’s speech at the Willard Hotel in 1917 overturned a long-standing American reluctance toward “foreign entanglements”—the prized isolationist sentiments of George Washington’s valedictory and their more formal legal expression in the Monroe Doctrine. “We are participants, whether we would or not,” Wilson declared, “in the life of the world. The interests of all nations are our own also. We are partners with the rest” (Knock 76). But enmeshing American interests with those abroad meant dispelling resistance at home. In the juggernaut of American militarization and enforced compliance with its agenda, many citizens felt the repressive
grip of propaganda and censorship. As bulwarks against “subversive” activity, American society witnessed the ascent of George Creel’s Committee on Public Information (CPI), the passage of the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917 and 1918, Postmaster General Albert Burleson’s suppression of left-wing literature in the mails, and Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer’s “slacker raids.” The homefront’s first exposure to mass conscription as well bore witness to an unparalleled intrusion of the state into formerly voluntary realms. As the CPI’s propaganda program proclaimed, a “white hot mass instinct” for war was paramount (O’Leary 229).

From below, other politically powerful engines generated war enthusiasm through both casually persuasive and overtly coercive means. While Dewey and Croly were the most visible expositors of war’s socially curative promise, distinguished universities were hotbeds of militaristic fervor with presidents and public-minded professors stirring up wide support within their respective institutions and mandating classics-based “War Issues” courses across a multitude of curriculums.8 Having denounced the imperialism of war planners only a few short months before in “The African Roots of the War,” W.E.B. Du Bois suddenly called on African Americans to “close ranks” with the dominant culture as the surest means of gaining increased political legitimacy at home.9 In conjunction with the Justice Department, community organizations and citizens’ leagues sprouted across the nation’s interior, dispensing vigilante retaliation against suspected subversives, pacifists, unassimilated ethnics, socialists, anarchists, or outspoken members of the working class.10 In tune with rhetoric pitched against “hyphenated” Americans—intoned most notably by Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge—organizations like the American Defense Society, the National Security
League, and the American Protective League used fear and open mob violence to induce and enforce an ideology of “100 percent Americanism” upon 100 percent of the population. By the end of the war, the APL alone would number over a quarter of a million members. President Wilson, throughout 1915 and 1916, joined in the chorus. “There are citizens of the United States,” he cautioned, “born under other flags but welcomed under our generous naturalization laws to the full freedom and opportunity of America, who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life…Such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out…The hand of our power should close over them at once” (Kennedy 24).

Intensifying control in the domestic realm and projecting national influence beyond American waters were two strands of the same political fiber. As prevailing conceits of American liberalism—the Jeffersonian privileging of a rationally self-interested subject unencumbered by governmental influence—crashed headlong into disorienting new ideological and geographic strata, the limits of their ability to enlist consent and predict public compliance became garishly apparent. How would the US accustom itself to the conditions of the new century while still retaining its foundational values? How would a nation weaned on lore of the Winchester over the fireplace and distaste for the “Prussianism” of standing armies tolerate the turn toward military professionalism and the Selective Service’s imposition of a draft? How would a mostly isolationist body politic convert events occurring across a presumably protective ocean, in a continent long viewed as decadent and corrupt, into fungible aspects of their own national life? Circulating throughout these questions and others, age-old conflicts between “rights” and “obligations” wove their way.
Navigating many a political impasse was the large body of American war writing itself which gave widely consumed literary form to the international plunge. Defining the stakes both at home and abroad, war narratives encouraged citizen consent for a changing political milieu and interpreted the meaning of war for generations that followed. Reduced to only a handful of novels generally repelled by the patriotic tenor of the war moment—e.e. cummings’s *The Enormous Room* (1920), John Dos Passos’s *Three Soldiers* (1921), Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)—much public memory today recalls an outpouring of literary outrage inaugurated by World War I. As “enemies of order,” in Alfred Kazin’s illustrative assessment, the postwar generation is typically remembered for its pursuit of aesthetic asylum and its revulsion for the militarist bathos of the “Herd State” (148-53, 239). Similarly, James Dawes notes their “suspicion of creation exercised at the scale of the public” and “concomitant retreat to the diminutive ranges and more controllable outcomes of private creation” (77).

Yet varying greatly in terms of both form and content, two differently attuned groups of writers circumscribed the conflict in ways that helped Americans imagine and embrace their newly assumed place in a changed world. The most pronounced thematic tension concerned an incompatibility between an inherited legend of the self-ruling, rights-bearing individual and the altered scale of subjective interest signaled by the historical and spatial imaginaries of statist nationalism and liberal interventionism. Overcoming earlier allegiances to autonomy and isolationism, authors worked collectively to unlatch the political imagination from local centers of meaning—the family, the farm, the church, the saloon, the schoolhouse—and “mature” orientations more adapted to the needs of an international, militarized era.
tools necessary to measure personal stakes in distant arenas, war narrative allowed Americans ways of linking their interiors to the mystical outer boundaries of the national community—a linkage by which they could retroactively recognize themselves as dependent elements within a broader body politic. In so doing, war writing also silenced recalcitrant desires for personal autonomy, lingering appeals to conscience and “rights,” and an atavistic repugnance toward the authority of state institutions. And in galvanizing a more symbiotic culture of obligation between citizens and broader modes of social organization, many war narratives helped transfer the content of popular sovereignty from resources determined by “We the People” to suprapersonal perches of legitimacy in the government, the law, and state power.¹⁵

The first group of writers orbited the theme of “sacrifice” as an extra-liberal, transhistorical supplement to official conceits of citizenship. The second, in a related way, focused on the bourgeoning discourse of “preparedness” as a medium through which Americans could recognize—because of their shared vulnerability—the necessity of incorporation and homogeneity where only disparity and difference existed before. And though repelled in many ways by the worldview of the first two groups, major texts of American literary modernism—those which followed in the wake of the war and which earned reputations for inaugurating an “antiwar” or “protest” tradition—demonstrate their own complicity in the period’s militarization, accommodating “realist” migrations in political thought and favoring subjectivities compliant with the liberal internationalism of World War II. The first two groups comprise the substance of this chapter. The modernist “backlash” unfolds in the chapter that follows.
I. “The Deepest Moral Mystery of the World”: Sacrifice and the Expansion of the Biographical Self

Early war writing, aside from being simply “patriotic” or “nationalistic,” was involved in the more specific cultural work of shedding insular affections for locality and attaching public sentiment to the national aggregate. It did so by treating unfolding scenes of conflict as contemporary instances of a much longer, transhistorical spiritual war waged for the “destiny” of a superior “civilization.” Whatever the particular historical interests of the hostilities, popular writing often portrayed the war as merely the current stage in an elongated sequence of conflict, one orchestrated by divine covenant at the dawn of history and now marching along its preordained course. From President Wilson’s verbal machinations to the rhetorical flourishes of countless pulpits, the language of the “crusade” was an omnipresent framework for describing oncoming events. Methodist Minister and YMCA worker William “Bill” Stidger’s Soldiers’ Silhouettes (1918), for instance, was a popular early text presenting soldiers’ family members with confirmation of their young men’s “crusade of service” in France. His homage to the army presented images of soldiers as divine attachés, filled with the “effervescent spirit of sunshine and laughter,” on their way to meet the Boches singing “Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past.” Arthur Train’s The Earthquake (1918) likewise describes the war as “a struggle for existence between the gospel of terror and that of humanity, between barbarism and civilization, between tyranny and liberty, between a cruel and merciless paganism and the teachings of Jesus Christ” (306). For writers like Temple Bailey, Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, and Connigsby Dawson, the “crusade against the Hun”—as the two key terms suggest—constituted not a discrete event
occurring in its own time and place and traceable to social and economic causes but a renewed grappling with the avatars of an ancient evil, the newest episode in an eternal clashing of light and dark forces.

Critical to garnering support for the war, however, was an even more refined petition to notions of “sacrifice,” a complex appeal to moral and political obligations extending beyond the atomistic boundaries of political self-interest and liberty of conscience. Symbolically supplementing liberalism’s impoverished ontology of the independent personality, sacrifice fleshed out skeletal notions of citizenship by imagining “the possibility of sacrifice not as an alien eruption of violence into life, but as the realization of an ultimate meaning.”18 Potboilers like Temple Bailey’s *The Tin Soldier* (1918)—among the top-ten bestsellers in 1919—dramatized the war as a moral brush clearing that let citizens at last view more telescopic parameters of personal significance, a concentric expansion of the person disclosing the mystical bonds of a national interdependency. “Men and women, because of it,” she pronounces, “were finding in themselves something which could suffer for others, something in themselves which could sacrifice, something which went beyond body and mind, something which reached up and touched their souls.”19 Furthermore, drawing parallels between Christian conversion and nationalization as homologous vehicles for self-transformation, early writing used scriptural allusions like “He That Loseth His Life Shall Find It” to frame compliance with the war—for men, women, and children alike—as a portal to existential enrichment and remuneration (Andrews 32). Some novels and tracts depicted soldiers’ deaths as splendid imitations of Christ’s crucifixion. Connigsby Dawson’s *The Glory of the Trenches* (1917) described soldiers as “soiled unconscious Christs,” martyrs fighting
on European hills of atonement recast as “Calvaries of a new redemption.” For Arthur Train, U.S. territorial immunity was itself worrisome. Along with Belgium, he proclaimed, we must be “crucified upon the Cavalry of Self-sacrifice”; not until we are “purged with the fire of self-sacrifice” will “our regeneration be achieved.” “Not until then” he concluded, “shall we hear the message of God” (305-307).

Collapsing Christian doctrines of self-surrender into nationalist narratives—both features of the New Nationalist ethos emerging out of the right-wing strain of Progressivism—texts such as Dawson’s enlisted able bodies to submit their most vital possession as a kind of self-amplification, as acts of “self-sacrifice which transcend the instincts and promptings of the flesh, and bear witness to the indestructible life of the spirit” (15-16). Defining the proximity to one’s own finality as conferring incorporeal profit, Dawson celebrates war’s “pitiless destruction of the body” as a recuperative “emancipation of the soul.” As it exhumes a “latent nobility,” “self-surrender,” he decrees, frees the soul from “the tyrannies of time and the fear of death.” With notably few available to confirm the truth of his claim, his main narrative departs very little from this train of thought, praising the body’s liberation from time’s “tyranny” as pleasurable relief from a burdensome outer husk. “Now we know,” he explains, “that our bodies are flimsy shells, in which our souls are paramount. We can fling them aside any minute; they become ignoble the moment the soul has departed.”

Concentrating less on death, however, Dawson’s central premise focuses on the socially curative experience of war sacrifice as a cultural conversion. In becoming “self-forgetful,” he professes, men in the military—once “normal men”—come to realize that “[s]omething has happened to them since they marched away in khaki—something has
changed them. They’re as completely re-made as St. Paul was after he had had his vision of the opening heavens on the road to Damascus” (58-61). The moral rebirth of war mobilization and the “service” of sacrifice have a purgative effect at home as well, immunizing a morally truant society against the “deep-fibred cancer of doubt and decadence which has long threatened civilization with a slow corrupt death” (17). Arthur Train’s *The Earthquake* (1918), a highly celebrated manifesto of war and national unity, applauded mobilization’s quarantining of delinquent social impulses, especially those enabled by laissez faire self-interest. In the final chapter, “What the War Has Done for Us,” Train deliberates upon “the new inward and spiritual grace” superintending his return to New York where nearly every corner of a once morally bankrupt public square has been transformed into a likeminded pageant of national enthusiasm. “Respect for the uniform has jacked us all up several pegs,” he declares, ushering the reader’s eye to observe fondly the spectacle of U-boats in Central Park, “aeroplanes” roaring over the city, service flags on Wall Street buildings, and the passing family doctor now clad in a major’s uniform as evidence of war’s “moral tonic” (276). In contrast to the petty materialism that dominated the prewar years— where miners and harvesters could afford their own “motor,” where prosperity permitted licentious factory girls to buy jewelry and copies of *Saucy Stories* — war has brought about a great and necessary change of heart (278-279). At the center of that turn, Train proclaims, is the development of a “national conscience” where once only unregulated ethnic diversity ran riot (290). “[T]here were so many different types of nationalities constituting the American people that we had no strictly national aims or ambitions except to be left alone,” he laments, “no principles except the particular form of ‘liberty’ which we enjoyed—no doctrines to uphold except
the moribund doctrine of Monroe.” While once public opinion was “local and divided,” “now apathy has given place to patriotism.” “We have a national consciousness if not a national conscience” (278-279, 290). In both heart and mind, nationality was becoming fundamental to the self’s interior makeup.

Like Dawson and Bailey, Train promoted sacrifice to vent his frustration with liberalism’s failure to secure a cohesive public temperament. By stripping away self-interest, by yielding themselves to a military cause, Train’s readers, he reassures them, will have reciprocating access to an aristocracy of character: “There will be a new order of nobility, and our boys instead of becoming coal ‘barons’, steel kings’, or ‘knightsof industry’ will be knighted upon the battle-field with the accolade of valor and self-sacrifice.” The abuse heaped upon Jefferson continues throughout as he excoriates the figure most responsible for enabling a languishing youth culture’s “crescendo of degeneracy.” For Train, the “deepest moral mystery of the world, the mystery of sacrifice,” mends a political will weakened by notions of freedom unconstrained. Through proximity to life-ending risk, he avers, “Life and Liberty became precious possessions—not vague abstractions.” The “distant rumble of war” makes the “old set phrases about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” glow suddenly “with a divine fire.” “The fox-trotters paused in their gyrations, the card-players glanced up apprehensively from the green tables, the fille de joie set down with a pale face the glass she had half raised to her red lips” (283, 296).

If Dawson, Bailey, and Train promoted sacrifice as means to repair liberalism’s organizational infirmity, others promoted it as the means of abandoning liberal political traditions themselves, freighted as they were with an intractable faith in reason and
measured dialogue. Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews’s *Old Glory* (1916) construes the bloodless murmur of democratic councils as obstructing the summons of Heaven’s martial trumpets. Ultimately, war converts legislators’ impoverished liberal rationalism into a celestial national idealism. “It comes as a surprise to reasonable people,” she announces, “to observe that in the last analysis it is not reason which makes history.” Referring to the “vital question,” she describes the surge toward intervention as an ecstatic relief from quibbling public debate. Congratulating Congress for being swayed not by a power “born of argument” but by “a passion not known since the Spanish war,” she praises the willingness of once pitifully “responsible lawmakers” to eagerly “Stand by the President” in “an unashamed whirlwind of loyalty to country and the country’s leader.” As for the people themselves, “Millions of men march to death knowing little or nothing of the reason why—knowing that they follow their country’s flag; it is enough. An appeal to honor, and armies rush to the guns; a catchword of patriotism, and stately legislative bodies toss away formulas and arrive, white-hot, at certainty” (4).

If governmental bodies were sacrificing outdated political formulas for transcendent spiritual ones, the same logic of sacrifice most assuredly mattered for newly arrived immigrants and the working classes. Just as tests of “sincerity” were used to demean conscientious objectors, so the same affective trials were imposed on immigrants as a barometer of their American authenticity. Advancing pleas for immigrant deculturation, a section of *Old Glory* titled “The Stranger within the Gates” similarly treats the unassimilated alien, “the land’s vital problem,” as needing to pare away outmoded ideas of personal acquisition and a worrisome overemphasis on workers’ rights. The story presents an account of Giulio Biachi, leader of a group of striking
Italians. Transferring his fund of loyalty from ethnic-labor reserves to national ones, he emotionally embraces the Stars and Stripes—“the colors that work the magic of assimilation”—becoming a “living “symbol” of a sacrificial order “willing to die for the flag” rather than cash in on liberalism’s mere fiscal enticements (93, 95, 99).

The metaphysics of sacrifice, its different and individuated points of resonance, summoned forth a symbolic domain able to accommodate a heterogeneous demography within a single grid of national self-valuation. Borrowing from religious modes of identification—personal continuity within an enlarged transhistorical narrative—it rehabilitated structures of feeling extrinsic to the liberal-democratic tradition: a repressed, affectively resonant subjectivity derived from divine and monarchical forms of sovereignty. In so doing, it convened an ideological consensus bridging submerged gaps within the extant political order that war mobilization, mass conscription, and state planning unearthed. To what gratifications beyond the parameters of monastic self-interest could the state appeal if it was to recruit bodies to perform tasks and accept responsibilities that would yield little gain and perhaps even necessitate the “ultimate sacrifice”? Overcoming a paucity in the collective will enabled by liberalism’s dutiless notions of contract and the “right” to an uninhibited pursuit of happiness, sacrifice’s interpelling historical mythology enabled a convergence of social energies contained within the mystical corpus of the nation and amenable to the power of the state.

The era’s predominant theorists lamented liberalism’s inability to remain solvent under conditions of emergency. Betraying the middle-way vacuity of William James’s “moral equivalent of war,” American militarization in the first quarter of the century highlighted submerged dilemmas of citizenship and gave traction to Randolph Bourne’s
famous declamation that “war is the health of the State.” By definition, Bourne decreed, the state, “as a diplomatic-military ideal, is eternally at war.” “If diplomacy had been a moral equivalent for war, a higher stage in human progress, an inestimable means of making words prevail instead of blows, militarism would have broken down and given place to it.” Rather, war’s “spiritual alchemy” so molds the “collective community” that the “distinction between society and the individual is almost blotted out.”

Harold Stearns, vexed at the “emotional break-down before war hysteria” and the general tolerance of the draft, labored throughout the war on Liberalism in America (1919), a treatise aimed at recovering liberal citizenship from its “slavery” to the state. For Norman Angell in Britain, but remarking on the U.S., “the impersonal entity known as THE STATE,” was a monstrous “abstraction,” a machine” to which “you may at any moment become the slave.” But these tirades, rather than restoring liberal ideals to a place of prominence, merely testified further to the fact that political belief prizing substantively valueless entities like reason, autonomy, and freedom—abstractions themselves—prove frail reeds against the juggernaut of national drives and their compulsion toward more absolute forms of collective meaning.

The characterization of U.S. citizens at war as supple appendages of state order, the pliant outgrowths of an intensified social field, constituted a remarkable revision of prevailing orthodoxies of war and citizenship. That war participation revealed what Bourne decried as a “passionate inertia against change” inverted a long-regarded mythology of war as the creative engine of political rebirth. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, an antigovernmental emphasis on minuteman masculinity and revered notions of the citizen-soldier buttressed a powerful revolutionary imaginary—the
historical memory of warfare as a generative upheaval, a productive historical rupture
ushering in a bold new epoch of political liberty, individual autonomy, and the rational
self-interest of *homo economicus*. The Civil War, as it was initially characterized in most
of the North and at least some of the South, had made more tenable a story of freedom’s
victorious advance that, though excruciatingly divisive, emerged from the mists as having
further vouchsafed the nation’s most cherished commitment to liberal democracy.

By the close of the nineteenth century, however, positive accounts of war as a means of
dissolving “political bands” had become difficult to sustain.28 The dissipation of
insurrectionary energies, especially in regard to war memory, attested to a pervasive “de-
revolutionizing” of military values at a time when the needs of national stability took
precedence over more democratic values.29 Two glaring exceptions were Gertude
Atherton’s *The White Morning* (1918) and Mary Austin’s *No. 26 Jayne Street* (1920),
both of which adapted the occasion of war-making to advocate for women’s revolution
from a culture indelibly acculturated to comply with violent norms. But most war writing
was squarely in line with the militarizing proclivity of the time, expressing self-
abnegation as spiritual profit and unfurling the first of many ideological addenda to a
liberal ideal lacking in coercive power. Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* (1922), winner of the
Pulitzer Prize, vaunted the war’s conversion of Claude Wheeler from a pickle-munching
youth afraid of saloons to a martial-spiritual pilgrim seized by the quest for an “enduring
idea,” by the desire to live “directly.” For Cather, Claude’s treacherous encounter with
war’s “greater than man force” redeems an America enfeebled by the mere regard for
“safety” and “security” as ends in themselves—those hollow terminals of private desire
treasured by frigid prohibitionists and pacifist economic opportunists growing fat off of
German food back in Nebraska. Partitioned into the nation as “an atom in that wall of flesh and blood,” Claude ultimately gives his life “for the purity of an abstract idea.” “I’ve sometimes wondered,” muses one character, “whether the young men of our time had to die to bring a new idea into the world…something Olympian.”

Sharon O’Brien discusses a “submerged narrative” beneath the overly bellicose nature of Cather’s “manly battle yarn” (188). For “O’Brien,” One of Ours is neither a “chest-thumping, Kiplingesque celebration of militarism and patriarchy” nor “the sentimental, stereotypic hymn to the American fighting man that Cather’s reviewers [H.L. Mencken and Ernest Hemingway accusingly] attributed to the ‘lady’ author’s feminine limitations” (188). As a text that simultaneously compels ironic distancing from and identification with its protagonist, One of Ours demonstrates the author’s power, at times, to co-opt Claude’s enlistment for her own purposes as a means to escape “Nebraska’s constricted life,” “flee bourgeois oppression,” and inaugurate a “quest for authentic, creative selfhood” (189). At others, she sees Cather’s portrayal of masculine “mutilation, infantilization, and emasculation” as counterpoints to expressions of women’s strength (188, 192). In effect, Claude Wheeler works as a kind of “double” with “access to experiences forbidden to women” allowing her to “symbolically possess their experience and share their secrets” (190). But while O’Brien is right that a more complex textual politics unfolds than her patriarchal reviewers give Cather credit for, One of Ours pitches about in the same supremely militarized conceits rising out of the period that equated war practices with forms of cultural renewal. As the novel’s title suggests, readers’ (as well as the author’s) identification with the American doughboy endorses ways of recognizing others as similar bearers of national meaning. Kimberly
Jensen ascertains that women’s identification with the war—many of them “institutional feminists” of the New Woman movement, advocates of progressive reform, or New Women of Color like Addie Hunton—testifies more to their affirmation of nationalist “virtues” and “loyalty” than to a contrarian troubling of the esoteric public sphere. Deeply compliant with war aims, Jensen argues, they sought mostly “access” or “recognition” rather than “to transform the paradigm of citizenship that equated full civic status with military service” (142). As “more powerful citizens they could offer a more powerful loyalty and patriotism to their nation” (158). Cather’s playful substitutions may have provided aesthetic vehicles for her own flight from oppression, but they did so in ways ideologically knotted to the culture of abstract loyalty the war made manifest.

For Edith Wharton, especially, the war represented a cosmic contest for the future of “civilization,” conceived in her idiom as a racially inflected version of transnational Euro-American culture. *The Marne* (1919), published in the year of the Armistice, dramatizes Troy Belknap’s agility in casting aside self-concern and enlisting in the “divine far-off event” of the war. Morally outranking his parents’ class of professors and senators, Troy condemns their “general tendency to regard the war as a mere background to their personal grievance.” Listening to their heated talk at dinner, he “perceived with disgust and wonder that at the bottom of the anti-war sentiment, whatever specious impartiality it put on, there was always the odd belief that life-in-itself—just the mere raw fact of being alive—was the one thing that mattered, and getting killed the one thing to be avoided.” As with Train, pacifist motives are described as symptoms of political decadence, of a simpering addiction to safety and the pursuit of crass pleasure it affords. *A Son at the Front* (1923) similarly contrasts youth’s clairvoyance with their elders’
spiritual inertia, with their inability to resist the deliriums of individual desire. The power to discern war’s inevitability—its “had to be”—is most evident in boys like George Campton and his elite set who want nothing more than to get “in this thing.” Too ghastly to allow its perpetuation, the war’s “dark problem” obliges the “clear eyed sacrifice of the few” as a duty to history recognized only by his cabal of prep-school cohorts who grasp instinctively “the necessity of this particular sacrifice.”

In contrast to Troy and George, Wharton presents morally anemic characters like Sophie Wicks in *The Marne* and John Campton, George’s father, in *A Son at the Front*. Mere spectators, they preoccupy themselves with private affairs, offering uninspired rebuttals that the war is “not our job.” Eventual penitents, they grow gradually more embarrassed as the war’s revelations bring to light their obvious myopias of character. Their final departure from solely liberal sanctuaries of meaning—self, family, possessions—to join the imperiled national body models the broader U.S. conversion from pacifist isolationism to vitalist interventionism. “Campton had never before, at least consciously, thought of himself and the few beings he cared for as part of a great whole, component elements of the immense amazing spectacle.” But the war finally shows him “man as a defenceless [sic] animal suddenly torn from his shell, stripped of all the interwoven tendrils of association, habit, background, daily ways and words.” “That was what war did,” he concludes, “that was why those who best understood it in all its farthest reaching abomination willingly gave their lives to put an end to it.”

At the conclusion of *A Son at the Front*, united in their steadfastness against unvarnished evil, the characters join in a chant of “Preparedness!”: “Preparedness! America, it appeared, had caught it up from east to west, in that sudden incalculable way
she had of flinging herself on a new idea.”35 Although it had to be “wrung from a reluctant government,” Wharton praises the “creation of the training camp at Plattsburg”—a military training facility in New York and the era’s predominant symbol of a revivifying martial culture—as a homology of the new national ideal. Roger Tackett, the novel’s chief herald of pacifism, converts passionately to the cause of national security. “Off tonight for America,” he declares, “for Plattsburg.” Although thousands, George Compton among them, lose their lives, Wharton’s version of the war supplies U.S. nationals with corresponding self augmentations as cosmic ambassadors in a purpose-bestowing program for spiritual renewal. “At last,” she decrees, “random atoms that they were, they seemed all to have been shaken into their places, pressed into the huge mysterious design which was slowly curving a new firmament over the earth.” Combining metaphors of domestic order and global expansion, Wharton gathers her readership into postures of readiness better to attend to the providential panoramic.36

Wharton’s preparedness episteme fundamentally modified existing territorial conceptions of the “New World” and foundational conceits of U.S. political life. From a discrete, historically exceptional sanctuary, she rescaled it to accommodate its new role as a collaborative security outpost. Her vision was complicit with that of President Wilson who viewed the United States as having evolved from adolescence into its more mature incarnation. Positing the nation as the axial center of global history, Wilson solemnly declared, “The life of the new world grows as complex as the life of the old. A nation hitherto wholly devoted to domestic development now finds its first task roughly finished and turns about to look curiously into the tasks of the great world at large, seeking its special part and place of power. A new age has come which no man may
forecast. But the past is the key to it; and the past of America lies at the center of modern history.” 37 America’s coming-of-age, however, required not merely a temporary state of readiness but the more durable sense of perpetual threat as a general political mood. The “tendrils of association” confederating the new nationalism—the positioning of America at the “center” not just of the globe but of human history—also interwove discourses of sacrifice and service to espouse a second elongated vision of the present, this time of a constabulatory, spatial variety. Refracting once locally anchored affiliations into invisible but nonetheless intensely felt realms, preparedness ideologies harnessed citizens’ interiors by engendering a constant awareness of potential invasion. Inverting the transcendental appeal of sacrifice while maintaining its emphasis on personal change, preparedness gave continued access to war’s mystical fraternity only through willing obedience to a conservative program of incorporation and professionalization.

II: Preparedness and the Plattsburg Imaginary: Military Realism and National Integration

Mary Raymond Shipman Andrew’s *Joy in the Morning* (1919) presents a scene one hundred years in the future—2018—when an American officer and English cabinet member gather at the side of a former World War I trench line to ruminate on the significance of the war, “what the thing meant.” Gazing sagely toward the American, the Englishman applauds the United States for updating its isolationist creeds: “No nation at that time realized how vital was your country’s entrance into the war….Your young, untried forces lifted worn-out France and England and swept us to victory at the last.” “Without doubt,” he adds, “Germany would have been happy to invade the only country on earth rich enough to pay her war debt. And you were astonishingly open to invasion.
It is one of the historical facts that a student of history of this twenty-first century finds difficult to realize.” The U.S. citizen agrees: “The Great War made revolutionary changes. That condition of unpreparedness was one. That there will never be another war is the belief of all governments. But if all governments should be mistaken, not again would my country, or yours, be caught unprepared.” To overcome their exposure and inertia, one learns, Americans relinquished time-honored attitudes toward security. The army, claims the American, is now “magnificently efficient,” at least in part because it “purified with fire the legislative soul,” the anachronistic howling of a “little group of willful men”: antiwar stumpers like Senator Robert LaFollette whose liberal “bombast” “came near to shipwrecking our country.” Having at last inculcated “the change,” war mobilization assisted at a precarious moment when “an enormous majority of decent people woke from a discontented apathy and took charge.”

The production of national stability was, in at least one respect, fortified out of a dawning sense of its opposite. Just as sacrifice’s historical scale distended notions of personal contingency, so the nascent discourse of preparedness acclimated Americans to an enlarged social perimeter signaled by dangerously assailable collective interests. Where political appeals to sacrifice replotted the U.S. narrative along an exaggerated historical timeline, preparedness established a global imagination hinged to the prospect of territorial vulnerability and an invisible—and thus visible everywhere—prospect of permanent danger. Made similar to each other by shared perceptions of common threat, equally collaborated as the targets of foreign envy, otherwise distant actors within a nationally demarcated space could regard themselves as like integers within a protracted community nexus. Their reciprocity was only magnified by the period’s military
innovations in which modern technology and the practices of total war were blurring conceptual boundaries between zones of war and peace. Configured as the nodal endpoints of a symbolic circuit, the inner core of the citizen-subject and the outer borders of the nation were mutually constituting.

Essential to this shift was a conservative ideological drift from a view of war as episodic effusion to one underlining its omnipresent probability—a political maneuvering, that is, from a notion of war as a *caused* event to a more existential understanding of its nature as a human *condition*. Books like Alfred Thayer Mahan’s *The Influence of Seapower upon History* (1890) acclimated an earlier generation of Americans to the necessities of military buildup and overseas expansion. Emory Upton’s controversial *Military Policy of the United States* (1904)—discussed in the last chapter—further outlined liberalism’s incompatibility with modern military circumstance. But it was as a specifically nationalizing project that preparedness gained its fullest expression in the period surrounding World War I. Superintended by a small but powerful assemblage of national leaders, the change in civic sensibility from liberal voluntarism to militarized nationalism represented a political watershed. “It was organized and articulate,” remembered Harold Stearns,

> It controlled the press and the popular magazines. It could dominate the moving picture industry. It held the government practically at its mercy. It had the support of substantially all of the financial interests. It spoke from the pulpits. It captured the colleges and schools. Hardly a single recognized leader in the economic or social or intellectual world dared to risk his prestige by speaking against it….Who cannot recall the parades and ‘loyalty’ pledges? The invitations
to turn amateur spy and report to the secret service any person making a statement
calculated to upset members of the National Security League? The patriotic
oration? The sudden flood of “atrocity” moving-pictures? (87)

Shepherded along by the Plattsburg movement, the lobby for Universal Military Training
(UMT), and numerous Preparedness Leagues, the propagation of conservative realism
sought a full scale renovation of American political culture. Among its many appeals
was that it “would promote the work ethic, lower the crime rate, Americanize the
immigrant, teach ‘responsibility to the young’, and bind together all classes of society
into one common purpose.”39 Though formally unsuccessful, achieving only a few of
their large scale aims, the more theoretical influence of the movement’s central
premises—its looming “specter of the dragon”—would prove enduring.40

Frances Wilson Huard’s autobiographical My Home in the Field of Honor (1916),
for instance, describes her experiences near the French lines as she transforms the
innocence of prewar “cheerful times”—picnicking with friends and “long delightful
walks in the park”—into the hardened resolve of an alert war worker (7). An American
expatiate in France, Baroness Huard—the daughter of American actor Francis Wilson
and wife of French painter Charles Huard—was immersed suddenly in the war when the
bloody early engagements engulfed her region. Amid chaos, she prepares meals for
fleeing refugees, stands armed watch over the town, endures a forced evacuation, nurses
horribly wounded soldiers, and is conscripted into service as a translator. Her many
juggled activities and sturdiness of will throughout constitute some of the more energetic
assertions of women’s work in what was an almost exclusively masculine province.

Scholarship on war and gender tends to recuperate forgotten texts like Huard’s as part of
a repressed, neglected record of “women’s contributions.” But her popular text was one of many bestsellers umpiring dispositional changes in political thought and integral to constructing the “national conscience” lauded by conservatives like Arthur Train. Applauding the one-hundred percent attendance rate of able French bodies in the rally to arms, she exalts the “wonderful national resolution to do one’s duty, and to make the least possible fuss about it” (12). As the war takes its toll, she documents the demise of her fragile optimism, forced as she is toward a darker knowledge of “the willful damage that human beings could do” (144). From their delight in raping Belgian women to their scatological soiling of her chateau and its American flag, Germans expose the inherent criminality of a fundamentally reprobate inner character, a trope ubiquitous in novels like Atherton’s *The White Morning*. For Huard, it is enough finally revoke her laissez faire charter. Having steeled herself to the more sinister reality of human wretchedness, she toured the U.S. on a lecture circuit following the book’s publication.

The Preparedness Movement, however, typically privileged more masculine expositors. Sponsored energetically by General Leonard Wood, first commander of the Rough Riders and pupil of Oliver Wendell Holmes at Harvard Medical School, the movement spurned treasured American attitudes toward warfare—the heroic individual gallantly charging his steed into the clashing fray—to nurture more mundane representations of conflict suitable to mass modernization’s more associational, institutional needs.41 Numerous figures crafted elaborate histories of the United States’ military “unpreparedness,” premier among them perhaps Frederic Louis Huidekoper, founder of the Army League of the United States and author of *The Military Unpreparedness of the United States* (1915), a tome which, across hundreds of pages,
documents the “folly” of outdated policy. Pessimistically adapted to cope with grimmer, more socially volatile expectations—both domestic and international—preparedness advocates vigorously propagated core tenets of conservative realism as urgent renovations to American political life: military professionalism, instrumentalist preferences for “order, hierarchy, and division of function,” and the need for coordinated regimental power over the cult of individual “genius.” Preparedness also drew upon changed attitudes toward masculinity as coarser working-class fealties to strength and endurance gained cultural capital in upper echelons. Trumping the older Victorian virtues of cultivation and restraint, preparedness drew broad support from the wealthiest strata of society for its masculine celebration of Spartan vigor. Business circles and Ivy League youth alike applauded the “moral trinity” of “effort, pain, and difficulty” for its rejuvenation of a neurasthenic manhood, a kind of “public health project” under Wood’s supervision. Deprivation and hardship were the prized tenets of a “strenuous life” that could “purify the nation through sacrifice.” Diagnosing pacifists as afflicted with a “moral syphilis,” “typhoid carriers [who] poisoned the very life of the people,” Roosevelt and his entourage also used the campaign for UMT to harass labor and leftist contingents, claiming that his “Dakota cowboys” “would love to have a chance with their rifles at one of the radical mobs” (Pearlman 13, 38). Pledged to “redeem” the moral anemia of men like his father who had purchased a substitute in the Civil War, Theodore Roosevelt trumpeted Plattsburg’s “character building” system for its “regularity, thoroughness, promptness, [and] respect for authority”—virtues which he believed supplied “preventive medicine” to an infected body politic.
The war, of course, gave ample opportunity to test the efficacy of the new worldview. And though the received cultural interpretation of postwar literature often suggests otherwise, popular writing often carried on the war’s conservative tradition. Although by no means hegemonic, gaining numerous detractors from various pockets within the culture, the movement’s central principles proved lasting, an embryonic fermentation of the political imaginary that would later define the Cold War and the portentous metaphysics of national security. Conveying the preparedness sensibility across the following two decades were texts such as Leonard Nason’s *Chevrons* (1926), John Thomason’s *Fix Bayonets!* (1927), James Wharton’s *Squad* (1928), Theodore Roosevelt Jr.’s *Rank and File* (1928), William Scanlon’s *God Have Mercy on Us: A Story of 1918* (1929), Theodore Fredenburgh’s *Soldier’s March!* (1930), Humphrey Cobb’s *Paths of Glory* (1935), and Hervey Allen’s *It Was Like This: Two Stories of the Great War* (1940). Whereas many of these works voice frustrations with military bureaucracy, cede accounts of the individual’s expendability, or paint numbingly antiheroic portraits of the dreariness and boredom of military routine, it would be a mistake to understand such texts as a contrarian archive of protest. Together, rather, preparedness texts presented models for personal alteration, shaping a cast of mind for future generations to rehearse the emotional and situational burdens of modern army life—and, concomitantly, national life. Their resignation to and accommodation of strictures of subordination and hierarchy taught Americans a gritty truth about a mostly unknown world and the means by which to counter it. As a kind of public pedagogy, they urged young war enthusiasts to accept perennial conflict as a permanent condition and, consequently, to develop a temperamental readiness to act out complicated but
coordinated military procedures in a variety of foreign theaters. Different than the literature of sacrifice but driving toward similar existential ends, preparedness narratives accustomed liberal, middle-class readerships to a less heroic view of war and to acceptance of more diminished but collectively effective roles within the “system” of the “machine.” As such, however, they articulate yet another rendition of sacrificial obligation as the individual agent surrenders outmoded personal liberties for collective embodiment in the military-national aggregate.

Commandeering the shift in political sentiment was a prescriptive reverence for the masculinized culture of corporate professionalism. In *Fix Bayonets!*, for instance, Thomason draws from his own military experience to dispel romantic myths of individual celebrity and to indoctrinate professional devotion to the nation’s security. “There is nothing particularly glorious about sweaty fellows, laden with killing tools, going along to fight,” he begins, training the reader’s eye along a row of marching men, “And yet—such a column represents a great deal more than 28,000 individuals mustered into a division. All that is behind those men is in that column, too: the old battles, long forgotten, that secured our nation” (xiv). In Thomason’s view, installing oneself in a war cadre makes one retroactively a participant in a more comprehensive national enterprise, a historical identification that exceeds biographical particularity. Compensating for enforced anonymity and regulation—especially in the wake of a conflict that witnessed a powerful intrusion of the state in the first real mass conscription—*Fix Bayonets!* describes military conformity as triggering remunerative self-enhancements. Like Crane’s *Red Badge*, the novel speaks of large military groups as a single body, impressionistically eroding the singularity of its individual components: “The platoons,
assailed now by a fury of small-arms fire, narrowed their eyes and inclined their bodies forward” (13). When men are killed by incoming fire, their lines simply “thin” (13). Marching on a road at night, the platoon is “a great flowing river of martial force” (90).

Thomason’s war story is a testimony to the more diminutive consolations of professional functionalism. Although the men in his company were reared on tales of “Great battles, glamorous attacks, full of the color and high-hearted elan of chivalry,” there would be no “screeching Rebel yell” nor “fife and drum” in the vast conscripted organizations of modern war (47-48). “No music here,” he calmly assures, “no flags, no bright swords, no lines of battle charging with a yell.” All one should expect are “groups of weary men, in drab and dirty uniforms, dressed approximately on a line, spaced ‘so that one shrapnel-burst cannot include more than one group,’ laden like mules with gas-masks, bandoleers, grenades, chaut-chaut clips, trudging forward without haste and without excitement” (48). Cumbersome equipment lists and tedious diversions on rules and regulations freight the narrative with lessons on tactics and procedure. Even his battle scenes resist the surge toward the spectacular, represented mostly as brutal quagmires in which good officers are identified for their pragmatic, mechanistic know-how: “Automatically functioning, as a company officer must, in the things he is trained to do, there was still a corner of his brain that watched detached and aloof as the scene unrolled” (179). War is a dirty business, and to drive home that point, he pauses over an atavistic “Harvard patriot,” awkward and out of place among “professional-soldier types.” Nostalgic for “tea by a sea coal fire in New England twilight, and clever talk of art and philosophic anarchism,” his Ivy League idealism is symbolically dispensed with when a shell lops off his head while the column indifferently “moves on” (43-4).
The same anticerebral emphasis on incorporation, professionalism, and leadership suffuses Theodore Fredenburgh’s *Soldier’s March*, which presents Edward Zorn’s transition from eager Wilsonian optimist to conservative organization man. To prepare men for their encounter with war’s purifying power, Fredenburgh’s bellicose text approvingly demonstrates the detachment of desire from personal ambition and its channeling into group arrangement. Socializing dispositions more agreeable to integration, he portrays military membership as a therapeutic antidote to the doily-draped domestic universe of tea rooms and pulpits in the rear. Upon landing in France, Zorn and his friend Geary are greeted by “soldiers of his Brittanic Majesty”: “death’s-head caricatures who gazed with stolid incuriousness at the fresh, smartly uniformed men on the platform.” Although their emaciated appearance suggests a diminishment of self, for Fredenburgh, they are survivors of contact with something elemental, some special revelation of the Real inaccessible to humanitarian idealists. As Zorn surveys the “dead monotony of their faces,” he feels the “creeping fingers of an unseen, unmeasured force fastening upon him.” “Human values, individual values, that had been evident to him all his life, became by some hidden process extinct,” he reflects (44). Exhuming primordial natural truths, war’s esoteric “contact with reality” exhumes an existential primacy which liberal political orders are ill-equipped to understand (48).

Recognizing what he must do, Zorn performs the preparedness ritual at the center of nearly every representation of professional militarization. He makes peace with “the system” since it is the all-controlling fortification that “we can’t set aside” (60). “He must forget high-sounding dreams and get down to facts,” he discerns. “He was in it; part, a tiny part, of a great cold system. It had no sympathy for human pain. It pursued
its own ends exclusively.” Merging his private self into the composite, he surrenders, indeed sacrifices, his retained autonomy. “Let the individual take care of himself,” he considers, and “If he could not stand the strain, let him break—the system would discard him quickly enough, its only regret the loss of a rifle, perhaps not even that, since the passing of a weak link purged the whole of the defect” (48). Fredenburgh increasingly portrays the experience of war as a corporate business operation. For his success at adaptation, Zorn is rapidly promoted. With each incremental step up the grade, he sheers away more of his baroque Victorian moralism, finally becoming a manager of functionaries “proficient in the various techniques which assured the regiment a high efficiency in the business of killing” (75).

_Soldiers March!_ unfolds scene after scene of modern war atrocities with what initially appear to be negative assessments: endless marching, confusion at orders that inexplicably change, the nerve-shattering experience of constant shelling, inept leaders enduring unfathomable casualties merely to gain a stretch of meaningless territory, heaps of guts flung about as intimate friends are suddenly transformed into many “a horrible apparition of blood and intestines.” Fatigue took Zorn, Fredenburgh admits, to the point where “nothing mattered—nothing at all” (142). When Geary is abruptly killed without warning, the most Zorn can muster is a stoic concession to the loss as circumstantially appropriate. It “could’ve been you or me,” is his final thought as he “clung to his cold outlook” (299). Yet monstrous and dehumanizing as such behavior might be, preparedness representations are less regretful indictments than forward-looking descriptions. As countercurrent to a fantasy of missionary democracy, narratives like Thomason’s and Fredenburgh’s admonish American idealists to acquaint themselves with
war’s more iniquitous features—not to corroborate a return to isolationism but to habituate them to the sterner travails of an unknown century and the perils of its international scale. To meet such needs, preparedness fostered acceptance of a new professional warrior class with subjectivities more constrained by and attuned to maneuvering within those domains.

The best examples are perhaps Nason’s Sergeant Eadie in *Chevrons* and Scanlon’s “Nap” (short for Napoolean) in *God Have Mercy on Us!* Having served in both world wars, Nason uses his writing to shape a conciliatory American adaptation to the accruing demands of the warfare state. Enmeshed in a latticework of military bureaucracy, Eadie is a twentieth-century navigator of the newly coordinated, incomprehensibly broad war apparatus. He wrangles with incompetent officers, requisitions provisions, and gauges situations in order to achieve desired objectives. Anticipating crises, predicting situations, and adjusting his acuity, Eadie dramatizes the internal gymnastics of an elastic modern identity conforming to processes of assimilation and group preservation.  

No doubt *Chevrons* is filled with depictions of deprivation and stupidity, scenes of Americans accidentally firing on each other, officers slapping men into “whimpering heaps” who understandably refuse to be “butchered” (166, 238). But such elements are subordinated beneath the larger theme, one that suggests how enduring such trials is an essential verity of a dangerous and violent modern world. In the end, Eadie tears off his wound stripes—the “chevrons” advertising his individual “reward”—and assumes an undifferentiated place among “the boys” of his company. Reversing the Homeric plot, Eadie’s return to the frontlines constitutes a “homecoming” that dissolves him into the mass (337).
William Scanlon’s *God Have Mercy on Us!* provides numerous similar images of the professional soldier inured to his environment and adapting to its demands. His chief protagonist “Nap,” like Nason’s Sergeant Eadie, acclimates himself to the brutal exigencies of modern war, careless of his own particularity and adjusted to the overall functioning of his unit. Accustomed to his diminished role in the larger totality, Scanlon finds his resources of personal meaning inseparably bound up with his platoon. The novel opens with the narrator assailed by gunfire and contemplating portions of his body to sacrifice since he is unable to withdraw it behind his obstacle. “I bargain with myself as to what part of my body I will sacrifice,” he explains, “I consider which part of me I can best let get hit” (17). Although his first instinct is to utter a prayer for himself—“God have mercy on me,” he begins—he quickly changes the pronoun, pleading rather, that “God have mercy on us.” His first effort, he confesses, “seemed selfish” (18).

Like other preparedness fiction, Scanlon’s novel is saturated with blood and gore. Edging out Mary Lee’s *It’s a Great War!* in 1929 for prize of $25,000 cosponsored by the American Legion and Houghton-Mifflin, Scanlon’s sobering novel is a textbook on the taking of human life and the disciplinary structure of the military machine. Lee was ineligible since the Legion, though she was a member, refused to grant the award to a woman. But though she had eliminated the sardonic working title, “The Farce,” Lee would probably not have won it even under equal circumstances since—in a bold inversion of gender stereotypes—she dared to declare that only women could truly tell the “whole picture” of war because the male picture was too stained with sentimentality (vi). Scanlon’s work, however, was no sentimental throwback. As a “realistic” portrait in both the aesthetic and political sense, he telegraphs his report from
the exclusively male (and thus unavailable to characters like Lee’s) province of the front
lines, giving lessons along the way on how to assemble rifle parts under fire, lengthy
analysis on the proper way to spike Germans on bayonets, and perspectives on living
with oneself as a killer. He is the perfect exemplar of what Frances Early calls World
War I’s “extreme masculine ideal of the intrepid, combat-ready patriot, prepared not only
to kill but to die for his country” (92). His play-by-play report eventually discards any
pretense to craft as the story becomes overwhelmed and finally consumed by elaborate
documentation of firing angles, positions, distances, and targets. The farther one
proceeds through it, through Belleau Wood and Chateau Thierry, the more affectless the
account becomes. In one incident, Nap blasts away on unarmed prisoners with no regret.
Resigning himself to the status of partial integer, he declares in a letter to his mother that
he has become recognizable, even to himself, only as #123284 (75). His sole
consideration is automatic functioning within the assemblage. “The old system of
infantry charges will not work in this war,” one staff officer lectures. “Man against
machine and man loses. It is necessary to work machine against machine. (162).

To most commentators, the literary preoccupation with “herd-like” absorption
into the mass or self-installation into the machine constitutes the literary emergence of an
“antiwar” opposition to military values. For critics like Stanley Cooperman, for instance,
the obsession with the mass, with what he calls being “degraded by and for a machine,”
“runs through the World War I novels accompanied by protest” and an accusatory tone of
“bitter, symbolic mockery” (88). As I have been arguing, however, themes of group
integration in works like Scanlon’s and his predecessors became ubiquitous in U.S. war
writing during the period and integral to the construction of the preparedness worldview.
Masculinist in ethos, it nonetheless solicited identifications from all quarters of the body politic. In many ways, the theme’s popularity was responsive not just to military innovation but also to the complicated range of political identifications refracting out of the growth of an evolving warfare state and culminating eventually in the redefined welfare liberalism of the New Deal—policy itself often framed in military language. As associational networks like clubs, parties, and fraternal organizations assumed more social responsibility, as state institutions intruded deeper into local communities, expressions of the political self wrenched and buckled in what Michael Szalay calls a kind of “liberal interdependence,” the attempt to reconcile “conflicting impulses toward individual agency and collective affiliation.”

Veering collective urges into their most conservative variants—as opposed to, say, unions, the Popular Front, or the Communist Party—numerous liberal organizations, including the Roosevelt administration, championed that interdependence while at the same time routing it into militarized, nationalist corrals. By the 1930s, the U.S. governmental system was itself to a large degree structured on wartime emergency measures. As an “analogue of war,” the New Deal drew explicitly upon the recent history of American “war mobilization as a design for recovery.” Its unique “political synthesis of liberalism and nationalism,” according to Nikhil Pal Singh, lent it a “symbolic and institutional infrastructure” that emerged as “the basis for the transnational power of the American warfare state,” a social dynamic incorporating all sectors of the population “into the life of the state” (85-86). Whatever the war’s other legacies, it had nationalized formerly diverse political dispositions as interdependent flashpoints within one interlocking constellation.
Positing the outer boundaries of the nation and the interior of the citizen as coterminous, preparedness constructed another ideological bridge bypassing liberalism’s inability to secure political obligation, appealing as it did to a national conscience in ways that cast defense of its borders and self-defense as one and the same. Although liberals ranted at Wilson’s improvident claim that the first wide-scale national draft was “in no sense a conscription of the unwilling,” merely “a selection from a nation which has volunteered in mass,” the president was onto a truism of national belonging for which—as with sacrifice—a political ontology of the rationally self-interested individual could give no account.52 Salvaging identifications outlying the liberal-democratic personality, war emergency and its inflation of the state infrastructure assembled the “public interest” and organic society that Progressivism never could.

To convene that resilient republican compound, dispositions sensitive to a permanent condition of international struggle were indispensable. No longer conceiving war as a sporadic intrusion into public affairs, preparedness normalized it as the bedrock of political reality itself. Yet rampant militarization and an unregulated delight in violence could set loose an unwanted backlash of revolutionary memory and dialectical desire that preparedness nationalism hoped to suppress. Moderating between the dangers of anarchic barbarism and overcivilized refinement was a proclivity for “recapitulation” as a cult of racial regression peculiar to white bourgeois masculinity. Congruent with the culture of military professionalization, recapitulation invoked a dispositional mutability accessible only to a selective group of “super-men”—men like those at Plattsburg—as a racist strategy to reconcile tensions between primitivist and high-cultural currents.

Excavating a submerged savagery from imagined ancestral lineages, a managerial class
of white men could enact temporary regressions during periods of intense emotional trial, reviving what Harvard Medical School’s Harvey Cushing lauded as the “barbarian behind your starched and studded shirt.” Borrowing spiritual infusions from shared reservoirs of “stock,” claims Gail Bederman, they could conjure “remote ancestral strains of the blood” and experience a kind of “second-birth” similar to religious conversion where they would be “flooded with ancestral tendencies.” While seemingly a reversion to the anachronisms of the heroic tradition, such thinking was integral to the preparedness worldview, which further established the wellsprings of subjectivity in communal registers alone.

The sensed omnipresence of war and conflict guaranteed a potentially complacent populace that the “specter of the dragon”—and the need for a readiness to release those repressed ancestral tendencies—was never further away than tomorrow’s headline. Strains of many preparedness novels vividly represented war’s identity-conferring “trial by fire” with longing for its conferral of these exclusive knowledges. Hervey Allen’s It Was Like This describes the “real war” unfolding in exclusively masculine precincts rather than the “radio war” occurring only in kitchens and nurses’ stations. From his experience in World War I, Allen discovered war to be a fundamentally transformative event through which men encounter reality in its purest essential distillate. “Battle is an experience of complete and unmitigated reality,” he explains, “The inner and outer worlds are fused.” “The sheep in wolf’s clothing in which the ego may have wrapped itself and the asbestos curtain of the universe are at one and the same time sublimed.” Engaging in combat, one is “stripped of all the bandages laid across the mind, of all the gauze and the lace curtains which civilization has spread over nature and human
nature.” As a kind of national catechism, war divests the soul of liberalism’s false allures—feminized thereafter as the false ornamentation of a rococo domesticity obstructing the “naked” self’s more fantastic confrontation with authenticity, with “the nature and end of everything.” Like religion, it teaches participants the meaning of “supreme sacrifice,” which, he counsels, is an “essentially difficult problem to discuss with others”—especially those denied access to the front line’s self-legitimating baptism—who have no direct experience with its authenticating “crucible.” Considering the oldest of “mass habits,” Allen assures his readers—the young men of 1940 who may soon embark on a similar pilgrimage—that “the only way one can get at it,” war’s “deep mystery,” is to regard it in a way for which their “democratic upbringing” neglected to prepare them. Democracy, he mentors, is “a poor tutor for reality.” War, on the other hand, elevates long “suppressed tendencies,” organizing them through routines “calculated” to overcome squeamishness, and makes a man a hearty murderer propelled by the “fixed ideas” of military discipline.

Allen enlists two characters, the unfortunately-named Dick Force and the equally obvious Corporal Virgin, as allegories of American masculinity transformed. Together their tales of deserted innocence demonstrate war’s fundamental remaking—indeed deflowering—of unfledged democratic youth and their developmental arrival into manhood. In *Report to Major Roberts*, he distinguishes the American soldier as possessed of a “hereditary” instinct with guns. “Every nation that is a nation, a living entity instead of an afterthought in a treaty or an invention of diplomats,” he claims, “has a national and natural way of fighting for its existence, one that comes out of its experience in the past.” As a suprarational vitalism with little use for the banalities of
diplomacy and international law, Dick Force’s “supreme experience” as an “Indian fighter” demonstrates particularly national aptitudes for dispensing swift and deadly verdicts as well as a disdain for liberalism’s hobbling of those frontier talents. Both characters’ combat prowess is persistently depicted as spontaneous skill arriving from cultural repositories beyond mere private endowments.

Allen’s characters are not alone in being tended to in battle by spirits past or in their discovery of war as an eternal political truth. Plattsburger, war veteran, and President’s son, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., contributed his own symbolization of the military nation with *Rank and File*, a text bestowing the “stout fighting men” of Protestant America with a particularly Anglo-Saxon gift for retributive violence by announcing that in them “the fiery spirit still flamed” that “carried the Roundheads to victory under Cromwell.” Although slow to remember their ancestral heritage—a transcontinental zeal for brute force—gratefully citizens are awakening to the need for more permanent military vigilance. “The days of small professional armies are past,” he instructs, “Now entire nations go to war, and therefore the army is the replica of the country itself.”

To convey his point, *Rank and File* collates militaristic tales of “sacrifice and devotion” as a tribute to the war’s revelation of the “varied strains that go to make up the colorful skein from which is woven our national character” (viii). Among them, he recounts conscientious objector Alvin York’s conversion from Christian pacifist to divine assassin as he metes out cosmic justice with sacramental fury (36). York, a gentle, liberal soul, “did not believe in war,” Roosevelt recalls, because of his religious upbringing (39). “He felt the New Testament definitely stood against the killing of man by man” (39).
Like Pastor Pile, in whose congregation he is a member, he “firmly believed that the
tenets of his church forbade war” (40). When the call came to enlist, “All York had to do
was to state his case” since he “had clear grounds on which to claim exemption.” But,
for Roosevelt, York gladly “was made of sterner stuff” (40). “Though he believed it
wrong to kill, he believed it necessary to serve his country” (40). Subordinating
individual conscience to national obligation, military realism circumvents religious
prohibitions by making them incompatible with modern demands.

York’s decision to serve country over religious principles, however, rather than
betray biblical doctrine, actually fulfills a providential mission. Because Pastor Pile
continues to send him letters indicating that it is wrong to take human life, a distressed
York consults with military superiors for advice. They hold a bible study for him where
they show that, “while peace is desirable, it must not be peace at any price. Though we
are in the world to strive for righteousness, justice, and peace, if one of these has to be
sacrificed in order to obtain the other two, it must be peace” (41). From the thirty-third
chapter of Ezekiel—a text composed roughly two millennia before the European
discovery of North America—they discern that Americans are as “the watchmen” in the
Bible. “On them was laid the charge of guarding humanity. To fail in the task would be
traitorous” (42). And because York “strove for light,” “right and war,” they decree,
“were bedfellows in this instance” (41-42).

As he transfers conscientious authority from private to state resources, York is
joined by “the spirits” of men of old, a pantheon of valiant figures out of military history:
“The shadows of the men who fought at Naseby and Marston Moor stood at his elbow.
The spirit that inspired Cromwell and Ireton, Hampden and Vane, stirred in him. He saw
‘enfrancised insult’ in the persons of German soldiers, and, like the Covenanters, with a
cold fury he ‘smote them hip and thigh’” (49). Attended to by historical figures with
whom he shares an imagined kinship, York’s war experience discloses more durable,
monastic affiliations within a sacred political order. After the war, York joins the
American Legion, puts down roots on a comparatively small farm, and puts his war
“education” to use by starting “education foundations” back in his home in Tennessee,
presumably inculcating in the next generation the foresight and knowledge he once
lacked, but which war’s trials have ultimately unveiled.

Taken collectively, preparedness texts signify a fantasy of political selfhood that
enfolds masculine, religious, and military symbols into one comprehensive national
wreath. “The war is long past,” Roosevelt, Jr. perceived almost a decade after the
Armistice. “The German guns which pounded the American soldiers in France now stand
in the parks of our cities and towns. Around them on national holidays the people gather
for patriotic celebrations.” And though sacrifices had to be made, a new phase of the
country was born. “All is worth while,” he states, “for all helps keep alive the greatest
victory we won—national unity” (xvi). As a condition of permanent threat made
necessary redistributions within the political imagination, professional sacrifices acted
out in exclusively masculine domains emerged as models for a new concept of
citizenship. Dedicated to “those far-seeing men,” The Plattsburg Manual (1917)—the
number two bestseller in non-fiction for 1917—vaunted the forthcoming of antiliberal
visionaries whose subordination within hierarchical systems constituted the “husbandry”
of a much-needed “theory of security.”
Conclusion: Military Nation

Organizing the boundlessly recombinant political identities that a labile political culture enabled, war writing assisted an American political mutation by teaching that—through sacrifice and preparedness—Americans could overcome their own finitude and, through a miraculous ideological cartography, enter a political order exceeding the boundaries marked by calendar and village. It shaped national growth in tandem with an inchoate but developing discourse of national security that surveyed equally the murky temperament of the citizen within and the inscrutable world without. “The whole issue hinges on social control,” barked *The New Republic*. “For forty years we have been widening the sphere of this control, subordinating the individual to the group and the group to society. Without such control, vastly magnified, we should not have been able to carry out on the war” (Porter 276). Believing American society to be as “fluid as molten iron,” they “called for the continuation of wartime controls” as permanent resources for molding and remaking the public weal (Porter 276). “It isn’t merely a willingness to fight that is required,” insisted Elihu Root, “it is a change in the whole attitude of the people toward government.” Henry Stimson, Root’s protégé and Secretary of War under Taft, echoed the sentiment: “Americans must be taught to think more of their duties toward the government and less of what they can ‘get’” (Karp 222-223).

War writing in many ways assisted in that political mutation. As much as the war itself, it would be this concession of culture to the needs of the state that would supply much of the modernist backlash with its critical force. Complicit with the war’s socially disfiguring violence and betrayal of established ideals, the literary culture that emerged from World War I retaliated against many aspects of this conservative turn. But the
generational outcry against statist or militarist art was seized in the undertow of similar political currents. In often complex ways, the modernist revolt responded not just to the bad faith of the war establishment but to the very “democratization” of American culture that the Plattsburg worldview made possible. As much as modernism was repelled by the “plastic juncture” of war emergency, its disdainful “retreat” into various aesthetic asylums was as much an evacuation from the very “masses” that war nationalization brought into existence. Disappointed at the war’s failure to confirm a mythically charged masculine heroism, contemptuous of the enforced proximity to a “degraded” body of racial others and ethnic lumpenproles, the modernist riposte nonetheless shared aspects of the war’s conservative politics.
Chapter 3
“A Bestial Convulsion of Civilization”: Race, Modernism, and the Culture of Protest

We do not usually think of the 1920s, the easy going Jazz Age, as a time when the racialized character of the American nation intensified, reinforcing the barriers separating blacks and Asians from whites, eastern and southern Europeans from ‘Nordics,’ and immigrants from natives. Yet these developments were central to the age. That the proponents of these changes frequently justified their aims in the name of science underscores the modern character of the racial regime they implemented. Indeed this regime, backed by an edifice of race law, would remain in place for forty years, persisting through the Great Depression, World War II, the affluent 1950s, and John F. Kennedy’s 1960 election. It must be seen for what it was: a defining feature of modern America.

--Gary Gerstle, American Crucible

That progressives—the people who brought American direct election of senators, direct taxation, initiative and referendum, and a philosophy of participatory democracy—should have turned away from “the people” is ironic but not surprising. As angry wartime crowds silenced pacifists, labor radicals, and small-town ministers, the idea of appealing directly to the people and locating democratic legitimacy in their associations lost some of its luster. The state—even the seemingly tyrannical state of the 1920s Palmer Raids that civil libertarians despised—appeared the better option in a devil’s bargain. Progressives’ faith in “the people” became, for many, a postwar fear of “the mob” and “the crowd.”

--Christopher Capozzola, Uncle Sam Wants You

The nationalist metaphysic and bellicose internationalism evangelized by the Progressive Era’s bloated warfare state met with forces of resistance in the decades that immediately followed. Having overflowed the embankments of its own rhetorical justification in the excesses and abuses of loyalty syndicates and anti-sedition legislation, liberal interventionism retracted somewhat in the period harkened by President Harding’s isolationism and the promiscuity of the “Jazz Age.” Endowed by white collar affluence and driven to discover new modes of self-expression was a rising urban youth culture—that kinetic flurry of gin-guzzling Fox-trotters—that all but assured the demise of “crusader nation” and the moral rigidity of the past. For many writers, especially, the postwar scene seemed a time of exculpatory liberation from the standards and restraints subduing older generations. In Alfred Kazin’s characteristic recollection, a literary avant garde crept “out of the old proverbial shelters and ambitions” with a “carefree gaiety,” with a “sense of release” issuing from the “new current of freedom after the war.” As
“enemies of order”—in a permissive climate in which “maladjustment” had become a
“sign of grace”—the modernist set, Kazin remembers, reveled in their deliverance from
the “Herd state” and its bungling “booboisie.” Fleeing the Victorian innocence of the
“Old Gang” who had not endured their “intimacy with disaster,” young writers found
themselves on the other side of a “gulf,” “proud and stricken in the consciousness of their
difference from their predecessors.”¹ “It was the war, of course,” Kazin assures, “that
had made that difference.”²

The picture of beret-clad iconoclasts bristling with contrarian energies throughout
the “Roaring Twenties” has long dominated the memory of postwar culture. Apostles of
an aesthetic rebirth, in libidinous desertion from the wreckage of war, the “lost
generation” of Promethean modernists harnessed a shared imaginative current,
assembling the fragments of a decimated world into new patterns of order. Whether
troubled by the collapse of traditional paradigms and impassioned in the search for
compensatory forms apart from a homogenizing “mass culture”—as were the stalwarts of
“high” modernism—or emboldened by a new spirit of insurrection—as were newly
empowered women writers or the New Negroes of Harlem and elsewhere—the
“unsynthesizable” experience of the war yielded a culture prone toward the “versus
thesis,” Paul Fussell’s famous descriptor for the general negation of sensibility toward all
that had come before. Critics continue to assess the postwar milieu as a kind of
watershed, a renegade frolic against the compulsory verities of established ideals. Most
recently, historians Douglas Mackaman and Michael Mays have declared the experience
of the Great War “an apocalyptic moment of transition from one world to another,” an
event that seemed “so shockingly and completely [to] shatter what the ‘bourgeois century’ had built but could not sustain” (xx).

Yet discomfort and suspicion at such stark severing of the historical record has risen in recent years from numerous critical sectors. As Richard Pells cautions, it “may be more accurate to consider the social and cultural experience of America as an ongoing series of tensions and conflicts, none of which is ever more than temporarily resolved” (1). Dismayed by eschatological assessments of the Twenties as rending an “epistemological gap in the order of things,” presenting history with some kind of past-effacing “clean slate,” some critics have denounced the false bundling that such sweeping characterization of decades often reveals upon closer inspection (Gandal 23). “Literary critics are fond of quoting famous authors who announce the exact moment (more or less) when social modernity transformed the character of life,” remarks Rita Barnard. Remarking on the frequent resuscitation of Willa Cather’s lament that “all the world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts,” she ascertains, like Pells, that “The reason for our dramatic attachment to these pronouncements is perhaps that they relieve us of the obligation of considering the extent to which the old and the new coexist, with varying degrees of tension, in any given period.” Echoing Lawrence Levine’s work, Barnard suggests that “the New Era” was “in many ways backward-looking,” that “it was also a time when many Americans tried to turn the clock back from the ideas and the progressive spirit of the prewar years. Fundamentalism, nativism, and the Ku Klux Klan flourished, Prohibition was instituted, and Left-wing political movements were suppressed” (44). Emphasizing any era’s historical “complexity,” Susan Hegeman (recalling Raymond Williams) also warns against the chronographer’s penchant for
“origin stories,” for acquiescing to modernism’s “self-mythologized” legend of a “clean and self-evident break from its past” (18).

Never a coherent movement unified by common principles, modernism and its political implications are profuse, highly ambiguous, and drawn from many different pockets within the culture. Much of the last chapter was devoted to showing the persistent influence of conservative nationalism and military realism throughout the Decadent Decade’s supposed retreat into aesthetic sanctuaries as well as their endurance into the alleged “Red Decade” of the 1930s. Convoluting any account of the war’s political legacy, the cohabitation of divergent dispositions within the national domain resists monolithic characterization. On one hand, the war emergency inaugurated a “broadening of American nationalism,” a more liberal expansion of civic inclusion for groups formerly at the outskirts of the political mainstream (Porter 274). At least in part the consequence of their contribution to war mobilization, the “catalyst for a more inclusive definition of citizenship,” women’s suffrage was granted in 1920 (Anderson and Clayton 353).³ In 1924, Native Americans—10,000 of whom participated in the war—finally achieved citizenship rights. The birth of the American Civil Liberties Union in the same year of the Armistice, an agency vowed to protect dissenting Americans from the very abuses and humiliations of political repression the war unleashed, constituted a “silver lining” that, for the first real time, imbued the Bill of Rights with palpable implicative power.⁴

On the other hand, rapacious corporate capitalism was in its prime, liberal internationalism and the hope for a League of Nations fizzled out in the “disaster at Versailles,” and the Immigration Exclusion Acts of 1921 and 1924 formally legalized
racial hierarchy in the custody of democracy’s code of law. The surge of urban riots and harrowing displays of white terrorism in the Red Summer of 1919—lynch violence frequently targeting “uppity” returning black soldiers—proved the stamina of ascriptive racial symbolization beneath the more abstract rhetoric of liberal democracy. Although the wave of 3,600 strikes that gripped the country immediately following the Armistice testified to a surge in working-class power, the events also channeled reactionary conservative desires for sturdier domestic control. The problem came to a head on May Day, 1919 when gangs of returning soldiers attacked Socialist newspaper quarters and labor rallies in cities across the country, an event given literary expression in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “May Day.” Furthermore, the Communist revolution, according to Fred Anderson and Andrew Clayton, “put the United States on the ideological defense for the first time in its history.” “A republic that had regarded itself as the very embodiment of liberal revolutionary principles in the nineteenth century,” became—in the aftermath Red October—“a leading proponent of the status quo.” Capsizing the revolutionary memory of national mythology, U.S. citizens began “celebrating their history as a series of sacrifices made…in the defense of liberty, an essentially conservative reading of their past” (xx, 353).

In the last chapter, I delineated the way representations of sacrifice and preparedness, spurring a culture of incorporation and collaboration, coordinated notions of sociality supplementary to the flimsier political culture of the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I examine the fallout from that unstable social amalgam. To be sure, that fallout witnessed a variety of responses to a bewildering range of issues. But as much as anything, it gave new representational life and intensity to racial discourse, yet another
“supplementary” ideological rigging hoisting up liberal-national forms of belonging. Despite continued segregation, U.S. war mobilization clumped together a volatile welter social attitudes and racialized bodies that under normal conditions would have remained mostly unknown to each other. As Connecticut prep-schoolers found themselves languishing in Parisian brothels with French colonials and Mississippi stevedores, as well-educated people of color from Philadelphia and New York landed in Alabama training facilities under the supervision of beet-faced local sheriffs turned drill sergeants, definitions of political personhood were put on trial in the most perspicuous of ways. I will return to questions of white masculinity surrounding the preparedness sensibility that focus more on its peculiar racial ontology. I will also consider the elusive subject of “protest” and the relationship of some modernists to a slippery culture of dissent. But first I discuss the dialectic of race and nation expressed by African American writers as the war’s blurring of the color line forced them to confront and make meaning of the elusive terminological character of both.

**Closed Ranks: Race and the Nation at War**

World War I presented African American citizens with an impossible dilemma. Realizing the need for capable working bodies as it mounted its resources, the white establishment rhetorically embraced a civic nationalist code, a “social bargain,” as Richard Slotkin describes it, “that would redefine the relationship of ethnic and racial minorities to the American nation.” In exchange for loyal service and muted protest, compliance with national aims and military ideals would give black participants access to the national culture, to a political community that had long viewed them as an inassimilable “defect in the body politic” (*Lost* 35-36). But why should a black soldier
make the world safe for democracy when no such experience of egalitarian dignity benefited him in the life of insult and abuse he often endured at home under Jim Crow? A history of offenses against black regulars—notably Theodore Roosevelt’s dishonorable discharge of the all-black 125th regiment in Brownsville, Texas in 1906 after one or two purportedly shot at whites—had already deepened the culture of suspicion between African Americans and the military, a distrust refortified by similar events in Houston and Waco in 1917. As Nell Irvin Painter points out, the frequent use of the military to quell democratic uprisings and instill status quo in the early part of the twentieth century branded it essentially an instrument of white supremacy (389-90). Regarding the war itself, W.E.B. Du Bois in 1915 had castigated its imperialist, land-grabbing dimension in an Atlantic Monthly column titled “African Roots of the War.” Explaining the territorial conquest and economic gain enabled by the conflict in the register of a historical materialist, he decried the war as yet one more symptom of global exploitation enabled by nationalist ideology. “It is no longer the merchant prince, or the aristocratic monopoly, or even the employing class, that is exploiting the world,” he wrote, “it is the nation, a new democratic nation composed of united capital and labor” (645). Generally disparaged as the “white man’s war,” what business did the disenfranchised have with Uncle Sam? What could they possibly have to do with the “you” signaled by the gnarled finger protruding from his frock coat sleeve?

Two years later, Du Bois reversed his critique and resigned himself to the hope of progress through national sacrifice. Once the U.S. formally entered the war, he published a famous article in The Crisis titled “Close Ranks.” It’s cardinal proclamation was that black citizens should “forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to
shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy.” Retracting his earlier charges of global imperialism, Du Bois abetted the philosophy of global interventionism advocated by President Wilson, decreeing that war would “inaugurate the United States of the World” (645, 697). With echoes of Frederick Douglass’s “Men of Color, To Arms!,” he acceded to the hope of better citizenship through military partnership, a belief he would further aligned himself with in later writings like *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935). “Nothing else made emancipation possible in the United States,” he would later announce, “Nothing else made Negro citizenship conceivable, but the record of the Negro soldier as a fighter.” Some two million black men registered for the draft though racial segregation would persist for the duration of the conflict. Forbidden access to Plattsburg’s officer training facility—“a summer camp for members of the Social Register”—black candidates were sent to their own exclusive training grounds in Des Moines, Iowa (Slotkin, *Lost* 30). When it graduated 639 officers, all classed below field rank, the military would accommodate nearly all of them in the 92nd Division—a division helmed entirely by white superiors and deterred from assembling within U.S. territory for fear of congregating too many black nationals in one locale.5 Capped from climbing above the rank of captain and largely forbidden duty in the clout-bestowing arenas of combat, black officers discovered that preparedness in regard to black men meant mostly preparation for grunt work in commissaries, shipyards, and labor battalions.

War participation as a catalyst to national inclusion found literary expression in Jessie Redmon Fauset’s *There is Confusion* (1924). The literary editor of *The Crisis*, Faucet employed a story of African American war service to make legible the nation’s
betrayal of black citizens and to stake claims for increased citizenship rights. But it also
legitimated and intensified the nation as identity’s “master category”—the essential
political unit and first horizon of the self’s possibility.⁶ “I’m colored, of course, but
American first,” declares Joanna Marshall, the novel’s principal female character. But
driven by her quest for national “distinction,” she soon discovers that the desire to rise in
American society is fraught with difficulty if one’s phenotype reflects an image different
from entrenched symbolic ideals. Invoking the narrative trope of dual “fronts”—a device
endemic to race-based advocacy in war novels from at least Anna Dickinson’s What
Answer? (1868) on—Fauset’s World War I saga portrays Joanna’s domestic story as
paralleling that of Peter Bye, her romantic interest, whose experience of the European
front reveals its own “double battle” (269). Blurring zones of war and peace, Joanna
becomes a “battle-scarred veteran” in a race war on the homefront, a conflict that
obstructs her rise in New York’s theatrical society at the same time that African
Americans are sacrificing themselves for freedom in the European theater (235).
Meanwhile, despairing of any alternatives for social betterment through employment or
civic means, Peter follows his family’s tradition of service in American wars—an
ancestral history of participation in the Revolution and the Civil War—and enlists to etch
his own name into the national record. Although it “seems foolish for a colored man to
fight for America,” he embarks for Des Moines where “the boys are whispering of a
training camp for negro officers” since being denied at Plattsburg (206-7).

Like writers treated in the previous chapter, Fauset renders war participation as a
vehicle for self-enlargement. If Willa Cather and Edith Wharton accented the
compensatory spiritual enrichments of war participation, Fauset emphasizes the more
civic but nonetheless telescopic aspirations of her characters. “At first the war presented itself to Peter in a purely personal aspect,” she remarks; “It was a long time before he envisaged the struggle as a great stupendous whole” (237). Fauset’s “stupendous whole” represents the nation’s developmental striving to become the citadel of liberty it professes to be, a historical evolution toward a utopian future equality. Closing ranks, Peter discovers that he serves alongside a white man named Meriwether Bye. Their curiously shared last name reveals them as the current avatars of a forking family tree branching its way out of the knotted sexual history of plantation slavery. The scion of white slave owners, Meriwether’s social status is one steeped in privilege—everything Peter’s “strain of white Bye blood” desires but cannot attain (297). As it turns out, however, Meriwether’s motive for volunteering springs from a taproot of remorse over his own advantages and the means by which they were acquired. To absolve a sense of both personal and national guilt, he sacrificially enters the war determined to meet death as an act of national contrition, to sanctify his blood in a crusade Fauset describes as “the greatest gesture the world has ever made for freedom” (246). Resolved to his own tangled bloodline, Peter, despite bitter racial conflict within the ranks, joins himself to Meriwether’s purposes in Fauset’s image of a redemptive national alliance.

Politically speaking, the movement of Fauset’s novel operates along a kind of double articulation, an interpretive enfoldment that makes powerful demands for black recognition while tying them to the overarching project of national coalition. For one, the war teaches her characters to undo the belief that their lives constitute discrete, singular entities. Joanna, the dancer and operatic “soloist,” propitiously longs for fame in the early portion of the novel, a desire expressed patently as personal ambition, an
“obsession” with individual “success and distinction” (16-17). Her future with Peter is likewise made contingent upon his arrival at “manhood,” a condition understood as his ability to “come out of the herd” and be “somebody for his own sake” (157, 145-146). But like Philip, the novel’s fictional organizer of the NAACP, the goal as they come to understand it is not personal distinction but “to sense the social consciousness,” “to learn just what stirred mass feeling, and into what channels it could be directed” (73). The glacial nature of racial change in the U.S.—a reality made more palpable by the war’s social disruptions and the African American experience of relative equality in Paris—energizes a more profound commitment to a life of adversarial action and collectivist black empowerment. Vera, a longtime “passer,” determines to claim her “folks” in the South in combative opposition to “this terrible country” (270, 273). Joanna and Peter agree to “do battle” as “Happy Warriors,” steeled to face the dialectical challenges of the color line in the U.S. (266, 288).

Yet as the characters awaken from the political slumber of self-preoccupation, the war’s overarching power of national affiliation simultaneously impounds that roused consciousness, absorbing it as a testament to the country’s liberal maturation and a sign of its devotion to pluralist parity. Constrained within a nationalist story world, Fauset’s idealization of the black struggle for inclusion transforms into a demonstration of uniquely American virtues. The war brings that message home: Although its interracial approximation reinforces anxieties about “darkies and white women” and produces “grimmer, more determined fighting [between black and white nationals] than was seen at Verdun,” it ultimately establishes the conditions for an ensuing “harmony” that constitutes Fauset’s triumphal vision of the national body transformed (250, 291).
Meriwether indeed gives his life for “freedom.” Philip, commenting on the organizational purposes of the NAACP, self-censors his initial claim that it would be for “the interests of colored people.” “No, I’m wrong there,” he corrects, “It is to favor primarily the interests of the country” (129). His death in the war leads his mourning father to eulogize him proudly as having correctly “died for his country” (288). And though Peter at first returns “raving” that “fighting for freedom was a farce,” he and Joanna ultimately realize that the ordeal has taught them a concomitant “unselfishness.” Through its trials, declares Joanna, “we’ve found ourselves” (272-273, 267).

A scene of properly gendered spheres unfolds revitalizing domestic ideologies of an organized sexual economy, one endorsing the country’s own segregated and patriarchal social orders. Having abandoned her dream of a public life in the arts, Joanna discovers contentment, an “almost holy joy,” in her “free” position as wife and mother. Despite her love for music, the “soloist,” she discerns, misses out on “that most fascinating of all the sciences—harmony” (291). Released from a presumably dreary life of economic mobility and aesthetic expression, she learns that “Her desire for greatness had been a sort of superimposed structure which, having been taken off, left her her true self” (291). She gladly “defers” to Peter—a “dominating nature craved one still more dominant”—who appears finally as Fauset’s apotheosis of “self-reliant” manhood beneath whom Joanna gladly submits (146, 292). Although both characters endure the humiliations and persecutions of life in the American apartheid, they determine to embrace the nation as their home. “America makes me sick but darn it all, she is my country,” Peter concedes, “It’s mine, my people helped make it” (207, 182). Attuned to their separate domains but sounding consonant chords in ensemble, Fauset’s characters
present a picture of the nation as a kind of choral ensemble, a separate-but-equal paradigm that vindicates organic nationalist ideals and notions of better citizenship through self-sacrifice (291-292).

*There is Confusion*—an aptly disorienting title—muddles hazily through its own political miasma. Surely a signature of the time’s political complexity, it confronts that opaque sense of opportunity the war presented to black Americans, the murky “complex of color” at the core of a political community in obvious transition (179). Perhaps the novel’s most trenchant scene involves Joanna during one of her periods on the New York stage. She is recruited for a District Line Theater production called “Dance of the Nations”—a celebration of the different countries composing the Allied Forces represented by a single emblematic character from each—when the current white dancer refuses to dance the “black” segment in an homage to American pluralism. Joanna agrees and quickly becomes a rising star in the popular show. Donning a whiteface mask for the “white” portion (“a wig and grease paint” alone being sufficient for the “red” part), she is enthusiastically encored after one performance and beseeched to remove her mask to acknowledge a grateful crowd. After subtracting her disguise, she stands exposed before the bewildered Greenwich Village audience—her black figure standing in as the “symbolic” embodiment of “America.” “I hardly need to tell you that there is no one in the audience more American than I am,” she announces, “My great-grandfather fought in the Revolution, my uncle fought in the Civil War and my brother is ‘over there’ now” (232). The stunned audience, overcoming their amazement, erupts with applause and the potentially scorching event comes off as a huge success.
Fauset’s fantasy of black incorporation, of course, challenges the era’s prevailing idealizations of the national body. It condemns the internal contradictions of a political community that would send millions of soldiers to defend liberal humanism abroad while persisting with a white supremacist social system and Jim Crow segregation at home. At the same time, her somatic idealization recalls Barbara Foley’s description of the “metonymic nationalism” undergirding triumphal representations of cultural pluralism in the postwar period. For Foley—although she does not discuss Fauset’s novel—the Negro’s ability to “stand in” for the nation is “intended to combat disenfranchisement and bigotry” but ends up “conjoined with the nationalism of 100 percent Americanism” and its “essentialist notions of racial difference,” a representational mixture to which Fauset’s musical metaphor of harmonious chords ascribes (ix). Impeding “the burrowings of the old mole of revolution,” or at least obviating dialectical energies within the culture bent on systemic change, Fauset’s social symbolic dissipates more potent political programs, tabling them for the modest advances of increased access and integration (vii-viii). As such, novels like There is Confusion forward a political imaginary taking shape in the furnaces of war emergency and advocated by the “official ideologists” of liberal nationalism, the syndicate of political pedagogues boosting “a curriculum for soldiers and civilians” that would “guide the public’s understanding of the process of nationalization, socialization, and militarization that the war was imposing on them” (Slotkin, Lost 40). Promoting militarization as a form of democratization, they successfully linked loyal service and equal opportunity in ways that acknowledged minority dissent and social injustice while strengthening a more prominent identification with the liberal state as the legitimate vesture of political sovereignty and the overseer of democratic progress.
It was a version of “visibility” and “recognition” directly imbricated with nascent national security initiatives taking root within the culture. As an “Official Recognition of Negro Interests,” Secretary of War Newton Baker, for instance, appointed Tuskegee’s Emmett Scott as his Special Assistant, a mediating and arbitrative role designed “to advise whenever delicate questions arose affecting the interests of the colored people of the United States.” Pro-German influences, it was believed, were “stirring up a feeling of bitterness and unrest among both white and colored Americans” in an effort “to dampen the ardor and cool the patriotism of Negro Americans,” making them “careless and indifferent in support of their country’s war program” (41). “With a view to stabilizing conditions,” Scott remembered, he was brought in “for the special purposes of reassuring Negroes through the country that the Government in general, and the War Department in particular entertained a friendly and just attitude toward them” (41). In his memoir, he fondly recalls the moment when “colored troops” were first trusted with a security detail over Washington D.C. water supplies. As it turns out, encamped in the city were many white regiments worrisomely containing German-American troops, and black soldiers could ostensibly be entrusted with a security detail over the water tanks since, as the Baltimore Sun proclaimed, “the Afro American is the only hyphenate…who has not been suspected of a divided allegiance.” Howard University’s Kelly Miller praised Baker’s prescient inclusion of a black representative. It was a “statesmanlike grasp of the situation,” he announced, “in designating one of our number to help in bringing the race into sympathetic understanding and cheerful cooperation with the plans and purpose of the government.” “The nation,” he warned, “cannot expect that the Negro will always
remain an ardent, enthusiastic citizen, eager to play his part if he is forever shut out from equal participation in and protection under the law.”

The priority given national affiliation inhibited deeper reckonings with the racial buttress—the subterranean logic of inclusion and exclusion—that had always qualified rhetoric of the deracinated citizen and that the war crisis rendered most decipherable. Rogers Smith and Nikhil Pal Singh describe liberal ideology’s rhetorical agility during this period as a “recurring oscillation between the universalizing abstractions of liberal-democracy” and its “persistent regression” into racism (19-20). Linking the “reciprocal effects” of Jim Crow racial hierarchy and the imperialism of U.S. foreign policy, Singh—applying the thought of Etienne Balibar—detects how American universalism liberates “individual subjectivity from narrow communitarian bonds” while simultaneously imposing “normative and normalized patterns of individual behavior.” A kind of ideological hustle, American universalism’s liberal overtones facilitated a “complex dynamic of differential inclusion” that, because of its supposed humanistic example, often aided imperial growth, while simultaneously rejecting any need to resemble those designs at home. The dual dimension reveals the propriety of an ascriptive tradition of citizenship laws which could include and exclude at the same time. “American universality has degenerated into racism,” Singh writes, “not because it has failed to be ‘true’ to itself, but because racial demarcation has historically been a central measure of the inner constitution of modern, civic identity.” The political paradigm that emerged from the war would usher in the revised liberalism of the New Deal, “a powerful synthesis of liberalism and nationalism that augmented the old exceptionalist belief that
the US was the world’s exemplary nation-state and the bearer of universality in the world
system” (Singh 32-57).

Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928) wades through the same political eddy. Typically treated as a representative novel of the New Negro Renaissance, McKay’s novel, as Jennifer James rightly notes, should also assume a position in the long tradition of black writing about war as a text deeply scarred by the transnational crisis of World War I. Recognizing McKay’s “long perspective”—a term of his own coinage—she recuperates *Home to Harlem*’s “more radical reading of blacks’ relationship to ‘the Great War’; one meant to complicate the myopic nationalist perspective that, in McKay’s mind, prevented African Americans from viewing the war in a more expansive political context.” Her reading interprets McKay as “bringing the vast (and black) geography of the war ‘home to Harlem’” so that Harlem “can be seen as representative of other Western geographical spaces where blacks have been ‘lumped together’ under white nationalist or imperial reign.” If “World War I complicated the ethnic and racial affiliation of those blacks serving in white imperial and nationalist militaries,” it also rescaled racial subjectivity by creating “black transnational contact zones,” places where “blacks from the diaspora could interact and exchange ideas.” Its “revision of black integrationist politics,” then, functions as a kind of two-way street—disrupting the sanctity of the “white nation” by connecting it to its wider history of colonial exploitation while simultaneously understanding that connectivity as forging an international collective body based on racial solidarity, a “group soul.” If the logic of American liberal universalism makes operable the twin arms of an imperialist and segregationist machine, *Home to Harlem* jams the gears of both.8
James’s reading incisively excavates the two fault lines branching their way through McKay’s resistance to national identification and its power to instill the imagined community—especially attributable to his own nomadic internationalism and experience of racism in the US. Depleting the force of their monumentality, McKay’s treatment documents the interrelational way geopolitical spaces like nations are mutually enmeshed in broader, more volatile networks, a circuitry in which the local and the international are jointly parceled. Back in Harlem, Jake’s and Zeddy’s experiences of police raids and encounters with vice squads, union busting, and draft dodger roundups resonate with episodes they encountered as soldiers during the alleged war “after Democracy”: memories of being barred from the YMCA and of interracial violence in London and Brest (130). All are variant expressions of the state’s increasing monopoly on legitimate violence, a fact made ponderously visible during the war. AWOLs from a demeaning affair they now find “white folks’ business,” their defiance of the state in a Harlem swarming with its henchmen opens the way for a rapprochement with the “lifeforce” of their own racial community (49). “What right have niggers got to shoot down a whole lot a Germans for?” asks Felice. “Is they any worse than Americans or any other nation of white people?” (331-332). Jake and Zeddy go “slack,” and desertion emerges as McKay’s thematic refusal to conform to the militarist instrumentalism of the social order (331). Harlem’s “violence and disunity”—the book’s most lamented representational features for many black critics at the time—become, rather, “central to the novel’s examination of the war’s effects on black nations and communities” (James 217, 224). Resisting assimilationist and uplift prerogatives, *Home to Harlem* explodes the structure
of national identification patterned by figures like Fauset to bargain for an alternative universe of black transnationalism.

Yet in the dialectic of race and nation, McKay’s desire to outrun the nation’s power leads him into essentialist versions of racial authenticity that not only do not evade the state’s categorizations of black subjectivity but often reinforce them. To evade the interpellation of black identity into American universalism, he conjures a “primitive passion for going against regulation,” rhetoric corroborative of the white supremacist logic that legitimated black exclusion on premises of its natural incompatibility with the responsibilities of the open society (44). Summoning an “ancestral source,” a “current of black blood” from a shared but “scarce-remembered past” in the “jungle,” McKay expounds upon the “primitive joy of Harlem,” its “barbaric, burning, savage, clashing, planless colors.” A place where “near-white members” have trouble “proving their identity,” McKay’s Harlem is a tribal zone characterized by a “marshaling of spears” and the “sacred frenzy of phallic celebration.” In a culture that deprecated African Americans for inferior capacities for self-government, McKay’s efforts to inspire and embolden a collective racial body often deviate into politically disabling conceits, a dissociation of sensibility that would, in different ways, shape the political exile and inward-turning of white moderns like Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos. Like Jake, he “ain’t a joiner” (45). Ignoring the color line’s constitutive construction of both white and black modes of self-valuation, his racialism reinforces a narrative of biological predetermination and inassimilable resistance to political coalition. In so figuring African American subjectivity, he reverses the contrarian appeal of earlier poetic ripostes like “If We Must Die.”
McKay’s racial separatism—his “united mass” wriggling to “the same primitive, voluptuous rhythm”—runs dangerously close to corroborating the ideologies of segregation (337). James identifies McKay’s “important deviation” from other black writing in its refusal to document “the impact of white supremacy on black existence” as “primarily a ‘bourgeois’ concern.” Seeking instead a “more authentic racial solidarity,” his black internationalism offers a thankful reprieve in more “transcendent notions” of identification (215). But is McKay evading the nation trap? Or is his faith that the self can vault free of its immanent history to reclaim a pre-biographical past, that one may simply jettison the self-structuring effects of locality and ideology, itself symptomatic of developing trends in the national discourse with which modernism was more generally complicit? McKay’s dissonant strains may disturb the “harmony” of a nationalist imaginary like Fauset’s. But the essentialism of his racial primitivism—a chord McKay strikes in his own tribute to racial “harmony”—offers a vision of community recalcitrant to rather than pressuring for political change (320). The Haitian Ray, the one character skeptical of both national and racial ontologies, comes off as sexually tepid, one of the “slaves of the civilized tradition,” a creature incapable of community with what he contemptibly deems to be the “great black mass of swine” (153-55, 263-265). Ruined as he is by his elitist longing for education and preoccupation with racial injustice, his fear that he will “deflate” into “the contented animal that was a Harlem nigger,” Ray emerges finally as “impotent,” marooned from sustaining repositories of masculine virility and the “life force” of the street (154, 264). The novel’s conclusion unravels whatever anti-military pressures remain by defending Jake’s AWOL status on the complaint that a duplicitous U.S. army denied him the chance of killing Germans. They wouldn’t “give
us a chance at ‘em,” Jake laments (331). Although possessed with “his own daydreams of going over the top,” the army did not make manifest the promise of self-legitimation in the trial by fire: “Jake was disappointed. He had enlisted to fight. For what else had he been sticking a bayonet into the guts of a stuffed man and aiming bullets straight into a bulls-eye?” (4).

Fauset and McKay thus confront the difficult racial-national cipher of the sacrifice-inclusion paradigm endemic to the liberal warfare state, the riddle of belonging presented to African Americans by their consent to and participation in a program of state violence. Tugged by desires for collective life, they faced prospects equally marred and finally insolvent: compromise with a nation still allegiant to racist social organization and hierarchical categorization, or flight toward a racial transnationalism debilitative of local activism and state confrontation. Victor Daly bluntly called it hell. Appropriating General Sherman’s famous proclamation that “War is Hell,” Daly takes the elliptical title Not Only War (1932) to remind readers that racism, war’s odious twin, constituted “another gaping, abysmal Hell” for African Americans (7). Rendering African American life, like Fauset, as laboring on two fronts—a conceit that would later be known as the “Double V” during black mobilization for World War II—Daly simply leaves open the paradox that Fauset and McKay attempt to resolve. Like so many, his account orbits the conceptual contradictions of gain through sacrifice. Although dissuaded by his friends from joining in the “white man’s war” where “no amount of sacrifice” will “soften the hearts of these crackers,” Montgomery “Montie” Jason takes his chances on Des Moines. “I think that if we roll up our sleeves and plunge into this thing,” he declares, “the Government will reward the race for its loyalty” (20). But Montie is killed not only after
suffering the litany of abuses particular to black men in a military run by white authority, but in the process of saving the life of a racist fellow officer, Robert Lee Casper, who both stole his black girlfriend in the States and, in France, court-martialed him for billeting with a white woman. Daly’s final image, “Two bodies slumped as one,” dramatizes the absurdity of black compliance with the arm of empire (106). As James puts it, in “rejecting a black collective memory of betrayal to invest in the promises of the U.S. government and its military,” Montie’s consent springs from a desire “to secure political integration through a fraternal organization in a patriarchal society” (James 186-87). Daly’s depiction, however, is of the national community as failed venture, refusing to complete either a racial or national structure of identification and making primary the inhumanity of the color line. The final image dilates out from the two entwined corpses, the mutual products of an ongoing historical struggle, in a manner that spawns only questions.

The questions would endure long after the war as African American political life continued to confront the difficulties of categorical priority. Their cause would only be inhibited by white interference and subterfuge. All black-skinned peoples were excluded from talks surrounding the League of Nations, and conspicuously absent from the Armistice parade in Paris were the war’s 400,000 African American veterans. These slights surely reinforced “the conundrum of being a part of, yet apart from, American society” (Sanders 142-143). Compounding the irony, though prohibited from doing so in the first place, many black citizens were rebuked for failing to volunteer. To make matters worse, the modest racial advances made as a result of the war’s slight loosening of the color line enlivened counteractive white struggles to retighten the ratchets. The
lynching escapades of 1919’s “Red Summer” issued from a submerged will to violence that the figure of the black body in the national uniform ignited. Furthermore, some African American’s reluctance to endorse the war branded them an unstable fifth column, a internal population susceptible to communist agitation and a weak link in the chain of national defense. Such a sequence lends credence to the observation of one black character in James Wharton’s Squad (1928) who, when asked to comment on the war’s poor prospects for people of color, replied, “Dis ain’t no wa’ for me. Had lots mo’ wa ‘n dis back home” (106). In the crucible of sacrifice and inclusion excited by war mobilization, the experience for African Americans exposed the many quandaries of race and nationality and revealed further the persistence of an ascriptive racial metric, what Gary Gerstle calls the “defining feature of modern America,” as the foundation on which U.S. citizenship stood.

II. DeMeritocracy: Race, Empire, and Preparedness Masculinity

The struggle over racial and national priority exceeded confinement in black politics alone to ripple also through the dominant culture. Recent accounts of the political climate surrounding World War I mobilization make a convincing case that, however terribly African Americans were mistreated during the war, the experience of the conflict for other ethnic Americans was distinguished for its altruistic spirit of goodwill. Suggesting that historians may have overemphasized the influence of 100-percent Americanism advanced by the “old stock nativists and immigration restrictionists,” Keith Gandal describes the way that existing “partial” histories—those focusing only on the exploitation of African Americans, Native Americans, and women—overlook the comparative ease with which Jewish, Italian, Irish, Mexican, and
Eastern European Americans were welcomed into Uncle Sam’s family. Culling from histories by Nancy Ford and Richard Slotkin, he indicates that “of all the major institutions that shaped the life of the nation—schools and universities, government, and corporations—the wartime army may have been the one most willing to acknowledge and accept ethnic difference as an inescapable element of national identity” (19). Seeking out “talented ethnic Americans to serve as officers in foreign speaking companies,” the army’s “pragmatic” approach to mobilization yielded a relative “egalitarianism” in that “together, African Americans, immigrants, and first-generation ethnic Americans made up about 50 percent of the nation’s draft.” In addition, some evidence appears to exist suggesting that military ideologues actually wanted better black integration in order to verify a policy of “no racial discrimination in the National army,” but political pressure from “Congress and other powerful civilian men” undermined them (Gandal 15-22).

Welcoming prodigal white Southerners back to the family table was, after all, an integral component of wartime unity and crucial to the process of national expediency.

Yet the praise of military democracy overlooks the visceral experience of repression and white terrorism aimed at black and ethnic Americans—assimilated or not—who were not acting out performances of unqualified loyalty in military arenas. If the warfare state was generous to those who conformed with the war effort, it was equally bullish to those who did not. To the hundreds of German-American civilians lumped into Ellis Island as it was converted into a stockade in 1917—a stark inversion of its symbolic power as a haven of mercy—the story was quite different. As “enemy aliens,” a newly coined identity designation for German-born men over the age of fourteen, many ethnics’ first experience of the American state involved facing down an inquisitorial network of
government boards and loyalty committees. For wartime radicals from a variety of national origins—in particular Jews and the Irish for whom alliances with pogrom-friendly Russia and former British overlords respectively aroused little enthusiasm—repression was often brutal. Eroded of rights as quickly as were “conscientious objectors”—that other category of political selfhood deemed a menace to national security—an intense screening of their multiple and overlapping affections made them susceptible to “sincerity” tests, state-sanctioned probes into the substance of one’s “character.”

Moreover, the many supportable instances of increased inclusion only illuminate the way multicultural representation in the service of a more open-armed state dovetailed with a compulsory culture of self-subordination and loyalty mandated by that inclusion. The democracy of the barracks and field tent was never an accession to liberal ideals but an ideological advancement essential to the New Nationalist program. Worth noting, perhaps, is the fact that many of the publishing houses that printed preparedness fiction—Knopf, Boni and Liveright, Harcourt Brace, Harper Brothers, and Viking—were often
overseen by second-generation European immigrants, cultural pluralists “concerned with ethnic diversity and its relation to national identity” (Sanders 135). A conservative form of multiculturalism that honored the various “threads” of the nation’s organizational fabric, according to Susan Hegeman, offered the very “flexible model of identity” desired by progressives, one prohibiting potential “massification” which they worried could have a dangerously proletarian effect (58, 61). Even if non-whites of African and East Asian descent remained the unassimilable residue of that political alchemy, Theodore Roosevelt’s “true Americanism” welcomed ethnic hybridity as a tempering agent in the national steel, a polymorphous antidote indeed to the traitorous over-refinement and “effeminacy” enervating his own gentrified class and their Europeanized sensibilities (Gerstle 54). But to be welcomed into the inner-circle of fellowship, ethnics had to have “Teutonic” origins and honor exclusively the Red, White, and Blue (Slotkin, “Unit” 477).

Refining pluralism’s “balkanized” diversity by directing it through military channels, aspects of foreign difference could be reduced to a common denominator of pure Americanism which would decrease rather than expand American factionalism (Dawley 112-113). General Leonard Wood congratulated institutions like Plattsburg, bunking as they did the sons of Harvard with Midwestern hayseeds and the detritus of the urban slums, for their “absolutely democratic” vision of the American future, the model of the good society.15 Like the “intensely American” Rough Riders—which enlisted Russian Jews, Irish Catholics, and the “largest possible” contingent of German-born men to prove that “we are all Americans and nothing else”—Plattsburg would emerge as the embodiment of the military-national dream where a disparate polyglot would “learn to bow to the military god, Authority” (Pearlman 148).16 Resolving a rhetorical paradox
between democratic “meritocracy” (civic nationalism) and ascriptive white supremacy (racial nationalism), ethnic minority inclusion repaired yet another political divot in the national field.  

Implicitly designed to strengthen the national core, the increased tolerance of multiculturalism within progressive reform was likewise parceled to American universalism’s imperialist program. As American institutions diminished the unsustainable racialism of the national discourse, much of the enmity of that internal collective affect was transferred onto “others” abroad. Timothy Brennan, like Singh, assesses the mythology of the Progressive period as evincing a national chauvinism in which America came to be understood as the prototype of universal global desires. Masking an expansionist gaze behind a liberal cosmopolitanism, the Plattsburg social ideal thus reveals “how a national-political myth of multicultural inclusion (‘pluralism’) dovetails, under specific conditions, with a purportedly supranational ethos of global cooperation (cosmopolitanism)” (216-218). If military nationalism served as the template for domestic reform, those social renovations also provided a model upon which to restructure international society, a belief explicitly spelled out in Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Stretching state interest into both domestic and international domains, war-preparation—even as it extolled its commitment to end all war—was becoming an elemental component of national life.

Herbert Croly’s *The Promise of American Life* (1909) provided the intellectual backdrop to support such a view of (inter)national affairs. Favoring a competitive global order of nation-states vying for supremacy, Croly endorsed imperialism, colonialism, and war as “character building” goods. “Necessary for unification,” he argued, “War may be
and has been a useful and justifiable engine of national policy” and “contributes more to
human amelioration than a merely artificial peace” (255-256). One of many twentieth-
century American luminaries to cast war as peace, he offered an explanation of war as a
socially moderating practice whereby the naturally bellicose instincts of white manhood
could vent themselves at safe distances. “The truth is,” he advised, “that colonial
expansion by modern national states is to be regarded, not as a cause of war, but as a
safety-valve against war. It affords an arena in which the restless and adventurous
member of society can have their fling without dangerous consequences” (261).19 As for
securing cohesion within the domestic territory, a national polity, he proclaimed, “always
remains an organization based on force.” “It depends not on public opinion…but on the
strong arm” (255). Wilson agreed. “[I]n the last analysis,” the President finally
concluded in 1917, “the peace of society is obtained by force…. [I]f you say we shall not
have any war, you have got to make that ‘shall’ bite. The rest of the world, if America
takes part in this thing, will have the right to expect from her that she contributes her
element of force to the general understanding. Surely that is not a militaristic idea. That
is a very practical, possible ideal” (Knock 66).

Underwriting the logic of preparedness’s corporatist ideology, even as it
disavowed more bluntly familiar racist aspects, was a powerful racial component. To
convene the necessary social infrastructure effectively required a permanent condition of
international struggle and dispositions sensitive it. Plattsburg’s “best men” represented
ideal “types” of masculinity most equipped with the “strong arm” necessary to preserve
Teutonic civilization. To enforce both domestic and international order, Croly imagined
white leadership in the form of the “exceptional man,” a man “of special ability, training,
and eminence” (160, 170). Akin to the “passionate manhood” assessed by E. Anthony Rotundo, Croly’s “exceptional man” was a managerial white figure who could recuperate a presumably extinct savagery from primordial lineages while simultaneously, in Roosevelt’s words, speaking “gravely of man’s duty to the state and the nation”—a paradoxically obedient anarchy (Rotundo 227, 238). Oscillating along an often contorted double valence, to put it another way, the racial mythology of preparedness had white men exhuming an ancestral propensity for homicidal aggression while at the same time routing that resurrected substance into avenues only they could patrol. Gail Bederman describes this esoteric proclivity for “recapitulation” as a temporary regression moderating ideologically the twin pitfalls of knuckle-dragging brutishness, on one hand, and neurasthenic over-refinement, on the other. “Borrowing” spiritual infusions from shared ancestral “stock,” white leaders conjured “remote ancestral strains of the blood” as a kind of “second-birth,” an inner renewal similar to religious conversion where they would be “flooded with ancestral tendencies.” Harvard Medical School’s Harvey Cushing lauded it as a spiritual revival, unleashing the “barbarian behind your starched and studded shirt” (Pearlman 48). Although a seeming reversion to the anachronisms of the heroic tradition, recapitulation’s mystical self-excavations were integral to the preparedness worldview and further established the wellsprings of subjectivity in a community exceeding the solitary self.20

The last chapter discussed the corporatist, professionalist acumen of the Plattsburg ideal as it forded gaps in the political rationality of liberalism. Texts evangelizing that conservative nationalism frequently abounded with the racial metaphysics of recapitulation as yet another supplementary appendage to the national
body. Championing white primitivism while remaining hostile to non-white “barbarism,” preparedness culture promoted images of biological declension to codify racialized subjects in ways amendable to public stability. Hervey Allen, a figure discussed in the last chapter, sketched tales of white soldiers retrieving a talent for violence from submerged primitive resources. His Corporal Virgin is, in fact, surprised to discover that his berserker rampage against German enemies ends the life of a “white boy like himself” (130). During his own violent sprees, Theodore Roosevelt Jr.’s Sergeant York summons the spirits of Anglo-Saxon figures from military history, ghost-like figures who infuse him with their power during times of trial. The same literary conceit holds for Leonard Nason’s Sargeant Eadie who, when engaged by Germans, musters an ancient “snarl of rage” (227). “Hate and bloodlust blazed” from his eyes with “all the nakedness of a man’s soul gone back to primeval savagery,” Nason writes (227). In the same spirit, the white soldiers of John Thomason’s Fix Bayonets also undergo their share of primordial resurrections. “The Americans are savages,” reads a letter taken from a dead German, “They kill everything that moves.” To qualify such testament to American ruthlessness, Thomason makes it known that the American appetite for killing is merely the consequence of meeting a barbarous enemy at its own game. Exercising a native Yankee adaptability, the American killer necessarily responds to situations imposed upon him by wolfish opponents. “Like reasonable people,” Thomason explains, “the Americans were willing to learn from the Boche, from anybody who could teach them; and if the Boche played the game that way [shooting Red Cross men]—they could meet him at it” (27). Survival in preparedness’s universe of inexorable struggle mandates that one be capable of a temporary regression equal to the more innate depravity of the enemy.
But for those more “fixed” in their racial makeup, uncultivated barbarism was a mark of cultural inferiority, a worrisome biological deficit in need of careful white oversight. Often the racial trope was used to differentiate between volunteers—principled, white men of vision—and reluctant draftees: that green and shiftless mob of dissociated, drafted immigrants. Waiting for a fresh unit of draftees to arrive, the war-tried regular volunteers of Thomas Boyd’s *Through the Wheat* (1927) pejoratively observe an “incoming horde” of conscripted ethnics with their “voices in a polyglot of tongues” (161). William Scanlon’s *God Have Mercy on Us!* includes a long section where the men of Nap’s company have to compensate for the deficiencies of the Thirty-Sixth division, a unit made up entirely of indigenous Americans. Eagerly expectant that Indians probably make “pretty good fighters,” the men discover disappointedly that they are difficult to handle. They fumble orders, decline to charge at the proper times, and seem basically incompatible with the other units (261-280). Temporarily assigned to a camp away from his men, Nason’s Sergeant Eadie similarly despairs of being stuck with the “dregs of the melting pot that the long arm of the draft stirred up” rather than the “good white average joes” of his own unit (330). “Before, the men had been the average American wounded from the Regular and National Guard division,” he complains, “volunteers, every one of them.” “Now the camp was filled with the scum of every nationality on the face of the earth.” Mired with a crew that “lived and slept like animals,” Eadie seethes at the “heavy-jowled, stolid Slavs, curly-headed Albanians and Greeks, round-headed filthy Russian Jews, [and] Italians of the lowest sort, a crowd of men that scarcely spoke English, dirty, undisciplined, ignorant men who addressed an officer as ‘boss’ and a sergeant as ‘Hey, Jack!’” (331-2).
The proximity to black soldiers only exacerbates the racial dynamic. Thomason’s narrator expresses contempt for the fact that he has to work with “Annamite” French colonials, “heathen who smelled like camels and chattered like monkeys” (81). His band of marines may admire a group of Senegalese soldiers for the fact that they “marched like veterans” and for their lusty aptitude for German-killing. But unlike the “civilized races” for whom killing is “at best an acquired taste,” these “black savages,” he chillingly observes, were “enjoying themselves” (105). Trying his hand at some comparative sociology, Thomason analyzes the “black devils, raging with knives” amid scenes of atrocity, executions of violence in which his white characters have also triumphantly participated. Unlike the chastened force executed soberly by the white men of his company, Senegalese violence flows from animistic jungle sources. Issuing “lion-like leaps” and “shrill barbaric barking,” they dispatch their victims passionately, pausing only to take “a brace of human ears, nicely fresh, strung upon a thong” (106). “Their eyes rolled, and their splendid white teeth flashed in their heads,” he writes, “but here all resemblance to the happy Southern darky stopped. They were deadly” (105).

Thomason’s comparison reveals the limit and contradiction of preparedness’s racial optic in ways revealing the categorical ambiguity World War I imposed on many white soldiers. Raised on the racial ideologies of Jim Crow, startled white Americans often had difficulty comprehending black skill in warfare. Numerous war novels show black soldiers driven lustily by a knack for killing as an inherent condition of their savagery. [include print of “Two First Class Americans,” cartoon by W.A. Rogers, New York Herald, celebrating Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts Croix de Guerre in Emmett Scott’s American Negro in the World War 22] Yet depictions of black men’s
capacity for methodical violence undermined assumed racial truths about their lack of sophistication and tacitly childlike unfitness for military organization, the inherited lore of plantation myth. By revealing black troops’ coordination in battle, Thomason reveals deficiencies in the racialized taxonomy relegating black soldiers to labor battalions and grunt work, logic hinged upon tropes of the black subject’s innate lethargy and limited intelligence. But by tying warrior instincts to jungle origins inaccessible to black Americans, Thomason figures colonial fighting abilities as a racial exoticism available only to those black soldiers grafted to natural origins. Evidence of African colonials’ unconstrained aptitude for violent activity, moreover, only compounds the corresponding need for steady white paternalism, a supervisory moderation of social equilibrium out of racial chaos.

However accommodating official military policy may have been of the nation’s diversity, literary accounts of the war often were not. Precisely because the demands of war mobilization threw into relief the fictions and failures of the nation’s racial symbolic, war memory often sought to restore some foundation upon which to arrange and regulate social order. In many ways, the advent of modernism’s radical antistatism and aesthetic revolt signaled as much a response to the war’s assembly of undifferentiated human diversity as it was to its waste and violence. Hurled into the lurch with the dross of urban ghettos and rubes of East Palookaville, the artistic recoil of numerous modern artists— their search for refuge and separate peace, their expatriation to the salons of Montparnasse, their withdrawal into the little magazines—represented as much a nullification of war’s multicultural amalgam as the swansong of bourgeois Victorian conformity. As the warfare state’s portrait of the national family hardened into focus, it
convened a paucity of cultural sophistication few wished to embrace. If this degraded polyglot was the organic society envisioned by patrons of military nationalism, what was an aesthetic pioneer in search of meaningful forms to do?

**Racial Degradation and Modernist Backlash: Elliot Paul and Laurence Stallings**

To be sure, some currents within American culture, especially after the war, were challenging the “dichotomous reasoning” of nineteenth-century racial hierarchies and championing the self’s “contextual and relational” nature. As Mark Sanders indicates, an emphasis on “developmental relation” credentialed by figures like Franz Boas “leveled the cultural playing field, rejecting any privileged site from which society could be explained” (131). Desiring a “national integration of cultures,” some moderns “looked to America’s cultural patchwork and championed cultural pluralism—the celebration of ethnic distinction and intercultural exchange—in service to egalitarian and democratic ideals.” For the New Negro movement, especially, the multicultural nativism of the postwar era stressed “the radically contingent nature of reality” and a “dismantling of binaries in the service of democratic ideals” that “helped to create ideas and resources that New Negroes could use toward their own ends” (129-137). An energized culture of political dissent was taking root.

Like any period of transition, these more egalitarian, forward-looking efforts drew a stiff undertow of resistance, in particular from a parallel sensibility disdainful of the roiling, democratic crowd. As Sanders rightly attests, this period of aesthetic revolution also witnessed “the nadir of race relations in American” (137). Dragging against the thrust of modernism’s more progressive upheaval, then, was a deeply conservative counterweight, and it emerged from within rather than outside modernist circles. The
sensed unraveling of value spurring those retreats to havens of imaginative solitude were at least in part incited by an opprobrium for “mass culture”—that formless riot of color and flux homogenizing the autonomous consciousness. Max Eastman spurned high formalism’s preference for “authority, stability, and control” and for its propping up of “the Victorian system of class hierarchy and privilege” (Sanders 136). But many artists’ concerns were more akin to Walter Lippmann’s who nurtured a deep suspicion of the “phantom public” as an easily manipulated herd—an attitude the mania of the war craze only corroborated. Their historical point of view was basically reactionary and conservative. Beneath the moderns’ many “adventures” in form, claims Richard Pells, always ran the “unstated assumption that the surrounding environment could not really be altered, that literary interests and skills would never be served by social reform, that the only practical task for the emancipated and rootless intellectual was the creation of an alternative life-style and culture beyond the grasp of bourgeois America” (36). Liberal theorist Harold Stearns’s famed symposium, Civilization in the United States (1922), convened thirty prominent intellectuals to recommend that, if the American artist was “to preserve his [sic] talent, he must go to Europe where the creative life is still possible” (13).

The isolation from the mob pursued by some of modernism’s most prominent artists was entirely disingenuous. In numerous instances, the most vitriolic polemicists were those disenchanted war participants who, fresh from university “War Issues” courses and eager to go “over the top” and “do their bit,” were the first giddy volunteers in Europe. “We were jealous of Europe’s great experience,” recalled the more honest Stearns of 1919, considering what he called the “emotional breakdown before war-
hysteria.” “A profound world tragedy was being enacted, and we were hardly even supernumeraries in the wings. Most of the civilized nations we knew, and to which either in blood or sympathy nearly all of us were attached, were experiencing unprecedented spiritual depressions and elations. The intoxicating tingle of life in Europe contrasted favorably with the drab monotony of our own.” Displaying the patently antiliberal allure of the preparedness ethos, he adds: “With so much tremendous new experience being undergone (even though some of it was an experience of hell) were we not entitled to our share?” (88-89). Much of the moderns’ disenchantment with their “experience of hell” issued from the fact that prominent participants were displeased with the portion they received. Keith Gandal diagnoses what he calls “mobilization wounds” troubling modernism’s more elite male progenitors—William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway especially, but also John Dos Passos, and e.e. cummings—“for their own failure to matter to the army or to become heroic soldiers” (13). Learning “to submerge and transfigure this pain,” their later nonwar themed masterpieces reveal “a sense of inadequacy and emasculation” at the “meritocracy accelerated by the wartime mobilization.” In the comparative democracy of a multiethnic military, Anglo-Americans experienced “culture shock” in “meeting the rest of the nation (minus blacks), not as servants, service people, employees, or charity cases, but rather on an equal footing.” Consequently, much modernist sentiment may be “antimilitary,” but its scorn for the war originates at least partly from the forced association with a national polyglot that did not conform to their heroic ambitions and romantic ideals.

Before Hemingway’s Frederic Henry famously declared his embarrassment at the words “sacred, glorious, and sacrifice,” Elliot Paul’s *Impromptu* (1923) and Laurence
Stallings’s *Plumes* (1924) were indexing the difficulty of reconciling democratic and military pieties (191). Their work, furthermore, demonstrates the problem of categorical assignations like “protest literature” or “antiwar writing” when attributed to modernist orthodoxies. Paul’s novel—a venomous indictment of Main Street America—opens in the most waspish of towns, Glendale, Massachusetts, where Irwin Atwood and his closest friend, Dutch Gerry, have been reared on a steady diet of anti-Semitic, racist white nativism. The opening chapters parody their comfortable lives as “overrun” by an invasion of garlicky-smelling “Guineas,” “uncivilized Chinks,” and “ugly three deckers” bulging with “fat Jewish mothers resting their flopping breasts on the windowsills”—Boston’s new suburban consortium of commuters and factory workers (6, 12). When not spending time at their all-white fraternity, Dutch and Irwin worry about the Jews on their baseball team and sling firecrackers at a Chinese laundry (35). Initially, *Impromptu’s* present a mocking parody of small-town xenophobia and patriotic naivety. Paul sarcastically trumpets the fraternity’s commitment to “democracy and the removal of social barriers,” “excepting, of course,” he adds, for “Jews, Catholics, Chinese, or Negroes” (38).

When the war breaks out, however, the multicultural ensembles it gathers emerge without gloss as humiliating symbols of the nation’s degeneration. Atwood expresses revulsion at having to serve alongside a drafted regiment of “Wops and Yids” from New York (111). Most worrisome is that Atwood and Gerry work in close proximity to black troops, a fact which Paul represents as an experience of radical self-unmaking. Atwood’s exposure to French nightlife begins in a desegregated café bubbling with the noisy conversation of “white men, Frogs, niggers, Algerians, all babbling at once” (119). His
discovery that French prostitutes do not discriminate between white and black patrons is a revelation regrettably made too late, once he has already consummated his transaction (123). The remainder of his unnerving war service finds him stranded alongside the “gleaming eyeballs” of black gravediggers or transported by “expressionless Chinese coolies” whom he regards as disarmingly “noiseless”—“heathen” from a “civilization long dead” who, interchangeable and “just alike,” “lived a foot behind their faces” (177, 181, 301).

But the pivotal incident occurs early on in camp and continues to haunt Atwood throughout the remainder of the novel. Grumbling that his work would be more suitable for “niggers,” he is confusedly flung into a shellshock ward populated entirely by “a blur of Negro faces” being treated for syphilis (104-105). Paul describes Atwood as suddenly plunked down amid “a harrowing grotesque of jackknifed perpendiculars,” a “nightmare of naked, howling savages” composed of “Runts, giants, apes, [and] bronzes” (109-110). Traumatized by the “Jungle cries” emitted from the “roomful of bare coons,” Atwood vomits (110-111). The spectacle is vividly and indelibly imprinted on his psyche as subsequent encounters with black soldiers yield similar results: fits of vomiting, terrifying dreams, suffocating and vertiginous panic. In a moment of contact with Algerian regulars—“lampblack masks” with “porcelain eyeballs”—Atwood notes the leader’s “barbaric monotone” as he “contorted, quivered, and waved his claws in wild gesticulations, conjuring deep race memories.” Chanting in a “weird crescendo,” the men summon a savage energy from primordial Africa: “Every black man in the area reverted to type, standing tense, crooning the song in the back of his throat, slapping his palms and thighs with the beat” (134). Overcome by his fear of black bodies—
increasingly sexualized and fetishized as “Bare, smooth…Buttocks staring up at him in every shade of brown and yellow”—Atwood succumbs to a terrorizing cycle of nightsweats and nightmares. “Drowning Portuguese in a black night sea,” “quavering shell-shocks in a stench of disinfectants,” “chanting wild-eyed Algerians around a cannibal feast”: these images form the racialized dreamscape that divests Atwood of his integrated sense of self (165, 344-345). Identifying with cinematic images from D. W. Griffith’s Birth of a Nation (1915), Atwood imagines “a lynch mob of “niggers with banjo torches” pursuing a crowd of frightened white citizens in which he is trapped (189). Paul’s horror story of black invasion—figuring black vigilantes as the pursuers of hapless white victims—thus co-opts and inverts the actual history of white mob violence spreading across the country contemporary with Impromptu, tapping into the nation’s political unconscious while deflecting that affect into a corroboration of white fear.

What begins, then, as an indictment of Main Street normalcy essentially loses ground as Paul’s “antiwar” critique of army life decays into a murky meditation on the doleful effects of minority inclusion. Although Impromptu barks loudly against the war’s many propagandized hyperboles—the hollow assurances of Congress and the flatulent rhetoric of fighting for democracy—in the end Paul’s complaint is with the war’s relative equalization of the population and indifference to racial hierarchy. “What in hell was patriotism, anyway?” Atwood wonders after another round of black haunting. “Loving his country? What did that mean?” Attempting to recall the compensations of home as warrant for his sacrifice, their comparatively meek offerings finally do not “seem adequate to drive him to mop up floors for venereal niggers” (114). What did “railroad yards swarming with chanting Algerians” and wards “full of quivering eyelids” and
“bare, brown buttocks” have to do with him? (137) “It was not an element in which he could survive,” Atwood resolves; “He had no place in it” (137). To make matters worse, Paul insinuates, while white troops bear out the burdens of war abroad, the Italians and Chinese subsisting with relative ease back in Glendale—enduring only sugar rations and the slight “sacrifice” of two and one-half percent beer—reveal the parasitic apathy of a basically disaffected people, unmoved as their imaginations are by the war’s “cosmic forces” (199-200). The literary critique of “sacrifice,” the bloated prowar rhetoric of mobilization (see Chapter 2), was also a critique of those for whom sacrifice was made.

The experience abroad fundamentally alters Atwood’s perspective on “home” when he returns. Disturbing the memory of autonomy and prestige that were the hallmarks of his cloistered childhood are surging urban throngs, labor unions, and other mongrelized polyglots—frenzied, uncontrollable crowds amassed in celebration of the Armistice (235). Distress at the rollicking mob prompts Paul’s presumably harrowing vision of the American future: “an aimless flood of humanity, shoulder to shoulder, carried here and there by a capricious current, gurgling at once into any openings which offered themselves” (229). His dreams continue to overflow with images of “Chinese coolies” and their “impassive, Oriental masks,” with lunging collages of “chanting black faces” “gesticulating and threatening him,” and his nerves shatter beyond repair (344-345). He kills his ex-girlfriend’s sister and disappears back into the army, gratefully absorbed into its anonymity and routine. In contrast to monuments of saber-wielding generals squatting stolidly about the city, war-shattered men like Atwood—jolted by back-firing cars, psychically incapable of returning to work, utterly devoid of hope—
represent Paul’s degraded memorials to the creatures of the modern century: rootless, alienated souls derailed by the leveled society’s refusal to grant them distinction (298).

Thus while *Impromptu* may lampoon the sentimental culture of the heroic ideal and the values of military environment that produce figures like Irwin Atwood, as a vehicle of protest it nonetheless resorts to a racist social imaginary and the rising fear of the mass in ways that prove the stamina of anti-democratic logics even in a postwar culture of dissent. Critics like Stanley Cooperman and Arnold Goldman argue that—like Dos Passos’s war writing and the early Hemingway fiction—Paul’s antiwar features merely suggest how war “coarsens” the protagonist, ultimately undoing his “manhood.” Yet Paul’s satire of the “superficiality, crassness, patriotism, and xenophobia” of Republican America lets in through the back door what it denies at the front. Annulling the nation’s Victorian stuffiness and the excesses of mobilization rhetoric, the racialized imagination of Paul’s antiwar screed also rebukes its democracy.

The suspicion leveled at monuments and crowds enables Laurence Stallings’s similarly conceived “protest” against the military establishment: the immensely popular *Plumes*, which would undergo eight printings in the first six months of its release. The latest literary contribution by one of the most prolific writers of the period—an author whose work appeared regularly in *American Heritage*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, *Argosy*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*—the semi-autobiographical *Plumes* was venerated by Archibald Macleish as an example “successful anti-war propaganda.” Located within a multigenerational tradition of U.S. war participation, Stallings’s portrait of one family’s mindless obedience to the state during World War I, in notable contradistinction to Jessie Fauset’s, indicates, as George Garrett puts it, “the common currency of the deluded” that
simply and brutally repeats itself” (xv). Stalling’s account is bitterly antimilitary. Interweaving a portrait of the protagonist’s sustained agony from war wounds with a castigation of the nation’s callous indifference, Plumes, like Impromptu, condemns the institutional power of a political community that coerces such loyalty from its constituents. Yet as with Paul, the force of the novel’s dissent derives from a racial metonymic as it corroborates a story of military injustice by appealing to a damaged white masculinity. Its final encomium to liberal individualism, the substance of its antistatist message, flows not merely from a denial of the militarized nation but from a sense of debasement at mobilization’s enforced commingling with the democratic mob.

The story centers on Richard “Coeur de Lion” Plume, the current incarnation of a compulsively patriotic family line notable for its historical participation in every U.S. war. Plume is “called to the flag” by the Lord during a chapel service at his local college. Like the country that is “throbbing with a victorious wave of hysterical patriotism,” the congregation sweeps him up and marches him off to war singing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Left behind in all the enthusiasm is his pregnant wife, Esme (53, 56, 61). Richard’s fictional leg, like Stallings’s real one, is badly damaged in combat, eventuating in a full amputation. Like Donald Mahon in Faulkner’s Soldier’s Pay (1925), Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises (1926), and Joe Bonham, the heap of bandaged injury in Dalton Trumbo’s Johnny Got His Gun (1939), Plume assumes his place among a bullpen of physically destroyed characters who persisting with agonizing war wounds long after the war’s demise. Although he once “gasped” with adulation at the beauty of “supreme sacrifice,” he returns from the war to a mostly disinterested nation, public sentiment having turned against Wilson and the veterans, embarrassing reminders that they are of
the puerile élan with which the nation embraced the war’s “bestial convulsion of
civilization” (91-92). Against “the solid self-interest” listlessly restoring the country to
its “normal life,” Plume’s existence is a tour in uninterrupted misery. Bandied about in
Walter Reed Hospital as training fodder for experimental young surgeons, Plume suffers
a torturous daily hassle of oozing sores, painful brace adjustments, and bureaucratic
quibbling over “disability ratings.” His hatred for “the system,” Stallings writes, burned
“steadily at a white hot heat in the center of his brain” (87). Unable to find work,
resented by his family, estranged from his wife in a grubby efficiency, he retreats deeper
and deeper into a psychic morass of resentment and self-loathing.

Assailing ideologies of sacrifice, Stallings mocks the rhetorical solemnity of such
falsely metaphysical appeals as ludicrously justifying human suffering. He bemoans
mobilization’s appropriation of Christian ideals, which compelled hundreds of thousands
of “foolish little Christ[s]” to mimic Jesus’s mere “three hours” of suffering for a much
longer duration (198-199). Recalling in particular a “God-cursed” soldier named
Crocker, he muses upon the political absurdity of dying for democracy, of disinterestedly
sacrificing oneself for a political community based precisely on guarantees of a right to
self-interest (245). “What price supreme sacrifice?” he reflects (244). Why should one
commit “supreme sacrifices” for a political community that, by definition, should never
require them? Why should one assume bodily risk to secure safety? Fools for sacrifice,
soldiers’ many selfless deeds only benefits the plutocracy he finally lambastes as a
coterie of “loose-lipped seriously drooling sons-of-bitches” writing cost sheets and
brokering business deals back in “that land of grasping millionaires” (244-245). Against
the “political tricksters, country jesters, [and] drooly mouthed orators” of Washington’s
political machine, “duty,” he proclaims, is “the most terrible word of all” (124, 197).
With thick ironic strokes, he paints the scene of his war injury, the nonsense of being
both the “center” of the “centrifugal force” of the liberal-democratic universe and having
one’s body “centered” on by the enemy and shattered for the good of the state (241-242).
Attacking the sentimentality of mobilization’s chivalric rhetoric, he affixes titles like
“The Caitiff Knight” to chapters in which Plume’s ruined prostrate body is depicted
hooked up to a machinery of tubes, pulleys, and levers. Eventually, Plume channels his
anger through more direct channels, writing editorials in _The Wounded Doughboy_ about
President Harding’s neglect of returned soldiers and A. Mitchell Palmer’s civil rights
abuses. Like Paul’s satire on military statuary at the conclusion of _Impromptu_, Plumes
closes ominously at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to condemn the pomp and
pageantry, the “drooly palaver” of politicians, that, generation after generation, inspires
youth to throw their lives away for the state (342). The depressing final image is of
Plume’s son, enchanted by the martial spectacle and gawking adoringly at a policeman’s
pistol, to chastise the nation for the way it remembers its league with violence as a noble,
emulative event.

Yet Stallings’s protest against the nation’s militaristic culture unfortunately draws
much of its polemical grit from deeply racialized roots, bounding across the color line to
present its case. The withered husk of a body that Plume lugs about the novel, one learns,
was not always so battered and disfigured. In the “November football condition” in
which Plume went to war, it was, rather, a sight to behold (243). The novel’s opening
scene presents Captain Whiting—a name surely bearing a strong measure of symbolic
weight—gazing admiringly at a young Plume as he showers nude under a standpipe at
Noisy-le-sec, a railroad yard outside Paris (3). “The captain was struck by the boy’s physique,” Stallings writes, “which at that time was a beautiful thing” (4). However, in contrast to Plume’s serene, statuary poise, the railroad yard is a pan-racial assemblage of international Allies, a scuttling “medley of tongues and uniforms” gathered about on the landing. When Senegalese soldiers mistakenly desegregate the platform by congregating among white Americans, Plume, martial of racial order, impinges “his glistening body into the black and white mass,” extracts a “mameluke out of Arabian Nights” he dubs “Sambo,” and invents “some desperate patois on the spot”: “‘You allee samee haul tail away from here pronto,” he screams at the colonial (5). Having uttered the final word, “he turned the marmeluke around, planted his wet and grimy foot in the captive’s back-sides and sent him sprawling” (5). Although Plume’s “Nordic magnificence” elicits awe from those marveling on the sidelines, the black soldier, Stallings explains, “saw only a large and lusty white man, no more immortal than sundry Germans of ferocious memory,” and lunges for his knife. Alertly, with “glistening shoulders,” Plume breaks the man’s thumb, leaving him “to ponder for himself the limitations to killing white men among the white men.” Having restored control, he justly halts his abuse before leaving “Uncle Tom’s cabin in ashes” (6-7).

Framing the incident is a section near the end in which Plume, recovering after his amputation, discovers that he has been bunked beside a “South Carolina mulatto” named Lieutenant Jackson. Intent on ridding himself of the racism he inherited from his Southern family, he decides to be friendly, submitting “his post-war Liberalism to the acid test” of interchange with his ward mate (253). “Lustrous in his Caucasian creaminess as Jackson was lusterless in his weakened, hybrid’s skin,” Stallings writes,
Plume nonetheless admires Jackson’s “savage” instinct for sewing bead sacks (254). Inferring that Jackson’s talent derives from his deep “racial consciousness,” the purity of his “Maya” heritage, Plume determines that races are distinct and singular things. He resolves that “he no longer believed himself Liberal” and that he “preferred being any hybridization on earth to that of Jackson’s black and white” (264). Yearning “to be away from the Negro” and enraged at Jackson’s claim to be “half white,” Richard sullenly retires with his “irrepressible superiority” in tact (265). When his friend Gary visits, he demonstrates a presumably purer commitment to liberal ideals by counseling Jackson not to meddle in “white” practices like education or business since his primitive “craftsman’s spirit” and adeptness at the “useful arts” demonstrates a “superior culture” (265-266). That superiority, evinced in his gift for manual labor and primitive art, would be corrupted, Gary opines, were it to profane itself with the banalities of the public sphere. For Plume, however, Jackson’s presence only reminds him of the indignity to which his war service has reduced him. The shame is compounded during his brief association with the “wiry little Jew” Meyer, a conscientious objector and the founder of the Wounded Doughboy (274). As it turns out, Plume learns, Meyer exploits the activism of wounded veterans only to raise money for other imprisoned conscientious objectors, those who at least had shelter and square meals while Plume’s “kind” were fighting the war.

Like Paul’s novel, Plume’s disillusion with the political system—the public body into which many disenfranchised writers were trying to gain access—also censures democracy’s degenerative tendency toward uninspired mediocrity. An unreconstructed Southerner, Plume rails against Lincoln’s legacy, the Civil War’s “one union inseparable,” as having “ironed into uniformity” a “continent of people to be made as dull
as so many soldiers in a row” (195). By overthrowing a system of free labor, he expatiates, the Civil War merely redirected plantation slavery onto the populace at large. Although he rightly detects how war-making has historically advanced a state program of social regimentation, his (and Esme’s) critique nonetheless resorts to plantation nostalgia and a longing for the simple certitudes of the antebellum order, a political withdrawal to “woods and sleepy towns” as refuge from the “disenchantment” of the urban melting pot (196-197). Esme applauds the great “individualist” Robert E. Lee: “I am beginning to think that Lee was right,” she claims, a pronouncement with which Plume agrees (195). Although he accepts that slaves eventually would need freedom, the resultant “nonsense about giving savages the suffrage we had learned gradually to exercise in a thousand years” seems an unwieldy progressive injustice. Unfortunately, the couple reckons, “we’ve become slaves ourselves” (196). Gary amplifies: “We should have manumitted four or five millions of slaves without slaying a million biologically superior men, and without laying waste to the agrarian south of an Empire” (207). If American wars get it wrong, Plumes implies, it is because the symbiotic, consentient union they forge collapses a system of racial hierarchy and imperial growth—insults to which the wasted, disfigured bodies of white men testify as an index of misappropriated sacrifice.

Plumes’ political resort, characteristic of modernism generally, is to retreat into private abodes of meaning, into the insular sanctuary of the individual imagination. “Everyone is centrifugal,” Plume ultimately concludes (221). Although he remarks upon the irony of an antiwar president who “still got the hundred men in prison who…tried to prevent it,” both he and Esme admire Wilson—“the pain of the world revolving around his axis of personal agony”—for his go-it-alone individualism (220-221). Stallings’s
“protest novel” thus embraces the political quietude of modernism’s inward turn and a backward-looking regard for the solipsism of the autonomous, liberal self. “The only man worth while,” Gary finally declares, “is the one who withdraws altogether from the stupidity and ignorance about him” (308). Secluding himself from the “mob” commemorating the tomb in Arlington, Plume also insulates himself from the racially anonymous cadaver in its crypt (340).

While Paul and Stallings use war narratives to oppose to the myth of a healthy, harmonious national society, their recourse to a logic of racial hierarchy, their scorning of the democratic mass, and the general retreat from progressive politics leaves much to be desired in the substance of their “protest.” No doubt much of their revulsion at mass society is displaced. Viewing masses as the gullible victims of demagoguery deflects a reconciliation with their own earlier culpability and fascination with a culture of masculine war-making. However antimilitary some modernist work, numerous modern writers never transcended a preoccupation with war and its spectacle. William Faulkner’s notorious feigning of a war injury suggests just how far some authors would go to secure masculine status. Hemingway and Stallings remained infatuated with war throughout their careers, Stallings, from the more distant perch of 1963, going as far as to write a nostalgic memoir of his time in the AEF. As David Kennedy argues, modernist writers may be less against war itself than the features of authority that the war loomed up within the culture (224). Moreover, in its retreat from the repressive excesses of state culture, in its flight from the propagandized shibboleths of the romantic ideal, modernist ideology may in many ways have forged the political rationality most compliant with an evolving liberal warfare state and its quest for a more flexible structure of governance.
Modernism and the Crucible of Protest

The inherited memory of modern war writing as one generation’s protest against the preceding era’s moralism and nationalism has a long legacy. Assessments like Henry May’s that the interwar years mark “the end of American innocence” (a remarkable conclusion in a nation founded on legalized slavery and genocide) have epitomized accounts of the modernist period since the advent of modernism itself. More specifically, the literary avant garde of the Twenties and Thirties has often been hailed for its steadfast opposition to war and violence. For Leslie Fiedler, the cultural legacy of the war was a literature of “pacifism.” Because official war aims—“democracy, national self-determination, and international cooperation”—never came to much, he declares, we “must settle for saying, more modestly, that the chief lasting accomplishment of World War I was the invention of the anti-war novel” (26-27). Similar assessments permeate the critical discourse in many different forms. Wayne Charles Miller christens World War I novels vehicles of “cultural protest.” Eugene Lohrke treats the war and its literary documentation as a cultural “Armageddon.” Holger Klein and Peter Aichinger declare modernism generally to be a body of “anti-war literature,” as writers were “primed for protest” against the “absurd world” of the war. Thomas Myers considers what he calls the “modernist configuration of protest” through “an aesthetic restructuring of the representation of war” (17). Stanley Cooperman’s World War I and the American Novel, to date the most definitive analysis of World War I fiction, similarly chronicles a body of literature notable for its many “terms of protest.” And Paul Fussell’s The Great War and Modern Memory endures as perhaps the most frequently cited account of the war’s effect
on modern consciousness, of the grim morning after in an ill-advised love affair with utopian social engineering and technological progress.  

No doubt these accounts contain a partial truth. The mood of the postwar years suggests an obvious rift between prior attunements toward history and society and those of the apostate culture that followed. That backlash, not always necessarily “modernist,” took form in literature in ways as different as James Stevens’s *Mattock* (1927) and William March’s *Company K* (1933), one of which—*Mattock*—would condemn not only the militarist culture that spurred U.S. intervention but the ubiquitous racialization of much antiwar sentiment. Stevens, salty “dean of the Northwest writers” and famed Paul Bunyan fabulist, satirized the hyperbolic epistemology of sacrifice that galvanized mobilization but also the white recoil from ethnic contamination evinced in texts like Paul’s and Stallings’s. Parve Mattock, the novel’s antihero, is a lumpish bumpkin from a back patch of Kansas. Called to the war, like Richard Plume, by a local pastor’s exhortation on the “Christian American Soldier,” he determines to be an “instrument of the wrath of the Almighty God,” “to sweep the hellishness of the Huns from His beautiful Earth” (40).

The main thrust of Stevens’s satire centers on the tendency of overly patriotic Americans—in a war ironically “to make the world safe for democracy, not autocracy”—to support repressive, coercive practices. At first, Mattock tries generously to fit in with his multiethnic cohort of “nigger stevedores,” “black Portugees,” money-grubbing Jews, and idolaters of the “Romish church” (4). But as the loyalty standards of 100% Americanism more distinctly manifest, Mattock becomes a “stooly,” a “narc,” for the distressed Lieutenant Dill, a xenophobic officer convinced that “Boshevism, the red
menace, the Russian debackle” has implanted its “cancerous evil” to disrupt Allied morale (197). In a burlesque of American loyalty committees and paranoid government agents like A. Mitchell Palmer and J. Edgar Hoover, Mattock becomes a “Secret Service Man”—an “invisible weapon” against the communist infiltration exerted by New York Jews, “Chicago foreigners,” “Eyetalians,” and other “enemies of the true word” who “inflame others against everything American.”

Stevens portrays Mattock’s return mockingly, the pitifully self-inflated, quixotically triumphant homecoming of a puny and prudish man. Drawing connections between military intervention abroad and political repression at home, Mattock rises to prominence in his church, the American Legion, and the Ku Klux Klan, determined to advance the “good fight” against “law-breakers, Reds, Romans, and foreigners” (307-309, 320). Under the homefront tutelage of Captain Dill, his former supervisor and the popular author of God’s Crusaders, a bathetic preparedness novel, he elects himself monitor of the social order as a “Conserver of our Wartime Idealism” (316-320).

Similar invective, though less comedic, surges through March’s Company K, a novel composed entirely of individual vignettes from each member of a “representative” company. One, for instance, recalls a postwar preparedness sermon to young boys in a parody of the inflated rhetoric espoused by preparedness writers like Conigsby Dawson, Arthur Train, Temple Bailey, and Arthur Guy Empey, the popular memoirist of Over the Top (1917). Placed alongside accounts of grisly, agonizing death and images of rotting, fly-ridden corpses, melodramatic testimonials like that of Hermie Gladstone’s “nobler sacrifice,” his gift of “his life for his country,” are rendered absurd (162). Echoing Stallings’s concerns at the end of Plumes, many of March’s portraits ridicule the targeting
and indoctrination of gullible youth by military bureaucrats and war planners. One of the most remarkable vignettes is an account told from beyond the grave by the Unknown Soldier. “I saw my belly was ripped open,” claims a soldier strung across a wire, “and that my entrails hung down like a badly arranged bouquet of blue roses” (119). As he prepares to die, he remembers a preparedness speech given by his mayor, which reveled at “men who died gloriously on the Field of Honor” and “Gave their lives gladly in a Noble Cause.” His end, like that pilloried in Private Sylvester Wendell’s letter home to a bereaved parent, claims to at last “tell the truth”:

Dear Madam, Your son, Francis, died needlessly in Belleau Wood. You will be interested to hear that at the time of his death he was crawling with vermin and weak from diarrhea. His feet were swollen and rotten and they stank. He lived like a frightened animal, cold and hungry. Then, on June 6th, a piece of shrapnel hit him and he died in agony, slowly. You’d never believe that he could live three hours, but he did. He lived three full hours screaming and cursing by turns. He had nothing to hold on to, you see: He had learned long ago that what he had been taught to believe by you, his mother, who loved him, under meaningless names of honor, courage, and patriotism, were all lies. (63)

If lies enlist support for military mobilization, telling the truth belongs to the generation that endures. Conceiving of his book as a “composite whole,” a “picture of war” representing its “unending circle of pain,” March devotes numerous accounts to the voices of shellshocks, suicides, prisoner killers, lying senators, and poverty-stricken veterans (2).
Thus do Stevens’s and March’s World War I narratives demythologize the inflated rhetoric of sacrifice, the false theology of nationalism, and the artifice of military pageantry. Yet the beguiling celebration of a protest politics in most accounts of World War I culture—an imprecise generalization about the “rupture,” “shock,” and “breakdown” of the modern age—do as much to obscure the effects of modernism’s encounter with violence as they do to illuminate it. More fibrous and dense, the modernist relationship to war is delphic in its ambiguity. Frederic Jameson notably characterizes modernism for its nostalgia for the “archaic,” for the “entrepreneurial and inner-directed individualism” of the “genius” with “charisma.” “Modern art, in this respect, drew its power and its possibilities from being a backwater and an archaic holdover within a modernizing economy: it glorified, celebrated, and dramatized older forms of individual production which the new mode of production was elsewhere on the point of displacing and blotting out” (PM, 306-07). “The postwar writers of disillusionment,” Kennedy argues, “protested less against the war itself than against a[n older generation’s] way of seeing and describing the war” (225). Indeed, premises of the modernist recoil were often compliant with the militarized culture that continued unabated in the war’s wake. Although it may have spurned an older tradition’s romance with Homeric ideals and St. Crispin’s Day glory, the “tragic-minded naturalism” of a generation cast “into the dark maw of violence,” as Kazin put it, in many ways hastened the arrival of an art that was war’s ideological cognate (240). “It was the enforced education in the international community of war and art,” he tellingly professes, “their impatience with an art that did not express them, that separated them so persistently from the older writers” (240-241). “As participants,” adds John Aldridge, “they learned to
view all life, all human emotion, in terms of war, to pursue pleasure with an intensity made greater by the constant threat of death” (10). The mandarin delight in disembodied form, the fascination with force and speed, the Augustinian resignation to a sinful, reprobate self, the experiments with creative energy through concentration and compaction: these owe as much to a rapprochement with modern violence as they do its disavowal. In convoking an art that expressed them, that is, rather than renounce the war, many writers internalized it.

The most obvious is probably Ezra Pound’s A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska (1916), a “vorticist” manifesto and proto-fascist fascination with war’s power to convey form and synthesis, with its ability to capture the “intensity of life” as “maximum energy”—a social “REMEDY” that “TAKES AWAY FROM THE MASSES NUMBERS UPON NUMBERS OF UNIMPORTANT UNITS.” Its intoxication with molding human forms into singular, “absolutely square” objects of “wholeness” and “fixed value”—“ONE AND INDIVISIBLE!”—and its desire to derive aesthetic emotion “SOLELY FROM THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES” discloses Pound’s delight in the “absolute rhythm” of war, in its “combat of arrangement” as an authoritarian antidote to the “sodden mass” of the “mob.” Margot Norris observes that such loathing of the mass as “an enemy of form” constituted modernism’s “formal response to the challenge of mass warfare and mass death,” translating “nineteenth-century discourses of population control and quality—Malthusian arithmetic and Darwinian competition, Nietzsche’s herd and Arnold’s mass culture—into mandates to produce aesthetic formalism and artistic connoisseurship” (35-36). Modernism’s general “inability to totalize” the experience of the war—signaled by the paratactic flavor of its traumatized,
elliptical gaps—evolves, she suggests, from artists’ repression of the war’s mass dead, who could not be conceivably represented in existing aesthetic forms (20, 35).

Yet the refusal to totalize, as much as it demonstrated the limits of the past, was in many ways forward-looking. As such, the “schizophrenia” of much of their work—what Cooperman reckons to be an antonymous straining between pacifism and militarism—more likely reveals the disorientation of aesthetic and political sensibilities in a threshold of transition. Although Wilson may have failed to achieve the planetary influence he desired, the military intervention remapped the territorial scale of what counted as one’s rightful place in the world. Van Wyck Brooks denounced the “insane individualism” signaled by the moderns’ “denationalization,” but their rootlessness and homelessness not only failed to threaten the nation’s accruing power but, in fact, reflected a changing structure of feeling toward self and globe developing side-by-side with an evolving liberal warfare state and its expanding range of interest. Validating a kind of imperial cosmopolitanism, their international passport negotiated updated versions of the liberal self that, responding to the dismantling of cultural hierarchy and a flattened world order, envisioned “home” anywhere and everywhere. Susan Hegeman, describing modernism’s “spatialization of the culture concept,” suggests that, in dispensing with older orthogenetic plotting, the categorization of human societies along a developmental grid of “lineal, temporal advancement,” moderns viewed cultures in a kind of comparative simultaneity—a more chartable and contingent, and thus more “cooptable” and “appropriable” perception of international cultural material (12, 32-37). In Thomas Boyd’s Through the Wheat (1923), an early World War I novel, the protagonist is pictured finally wearing a French colonial’s red kepi hat, an American officer’s boots,
and a German lugar—a collage of transnational affiliation (203). “My God what an ugly island,” declares the returning e. e. cummings upon shipping into New York harbor. “America,” he concludes, “The land of the flea and the home of the dag’ short for dago of course” (241). Fredrick Henry’s culinary and oenocultural travelogue in *A Farewell to Arms* constitutes perhaps the most memorable example of the postwar sets’ international foraging, a cultural tourism that dispenses with national locality if only to booster the advantages global rumination (roomy-nation). “Looking backward,” Malcolm Cowley reflects, “I feel that our whole training was involuntarily directed toward eradicating our local and regional particularities, toward making us homeless citizens of the world” (27).

To be sure, theirs was a spiritual and psychological quest for artistic fulfillment. But vaulting free of uninspired childhoods in scruffy Midwestern and Southern backwaters, many of the denizens of modernism’s “international republic” constructed political subjectivities that would embolden the global purview of future U.S. expansionists (Cowley 28). The unique ideological syndicate of Cold War liberals and New Critics in literature supervising the cultural discourse at mid-century adapted the distended scale of the modernist war imaginary (itself an adaptation of the preparedness worldview) to the complex, more durable forms of liberal militarism and global modernization thriving at mid-century. Revised under their watch, the “military outlook”—as C. Wright Mills coined it—shrunk the reach of political interest in local domains and, in the other direction, acclimated that de-politicized subject to enlarged U.S. involvement in international domains (176). At a moment when the suspicion of government would be aimed at both left and right, modernism’s privileging of imaginative autonomy and international mobility gave ideological credence to the a
That antinomian turn, that “retreat to the diminutive ranges and more controllable outcomes of private creation,” expressed a proclivity for self-reinvention preoccupied more with existential and psychological play than social change (Dawes 77). Cowley himself remarked on their mostly “spectatorial attitude” toward the problems of political life (43). Lamenting the “whirlpool of murky subjective puzzles” with which the postwar literati mostly gratified themselves, Joseph Freeman complained that his contemporaries celebrated only “personal control” rather than propounding dispositions to address the state (Pells 165, 205). It was an aesthetic penchant Rita Bernard traces—through Georg Lukács—as an undoing of the dialectic between human subjects and the objective world. The “loss of an interpretive purchase” signaled so starkly in the love-jaded narrator’s exit into the rain at the end of *A Farewell to Arms* only echoes the text’s general abandonment of a language of commitment, a relinquishment of political hope that “summarily bans an entire vocabulary of idealistic generalization” (41, 45). Thus the metaphorical retreat from Caporetto—“it was not my show any more”—mirrors a very real generational retreat from political commitment (241). Withdrawing into the interstices of a world-animating imagination, their self-enclosure, far from renouncing the politics of war, provided the very ontological index equipped to cope with the political tensions of a Cold War “maturity” and its global management of a “containment” and “deterrence” program (more on this in Chapter 4).

In *The Enormous Room* (1922), for instance, e. e. cummings’ treatment of his
stint as an ambulance driver in the Norton Harjes Ambulance Service and term in a French prison for suspected subversion, the narrator castigates bureaucratic “war speak” in what John T. Matthews calls the author’s “defense of the word” (232). Distrustful of war leaders and propaganda agencies, cummings revels in his detention, romping about the prison with a band of amusing misanthropes. A wry, cagey text, the autobiography is often considered an emblematic example of World War I era protest fiction. That his war “service” is one of incarceration (“serving time”), claims Matthews, “turns the war on behalf of democracy into a cruel joke.” “The brutalization of domestic populations—from civilians overrun by combat troops, to the Negroes, Jews, Communists, unattached women, and other ‘misfits’ rounded up for detention,” only reveals, like Stevens’s Mattock, that “the war functions as the means to discipline deprived, unruly, or eccentric groups at home” (233). One might even consider the treatment of French misrule as an oblique condemnation of American hysterias like the Palmer Raids, of that recurrent tendency of democracies to curtail human rights and democratic values in times of national emergency. The “irreverence” of “Cummings’s harsh book,” claims Kazin, “was thus almost the very first to express for America the emotions of those artists, writers, students, and middle-class intellectuals who were to constitute the post-mortem war generation, and whose war experience was to transform their conception of life and art” (250).

An illuminating sentence in Matthews’s discussion, however, sheds light on an ideological subtext behind The Enormous Room. cummings’s invective, Matthews avers, renders “the brutality and mechanical cruelties of war” mostly “as a personal disaster” (250-251). The animus of the author’s outrage throughout, the wellspring of his aesthetic
élan, is always his own world-animating consciousness, what he calls the vital “is-ness” of his most imaginatively concentrated being. In his declaration that “something more unimaginably huge than the most prodigious of all universals is the individual,” he offers the “imperialistic” dictum that, as John Limon rightly suggests, is of a conscience that imagines itself “larger than its milieu” (90, 103). If he is imprisoned physically, his retaliation is to imprison everyone else in the “enormous room” of his mind, an imaginative theater populated by the “stupid dolls” that surround him as objects for his own artistic delight (90). Disdainful of the “Great American Public,” a body presumably none of whom could attain the mental heights he models, his incarceration leads him to a generalized condescension toward the undisciplined human throng, animating his fellow inmates as a kind of gaggle of raw material for the aesthetic sketchbook of his mind. Watching the call to dinner, for instance, cummings offers this typical passage:

Among these faces convulsed with utter animalism I scarcely recognized my various acquaintances. The transformation produced by the planton’s shout was not merely amazing; it was uncanny and not a little thrilling. These eyes bubbling with lust, obscene grins sprouting from contorted lips, bodies unclenching and clenching in unctuous gestures of complete savagery, convinced me by a certain insane beauty. Before the arbiter of their destinies some thirty creatures, hideous and authentic, poised, cohering in a single chaos of desire; a fluent and numerous cluster of vital humanity. As I contemplated this ferocious and uncouth miracle, this beautiful manifestation of the sinister alchemy of hunger, I felt that the last vestige of individualism was about utterly to disappear, wholly abolished in a gamboling and wallowing throb. (65-66)
Delighted by their hunger as the release of some residual animism, cummings’s derives a kind of lascivious entertainment in the spectacle of a “gamboling and wallowing throb” of human marionettes departed of their individuality even as his own autonomous imagination exerts an interpretive authority from an untouchable separate space. That mandaric exultation in human derangement follows nearby passages where he winnows the same kind of enchantment from a turd floating in his cell’s toilet.31

Having studied classical literature at Harvard before the war, this after a childhood frolicking on the summer lawns of Cambridge, cummings’s reproof of his war experience might be as much linked to its failure to confirm the heroic legends of Achilles and Odysseus than to a renouncement of state violence. Joining cummings in his adventure was Harvard classmate John Dos Passos whose war novels garnered him a similar reputation for inventing an aesthetics of revolt. His One Man’s Initiation: 1919 (1920), much like Stallings’s Plumes, condemns war’s “slavery” as it takes possession of a “military nation” like the United States (107-108, 113). The novella reveals Dos Passos’s fledgling commitment to Marxism, commenting on war’s material exploitation of the working class as the newest installment in a process of economic causation. “All we have now,” proclaims the character Merrier, “is the same old war between the classes: those that exploit and those that are exploited” (110). “What we want,” he declares, “is organization from the bottom, organization by the ungreedy, by the humane, by the uncunning, socialism of the masses that shall spring from the natural need of men to help one another” (111). Desirous of a “true universal humanity,” Dos Passos disparages the war as symptomatic of the “vulgar apparatus of overorganized life,” a kind of social “death” extended to the population as a whole (112).
Yet only one year later in *Three Soldiers* (1921), Dos Passos revised his portrait of war’s instrumental socialization for the way it threatens private, self-dissolution in the deadening conformity of the mass. Through chapters unambiguously titled “Making the Mould,” “The Metal Cools,” and “Machines,” he traces John Andrews’s encounter with the military system as a menace to personal autonomy and the imaginative isolation of an artistic elite. Andrews, the artist, resolves to carry “his individuality like a banner above the turmoil,” resisting standardizing force that compounds the other men in his company into “one organism” (26). He is appalled at the “slavery” of war training, a bondage unforeseen since “His race had dominated for too many centuries for that” (32). In yet another allusion to D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, though with “the Huns” substituted for the Klansman, Andrews fantasizes his victimization as similar to the film’s persecuted black characters. The day-to-day routine breaks him down, forcing him to perform strenuous mental exercises to maintain an individuality above the “herd.” “He needed to lie awake and think at night this way,” Dos Passos writes, “so that he might not lose entirely the thread of his own life” (31). Particularly as a cultivated artist, Andrews is given elongated commentary on war participation’s effects that is rarely expressed through the other two soldiers of Dos Passos’s triumvirate. Fuselli and Chrisfield—undereducated, working-class “toughs”—take shape as counterpoints to Andrews’ more sensitive, perceptive observations. Although Dos Passos sympathetically intended them as exemplars of human manipulability in the face of the dehumanizing war machine, the author’s distance from them and his scorn, though mild, for their pedestrian lack of culture nonetheless betrays a paternalist view of the working class as hapless victims of their own dulled perception and pedestrian appetites. Chrisfield suffers from blinding,
uncontrollable bouts of anger that explode in situations beyond his control. Fuselli, conversely, is a kind of lapdog in the hierarchical structure. Believing that sycophantic obeisance will make him rich, he is forever bouncing around the ranks trying to “get in right.” The authorial neglect is only magnified when the two characters disappear halfway through the novel, returning only on a few occasions to give updates as to their whereabouts.32

Concentrating more fully on Andrews’s inner, private turmoil as a caring liberal soul wrongly mingled with the unthinking herd, the bulk of the narrative documents his effort to extract surviving features of his authentic personality from the self-battering, swamping “waves” of collective life (92). Distinct as it is from other “brutes,” human “pieces of machinery,” Andrews “real self” is beset by an anonymity that renders “his name and his number” indistinct from the army’s “millions of other names and other numbers” (348). Although Three Soldiers de-legitimates the synergetic preparedness rationales of mobilization—inverting, in particular, visions of the war as administering global democracy—its corroborative anti-democratic dread, its fear of personal absorption in the parasitic mass, impedes its unqualified attribution as specimen of literary dissent. Toxic in its disregard for hierarchy and conformity as it might be, the nascent outlines of the eventual conservatism that overruns Dos Passos’ later work are easy to discern—the sensed loss of self-distinction and fear of decomposition in the horde. As Kazin concluded early on, Dos Passos never really rises above a kind of social “defeatism”: “His protest is never a socialist protest because that will substitute one collectivity for another. It is a radical protest, but it is the protest against the status quo of a mind groping for more than it can define itself, the protest of a mind whose opposition
to capitalism is no greater than his suspicion of all societies” (279). Perhaps modernism’s most lasting contributions, the “suspicion of society” and the cordonning off of private sanctuary constituted a political adaptation acclimated to the reformed liberalism of the national security state and the American universalism increasingly mitigating conflicts in international arenas.

**Conclusion: Unknown Soldiers and the Politics of Recognition**

Congregating a diverse social polyglot in its effort to marshal resources, war mobilization summoned numerous discrepant, often antagonistic forces into one combustible arena. Far from dividing the country, however, the resultant fallout in many ways strengthened the foundations of the national security edifice that would emerge. As the monolithic America envisioned by progressives shattered into the various shards that would constitute the multicultural enclaves of transnational America, it fashioned the divaricated social network of a more diversified liberal state, a network stronger for its multidimensional facets. For some, war emergency developed a symbolic geographical scale revitalizing the nation around an “organic” notion of unity while intensifying that community by preparing it for forward-leaning advances into international domains. For others, the war gave rise to possibilities of inclusion and symbolic recognition in a political body which had long denied them entry. For still others, that same unity, the face of democracy is convened, propelled concomitant flight—in yet another reorientation toward the global “scale”—into denationalized forms of renegade individualism or imagined memberships in an international fraternity as a remedy to the war’s self-profaning demotions: their perceived anonymity in the “standardized” egalitarianism of the mob.33 Different as each response may be, however, all bear the
sign of an encounter with the state, of interaction with a developing organizational
imaginary and its identity-conferring apparatus of recognition. Whether desirous of
political absorption in the national body or, conversely, revolting against the “slavery” of
being “located” by its socializing instrumentality, the various responses to the political
event of World War I furrowed a network of branching tributaries that eventually—
however at odds the flow of their currents—converged in the same nationalizing
stream.34

As an “improvisational time,” war mobilization’s splintering of 100-percent
Americanism into demographic diversity orchestrated a state-centered nexus of identity-
making which had never been seen before (Capozzola 12). Dissonant but highly
collaborated, the “centrist” strain of progressivism that evolved from the war—a
“corporatist pluralism” integral to the project of nationalization—fundamentally remade
the political substance and texture of American nationality in way amendable to
governmental influence.35 “As men carried draft registration cards and showed them to
American Protective League operatives,” Capozzola observes, “as women told selective
service boards details of their married lives in order to obtain allotments, as conscientious
objectors articulated their religious beliefs to the Board of Inquiry, as women’s clubs and
vigilance societies transformed themselves into the arms of the federal government, as
German citizens submitted to surveillance as enemy aliens, and as small-town preachers
found themselves in federal penitentiaries, they remade the relationship between
Americans and their government” (16). Although the war’s struggle over the monopoly
on legitimate violence “would give new vitality to the language of rights,” according to
Capozzola, it “would also give even more energy to the emergence of a powerful—if more latent and noiseless—state” (13). Patricia Chu elaborates:

Civilians and civilian life became objects of strategy for military operations and propaganda. Leaders needed the cooperation of civilians to fight the war, and made calculations in terms of populations as resources to be managed. After the war, the emergent world powers similarly counted on civilians to build expanding (inter)national economies and infrastructures. One of the war’s lasting effects was the extension of expanded federal administration into peacetime everyday life. (3)

The welfare liberalism of the New Deal, for instance, a state program modeled on World War I mobilization rationales, cobbled together an unprecedented coalition of citizens and government and developed a spirit of mutual dependency. And that relationship established patterns of belonging, a public structure of feeling, more amenable to social stability if only for its better accommodation of what could legitimately “stand in” for America. More supple and elastic, the warfare state guaranteed public allegiance precisely by “effacing the multiple loyalties of pre-war life” and by positing itself as the sole source and addressee of the people’s “rights”—a transfer of popular sovereignty from self-willed democratic “agency” to the legal authority of governmental “agencies.”

Far more solvent, the pluralist society thrived since the nation’s multi-categorical structure gave primacy to the search for identity itself, an urgency to discern or fashion one’s particularized form of personhood in ways amenable to state development. As Chu argues, the “terms of agency” within modernism always “derive from the relationship between the individual and large-scale systems of management and governance,” from
“the state’s role in creating and sustaining administrable identities and subjectivities such as ‘women,’ ‘natives,’ ‘farmers,’ and ‘voters’” (12,14). Akin to what Walter Benn Michaels describes when he speaks of modernism as movement concerned primarily with acquiring an identity, a task in which selfhood emerges as a sort of personal and public “ambition,” the U.S. war machine recognized a more representative picture of the “public” while posturing the state as premier executor of that self’s authenticity (3). In deciphering who it is that each citizen is to be, political subjects give interpretive content to individual bodies that help map and thus make more governable a collective national body, a kind of logistical geography that periods of war invariably produce. In the “managerialization of personal identity,” Foucault explains, the individual becomes “enterprise,” invested in a liberal phenomenology of becoming responsive to the utter “capitalization of the meaning of life” (Gordon 44).

What could express cultural pluralism’s symbolic power more than that temple to national sacrifice that is the Tomb of the Unknown? Arriving at the capitol rotunda in October of 1921 were the remains of an unknown American casualty from the Western Front. To escort the casket to Arlington National Cemetery on Armistice Day, planners arranged perhaps the most “representative” assembly of the multicultural nation to gain official recognition to that time: a “military honor guard, the president and cabinet, members of Congress, the justices of the Supreme Court, representatives of the services, diplomats, governors, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Knights of Columbus, the National Catholic War Council, the Jewish Veterans of the World War, the Red Cross, and a delegation of African-American citizens” (Anderson and Cayton 358). It was a tribute to the democracy of the corpse itself, both metonym of national
identity but also, ontologically speaking, a kind of blank slate able to “stand in” for every citizen as each filled him up with their own symbolic content. Many that day mourned the one “Known but to God” as a “martyr in the cause of world peace, a lost soul for whom ‘militarism [was] his continued crucifixion”—an unmissable reversal of the Christian nationalism vaunted in mobilization’s images of sacrifice on “Calvaries” overseas (359).

Since 73-percent of the total American Expeditionary Forces were conscripts, the chance that the nameless cadaver gave his life against his wishes is more than likely. But that did not matter to Douglas McArthur who, in 1935, hallowed him in an address titled “The Spirit of the Unknown Soldier” as “the exemplar of the American fighting man,” “a witness to the values of democracy and Christianity in the world.” Like much war commemoration—invested as much in amnesia as remembrance—the import of the Unknown’s original message was transfigured by time and temperament. He belonged to posterity, McArthur held forth, “as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and right.” Americans, he continued, had bravely to overcome “the emotional and seductive appeals of pacifism, with its rejection of war as an unmitigated evil,” a perilously naïve belief, he felt, since great empires fall “through degeneracy of military capacity because of unpreparedness.” “Let us be prepared,” he concluded, “lest we, too, perish,” (359). Whatever the war’s other legacies, its story of collective force enclosed a political heterogeneity within one affective life world.37
Preface to Part II: Literary Antifascism, Cultural Pluralism, and the Liberal Warfare State

Against the thinly disguised panic which calls itself ‘patriotism’ and the thinly disguised militarism which calls itself ‘preparedness’ the cosmopolitan ideal is set. This does not mean that those who hold it are for a policy of drift. They, too, long passionately for an integrated and disciplined America….They believe that the most effective integration will be one which coordinates the diverse elements and turns them consciously toward working out together the place of America in the world-situation. They demand for an integration a genuine integrity, a wholeness and soundness of enthusiasm and purpose which can only come when no national colony within our America feels that it is being discriminated against or that its cultural case is being prejudged. This strength of cooperation, this feeling that all who are here may have a hand in the destiny of America, will make for a finer spirit of integration than any narrow “Americanism” or forced chauvinism.

--Randolph Bourne, “Trans-national America”

“To win this war, we need the impassioned effort of every individual in the country; to get that effort it will be necessary to throw the ball to the people of the small towns and the large, of the farms and the mines and the merchant marine. In the first shock after Pearl Harbor, the American people, like children afraid of the dark, wanted Washington to tell them what to do. But such an attitude is neither healthy nor dependable—if a government were foolish enough to want to build on it. It will not be enough for each American to be told, individually, that the government wants him to buy so many bonds or grow so many pigs or so many acres of wheat or corn. Each of those individual Americans, with the people of his town or his township, his block or his union local or his ship, must become part of groups demanding the chance to do more than the government has asked, demanding the right to use their imagination and devotion, and use it well. The War Department has done a fine job with its personalizing of the war effort so that each town and village can know when one of their boys has surpassed all expectations. But in every hanc of the war effort the same thing must be done—each town, each village, each factory, must feel that they are doing more than was asked of them; more, in fact, than the government knew to ask. Out of their local brains and guts, out of their local hearts and purposes, they themselves are forging the weapons of war. The government must cease to be “they” and become “we.”

--Margaret Mead, And Keep Your Powder Dry

Simultaneously totalizing and individualizing, amassing and distinguishing, and achieving each effect through its seeming opposite, tolerance emerges as one arsenal for organizing and managing large and potentially unruly populations.

--Wendy Brown, “Tolerance as Governmentality”

While the mania for a synergetic society may have abated somewhat in the allegedly pacifistic aftermath of World War I, the quest for a national security culture did not. Progressivism’s preparedness enthusiasms might look atavistic set against the more jaded backdrops of the postwar Twenties or the Great Depression. But the activist state cobbled together out of wartime necessity—especially in the climate of misery and desperation permeating the 1930s—constituted the only tested resource able to assist in recovery, the only governmental network to adhere a collapsing national edifice.
Financial crisis was a shared enemy, and, if the nation was to survive, steadfast citizens would need courage to face its realities head on. “We have all been saying to each other that the situation is quite like a war,” Secretary of State and preparedness leader Henry Stimson confided to his diary in the years after the crash. President Hoover spoke frequently in military metaphors to describe the conditions of his term, rhetorical appeals seized upon by his successor in the 1932 campaign for the Democratic nomination. Declaring “a more grave emergency than in 1917,” Franklin Roosevelt summoned images of “the whole Nation mobilized for war” as a challenge to move as one “vast unit,” a collaborative “pyramid” requiring the leadership’s commitment at the top but especially that of the “forgotten man” at the bottom. His inaugural address similarly construed the nation as “a trained and loyal army” and invited citizens to grant him “broad executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great” as would be given were the nation to be “invaded by a foreign foe.” Staffing his New Deal administration with veterans of World War I mobilization boards, he battled economic woes with a flush new bureaucratic state, an acronymic fleet of agencies trolling every branch of the political network as integral tributaries of that national recuperation.¹

Brigadier General and Time magazine’s “man of the year” Hugh Johnson, for example, was assigned to head the National Recovery Administration, which created stabilizing codes of fair competition between farmers, business, and labor. To enforce its “Blue Eagle” program, Johnson recruited the loyalty of the nation’s housewives. “It is women in homes—and not soldiers in uniform,” Johnson expatiated, “who will this time save our country.” “They will go over the top to as great a victory as the Argonne. It is zero hour for housewives” (Leuchtenburg 83). As an “analogue of war,” the financial crisis
represented another “identity of interest” event, calling a “truce” on domestic competition and tolerating no “slackers” in its search for stasis. “The country had yet to find a way to organize collective action,” concluded William Leuchtenburg, “save in war or its surrogate.”

What was changing was the organizational form collective action inspired. That the First World War mourned its unknown representative in Arlington as an icon of U.S. pluralism was not incompatible with political developments issuing in its wake. The achievement of national unity by openly coercive means had become untenable. Widely resented were mobilization’s suppression of dissenting periodicals, the paranoid excesses of the Palmer Raids, and the antidemocratic insults of the Alien and Sedition Acts. The public backlash galvanized by such abuses chastened policy makers’ confidence in the power of the state to enforce unanimity directly. Unrestrained governmental influence, it was now evident, jeopardized the very ideals it was designed to protect. Moreover, grassroots collectivism—the lawless vigilantism of mob populism and the pandemonium of 1919’s “Red Summer”—highlighted popular sovereignty’s many unforeseen disadvantages, exposing unpleasant limits to the progressive search for order: that no shared vision of nationality united the political community in its entirety, that no common culture of solidarity absorbed the loyalty of all citizens. Government, as Hoover presaged, would have to be more “catalytic” than “coercive” (Sherry 18).

To the alert student of public affairs, however, the lessons of war mobilization were less admissions of political failure than recognitions of obstinate social realities that, properly managed, could be adapted to national security culture. Although the decades immediately following the war witnessed a harsh intensification of anti-immigrant
sentiment and a low point in U.S. race relations, an awareness of cultural pluralism’s socially curative impact was on the rise in some quarters. Where an earlier generation worried that racial and ethnic factions moldered the totem of national unity, many writing after the war found a diversified, and thus more resilient, republican compound pillaring out of those same enclaves. Commentators like Randolph Bourne, Horace Kallen, and Constance Rourke longed for an “American character” that embraced the nation’s many cultural and regional “humors” as distinct but cooperative bloodlines in an “organic” national body. Indeed, it was society’s increasing “standardization”—the stultifying effects of “mass culture” and the callow optimism of the “melting pot”—that threatened to blaze the way for “massification,” a condition ruefully akin to proletarian amalgams. Segmented nations within nations, conversely, might assemble an “orchestra” of harmonized “trans-national” parts. Able to regiment “clusters” of difference across an ethnically riven domestic domain while expanding U.S. interests into international zones, a more capacious reckoning with democratic ideals could have stabilizing rather than disruptive effects at home and at last acknowledge global political realities to which the nation was already implacably attached.4

This shift in political sensibility evinced no nostalgia for the vagaries of the laissez-faire polity. Nor did it entirely dismantle the progressive program for the pure society—understood, though, for the “cultureless,” “deracinated” artificiality that it now was (Hegeman 64). More a migration in emphasis, a shading and coloring in of the once featureless picture of monist order, the revised conceptual framework of America gave more “representational” priority to the nation’s many variegated struts while tightening them more securely to its political ballast. According to Susan Hegeman, it was a
question no longer of “acceding to the dominant ethnicity,” but—in a more “metallurgic” or “alchemical” way—conceiving the U.S. as “the crucible in which all the immigrant groups will be transformed into the new alloy of the nation (presumably stronger, sharper, less prone to corrosion than its European counterparts),” and thus marching “toward a common goal of national cohesion.” Such an “interesting dynamism” discovered power, not frailty, in the “more flexible model of identity” liberal pluralism implied (57-58, 61). Bourne, for instance, championed the “superiority of American organization” for its “dual citizenship,” for its emphasis on the U.S. national as a “citizen of the world,” which “should make us, if the final menace ever came, not weaker, but infinitely strong” (119-123). Anticipated earlier in the field camp diversity of the Rough Riders and Plattsburg’s multiethnic platoon, the return of the hyphen transposed what was once a concession to military necessity onto the nation at large as a revelation of its prodigious cultural resources, its plentiful funds of international vitality.⁵

Transnationalism’s more inclusive purview, one that retained rather than assimilated cultural difference, foretold of conceptual priorities rehabilitating liberal ideals at mid-century: the transition Gary Gerstle marks from racial to civic nationalism.⁶ As ingratiating as Bourne’s nod to pluralist values could sometimes be, preferable as his acceptance of difference and denouncement of “prejudice” were to the openly hostile Immigration Exclusion Acts and unperturbed brutality of Jim Crow, his dually apportioned citizen presented a modernized national selfhood suitably matched to the changing worldview of the national security state, to its desire to calibrate the pace of historical change from above through a more “compensatory” or “improvisational” approach to social coordination.⁷ To win the war against totalitarianism, as Margaret
Mead urged passionately during World War II, the U.S. needed models for “social control” which would “direct the course of the world without compromising it by inappropriate methods” (189-190). Having overstepped the bounds of indefeasible authority in the First World War, the warfare state of the 1940s and ‘50s grew more elastic and supple, concerned less with making citizens the same than with making them more distinctively legible. The ideological structure of that process—predicted in Bourne’s prototype of the hybrid citizen and adapting to a post-Fordist futurity—involved related social drives toward both individuation and totalization, a political dichotomy concerned at once with protecting particularities of being and, concurrently, asserting the propriety of American universality that such tolerance surely legitimated.\footnote{8}

The optimized society—a body of citizens at once heterogeneous and isomorphic—configured the sort of cultural consensus underpinning what Foucault once described as the “society of security,” an ontopolitical regime of “governmentality” restored by rather than eliding the liberal embrace of difference and inclusion. Never really an equal accommodation of variety but more of a strategy, a “political technology” for calcifying and encoding identity itself, the liberal imaginary that emerged out of the many organizational considerations of World War II sought to clarify the imperium’s diverse subjects, calculating them through better taxonomies of individuation and differentiation.\footnote{9} Few war novels or films of the period, for instance, fail to include a “roll call” scene, a deliberative cinematic panning of the multi-ethnic platoon.\footnote{10} “Every squad and every ship’s department,” recalls John Jeffries, “had someone named Kelly, and Goldstein, and Kowalski, and Jones, someone named Tonelli, and Larsen, and Sanchez, and Schmidt, perhaps even an Indian called “chief”—‘Americans all’ from Brooklyn and
Dixie and from all across the land, joined in common cause” (120). A more ductile version of assimilationism, the liberal inclusion validated by World War II, Lewis Erenberg and Susan Hirsch observe, “now required patriotic dedication to unity and suppression of one’s class dissatisfactions” (4). It was a procedural gaze linked to a whole range of dynastic ambitions. The mid-century embrace of tolerance, as William Graebner attests, “[f]ar from being an invitation to a chaotic, decentralized, centrifugal, cultural pluralism,” was “an ideology of universalism, a step in the direction of the culture of the whole” (99). In diversity was integration; in multiplication was power.11

An extension and recalibration of modernist desire (discussed in the last chapter and below), the recourse to boundary-marking strategies responded to alarming recognitions of personal and collective contingency—corporeal, sexual, racial, ontological, ideological, economic, international—set loose by depression, war mobilization, and the global standoff with Communism. Proliferating within and across various public discourses was a general language of contagion and exposure. The war’s unfathomable quantity of death, the atomic incineration of vast spaces from vast distances, and the monstrous revelations of the camps were undeniable testimonies to life’s precarious interdependency and epidemic indeterminacy. Despite the triumphal blandishments of moral and fiscal victory, an intense and anxious probing of the “national character” followed in the war’s aftermath. Especially considering the political doctrines of Soviet rivals, the construction of postwar national identity refortified a version of the liberal capitalist subject in the image of the autarchic self, a political rationality cultural pluralism in many ways helped institute and validate. Spurred on by fears of the self’s permeable boundaries and the many ominous mysteries of personhood,
cultural pluralism’s “spatializing of difference,” its “democratic” engineering of the
social field, initiated the Cold War state’s most valuable form of population regulation,
propping up the system of barriers integral to national security culture’s organizational
imaginary.  

Chapter 4 examines the shifting “international” outlook that begins as antifascist
voluntarism but transforms into the imperial ken of the national security state and its
“realist” ideology of global containment. Chapter 5 considers the domestic domain’s
retraction of political scales that, coextensive with national security’s expansion of
perspective, constructed the “inward turning” consensus society underpinning “fortress
America.” Chapter 6, conversely, looks at failures, breakdowns, and ruptures within that
tenaciously configured political corpus as some writers—typically minorities and
radicals—used the contradictions of the liberal warfare state and its pluralist security
episteme to resist the Good War legend’s aesthetics of “entrapment.”
Chapter 4

**Literary Antifascism and the Changing International Imaginary**

I think this problem of the nature of the interventions gives us a starting point for approaching what is specific in neo-liberal policy. As you know, broadly speaking the problem of the liberalism of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth century was to distinguish between actions that must be taken and actions that must not be taken, between domains in which one can intervene and domains in which one cannot intervene. This was the distinction between the *agenda* and the *non-agenda*. This is a naïve position in the eyes of the neo-liberals, for whom the problem is not whether there are things that you cannot touch and others that you are entitled to touch. The problem is how you touch them. The problem is the way of doing things, the problem, if you like, of governmental style.

--Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*

The United States can no longer be a one-eyed Cyclops. Its power of attention must partake of the many-eyed vigilance of Argus—constantly watching in all directions in anticipation of the emergence of forces inimical to our national purposes.

--General Maxwell Taylor, *Responsibility and Response*

If it is too much to say that, for many of the elite, domestic politics have become important mainly as ways of retaining power at home in order to exert abroad the power of the national establishment, surely it is true that domestic decisions in virtually all areas of life are increasingly justified by, if not made with, close reference to the dangers and opportunities abroad.

--C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*

**Introduction: Military Cosmopolitanism/Managerial Transnationalism**

On the eve of the invasion of Sicily by U.S. forces in July 1943, General George Patton circulated an order to his soldiers. “When we land,” he informed them, “we will meet German and Italian soldiers whom it is our honor and privilege to attack and destroy.” “Many of you,” he acknowledged, “have in your veins German and Italian blood.” To rightly tilt the scales, he added: “[B]ut remember that these ancestors of yours so loved freedom that they gave up home and country to cross the ocean in search of liberty. The ancestors of the people we shall kill lacked the courage to make such a sacrifice and continued as slaves.” Patton’s characteristically gruff sophistry demonstrated a key modification in military discourse, one that acknowledged and incorporated America’s different international strains as an unequivocal signature of its international example. Only a generation before, a German American—disquieting challenge that he was to the monolithic nationalism of unhyphenated America—was far
more likely to be herded into a makeshift prison as an “enemy alien.” Here he found himself locked and loaded and clad in army green, readied for exertions of duty on a Sicilian beachhead, an included member of *Operation Husky*.

Such examples, and they are countless, do much to reveal the performative nature of pluralist discourse as it instantiated itself in the U.S. political imaginary during and after World War II. Integral to the construction of a national security paradigm was a rhetorical validation of “democracy” and “freedom” as the chief defensible goods of the “open society” for which every particle of the liberal polity’s “each and all” contributed its qualitatively unique share of assistance. War legitimates “the idea of a liberal state,” Gary Gerstle maintains, “one authorized to remedy economic and social inequities in the name of justice and security.”¹ Consolidating the Good War idiom, and durably surviving in our own time as nostalgic rehearsals of a “greatest generation,” were proud invocations of America’s moral champions of all stripes, reluctant but duty-bound servicemen and women making good on the promises of democracy. It was a political rationality—albeit under a more temperate hand than Patton’s— which would benefit the world if U.S. citizens, those “champions of the good life,” could find in regions outside the nation, as Mead pleaded, “a place which, like the great plains of the New World, gives us a wide stage on which to act out our parts” (204). “Can we not,” she asked in her popular wartime manifesto *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942), “take this sense of moral purpose—so intolerable when it sets itself above the world, but so indomitable when it sets itself to a hard job—and shape from it a tool with which the building of a new world can be done?” (206). That sense of an “unfinished world” and its search for moral resolution to institute liberal truths on an international scale suffused innumerable
other writings of the period—most notably the inflamed optimism of Henry Luce’s “American Century”—revamping the once isolationist U.S. as the purveyor of the “good society” among the comity of nations² (Campbell 52). Walter Lippmann thrilled at the emergence of a vibrant and propulsive foreign policy that finally deserted the many “mirages” of the established “American tradition,” the few paltry creeds—“torn from their context and then misread”—that treated the “Founding Father’s” warnings against “entangling alliances” as “Holy Writ” (FP, 58-59). “Elder brother” in the “family of man” that it now was, and blessed with the universal blueprint for a healthy society in “the American way of life,” U.S. foreign policy set out to remake the international order in its own image.³

As Sean McCann attests, the “fraternal spirit” of such universal liberal kinships contains an underwritten “imperial image” that, given the ubiquitous appeals to “one blood” in the “brotherhood of man” circulating through the period, does much to disguise the more aggressive dimensions of the American Century. Empire insinuates itself across the globe not through an explicit “conquering zeal,” he insists (in reference to Pierre Manent), “but in the presupposition of ‘the universality of human nature.’” “An imperial order that depended on trade, communications, and international law rather than, at least apparently, on military power, the American Century would seem in Luce’s description less a model of global domination than ‘the product of the imaginations of many men’ and a ‘sharing with all peoples of our Bill of Rights, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution’ (304). But Pax Americana, as Alan Wolfe remarks, was “fatally attracted to empire, intending “not only to maintain American power, but also to provide an imperial dividend in the form of domestic economic benefits” (109).
How does a cooperative spirit of antifascist struggle on an international scale mutate into the cosmopolitan universalism of the U. S. national security state? How does the energy exerted to demolish the most nefarious despot in human history transform into what Tom Englehardt calls the “triumphalist despair” of the Cold War consensus and the stalemate of the “anxiety ridden garrison state”? (3, 86-7). In the U.S. context, the rise of the antifascist enterprise in the organization of the Abraham Lincoln Bridgades in 1936 was voluntarist, collectivist, progressive, humanitarian, and international. It worked in defiance of the U.S. government, of its isolationist toleration of fascism which refused to implicate itself in the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War. Yet by 1945, having helped oust fascist militarism from power, Americans looked about them, as C. Wright Mills lamented, to discover a vast and unbroken “military ascendancy” cropping up in the homeland. They beheld it in the hulking new institutional structure of the Pentagon, in the shift from a War Department to a Department of Defense, in the conversion of public universities into military research venues. They beheld it in an interlaced complex of “warlords” governed only by a “permanent war economy” and its “military metaphysic,” a planetary surveillance that interpreted all facets of a global “risk system” through a single calculation of “military order” (215-17). The next two chapters trace that migration—from antifascism’s most democratic manifestation in the mid-1930s to it cooptation by the geopolitical realism of the national security state within both international (Chapter 4) and domestic (Chapter 5) forms of imagining.

I. Bell Tolls for Reform: The Spanish Civil War and the Politics of Commitment

Late in January 1938, after weeks of jostling about on buses, trains, and ships, Alvah Bessie and a group of multinational volunteers crested the last rugged bluff of the
French Pyrenees and crossed into war-embroiled Spain. Exchanging embarrassed but expectant glances with locals, they stumbled down rocks and onto the mainland crying “Salud!” and “Viva Republica!” Bessie’s perilous crossing to join the International Brigades was illegal, brazenly defying the U.S. government’s non-intervention statutes, policies which refused to condemn Generalissimo Franco’s fascist coup against a democratically elected Republican government. Given Bessie’s conservative background in a bourgeois Jewish-American home and the fact that he was a thirty-three year old father of two, his voluntary commitment to a life of cold garbanzos and wet blankets in defense of Spanish freedom was especially remarkable. Having recently converted to Communism, he devoted himself to supporting antifascist activity not merely for the Spanish people but for “the unity that exists between all men [sic] of good will, whatever their nationality” (Men 294). His internationalism reflected that broad spirit of solidarity consolidating the Popular Front. Fascism was an international epidemic, and it would take an international alliance of Communists, Socialists, Trotskyites, Social Democrats, and progressive liberals to put aside local disputes and unite under a shared banner of resistance. For Bessie, the International Brigades represented the “living embodiment” of that unified “roster of mankind,” “the final proof that those who perform the work of the world possess a common interest and an identical obligation” (Men 294-95). As the “eternal brigadier,” to arrogate Bernard Dick’s moniker, Bessie was a lifelong advocate for Spanish liberation (104). In the inquisitorial hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1947, Bessie, one of the original blacklisted “Hollywood Ten,” was jailed for “contempt” as a “premature antifascist” (Dick 150). Even after Franco’s death in 1975, Bessie still labored to raise the consciousness of Americans.
Organizing veterans, editing anthologies, writing letters, and soliciting contributions, he dedicated the remainder of his life unwaveringly to the interests of a people that he had fought beside and lived among for little more than a year.⁵

Political internationalism remains one of the cornerstones of a broadly conceived progressive sensibility, what Cary Nelson regards as a “choral paradigm” undergirding its “coalition politics” (6-7). That Bessie and other internationals risked (or gave) their lives for people with whom they did not share the bonds of citizenship suggests the astounding degree to which they could project political commitment beyond the frontiers of their own national histories; or better, the way that they recognized the political affairs of national others as coextensive with their own. In *Men in Battle* (1939), his memoir of life in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, Bessie presents the complex range of identifications (historical, spatial, material, discursive) oscillating across local, national, and international horizons. Its early pages, for instance, describe scenes bubbling with euphoria as volunteers from drastically different backgrounds join together to defend shared ideals. In the polyphonic clamor of a hotel dining hall, in the energy of collective embodiment, a farrago of different voices strain to bridge the language gap: “We laughed a good deal at each other’s efforts; there was a definite desire to communicate; it made you feel good. Here were students, engineers, dockworkers, clerks, and labor organizers. Most were unacquainted with each other, but they came together now with the warmth and familiarity of old friends.” He adds: “[Y]ou felt that with each of them, no matter how diverse his previous training, the Spanish struggle was a personal issue, something deep and close. This in itself, considering the disparity of their origin, was a major political phenomenon” (9-10).
Characteristic of the general tone of the memoir is Bessie’s exultation in the mayhem of the brigade’s transcultural synergy and a longing to exfoliate his “loneliness” in connection to a common cause (154). On an early morning train ride, Bessie reckons the convergence of histories, geographies, and economics as “all of a piece.”

It all tied up as you sat there in the jolting car early in the morning among the half-sleeping men: the foreigners, the workers from distant lands; the Spanish people fighting, dying here; the hills terraced by the million hands and the bowed backs of Spanish men and women; those men and women, their dark, lined, strong, hard, kind faces and their eyes; and the huddled rubble towns with crumbling walls; and the domination of the Church, buttressed in permanent stone; and the shrewd Italian bombers paid for by the men who lived graciously on the bitter labor of these people whom they deeply hate and fear; and your own children. (35-36)

His resonant sense of humanity’s interrelational nature, of the way that historical, material, and institutional forces have bearing on conditions both local and international, is one of the most enthralling features of Men in Battle. The more one disarticulates identification from its reification in self, family, nation, the memoir suggests, the more dioramic a sense of human contingency comes forth. In the most illuminating section, one that appears in both Men in Battle and in his recently published Notebooks, Bessie describes his commitment as a fusion of private and public desire:

I know, about myself, that the historical event of Spain had coincided with a long-felt compulsion to complete the destruction of the training I had received all through my youth. There were two major reasons for my being there; to achieve
self-integration, and to lend my individual strength (such as it was) to the fight against our eternal enemy—oppression; and the validity of the second reason was not impaired by the fact that it was a shade weaker than the first, for they were both a part of the same thing. It was necessary for me, at that stage of my development as a man, to work (for the first time) in a large body of men; to submerge myself in that mass, seeking neither distinction nor preferment (the reverse of my activities for the past several years) and in this way to achieve self-discipline, patience and unselfishness—the opposite of a long middle-class training—and the construction of a life that would be geared to other men and the world events that circumscribed them. There is much truth in the old saws—for a desperate disease, a desperate cure. (154-55)

Although expressed in typically masculine language, the description of his commitment depicts without gloss the form of political rationality that would be so feared by postwar American liberals. Bessie’s “desperate disease,” as this passage and others indicate, was the intractable conditioning of a bourgeois liberal consciousness; the camaraderie of internationals joined together in defiance of a fascist coup, its ideological inverse, its “desperate cure.”

At the same time, conversely, Bessie focalizes much of his experience through an expressly “American” lens, an ideological contortionism that cuts through the text with disorienting effect. In his account of the morning train ride, for instance, he frames his arrival at collective consciousness as a confirmation of the wisdom expressed by homegrown figures like Abraham Lincoln. “The strongest bond of human sympathy outside of the family relation,” Bessie recalls from a presidential speech, “should be one
of uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds” (35). Although he was espousing a patently Marxist point of view, he importantly framed proletarian doctrine as the utterance of an American President, especially the eponymous figurehead of his battalion and the subject that year of John Ford’s popular film, The Young Mr. Lincoln (1939). Appropriating the story world of the U.S. Civil War to frame the civil conflict in Spain, he gave a mostly unknown event the kind of affective resonance it needed to reach an American audience. The repetition of such references throughout suggests his need for local biographical counterpoints to anchor his international outlook for himself as well. Frequently, he gravitates toward American figures and themes to make sense of the vexing and unfamiliar: thrilling over Hemingway’s arrival in Spain, nostalgic for the smell and noise of Times Square, “wanting to see an American moving picture” to “reestablish contact” (11). Even in his later conflicts with HUAC, Bessie viewed the rise of repressive conservatism as a betrayal of distinctly national ideals. Thus in both his writing on Spain and the HUAC investigations—the “axial extremities” of his political life—his audience is clearly a U.S. citizenry that he hoped to inspire to reform. Both of his autobiographical later works, The un-Americans (1957) and Inquisition in Eden (1965), are, as their nationally essentialist and mythically exceptionalist titles suggest, reprehensions of the Red Scare’s many injustices as foreclosures on the American promise. If Bessie’s fighting was for Spain, his writing was for the U.S. In an apparently un-ironic gesture, Hemingway blurbled Men in Battle, a tribute to international collectivism, as “an American classic.”

That dichotomy might be seen as symptomatic of a broader “disruption of sensibility,” one consequence of the merged political agendas of the Popular Front—the
Seventh International’s 1935 yoking of proletarian internationalism to Constitutional democracy “in the tradition of Jefferson, Paine, Jackson, and Lincoln” \((\textit{New Republic} \text{ 15, June 1938: } 144)\). Out of its Americanization of Marx came, among other things, the dismantling and recombination of political theories of action, the overlapping and compression of national and international imaginaries, and antinomies of subjectivity yanked between the material and the ideal. The problem was no longer capitalism’s rampant historical exploitation of the working class but the psychological effects of its “inhumanity.” Restoring individualist forms of consciousness and a commitment to social order, it was believed, would recuperate a lost “wholeness.”\(^8\) In 1957’s \textit{The un-Americans}, Bessie was still turning over “the complexity of problems involved” and the impossible identifications they set loose: “the lines crossed and criss-crossed—the lines of influence, of stress and strain and intrigue were both national and international” \((75)\).

Antifascist collectivism, as Michael Denning explains, cobbled together an array of disparate dispositions, an assemblage that was less a politically coherent unity than a “radical historical bloc,” a complex political sponge absorbing the multifaceted agendas of community activists, independent socialists, the working class, and the left intelligentsia \((4-5)\). It was an alliance in which young plebians, radical moderns, and anti-fascist émigrés all found room to work. Even radical sectors of American cultural life compromised with its nationalism. Waldo Frank, Max Eastman, and Sydney Hook adapted Marxist thinking to the exceptionalist liberal pragmatism of the American creed and a politics of the “inner man.”\(^9\) Perhaps the most famous emblem of the Popular Front’s flexibility, of its widened circle of inclusion, was Kenneth Burke’s controversial substitution of “the people” for “the worker” at the 1935 American Writers’ Congress, a
redefinition that resembled more of a “working class Americanism” than international class struggle.10

Incendiary as that exchange may have been in more doctrinaire Marxist circles, it was precisely that appeal to broader membership, an appeal borne out of urgencies to convene a force powerful enough to confront the fascist menace, that propelled writers and intellectuals like Alvah Bessie across the Atlantic, that made possible transformations of conceptual abstraction into committed bodily force. In Frederick Benson’s analysis, the antifascist coalition represented a struggle to define the ideological future of Spain, but it was also “a test of the prevailing major political and social theories, providing an opportunity to transform these theories into action” (6). Across the 1930’s, particularly among the intelligenia, the discourse of turning art into “a life of action” was paramount.11 Bessie’s own transformation, he acknowledged, involved a will to link language and desire, to “see these things in terms of human beings; not in words” (xxix). His perception was shared by other Spanish Civil War writers like James Neugass who, in War is Beautiful (1937-38, 2008), a journal of his service as an ambulance driver, wrote, “I am here in Spain…either to give action to words or else become neurotic with self-mortification” (24).12 When Dalton Trumbo published Johnnie Got His Gun (1939), an unambiguously pacifist manifesto, in the same year as Bessie’s memoir, Trumbo expressed concern that his message was ill-timed, written as it was “when pacifism was anathema to the American left and most of the center” (2). Going to press “ten days after the Nazi-Soviet pact, two days after the start of World War II,” he declared, “its subject matter seemed as inappropriate to the times as the shriek of bagpipes” (3). If “it had been banned and I had known about it,” he admitted, “I doubt I should have protested very
loudly. There are times when it may be needful for certain private rights to give way to the requirements of a larger public good” (4). Throwing his support to the antifascist effort, Trumbo distanced himself from his own novel.13

In the years since World War II, few assessments of the Popular Front survive in this grain. Right-wing patriots, of course, easily dismiss it as an egregious moment in U.S. history when gullible liberals—“minions of Moscow”—fell victim to Communist propaganda. Many left-liberal and radical historians lambaste its muddying of political identities as an “execrable” stain on the political culture of the left, a rash short-term compromise leading to “deeper and more pernicious” consequences in the long run (Denning 116). In Stacey Olster’s summation, its one-size-fits-all compendium of positions made for “little difference between the adherents of revolution and the adherents of Roosevelt” (20). Joseph Freeman at the time assailed it as “the sweetest bandwagon in history”: “For now you could be for every kind of social reform here, for the Soviet Union, for the Communist Party, for Proletarian Literature—for everything and anything that was at one time radical, rebellious, subversive, revolutionary and downright quixotic—and in doing so you were on the side of all the political angels of the day; you were on the side of the Roosevelt administration, on the side of Labor, the Negroes, the middle classes; on the side of Hitler’s victims, on the side of all the oppressed colonial peoples in the world” (Aaron 270-271). In the 1940s and ‘50s, the New York Intellectuals of Partisan Review—Irving Howe, Philip Rahv, Dwight McDonald, and Lionel Trilling—objected to its “middlebrow aesthetic” and “sentimental nationalism.” New Left figures of the 1960s—Todd Gitlin, Stanley Aronowitz, and Warren Susman—decried that “out of it came an absurd vision of the American past, a
peculiar notion of American society in the present, a ludicrous attitude toward American culture in general” (Denning 116). In a characteristic diatribe, Susman berates “Ballad for Americans,” a favorite Popular Front anthem popularized by Paul Robeson, for its sentimental excess. “It was about the role of belief, about the ‘nobody who was anybody’ and the ‘anybody who was everybody,’” he complains, “about ultimate identification: ‘You know who I am: the people!’” (205). Worse, in our own time, critics like Robert J. Corber suggest the way that its “highly volatile” narrative of the “common man”—because of its “lack of specificity” and “abstract, universalizing logic”—made it “susceptible to recuperation by the Right,” a political community whose version of the “common man” “tended to exclude Americans who were not white, male, and heterosexual” (87).

Cutting from another angle, Al Richmond’s critique insists that the central problem of the Popular Front was its sentimental internationalism: the myopic belief that members could simply transcend the material and ideological roots of their historically specific subjectivity and embrace an abstract system of affiliation—a delocalized class, a cosmopolitan transnationalism, the Communist Party—untarnished by biography. Doubtful of such conversions of sensibility, he mocks 1930s internationalism’s profound mystification of its own philosophical tenets, its idealistic faith that advocates simply bypassed their ideological roots in American capitalism. The problem with American Marxism, in short, was that it tried not to be American, that it calcified Marxism into dogma that did not account for the “fundamental precept that all social phenomena can be comprehended only in the concrete historical context.”14 If the nation is an imagined community, one might summarily ask, what must that more telescopic international
community be? Such historically vapid affiliation, he accused, failed to take into account the culturally specific baggage believers toted with them and through which they would translate that more ethereal structure of belonging. Richmond’s critique echoed that of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who argued that the left should “abandon abstract international proletarianism and the vision of immediate, revolutionary seizure of state power” for a “war of position,” a “protractive struggle…across the institutions of civil society in their respective countries” (Singh 84).

Good intentions, one might simply conclude, have unintended consequences. In his assessment of the Popular Front’s political legacy, Nikhil Pal Singh describes its loosely defined “working-class Americanism” as unintentionally opening the door to cooptation by the imperial American state. It “hastened the development of alliances and interactions between Marxists and liberals in the New Deal state,” he argues, and thus “blurred the boundaries between the discourses of Marxism and liberalism in American left and progressive movements.” Incorporating once antagonist factions “into the life of the state,” its “blurring of the ideologies of left-wing transformation and liberal reform…occurred in a context in which liberalism (and not Marxism) assumed a far more expansive and hegemonic scope.” Coeval with the New Deal’s “nationalist revision of liberalism” in the mode of an “American way of life,” a view proliferated in popular texts like Wendell Willkie’s One World (1943), was its simultaneous ascent as a model for “rational change throughout the world.” The revival of an exceptionalist faith in American universality, for Singh, was bolstered by a logic in which the New Deal state’s “symbolic and institutional infrastructure…became the basis for the transnational power of the American warfare state during and after World War II” (84-86). Linking
constructions of American universalism to corresponding desires for “national security,” especially since that arsenal of democracy, “the world’s exemplary nation-state and the bearer of universality in the world-system” needed to be preserved at all cost, was the revision of liberalism during the World War II and its “international reconstruction of nationhood” (103). The “international sphere,” liberal discourse decried, “was now a social, political, and economic unity, which meant an end to the old politics of isolationism and spheres of influence” (Singh 104).

A year after the release of Men in Battle, as the United States contemplated its place in the rapidly escalating war between fascism and “the democracies,” Ernest Hemingway published For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), a Spanish Civil War novel focalized through American international Robert Jordan. It is an account of Jordan’s conversion from left-wing humanitarian international to the more “apolitical” liberal international imagined by the U.S. warfare state, a journey coded as a tale of personal maturation. In contrast to writers like Bessie and Neugass, its modernist machinations seek means to drive action into words. While he subordinates himself to Communist discipline, attempting to slough selfish concerns for submersion in the larger cause, Jordan’s tenure in Spain engenders an education in aesthetic self-enlargement more than a principled commitment to antifascism. Cozying with Spanish girls in his “sleeping robe,” lingering over dishes of stew, devouring bowls of wine, Jordan shrinks from the horizon of the war’s political ramifications to address concerns local mostly to his own needs and wishes. As time passes, he relinquishes his belief in the terms of the war at all, posing both sides of the conflict—the republican contingent and the fascist military—as driven by the same moribund tendency toward “clichés,” “bigotry,” and blind
“continence” to “party line” (164). Both factions, he considers after a meeting at Gaylord’s, drink deeply from the same “puritanical” wells, are lured equally by the fanaticism of the “crusade” (234-35). “What were his politics then?” Jordan ruminates; “He had none now” (163). As the novel proceeds, the war attains “value” more and more for its affective grandeur. Ever more the aesthetic tourist, Jordan relishes aspects of its immediacy and “intensity,” monopolizing its significance as an experience expressly for him: “living as we do now you must concentrate all of that which you should always have done into the short time that you can have it” (169). Chronological or dialectical registers of “span” and “duration”—and thus purpose or cause—disappear as he revels in the war’s passionate effects on his conscious, its ecstatic shrinking of the historical “value of time” into an ever more concentrated “now” (168-69). “Don’t ever kid yourself with too much dialectics,” he concludes, “You believe in Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” (305).

Jeffrey Walsh suggestively calls *For Whom the Bell Tolls* “a fictional transposition of American values to the Iberian Peninsula” (101). In contrast to the Republican guerilla Pablo and his clumsy, unprincipled band of *partizan* marauders, Hemingway clearly favors the “moral energy” that “epitomizes America’s capacity for democratic leadership” in the world (101). As aims particular to Spain recede, Walsh argues, the reader receives mostly a war myth derived from U.S. historical legend (102). His characterization of Jordan, for instance, draws from a deeply sedimented body of frontier nostalgia and Natty Bumppo-like idealizations of American masculinity in his figuration of the “rifleman figure” surviving a “frontier outpost,” itself often described as only a modern instantiation of his “buckskin grandfather” shouldering a “native Smith
and Wesson” (101-103). In its later chapters, Hemingway figures Jordan’s participation as a private rite of entry into one family’s manhood-conferring tradition of fighting in the U.S. Civil War and at the Battle of Little Big Horn (336). Granted global access to such rituals and experienced mostly in the isolationist locus of the private self, Hemingway’s text appropriates the international’s political commitment for a version of modernist self-fashioning, one that establishes the kind of planetary gaze and masculine stoicism shaping the international imaginary of the American Century.

Hemingway was savaged by many veterans and Left commentators as having “mutilated the cause for which so many brave men had fought and died” (Baker 356). “He had maligned La Pasionaria and slandered André Marty,” recounts Carlos Baker. “He had misrepresented the attitude of the Soviet Union towards the Spanish Republic. Worst of all, he had failed to show the relevance of the war in Spain to the world of 1940, where Fascism still ran rampant” (356). Mike Gold impugned For Whom the Bell Tolls in The Daily Worker as “limited, narrow…mutilated by his class egotism…[and] the poverty of his mind” (qtd. in Baker 356). Even Hemingway’s friend Alvah Bessie critiqued him in an open letter to The Daily Worker which was signed by veterans and leaders of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (356). But even as that censure occurred, Hemingway was busy compiling Men at War (1942), a collection of international war writing he hoped would inspire an American audience with the kind of military zeal it needed if it was “to endure” in and after World War II (20). “We will also fight this war,” he perorates in its preface, “to enjoy the rights and privileges conveyed to us by the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, and woe to anyone who has any plans for taking those rights and privileges away from us
under any guise or for any reason whatsoever” (20). It was an orientation toward international war and national identity for which Robert Jordan had paved the way.

II. Leaning Forward: The New Internationalism

Having defeated 1930’s “stagnation,” World War II’s fusion of government and industry assembled an economic organization and social order sustainable only through permanent mobilization for war. According to Brian Waddell, the alliance of “corporate political influence” and “military officials” amounted to an all-out “war against the New Deal” as “[i]nternational activism justified by anti-communism displaced and supplanted New Deal domestic activism” (5). Propped against a mysterious and dangerous international backdrop, the U.S. fortified that dyadic ideological structure, an imaginative modality tied indelibly to a discourse of internal and external security, necessary to galvanize support for an activist state. Beginning with George Kennan’s “long telegram,” which alleged to diagnose the “neurotic view of world affairs” infusing the “Soviet outlook,” and extending through the Clifford-Elsey Report, the Truman Doctrine, the National Security Act of 1947, and Paul Nitze’s National Security Council Memorandum-68 (NSC-68) of 1950, security rhetoric created a formal ideology of “total war” as a permanent and omnipresent risk. “The rise of total war,” claim Stephen J. Collier and Andrew Lakoff, “meant that the entire industrial capacity of a country was regarded as critical to its war effort, thus blurring the lines between civilian and military facilities, and making civilian installations and populations into military targets” (122). Requiring a “degree of military preparedness that was out of step with traditional convictions and old habits,” this cluster of documents comprised a kind of political omphalos, a concordant body of foreign policy scripture mustering the nation’s resources
and defining its political will. As Michael Hogan claims, national security doctrine represented a reorientation toward the globe and history that finally obliterated “the old distinction between civilian and military, between citizen and soldier, between the home front and the front line” (13). The Clifford-Elsey report, for instance, argues that it is “only realistic to assume that the U.S.S.R. might fight at any time,” a codification of every moment as rife with potential aggression (Hogan 14). With the Truman Doctrine, it expressed the conviction that peace and freedom were “indivisible” synonyms, thus making the defense of freedom anywhere an implicit defense of the nation, a codification of any domain as coextensive with American security (Hogan 13-15). With both time and space distended and intensified to such a degree, distinctions between war and peace dissolved, and the nation entered the epistemological no-man’s-land of the Cold War. Authoring a kind of “twilight condition,” Cold War discourse both “perpetuate[d] forms of personal and collective panic and simultaneously manage[d] them” constituting, in short, the militarization of everyday life (Farish 98).

The distinguishing tenets of American liberalism were what most cogently legitimated the nation’s moral rectitude and most conspicuously highlighted its adversary’s lack thereof. According to Kennan’s telegram, cherished “Anglo-Saxon traditions of compromise” constrained America while Soviets were compelled by “messianic” tendencies and a pandemic “fanaticism.” “We must study” the Soviet mind, he observed, “with the same courage, detachment, objectivity, and same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with which a doctor studies an unruly and unreasonable individual.” Hogan aptly summarizes the general conclusions of the emergent foreign policy algorithm:
The Soviets were hostile and active, usually according to a plan preordained in Communist ideology, while the Americans were friendly, reactive, and usually reluctant. The Soviet Union was animated, much like a “Church,” by a “doctrinaire ‘rightness’” and “the over brooding presence of ‘the word,’” while the United States behaved like a pragmatic nation state….The Soviets were equated with aggression and domination, while Americans were equated with peace and cooperation….Soviet politics were abnormal, secretive, and driven by ‘the doctrines and actions of a small ruling clique,’ while American politics were normal, open, and responsive to the rule of public opinion. The Soviet system was unnatural and ungodly, while the American system dovetailed with natural law and divine Providence. (17)

Consequently, negotiation with such an incontinent regime was “pointless and dangerous” since the enemy was “fundamentally unresponsive” to “normal logic,” incapable of pursuing a ‘community of aims’ with Westerners.” “The language of military power,” claimed Clifford-Elsey, “is the only language which the disciples of power politics understand,” and to establish that kind of force the nation would need “a permanent program of preparedness” (14).

Although it was the language of liberalism that most empowered the definition of American purpose, those grounding pieties were tabled as the U.S. prepared to meet a rival so monstrous and lethal. Americans, as NSC-68 cautioned, would “need to compromise some of the blessings of liberty in order to preserve it.” “A large measure of sacrifice and discipline will be demanded of the American people,” it solemnly warned, since many will be “asked to give up some of the benefits which they have come to
associate with their freedoms” (Hogan 17). What other lessons had the weak-willed “appeasement” of Hitler at Munich taught the U.S. if not that foot-dragging democratic compromise led to ruinous ineffectuality in the face of oncoming calamity? Did Americans really want to leave decisions of such magnitude to the whims of public debate and the vagaries of the voting booth? Citizens may occasionally feel stung by impertinent new practices and policies; they may at times feel that a bellicose worldview and prying public officials violated the essence of the nation’s founding creeds; but they should be heartened that contentious strife with foreign foes and insidious political ideologies only strengthened the democratic bedrock and thus enriched civic life. In the end, the Soviet-American face-off was “an exercise in moral rejuvenation, an opportunity to recapture the civic virtue and national discipline that marked previous periods in US history” (Hogan 16). “Surely,” Kennan concluded in Foreign Affairs in 1947, “there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin’s challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.”

To appropriate Hogan’s apt metaphor, the discourse of national security “worked like a powerful sluice gate,” “damming the current of public policy in some directions while opening channels that would harmonize national security state with older ways of thinking” (19). By the early 1950s, the “New Look” of the expanded military-industrial
society was fairly naturalized, anaesthetized to the activist state as citizens had become under the New Deal and fretful as the distressingly unfamiliar world was that churned kaleidoscopically before their eyes. To address such a hectoring international scene, national security officials assembled a vanguard of foreign affairs ideologues, “cosmopolitan realists” weaned mostly in Ivy League classrooms and fattened on the aliment of new foreign policy institutes and think tanks. Devoted to unraveling the mystery of the “Communist mind” and the Russian “character,” these Cold War Liberals constituted a “transnational political elite” standing in the gap as guardians and managers of “public opinion” (Sherry 131, 139). Because American security now depended as much upon “perceptions” as reality, and because it operated on a scale cloaking the entire globe, the New Look required a tripling of the defense budget and the incorporation of formerly civilian domains. Cooperating with research universities and agencies outside the newly minted Defense Department, the civilian-military synergy constructed a new political rationality as temporary exigencies of war emergency were instituted as permanent, revolving door facets of government. National security doctrine “embodied the conviction,” Michael Sherry argues, “that in an age of instant and total warfare, the vigilant nation must be constantly prepared by harnessing all its resources and linking its civilian and military institutions—indeed, obliterating the boundary between those institutions, just as the line between war and peace seemed to be disappearing” (138). Refashioned by an esoteric cartel of “Kremlinologists,” liberal political ideas morphed into the realist metaphysic that shaped an ascendant neoconservatism: a tacit glorification of U.S. nationalism combined with and bolstered by the neoliberal worship of open markets and free enterprise. Former “American Marxists” like Sidney Hook, for
instance, began protesting the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in 1949 for its suspected Communist sympathies, and disillusioned Trotskyites like James Burnham penned eagerly consumed books like 1947’s *The Struggle for the World* with its “hard boiled geopolitical realism” and “bleak predictions of inevitable conflict.”

The struggle for the world, unlike the bloody territorial conquests and empire by the sword of the old imperialisms, was a seemingly benevolent, even charitable affair. In fact, U.S. expansion into the international bailiwick announced itself precisely as a prohibition of that reoccurring historical pattern, a liberal rectification of history’s grimly repetitious trends. As upright emissaries of a new world organization—the nation having now “matured” a seasoned pragmatism in contrast to the myth-riddled, war-addled European and Asian nations still smoking among their ruins—serious, prudent diplomats armed only with a perceived moral imperative set out to remake the world in America’s image. “Emerging as the preeminent military, economic, and political power on the globe, the United States, in this view, sought neither territorial gains nor a vengeful peace,” writes John Jeffries, “but rather helped to rebuild Europe, construct a democratic Germany and Japan, and keep the peace and protect American interests and principles in the postwar era” (11). An “empire by consent,” its global agenda interpreted American values, as Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms did, as “essential human freedoms” worthy of universal emulation “everywhere in the world.” With the American political left in shambles and economic abundance satisfying most domestic quarrels, they found little resistance to the accruing “abstract universalism,” to borrow David Harvey’s term, “a spaceless universalization of its own values,” enabling the globalization of an American-styled capitalist system (47, 50). Even in his challenge to the neo-imperial globalization
of the “American Century,” the progressive Henry Wallace could only offer a more liberal substitute, suggesting an “international New Deal” to precede the “Century of the Common Man.” His lonely effort to “humanize” capitalism, an effort Dwight MacDonald scorned as “imperialism from the left,” implicated progressives in what Eric Foner and Alan Brinkley describe as the generative shift in liberal philosophy from the socialist-tinged “freedom from want” to an embrace of “free enterprise” in the “free market.” And to shield that fruit of providence from such godless opponents, the national security state instituted vast and multifaceted strategies of “containment” and “deterrence” to referee a turbulent international domain.

III. The Managerial Transnational: Military Cosmopolitanism and the World Scene

The World War II novel—because of its planetary scale, because of its many revelations of human nature’s malignancy, and because of its topically poised subject matter involving masculine assumptions of duty—was a literary vehicle best adapted to help Americans imagine an updated political regime. At the conclusion of Irwin Shaw’s *The Young Lions* (1948), for instance, where the fates of his three protagonists converge at the liberation of a concentration camp, he unveils his idealized American international in the figure of Captain Green, a cool-headed manager of public order superintending the camp’s takeover. With an unruffled, Eisenhower-like calm, Green gains him the admiration of Noah Ackerman and Michael Whitacre, the novel’s two American protagonists. Amid chaos and confusion, Green gives “brisk, sensible orders” to Poles, Russians, German Communists, liberated Jews, prisoners, and American soldiers alike. Despite his portentous and overwhelming circumstance, one for which no apprenticeship could have prepared him, he categorizes the sick, rations food, and organizes work
parties. Contrary to the heinous scene of his surroundings, the purulence of a “myth-ridden” culture rooted in racism and sexual perversion, his arrival restores reason and sanity to an otherwise deranged world. He is Shaw’s exemplary representation of the redressed future. “As the first afternoon wore on, and Michael saw the beginning of order that Green, in his ordinary, quiet, almost embarrassed way, had brought about, he felt an enormous respect for the dusty little Captain with the high, girlish voice. Everything in Green’s world, Michael suddenly realized, was fixable. There was nothing, not even the endless depravity and bottomless despair which the Germans had left at the swamp heart of their dying millennium, which could not be remedied by the honest, mechanic’s common sense and energy of a decent workman” (675). Against an Albanian’s warnings that he concede to “[t]he feeling in Europe,” beseeching him not to allow the sickly Rabbi Silverson to hold a service for the dead, Green not only exerts the moral largesse to permit the service but he also installs a machine gun battery to preside over the ceremony. From now on, Noah exultantly declares, “the human beings are going to be running the world. The human beings! There’s a lot of Captain Greens! He’s not extraordinary! There’s millions of them!” (680).

One of few American authors to portray the gruesome reality of the camps—two notable exceptions being Martha Gellhorn’s *Point of No Return* (originally published as *The Wine of Astonishment* in 1948) and, more obliquely, Kay Boyle’s *Avalanche* (1944)—Shaw’s treatment importantly broke a literary silence. Yet as it did for Gellhorn, who was present at Dachau’s liberation as a correspondent, the revelation of such brutality also correlativelly elevated the U.S. political imaginary—so allegorically and antithetically contrasted as it was with these atrocious scenes—as the *de facto,*
unchallenged palliative to a world gone wild with unconstrained evil. An important
forgotten work, Gellhorn’s retributive, often stirring, novel is a powerful reminder of
what catastrophes men—and for her it is unequivocally gendered—are capable of
manufacturing “when sanctioned by the State” (316, 331). But its realist prescriptions
also wonder how to cope with a “world which had grown ugly and strange,” a world
everywhere “dangerous with a danger you did not see…poisoned, spreading” (323). Like
her protagonist Jacob Levy, who was “blasted into a knowledge of evil that he had not
known existed in the human species,” Dachau’s “point of no return,” Gellhorn
acknowledges, fundamentally changed “how I looked at the human condition” (330). “I
could happen again” (323).

She was right, of course, and the memory of the Final Solution continues
hauntingly to remind the world of the human capacity for organized terror. Gellhorn was
a lifelong leftist, covering various war events in a reporting career of some forty years
with a humanitarian’s eye for suffering and a reformer’s desire for its relief. From the
vantage point of the imperial American state, however, such representations cut another
way, synthesizing World War II memory with that more opaque, often hallucinatory
topology that justifies all manner of conscriptions, repressions, interventions,
preemptions, and occupations in the name of national interest and international security.
Colin Flint describes a basic shift in the U.S. war imaginary occurring in the early years
of the Cold War where citizen-soldiers morphed into soldiercitizens: no longer simply the
liberal defenders of homefront territory but the “aterritorial” guardians of “institutions
and values,” moral champions of “a way of life,” simultaneously “disseminating the
values of the hegemonic state across the globe” (345-46, 349). Bound up in such a
transference were soft-imperial conceptions of the American international figured by
World War II writers like Shaw, Gellhorn, and even Boyle whose Tolkien-like Avalanche
casts the war in such starkly Manichean terms—forces of light set against forces of
darkness—as to naturalize national security’s Protestant global allegory.

Particularly piquing for readers of our own time, and augering a slightly different
point of view is John Hersey’s Pulitzer Prize winning A Bell for Adano (1945). Written
during his tenure as a Time-Life war reporter for Henry Luce’s publishing ventures,
Hersey’s first novel expounds international viewpoints akin to those of his employer. If
Shaw embraces the waspish Captain Green as his international marshal of the “common
good,” Hersey, a child of Christian missionaries, submits Italian American Major Victor
Joppolo as an altruistic diplomat of the multiethnic army, a figure prophesying the Good
News of the American gospel to an international congregation. Constrained in all matters
by democratic tolerance and liberal fortitude, he is Hersey’s tribute to military pluralism,
a trenchant human resource only stronger for his ethnic hybridity and thus more skillfully
equipped to negotiate international terrain. Working with security forces whose job it is
to “weed out the bad Italians and make use of the good ones,” Joppolo directs the
liberation of Sicilian Adano not by enforcing draconian disciplinary measures but by re-
establishing humanitarian values in a population hobbled by years of fascist occupation
(4). An Italian American, he navigates both sides of the hyphen with comparative ease.
He mediates local disputes between feuding peasants, establishing common sense rule
where superstition formerly reigned. He restores dignity to women, saving them from the
prejudices of their local culture as well as from the coaxing and cajoling of drunken
American soldiers. In contrast to the “habit of fear” grown thick amid the offices he now occupies, he makes himself publicly available, encouraging a climate of open discussion and petition (63). He forbids rituals of groveling and bowing in his presence and prohibits the fascist system of “tributes” and “protections” that have depleted the town’s coffers (76-77). He puts businesses back to work and fishermen back in their boats. He teaches individual initiative and the virtues of capitalist self-sufficiency. When unbending military procedure gums up his program, he shrewdly and inventively combines purposes with other military branches in a spirit of pragmatic cooperation.

When unreconstructed fascists appear, he shows firmness but also mercy. So sure is his moral compass that he even permits Adano’s citizens to listen to Radio Roma’s anti-American broadcasts (40). Winning hearts and minds, his Solomon-like public relations diffuse once-jeering mobs, leaving them “shouting and congratulating America” (64). Joppolo is both “servant of the people,” waiting in line for bread like everyone else, and an instrument of state occupation (45).

That two-vectored attunement is what best equips him to palter in international zones. The novel’s central conflict involves the town’s lugubrious longing for its lost bell, a seven-hundred-year-old heirloom that once hung proudly in the town square but has since been plundered by Mussolini to be melted down for rifles. The chauvinistic head officers of the American command refuse to be bothered with such a pettiness, especially in a war zone fighting to attain items necessary for mere subsistence like food and clothing. Nevertheless, as a man possessed of foresight and an appreciativeness of Italian folkways, Major Joppolo understands what provenance the bell holds for the town, for its self-pride and sense of collective identity. Maneuvering through available
channels, he obtains a replacement from the *U.S.S. Corelli*, an American naval vessel named in honor of an Italian living in the States. The new bell’s inscription reads “America ed Italia,” an instructive example of American beneficence and inclusiveness to a town stunted by outdated provincial customs. Like its newer symbolic cousin in the Quaker City back home, the gift not only restores the town to its prior sense of purpose but also points the way into the future, a future resounding with liberty’s most stentorian tones. Riding off into the proverbial sunset conclusion, having recently overseen its reinstallation, Joppolo exits the village with the bell’s “fine sound on the summer air” (269).

Hersey’s international parable, a tale he hoped would convince U.S. nationals to “make many friends in the world,” filters a vision of international military occupation through the universalist outlook of American Century liberalism (203). Limned heavily in the introduction, the pedagogical nature of the text—like James Gould Cozzens’s *Guard of Honor* (1948), a subject of Chapter 5—expresses disdain for administrative “theories” that fail to account for realities on the ground (v). “*Neither the eloquence of Churchill,*” he expounds, “*nor the humaneness of Roosevelt, no Charter, no four freedoms or fourteen points, no dreamer’s diagram so symmetrical and faultless on paper, no plan, no hope, no treaty—none of these things can guarantee anything. Only men can guarantee, only the behavior of men under pressure, only our Joppolos*” (vii). A man of “*quality,*” Hersey writes, Joppolo represents “*in miniature*” what U.S. foreign policy could harness as the exemplar “*international country*” (vi). “*Everywhere our army goes in Europe, a man can turn to the [Italian, French, Austrian, Yugoslavian, Czech, Norwegian] private beside him and say: ‘Hey, Mac, what’s this furriner saying?’*
And Mac will be able to translate” (vi). That amounts to “a lucky thing for America,” he proselytizes; “You can be as isolationist as you want to be, but there is a fact. Our armies are on their way in. Just as truly as Europe once invaded us, with wave after wave of immigrants, now we are invading Europe, with wave after wave of sons of immigrants” (vii). Having been seasoned to such knowledge as an international correspondent, Hersey’s testimony acclimatizes citizens to new roles in global affairs, urging them finally to “get to know this man Joppolo well. He is our future in the world.”

Hersey’s “international” point of view redounded through numerous other pluralist war texts of the period, most notably perhaps Leon Uris’s Battle Cry (1953), which harnessed the “unity in diversity” theme to a tale of multiethnic fusion in South Pacific battles. Far from a relic of mid-century, however, A Bell for Adano continues to influence American foreign policy directives and population appeasement strategies put forth by military planners in Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). In a 2003 Atlantic Monthly article titled “Supremacy by Stealth,” neoconservative Robert Kaplan articulates core principles needed to win the so-called Global War on Terror out of which he delineates ten rules for “managing the world.” Topping his list, fifty years after Hersey’s novel, is an admonishment that the U.S. Army and its agents in the Middle East “Produce more Joppolos.” The article is featured as suggested reading in the “Preparing Leaders for Nationbuilding” section of the U.S. Army’s “Professional Writing Collection,” a section designed to “train its leaders to adapt to a fundamentally changed security environment.”

Among the needs in that changed environment are sensitivity to international customs, tolerance for dissent, an urge toward ingenuity, willingness to adapt, and the flexibility to deal with the many overlapping interests of national and
international worlds. For Lt. Colonel Patrick Donohoe, Joppolo serves as a prescient reminder that successful nationbuilding abroad requires leadership trained in languages and governance, but also "culture; basic law and civics; city planning and public administration; economics; and ethics.” Preparing bygone isolationists to accept the obligations and responsibilities of new world order, *A Bell for Adano* accustoms U.S. citizens to their part in a complex and interdependent global tableau.

The United States’ detonation of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945 complicated such untroubled optimism about American benevolence. Tom Englehardt claims that, as an utterly unassimilable event, it demolished the innocence of an ingrained American “victory culture,” blasting “an opening into a netherworld of consciousness where victory and defeat, enemy and self, threatened to merge” (6). Hersey’s *Hiroshima* (1946), written in eerily somber tones only one year after the churlish *A Bell for Adano*, portrays that shift in the national mood. As if to compensate for such an overwrought display of arrogance as the cremation of an entire city, the prose assumes a spare, often elliptical economy. But although dispensing with the rhapsodic sermonizing of his earlier work, Hersey’s orientation toward U.S. internationalism is little altered. His authorship might even be seen as a textual inhabitation of Joppolo’s own transnational character, moving into his evaluative consciousness as he puzzles over the scene of the fallout. Investing the narrative gaze with a predominance that Alan Nadel claims “comes not from his witnesses” but from “his rhetorical position as omniscient narrator,” he summons “a narrative voice that has more authority than it is entitled to” (56). Through his objective journalistic point of view, he subordinates the “documentary vastness of the [bomb’s] destruction” to a cinematic economy, thus enabling the
“marginalizing of an event through its replacement with a document,” the text that, in its first appearance, consumed an entire issue of *The New Yorker* (58, 67).\(^2^3\) Although an outsider to the event and a citizen of the nation that engineered the destruction, Hersey transcends any personal affiliation, positioning himself as a cosmopolitan chronicler of an essentially generic human tragedy.

Nadel describes *Hiroshima* as engendering a kind of representational silence, insinuating a disjunction between history and event that dispels national complicity even as it represents it. Although Hersey’s reportage went to great lengths to break a journalistic muteness, acknowledging the ferocity of the event’s devastation for an American readership (only 10% of whom expressed disapproval), the text essentially traps and quarantines that recognition with an effect Margot Norris likewise dubs the event’s “amputation from history” (175). Like Nadel, who points out the reductive 1:16,000 ratio between the victims of *Hiroshima* and Hiroshima, Norris attacks Hersey’s narrative for being “told without diachronic or historical continuity,” fracturing “into a variety of disparate and incommensurate discourses that allow us to compartmentalize them into such discrete and unconnected disciplinary monads as military history, atomic research, political analysis, medical history, and memoirs” (175). “The accounts and memoirs of Hiroshima are thus enfolded,” she writes, “in the secondary discursive and psychological violence of this historiographic antiphrasis…that turns the event rhetorically into its opposite, an inhumane act called a humanitarian gesture, a shocking destruction of life named an extravagant rescue” (179). *Hiroshima*, consequently, “is entombed within the silence of the why: why did this happen, and how could it happen?” (175).\(^2^4\) Thus is the text’s “representation” also an act of erasure.
To define *Hiroshima* as an act of erasure is to begin to illuminate the chiaroscuro of a preparedness viewpoint lingering in the shadowy representation of some prominent World War II writing. Although all of its proceeds went to the international Red Cross to aid real-world survivors of atomic fallout, *Hiroshima* is an expressly American work of fiction. Largely unrepresentative of Japan’s general population, Hersey’s six survivors—one third of whom are Christian in a demographic containing less than one percent—focus the material in a way modified for a mainstream U.S. readership. “Following the gender typologies congenial to US 1940s culture,” Norris adds, the “profession men” through which most of the account is told are “heroically active, while the two female protagonists…are passive victims in need of care” (190). As a literary symptom of national security epistemology, moreover, Hersey’s rendering of the aftermath of the scientific-industrial power exerted by the U.S. government more closely resembles that of a wandered upon natural disaster than an unaccountably reprehensible demonstration of force. Just as his Japanese characters are sanitized of their cultural particularly, the bomb itself is polished clean of its national-cultural imprints, a noncontiguous manifestation of a “material and spiritual evil” and a predetermined effect of “total war,” both now globally apportioned (90). Sasaki-san, one of his characters, for instance, describes her “firsthand knowledge of the cruelty of the atomic bomb,” a rhetorical displacement of the bomb’s atrocity onto the nature of the object itself (122). Thus, under the pressure of Hersey’s description, does the destruction of Hiroshima transform from an act of national aggression into the seismographic divulgement of a mysterious and abstract world condition, “a purely symbolic referent,” as Donald Pease puts it, “for a merely possible event” (562). Pease was referring to President George H.W. Bush’s invocation of the
bomb in a State of the Union Address, but he could as easily have been referencing Hersey’s text when he describes the “spectacle” of Hiroshima’s memorialization as a transfiguration of “cold war spectators into symbolic survivors of their everyday lives.” “As a national spectacle,” Pease writes,” Hiroshima had turned the entire U.S. symbolic system into the afterimage of a collectively anticipated spectacle of disaster, a self-divided (rather than self-present) instant, that had always not yet taken place (hence always anticipated) but had nevertheless always already happened (in the lived experience of the anticipated disaster).” “Not Hiroshima the actual, the historical event that took place on August 6, 1945, at the conclusion of the Pacific campaign and resulted in the deaths of over 100,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians,” he explains, “but Hiroshima as the possible fate of U.S. citizens if Soviet imperialism remained unchecked” (562-565). As Michael Sherry more bluntly summarizes, American citizens read Hiroshima not so much to acknowledge a national guilt but as “evidence of what might happen to the United States” and “to challenge and reinforce a sense that the nation was still insulated from the devastation of modern war” (120-121).

A modernization of preparedness writing, Hersey’s Hiroshima exerts that murky double perspective in which renditions of specific historical horrors convert into assessments of probable future nightmares. Although Luce and Hersey parted ways, particularly for the latter’s alleged “pacifism,” it is difficult to avoid how textual disorientations like Hersey’s are enfolded in that larger aesthetic tendency of American war writing to “substitute apocalyptic models for political specificity” (Nadel 39). The referential instability of catastrophe culture in this instance imparted that “new form of spatial knowledge” so fascinating to Cold War militarists, a key to national security
thinking so evident in the “vulnerability mapping” projects undertaken by tacticians and war planners to assess emergency management strategies. “Such knowledge entailed not the calculation of probabilities but rather imaginative enactment of events for which civil defense services would have to be prepared, and the detailed analysis of how urban features would be affected by such events” (Collier and Lakoff, 130). Under the interpretive pressure of Cold War historicity, in short, Hiroshima’s Faustian tale of technological hubris becomes as much a prediction as a confession.

IV. The Liberal Encounter with Evil: Herman Wouk and Cold War Realism

In highly divergent ways, William L. White’s They Were Expendable (1942), Marion Hargrove’s See Here, Private Hargrove (1942), and the infamous misogynist Philip Wylie’s Night unto Night (1944) presented updated versions of preparedness fiction, works readying Americans to accept the difficulties and sacrifices of modern war-making. Yet the revised preparedness sensibility found its consummate example in Herman Wouk’s The Caine Mutiny (1951), perhaps the ur-work of World War II-era preparedness fiction and the Pulitzer Prize-winning play for 1952. A literary entrapment, it affects a sort of representational legerdemain: craftily ensnaring readers by luring them into compliance with a group of traitorous liberals who woefully commit mutiny during a time of war. Wouk, issuing the novel as a literary correction, probably had in mind Thomas Heggen’s irreverent and highly popular Mr. Roberts (1946), both a novel and play that won celebrity for humorously castigating the frivolous and inept command of a military supply vessel during the South Pacific campaign. Selling three million copies in the early 1950s, however, Wouk’s “valentine to the navy,” suggests Stephen Whitfield, shows “how smoothly popular taste could accommodate an authoritarian ideology” (60-
Wouk’s delight in castigating liberal individualists encouraged Fifties social critic William Whyte, author of the 1956 bestseller *The Organization Man*, to christen the novel an example of “organization culture” for its ringing approval of antidemocratic suppression. In even in its most inept, broken-down manifestation of authority, *The Caine Mutiny* embraces obedience to hierarchy and the disciplined functioning of the “team player” (182). “Better to be an average joe than a smart critic or whistleblower,” summarized Michael Adams in his discussion of the “other-directed” novel, the literary symptom of a “society valuing conformity to group loyalty above all else” (153).

The simple depiction of a mutiny within the U.S. military, not to mention the quasi-Marxist Lieutenant Keefer’s constant expository on misdirected authority, would have been anathema to the national security ethos in the peak Cold War years of the early 1950s, a time seized by the Red Scare hysteria of McCarthyism. With the Soviet standoff entering its frigid early stages, the mordant lampooning of imbecilic officers like Captain Queeg and his petty infatuations with protocol and routine was, to be sure, a dangerous business. Queeg’s many embarrassing appearances show him mindlessly instituting water famines on subordinates or fatuously sequestered in his quarters munching dishes of ice cream in his underwear. His inexplicable sadism toward sailors like Stilwell, his sabotaging of fitness reports, his endless investigation into a carton of missing strawberries, and, most egregious, his cowardly shiftiness under fire: seemingly these would suggest the nonsense of fidelity to organizational structures like chain of command. To Willie Keith, the novel’s protagonist, Queeg’s “almost German rape of their personal rights” represents “an outrage against civil liberties, and constitutional rights, and habeas corpus, and eminent domain, and bills of attainder, and every other
half-remembered phrase which meant that an American was entitled to a fair shake; “that they were submitting so tamely,” the novel insinuates, “was an indication of the way the Queeg regime had weakened the crew’s spirit” (187-188, 332). Barney Greenwald, the defense lawyer who wins their acquittal in the final scenes, even leads a key witness to diagnose all military careers as signs of psychological maladjustment, of a “paranoid pattern” of thought linked to yearnings for a return to the womb (449).

Although the book’s runaway success demanded a corresponding film, portrayals of such troubling cracks in the military armor were too much of a risk for any major studio. The navy refused to cooperate, and when Warner Brothers expressed interest, they were eventually warned against material so “extreme” and “derogatory” (Whitfield 62). Columbia eventually agreed to produce the film, but the directorship fell to Hollywood Ten renunciant and HUAC cooperative Edward Dmytryk, who was also charged with the task of neutralizing its more incendiary features.

Despite these elements, however, *The Caine Mutiny* functions far more to alert then to condemn. In the tradition of earlier preparedness fiction, it addresses the prospect of threats to the political community as much from fifth-column factions within as from without, threats which might even be festering in unconscious sectors of a citizen’s mental life. Internal subversion, Wouk suggests, will most likely occur as a consequence of ingrained liberal values, a tacit partiality that he explicitly targets. Far from a rebellion of rum-addled misanthropes, for instance, the mutiny on the ill-fated *Caine* is grounded in legal mandate and justified by a reasoned, self-evident list of grievances. Queeg’s despotic, clearly life-endangering command is relieved by dispassionate means and, despite circumstances of great strain and duress, follows to the letter the rule of law
expressed in *Courts and Boards*. The reader, having irritingly endured the Captain’s quixotic antics and arbitrary abuse of authority, circumscribed along with the crew in the ship’s unmanageable circle of tension, greets the rebellion as a cathartic release—the relief, as Keefer quips, of the “Fifth Freedom” (478). When their court martial grants them acquittal, the mutiny’s participants are vindicated, and a regimen of reason and common sense is seemingly restored.

As Wouk suggests, however, “all those things can be taken two ways” (342). As the ebullient cohort of victorious shipmen feast in celebration at the novel’s denouement, Attorney Greenwald, drunk but lucid, unveils the novel’s great reversal of verdict. The acquittal he attained, a requirement of his occupation, unfortunately endorsed the actions of a self-indulgent band of sybaritic liberals, moral ingrates so divested of ethical vision as to have forgotten the broader meaning of the war. Addressing the suddenly astonished revelers—Theater Guild men like Keefer and juke-house miscreants like Keith—Greenwald imparts stories of his family’s horrors at Cracow, of German fascists boiling their inmates into soap. While the privileged men of the *Caine* were tom-catting around dance halls, it was the “stuffy, stupid Prussians in the Navy and in the Army who were manning guns” to ensure freedom’s survival, a freedom on which the revelers, through manipulation of policy, merely cashed in (482). The novel’s hero turns out to be none other than the ruined Captain Queeg who, though imperfect, was at least “standing guard on this fat dumb and happy country of ours” to stop “Hermann Goering from washing his fat behind with my mother” (482-483). The hangdog assembly, a contingent with whom the quailed reader has likewise identified, discloses Wouk’s portrait of moral discipline gone awry.
Slinging wine in Keefer’s face, moreover, Greenwald’s peroration indicts not just their incapacity to see authority’s necessity but also a literary tradition of war writing that complains relentlessly against the military’s violations of the liberal contract—its antiheroic drudgery, its hierarchy, its abstention of personal rights. In a kind of metatextual commentary on the cultural marketplace for war novels like Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) or James Jones’s *From Here to Eternity* (1951), Wouk has Keefer at work throughout *The Caine Mutiny* on his own presumably trailblazing novel: the retributive *Multitudes, Multitudes*, titled so magisterially as to suggest the author’s inflated narcissism. As it turns out, coincident with the good news of the men’s legal absolution is the arrival of word that *Multitudes, Multitudes* has found a willing publisher, news which only adds to Keefer and friends’ saturnalia. “I’d like to read it,” Greenwald snidely declares in his tirade, “I’m sure that it exposes this war in all its grim futility and waste, and shows up the military men for the stupid, Fascist-minded sadists they are. Bitching up all the campaigns and throwing away the lives of fatalistic, humorous, lovable citizen-soldiers…the author proves how terrible military guys are, and how superior sensitive civilians are” (385-386). Greenwald’s summation, a fairly accurate assessment of the social realist themes that ubiquitously characterized the works of his contemporaries—the subject of the next chapter—sends Keefer’s beleaguered coalition even further into despondency.

For a generally liberal, middle-class audience, Wouk’s political realism helped construct that point of view toward world affairs shared by an immense and growing pool of Cold War foreign policy consultants and globalization experts, that collaborative team of reconstructed leftists alert to the exposure of the national body and the hazards of an
unstable world system. Liberalism’s general “relativism,” they believed, was weakening
the nation’s ability to contend efficiently and effectively with totalitarian danger. Like
the jovial roustabouts of the Caine, its obstructively “sentimental” attraction to good
feeling and comradely toleration obstructed citizens’ ability to reckon the sacrifice and
political compromise needed to face oncoming menace, the darker imagination more
adeptly perceptive of “life’s tragic complexities” (Lears 40). Intellectuals like Lewis
Mumford and Archibald Macleish denounced the “arid pragmatism” of the liberal mind
for its inability to understand “the basic issues of good and evil, of power and form, of
force and grace, in the actual world” (Sherry 36). FDR, increasingly incorporating the
discourse of “national security” into his public statements, lamented that “a false teaching
of geography” had created the illusion of “some form of mystic [American] immunity
that could never be violated.” To defeat totalitarianism meant to outperform it. Seizing
the chance to build a protracted military establishment, generals like George Marshall in
alliance with corporate leaders sought “some enlarged, permanent machinery of
mobilization,” “a powerful military force as part of the normal structure of our society.”
The army grew eightfold in size over the next two years. And, for the first time in U.S.
history, the military draft—once such an unthinkable hijacking of popular sovereignty
and civic voluntarism—was greeted with general enthusiasm, garnering a stratospheric
approval rating of 86% (Sherry 32, 43-44, 48). Casting international events—the
Holocaust and the bomb in particular—as “tragic” but nonetheless “emblematic”
evidence of untended human drives, national security’s realist hermeneutic interpreted
global violence, in one instance even an event of its own making, as merely the “generic
horrors of war from which the US [now] had to shield itself” (Sherry 57).
Further legitimating the national security state’s credibility, the militarization of American life occurred without resorting to the goose-stepping pageantry of its fascist rivals or the nightmarish practices of Harold Lasswell’s theorized “garrison state.” Possessing only “technological virtuosity,” U.S. citizens, claimed “full preparedness” advocate and President of General Electric Charles Wilson, could “possess the mightiest and deadliest armament in the world without becoming aggressors in our hearts, because we do not have the intoxicating lust for blood which periodically transforms the German military caste.” Rather, American war-making exhibited mostly a cool-headed, technocratic skill. “Like most Americans,” claims Sherry, war planners “associated combat zeal with the crudities of militarism, either the atavistic kind supposedly displayed by suicidal Japanese soldiers or the regimented, totalitarian version demonstrated by the German armed forces.” In contrast to the obsessions with “lebensraum” or master race narratives fuelling its enemy’s rhetoric, the American war machine operated with only a “muted, vague sense of purpose” (78). With every quarter of the globe now susceptible to potential destruction, an “urgent but directionless anxiety” acclimatized the public to war as a permanent and inevitable feature of an abstractly fixed “reality” (Sherry 121). Conceived through the causeless, ahistorical registers of conservative realism’s international optic, these many tropes congealed to form the emotional infrastructure of a society in transition: a move away from the progressive advocacy of the reform tradition, from desires for “action” and “commitment,” to the advent of the “military metaphysic” governing national security’s administrative rationality.
As Susan Buck-Morss attests, the political imaginary constitutes a horizon of contemplation, an ideological “landscape” held together by three cooperative “icons”: “the common enemy, the political collective, and the sovereign agency [the state] that wages war in its name” (12). Theorizing its form in the particular context of the war’s aftershock, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri similarly remark upon how the revelation of genocide and potential nuclear annihilation gained such a sovereign, biopolitical purchase over “individualized” human experience as to tend war toward the condition of “the absolute,” accelerating the “means of destruction” to such a degree as to “break the modern dialectic of war” and make it “properly ontological” (19). Some war narratives, modeling versions of subject formation structured by neoliberal conceptions of privatized “security” and biopolitical forms of nationality amenable to the expansion of the state, helped citizens imagine and accede to the complex intermeshing of local, national, and international interests remaking the felt experience of postwar citizenship. Looming the shadow of war across every auspice of American life was a cultural preoccupation with disaster, a darkly foreboding discourse of human iniquity and technocratic doom. That repeated invocation of danger, omnipresent across the 1940s and ’50, was linked directly to incipient sense of social contingency as a legacy of the war. It is the tenacity of that structure of feeling, most visible in the rapid mutation of international antifascism—a voluntarist, democratic movement of the people—into the permanent war imaginary and its construction of the national security episteme, that constructs the ideological scaffolding of the liberal warfare state and its heterogeneous but stable “society of security.”28 As young people lingered over issues of Popular Science and performed fallout drills as school, as their parents hurled themselves in sleek, missile-finned cars
across Eisenhower’s newly developed Defensive Interstate System or dug fallout shelters in the backyards of their Kenosha bungalows, they attested to that sense that the condition of life was fundamentally changed. Such is the way that the national security metaphysic smudges the border between soldier and citizen, inside and outside, war and peace only to harden the apparition of the enemy—that identity-conferring “other” deployed along “an ontological divide”—and thus guarantee the appearance of the “soldiercitizen” (Morss 35). It is to that subject of the mid-century liberal state, of its invention of a Cold War personality inured to the new internationalism, that I now turn.
Chapter 5

The Vacant Center:
World War II Narrative, Cold War Liberalism,
and the Subject of National Security

In a complementary way, [the Cold War metaphysics of] containment gives us a new American state that is
either Lockean nor Hobbesian but both in the sense that it is committed to staging itself in either mode
according to the demands of state power.

--Frederic M. Dolan, Allegories of America

If we approach the Cold War as producing something other than just a ‘containment culture’, however, we
can begin to understand the emergence of identity discourse, not as an extrinsic response to Cold War
culture based upon the ontological truth of identity, but rather as the production of identity itself as the
dialectical antithesis of containment within the cultural matrix of the Cold War world.

--Leerom Medovoi, Rebels

The [World War II] novelists write as if they were wholly immersed in the war and as if, instead of being
an exterior event to describe, it had become an inner condition of their lives.

--Malcolm Cowley, The Literary Situation

In Search of the Vital Center: Writing World War II as Masculine Self-Recovery

Published in 1949, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.’s The Vital Center: The Politics of
Freedom looked to recuperate a liberal “dimension of experience” recalcitrant to the
perfidies of both left and right “extremes.” Discovering the “moral vigor” to energize
such a space proved a worrisome project for him, he acknowledged, because democracy
in and of itself was bereft of the “living emotional content” that flourished and
scintillated mass movements. It “dissipates rather than concentrates moral force,” he
admitted. It moves toward “compromise, persuasion, and consent in politics.” It favors
“tolerance and diversity.” Worse, “the advocate of a free society defines himself by what
he is against: what he is for turns out to be certain means and he leaves other people to
charge the means with content.” Compared with “those irrational sentiments once
mobilized by religion and now by totalitarianism,” free society’s “evident thinness in
texture” made it “inherently incapable of satisfying those emotions in the apparatus of the
state without losing its own character.” “Today,” he confessed, “democracy is paying the price for its systematic cultivation of the peaceful and rational virtues.”

His concerns were shared by numerous liberal theorists. Roger Baldwin, John Chamberlain, Lewis Corey, Granville Hicks, Malcolm Cowley, and Hans Kohn, each, as early as the first year of U.S. participation in the war, contributed to Irving DeWitt Talmadge’s *Whose Revolution?* (1941), a “study of the future course of liberalism in the United States.” Faced with Hitler’s and Stalin’s “totalitarian savagery,” they alarmingly decried liberalism’s “intellectual unpreparedness to cope with the new problems of a changing world” (v). Similar misgivings beset Lionel Trilling in the early years of the Cold War as he compiled *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), a collection of essays which likewise sought to recall American liberals to the “primal imagination” of their founding moment. Like Schlesinger, he wanted to blaze a middle route between the “irritable mental gestures” of “conservatism and reaction.” The problem, however, was that the liberal imagination thrived most when it was put “under some degree of pressure,” and having gained such untested hegemony within the culture, the “largess and modulation and complexity” of its dynamic “ideas” threatened to atrophy into the artless “sentiments” of a mere “organizational impulse.” “It is one of the tendencies of liberalism to simplify,” he lamented, “and this tendency is natural in view of the effort which liberalism makes to organize the elements of life in a rational way” (5-10).

To recover some measure of “passionate intensity,” Schlesinger suggested, the nation would have to discover a positive “fighting faith” in its love of freedom itself, an ideal worthy of collective assent and mutual sacrifice without being itself collectivist. “Free society will survive,” he declared without tincture of irony, “only if enough people
believe in it deeply enough to die for it” (245). Because the liberal individual lived free from social coercion, individuals should be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to reward the very society which so charitably let them live apart. “However reluctant peace-loving people are to recognize that fact, history’s warning is clear and cold: civilizations which cannot man their walls in times of alarm are doomed to destruction by the barbarians.” Illuminating his centrist path—the “narrow and hazardous” course somewhere “between the abyss and the jungle”—was the “rich emotional life” of American pluralism, a collective anti-collectivism which alone could preserve “the integrity of the individual.” Reversing fifty years of progressive efforts to define the promise of American life in syncretic nationality, the liberalism of the vital center found the “élan of democracy” in a subdivided national sanctuary where the many distinct and free offshoots of “Western Man” could roam with unmolested “integrity.”

Disambiguating the sturdy, autonomous man from the “permeated,” prostrate masses meant rehabilitating the rugged creeds of preparedness stoicism to jump start the stalled liberalism of his age. Chief among Schlesinger’s attacks, as K.A. Cuordileone recalls, was a remonstrance against the progressive reformer: that rebarbative mixture of “carping wailer” and “dreamy adolescent” represented most visibly in “Doughface” figures like Henry Wallace (25-27). Against the progressive’s petulant whimpering and preachy casuistry, vital center liberalism posited a swaggering “radical democrat,” realistically acclimated to conditions as they were and intrepidly bent to the challenges at hand. The new square-jawed liberal—invariably coded as male—should be a “doer.” He should be a “tough-minded,” noir-like pragmatist, steeled to accept conflict as basic to existence and eager to use power to assert his will. He should openly treasure the
“attack” and not fall prey to the “feminine fascination” with sentimental abstractions since “the whole thrust of totalitarian indoctrination…is to destroy the boundaries of individual personality,” to “pervert politics into something secret, sweaty, and furtive…as homosexuality in a boy’s school” (151). For Schlesinger, it would be the new liberal’s paternalist capacities for individual responsibility, masculine self-reliance, and Christian realism which would prevent his absorption into the “lemming masses.”³ Because the Communist “mystique” seduced most effectively a self lured toward ecstasies of discipline, a self “defenseless, impressionable, open to intrusion, prone to yield to the ‘other’,” a self who “compensate[d] for his own alienation by immersing himself in the broad maternal expanse of the masses,” the new “resolute breed of men” must be stolid and confident, immunized against the “schizophrenia” and “torpor” of the horde (251, 255). They should, in short, be “hard” men.⁴

For emblems of such imperturbably cool masculinity, U.S. culture needed to look no further than the numerous popular fictions emerging in the wake of World War II. In various and distinct ways, many war representations cropping up in its aftermath puzzled dutifully over these very dilemmas of self-recovery, of what might be called re-locating the man, re-individualizing the citizen as an idiosyncratic part of the cumulative whole. Because the more grandiose initiatives of earlier liberal ideals tended to cloud and convolute a coherent political epistemology, Cold War pluralism, to put it another way, addressed itself to more local ranges of interest, constructing a latticework of diverse and personalized strategies for self-distinction beneath an overarching U.S. sovereignty. Like Schlesinger’s often awkward vacillations between praise for democracy and praise for the nation—evidenced in his prominent use of “American radicalism,” for instance—World
War II narratives often pried the individual loose from group dissolution while substantiating that rescue as a restoration of the nation’s accommodation of variety. Two wings of the same political renovation, individuation and universalization were entwined and mutually reinforcing, dovetailing individualist concepts of “democracy” with the incorporating logic of “America.”

The form of the World War II story was uniquely suited to present such a project to the nation, yoking tales of Americans at work in international zones to confirmations of home front pieties. As William Graebner attests, “the very act of looking inward to discover what it meant to be an American involved looking outward, with disdain, at what was not” (Age, 77). But although planetary in scale, many novels and memoirs focused assiduously on questions of liberal subjectivity itself, questions often set loose by the very dilemmas of obligation war mobilization disclosed. Richard Tregaskis’s *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), a widely disseminated Book-of-the-Month-Club bestseller (quickly produced as a film), followed the veteran of twenty-three combat missions as he reported on the Solomon Islands campaign. As one acquainted with the “grim but obviously pleasant business of mopping the enemy up one by one,” Tregaskis possessed the kind of temperamental dexterity necessary to answer Uncle Sam’s call when “he taps one of your boys for the great adventure” (260). “That was Tregaskis for you,” the International News Service crowed, “a lot of man any way you take him” (261). But peculiar to the text was the need not simply to honor masculine devotion to the nation but also to confirm each instance of manly valor as an autochthonous quality sprouted from specific points of origin and reflective of those locations’ folkways. Like the down-home journalist Ernie Pyle whose popular columns listed actual names and addresses of
interviewed soldiers, Tregaskis pins all his Pacific theater participants to their municipal home. In the Tenaru Battle, it was “Lieut. George Codrea (of Akron, O.), whose platoon formed the foremost firing line” (151). It was “Maj. Richard C. Mangrum (of Seattle, Wash.), leader of the group,” he reports, who “hit one of the Jap transports” (162). It was “a private, first class, named Ray Herndon (of Walterboro, S.C.), who, though “hit badly, had asked one of his buddies to give him a .45 automatic, and said: ‘You guys better move out. I’m done for anyhow. With that automatic, I can get three or four of the bastards before I kick off’” (238-239).

The “diary” is a very public compendium of such cinematic accounts, each told through the words of numerous soldiers and each given a stateside reference point demarcating a native patch of soil—be it the testimony of “grimy” and sweat-drenched “Leo B. Case (of Syracuse, N.Y.)” or that of “the sturdy young Capt. Stallings (Capt. George R. Stallings of Augusta, Ga.)” (87, 144). Reinforced with each entry—as each parenthetical attribution lights upon yet another contributive spot on the continent, as each topographical illumination anticipates districts closer to home—is the story of the nation as a coalition of cooperative parts. Tregaskis’s technique was omnipresent in the many contributions to the study of U.S. regional diversity proliferating during and after the war. As Matthew Farish recalls, “in the case of the early Cold War it is clear that appropriate citizenship was a geographic practice, suited to specific local landscapes and helping to maintain those spaces as secure and stable in the midst of national uncertainty” (109). John Gunther’s Inside U.S.A. (1946), a massive, wildly searching exposition on the multifold “local chauvinisms” of U.S. life, came forth “to show this most fabulous and least known of countries, to itself” through “no ‘general’ chapter on the United States
as a whole” but in chapters “stratified” by states, better to tease out all the “particular and special flavor” of its many indigenous parochialisms (XVI, XXI). The “nucleus of the American political system,” the state, he believed, offered the best index of the distinct traits and provincial aspects of the nation’s “diversity within unity,” of the “triumph of coalescence” he discovered on his “detail-choked and multicolored journey” across its “patchwork quilt” (22, 1002-03). British writers, inspired by the U.S. ascendancy to global postwar leadership, contributed their own share of musing on the nature of the national personality—a favorable consideration in D.W. Brogan’s *The American Character* (1944) since the U.S. had “solved” some of its “problems of unity” by reconciling itself to “diversity in all departments of life” (169), and a not-so-kind one in Geoffrey Gorer’s *The American People: A Study in National Character* (1946).

It was Margaret Mead’s *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942), however, concerned especially with the morale of “complex societies” in wartime and the “tremendous effort to translate permanent danger and unprecedented plenty into a newly ordered world,” and David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950), concerned with declines in the internal fortifications of “inner-directed” being, that most saliently sustained inquiry into the many variations of the national self. For Mead, Americans needed to overcome their “essentially passive attitude” and recover that founding sense of private resolve displayed most evidently in the “Puritan practicality” of “the Anglo-Saxon tradition.” Like Gunther, who espoused the “heart fabric” of national identity in the “Puritan and radical” of earlier “muscle days,” she loathed the New Deal for its hobbling of personal initiative (1011-12). “On the home front,” she wrote, “every good-sized community, every city, can tackle its own problems, get its own civilian
defense going, organize its own housing and settle its own feeding problems without waiting for Washington like so many helpless and spineless invalids waiting to be lifted from one deck chair to another” (160-61). “Mead argued,” recalls Graebner, “that American’s fondness for democracy ensured that certain indirect, persuasive forms of ‘social engineering’ –the control or management of people—would provide all the direction and motivation necessary for a successful war effort” (76). Leaving citizens to manufacture their own sui generis motives and purposes, the liberal state worked best when it constricted its scope.

Another war novel working to disambiguate and relocate the self was Harry Brown’s *A Walk in the Sun*, a bestseller appearing at the height of U.S. involvement in 1944. Having apprenticed with *Time* and *The New Yorker*, Brown shed lingering vestiges of his Ivy League panache, authoring a terse, hard-boiled narrative about a nerve-shattered patrol attempting to seize an occupied farmhouse and blow a bridge. His noir aesthetic, what Mike Davis defines as “a fantastic convergence of American ‘tough-guy’ realism, Weimar expressionism, and existentialized Marxism,” jibed with representational moods gaining prominence in the U.S. culture industries, the business in which Brown eventually earned acclaim as the screenwriter for films like *Sands of Iwo Jima* and *Ocean’s Eleven* (18). But it was *A Walk in the Sun*—later a film venture inspired by Burgess Merideth (who read the serialized version in *Liberty* magazine in 1944 and for which Brown’s screenplay won the Academy Award)—that secured him early esteem. Adapting Theodore Dreiser’s *American Tragedy* (1925) to the U.S. invasion of Solerno in 1943, Brown tried a groundbreaking approach by defying the buttoned-down tone and principled rhetoric of early mobilization propaganda. No plucky
G.I.s recite Atlantic Charter aims in Brown’s text; nor do they brightly reflect on Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms. From the officers on down, the characters taking their walk in the sun evince only a “professionalism” acclimated to war’s “inevitability.”

Having developed, “a core of hardness to anything that might happen,” the patrol, Brown writes, crystallized into “a team” at once aligned but individuated. “They worked well together,” which was “essential” because, “In its way, war is like a lethal game of football. The squad is a team, the platoon is a team, the company is a team. So are the regiment and the army” (140, 168). But although corporate in its structure, their conjoined roles nonetheless remain segmented, resistant to merger or interchangeability. Even as members are killed and soldiers adapt to new ranks and duties, each retains his own special variety of interests, “his own problems, his own desires and wishes.” “A man could exist on these memories,” Brown attests, “he could withdraw into them, he could construct them into an un-pierceable shell. They were his defense against the violence of the world. Every man in the platoon had his own thoughts as he walked along, and they hovered unseen over the little group, an indefinable armor, a protection against fate, an indestructible essence” (148).

Securing an “indestructible essence” for each member, an impenetrable “shell” of personal memory into which each could withdraw, was more than simply Brown’s homage to Yankee individualism. Brown composed A Walk in the Sun while working for the Office of War Information (OWI), the huge and patently liberal propaganda agency charged with updating the overzealous bravado of its World War I predecessor: George Creel’s Committee on Public Information (CPI), which promoted aims as flatulently extravagant as “a war to end all wars.” Staffed with residuals from New Deal writers’
bureaus and art guilds, the OWI (as well as the Writers’ War Board and the Council on Books in Wartime) portrayed the war’s meaning in ways appealing more to private than national interests. Under its direction, war sentiment borrowed into the most parochial quarters it could reach, tapering into domains of the private sphere previously off limits to state provocation. “Civilians,” the OWI argued, “must have the war brought home for them. Every individual must be made to see the danger to him [sic]” (Bredhoff 24).

Emulating advertisers’ market segmentation trends and an orientation toward the public as a conglomerate of private “niches,” war ideologues steered the abstruse rhetoric of the Atlantic Charter—global economic cooperation, national self-determination, freedom of the seas—into more locally recognizable appeals to defense of family life and neighborhood virtues. “Help daddy lick the enemy,” read a typical recruitment poster. “Our homes are in danger now,” read another (Bredhoff 24). Roosevelt’s famously curt summary of war aims as protection of the Four Freedoms—freedom of speech and religion, freedom from fear and want—were more ascertainably incarnated on covers of The Saturday Evening Post in 1943 not as grandiose expressions of national eminence but as modest guarantees of “private entitlement” (Foner 227). Posing the citizens of Arlington, Vermont in homespun demeanors of earnest but basically buoyant fortitude, Norman Rockwell depicted Roosevelt’s “lofty words” in what he hoped was a manner more “down to earth.”6 The nation fought, he knew, not for bombastic slogans but for the wholesome certainty of Thanksgiving turkey at grandma’s abundantly supplied table; for reassurances of worriless twins bundled snugly into freshly starched sheets; for the stuttered but sturdy petition of one gaunt citizen freely uttered amid a town hall assembly; for multi-pigmented hands clasped “EACH ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF HIS
OWN CONSCIENCE” in prayer. Although “freedom from want” suggested ideals ruefully akin to the socialist’s, a worry reinforced by Carlos Bulosan’s corresponding exposé on persistent sites of poverty and neglect in the U.S., the OWI successfully urged its ambiguities toward more consoling reassurances of free-market “security,” the “fifth freedom” of private enterprise and its “consumption-based version of national identity”.

Particularly visible in war bond promotion was a narrative of privatized Americanism that most roused the nation’s compliance with the war and which, consequently, victory helped to legitimate and normalize. Compelling “an infusion of the state into private life,” explains Lawrence Samuel, an injection of “civic affairs into realms historically outside the state’s domain,” liberal democracy’s mobilization against the totalitarian state ironically initiated the deepest insinuation of governmental influence into the private sphere in U.S. history. “Signs of divisiveness such as class conflict or forms of prejudice became less acceptable as the administration defined outward strength as internal harmony.” Essential to the national security ethos, war marketing blurred the borders between consumerism and nationalism thus making public and private spheres “almost indistinguishable.” Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, for instance, broadened the base of interest in governmental security by targeting many small investors rather than a few large ones. Powerfully enlisting the nation’s “voluntary” cooperation, Roosevelt’s “Kallenesque” belief in “unity through pluralism” mobilized troops through the sensed “consent of the governed” rather than the overt force of the state (95). “Bond drives,” Samuel explains, “would prove to combine the folk traditions of ethnic subcultures with concepts of private capital, creating a powerful fusion of personal, communal, and national interests” (95). That filmmakers, authors, and composers so
eagerly turned their materials toward the war effort was just another example of how “the bottom-up dynamics of World War II nationalism…crossed paths with top-down ones,” an irony most evidenced in “the state’s shaping [of] the ultimate expression of individualism—the creative act” (207-208).

Although World War I witnessed a similar meshing of public and private energies, World War II mobilization’s cultural synergy most evolved the organizational complexity of American life, binding together the “consensus society” that ultimately emerged (57). There were, to be sure, powerful inducements to such a fusion of state and public will. Defeating Nazi fascism—the most obscene instance of mass depravity in human memory—surely represents modern history’s most unambiguous war aim.

Against a nefarious culture of white supremacy and the genocide it inspired, the defense of human rights stands as one of the few warrantable uses of military power. But the ideological legacy of that action in the U.S. context would have exponential subsidiary effects, generating and justifying a vast new mechanics of conservative government and harnessing public desire to military prerogative for years to come. Cold War theorists Stephen J. Collier, Andrew Lakoff, and Colin Flint describe the “soldiercitizen” taking shape in mid-century as a conduit of state desire, a byproduct of the national security state’s more pluralist constellation of “distributed preparedness.”

Interlocking voluntary public rituals—pledging allegiance, selling war bonds, rationing food, making scrapbooks of the campaigns—with more top-down administrative activities—the “soft” censorship of Hollywood by the House Un-American Activities Committee’s (HUAC), the transformation of welfare state into warfare state—the national experience of war-making remade the felt understanding of democratic life. Eschewing a political heritage
of public advocacy and “social action,” it assumed more static cultural signification as “a
synonym for the status quo,” “the opposite of Fascism and Communism,” an ideogram of
“the American way of life” (Whitfield 57). Furthermore, war mobilization’s
synchronizing of governmental, financial, industrial, and academic centers masked
powerful longings within those same sectors to dismantle the already tottering labor
movement, deradicalized though it already was, and reconstitute the nation, as
commentators like Nelson Lichtenstein and George Lipsitz have argued, “along
individualistic, private, and material lines” (Horten 180). Linking private consumption,
family “togetherness,” and national loyalty, the unflinchingly “Good War” waged against
a hideous and sinister global nightmare paved the road for what William Graebner calls
the “turning inward” of American life, the turning “away from the public realm of
politics and economics and toward the neurotic, troubled, fragmented, and ‘rootless’ self”
(102). Crucially, the “rarification” of reformist discourse engendered a political
shrinkage in which “ideas of self come full circle” since “the turn inward is virtually
indistinguishable from the culture of the whole,” a culture in which “the self becomes
largely a repository of images and values that are useful in the larger project of human
integration” (Age 118).9

The decaying orientation toward progress as a historical activity connected to the
demos and the excision from history signaled by the privatized story world of the Good
War coincided with the further transference of sovereignty to state resources and the
scaling down of social action for more diminutive preoccupations with self-interest.
Corollary to World War II’s privatized narrative of Americanism and the liberal state’s
multiplication and expansion of inclusive taxonomies of personhood was the national
security’s dual vectored “containment” rationale which, as Andrew Ross describes it, “first speaks to a threat outside the social body, a threat that therefore has to be excluded, or isolated in quarantine, and kept at bay from the domestic body,” while secondly speaking to “the domestic contents of the social body,” the “threat internal to the host which must then be neutralized” (46). Re-locating the individual thus meant dispensing once and for all with the do-gooder reformer. Sharing Schlesinger’s repugnance for the nagging, caviling progressive, many World War II novels took aim at precisely that social crusader—never more obnoxious than in periods of national trial like war—as a figure so irascibly obsessed with social justice and civil rights as to have become “an overemotional, immature, narcissistic, neurotic wreck,” a fitful creature incapable of facing life’s “cruel complexities” (Cuordileone 24). Capriciously jostled by sanctimonious moral codes and an addiction to petty complaint, the social idealist took many less than savory shapes in World War II fiction: the bleating rights advocate misled by false information, the effeminate whiner emotionally unadjusted to the inveterate realities of human nature, the self-righteous Ivy Leaguer so smugly infatuated with a bookish liberal idealism as to let slip practicalities on the ground.

Released in 1948, for instance, while African American activists like A. Philip Randolph and Grant Reynolds organized campaigns to integrate the armed forces, while black writers like Ann Petry, Dorothy West, and Gwendolyn Brooks used their fiction to advocate for social change, John Cobb Cooper’s *The Gesture* (1948) painted political advocacy, particularly regarding the “color question,” as a sentimental and disruptive tampering with social “facts” (66, 213). Focusing on a segregated Air Force base, Cooper describes a less-than-ideal but nonetheless productively functioning center of
home front wartime operations. Compliant with “the Army’s ideas on the natural division of labor,” the reader learns, an all-black battalion had been dispatched to help build the airbase, but their sexual intermingling with the “one hundred percent white community” nearby led to an upsurge of rioting from angry white soldiers. Correspondingly, “in the interests of equality,” white soldiers are barred from entering the nearby town of Hinkley where black soldiers are stationed, and the other five neighboring villages are designated exclusively white, off limits to soldiers of color (64). The situation is ostensibly agreeable to all parties until a nepotistic change in leadership lands Major Gregory Harris—Yale graduate with a father in the State Department—in charge of the base. A squadron of ruddy, war-tried veterans watches in rapt amazement as charge of their comradely unit falls to a legalistic and dilettantish head officer who stuffily imbues the base with all “the discouraging aura of an insurance firm” (54). Where the previous leadership had relaxed military formalities as a concession to combat democracy (everyone faces death equally in a plane), Harris—a greenhorn with zero combat experience—re-institutes textbook decorum, imposing squeaky-clean regimens of saluting and disciplinary demurral onto the once convivial cohort. A hopeless nerd, he absents himself from the boozehall antics of his squad, mulling moodily over classical records in his room.

Most challenging to group morale, however, is Harris’s unsettling discovery of the “Negro ‘reservation’” in Hinkley. “Policies like that are naziism,” he exclaims. As a “world power,” Harris believes, one “liable to be the greatest one of all” by war’s end, the U.S. must lead in moral “responsibility” and not treat its wards like so many “domesticated animals,” a lesson that should properly begin at home (65-66).
barnstorming, one-man wrecking crew, he tries forcefully to integrate their base despite Bombardier Larry Whipple’s quiet insistence that he conform to established and working protocol. Against even black soldiers’ wishes, Harris willfully billets Captain Stark, a well-educated, “higher type of Negro,” in the white barracks. Contrasted with Harris’s rash egalitarianism, Stark’s “practical” gradualism takes more sober stock of “the Negro’s big chance” in the war, asking only “to do a job” and resentful of “the sort of sympathy he met up with” in liberal pedantry like the Major’s (74). Tension builds: Stark is eventually assaulted by the most vehement of the camp’s racists. Despite the humiliation, Stark refuses to press charges, reserving the bulk of his vituperation for the importunate Major Harris. “What does he know about it?” Stark demands, an accusation with which Whipple concurs: “What did Harris know about any human beings, much less those of another race?” (218). The meddling having backfired, soldiers black and white embarrassingly reestablish the equilibrium of segregation. In a final “gesture” of liberal interloping, Harris is killed on a mission while filling in for a subaltern too drunk to fly.

Cooper’s censure of the idealist crusader cuts in two directions, to be sure. The white paternalism of figures like Harris had its real world analogues in a number of incontrovertibly annoying white liberals compelled more by the hubris of their own moral mellifluence than genuine concern for the actualities of democratic life. Furthermore, Harris’s counterpoint in Whipple, a “chameleon” conformist “owing no allegiance to any man,” is as much an indictment of postwar complacency as its recommendation (242, 245). Indeed, Whipple admits to a “guilt sense” in the final pages, confessing to complicity with a sort of “social murder” since he and his band of “mere automatons” mindlessly “[r]ender[ed] unto Caesar” and thus “shunted” Harris’s reformist “God off
into obsolescence with the horse and buggy” (243-45). Insinuating as the text may be about the perils of group conformity, however, the novel most damningly condemns Harris’s unwarranted prying, the arrogance of tinkering in affairs that do not concern him. His breach of faith with the status quo and the bedlam that results drives home the novel’s central point: that interfering in another’s business is an overextension of rightful political scales. Cumbersome social idealism, in the end, taxes most the very society it seeks to assuage.

Another refutation of the progressive past is Irwin Shaw’s The Young Lions (1948), a hotly anticipated release which sold in the millions. Shaw electrified critics prior to the war with Bury the Dead, a Popular Front anti-war play hailed as “one of the radically chic events of the 1930s.” It was an unambiguously pacifist work, proclaimed “incomparably the best of the left-wing dramas seen this year” in a review by Joseph Wood Krutch in the Nation.10 Shaw, however, spent the entirety of the war on the European front as part of a documentary film crew, an experience that capsized the reformist optimism of his earlier commitments. “I’m not a pacifist,” he later admonished in a recantation of his 1930s views; “I don’t believe you can be. Lie down and let people walk over you? Some wars have to be fought.”11 That would be the message Hollywood Ten penitent and government cooperative Edward Dmytryk would extract from The Young Lions a decade later in his film adaptation, a existentialist meditation on the seamy and unchangeable corruption of the inner self.

Among the novel’s trio of protagonists, an organizational homage to John Dos Passos’s Three Soldiers, is Michael Whitacre. Once a spirited fundraiser for Spanish Civil War volunteers and member of a radical theater group, Whitacre finds that his
political leanings in the end have left him emotionally stranded, divested of hope, blown about aimlessly in a giddy pursuit of pleasure and dissipated excess. Appraising his generation’s “sour age,” an “Age of critics” whose lack of “faith-madness” has left the country “barren,” he joins the war with hopes of linking himself to a great “yea-saying.” The “good thing about getting into the Army,” he alleges, is that it offers one the chance to “get away from the over-sensitive resigners, the poetic despairers, the polite suicides” (240). Although his military experience encounters few of the “roistering and wild-eyed soldiers, crazy with faith, oblivious of death” that he hoped to find, he nonetheless acquires “gentle citizenship” in the “shellburst democracy” of his ethnically diverse platoon and masculine legitimation in the “blood-splattered Utopia” of the front lines. “Only the men who had come back from the frightful, sickening crust out in front,” he avers, “would be able to speak with authority, with a sense that they had really paid for their opinions and owned them, irrevocably, once and for all.” It was “an America in which a man could finally put away his over-civilized doubts, his book-sourced cynicism, his realistic despair, and humbly and gratefully lose himself.”

The language of immersion, not to mention Shaw’s unapologetic use of “Christian socialism” to describe the communitarian “common good” of the front lines, warbles the form of masculine self-disarticulation World War II novels more generally promoted (636). True also, Shaw vaunts his “community enterprise” as a collective in which “no man was rich and none poor,” “where lodging, transportation, medical attention, and
funeral benefits were available with absolute impartiality to white and black, Jew and 
Gentile, worker and owner.” Yet, remarkably, his invocation of socialist language and 
paean to grunt camaraderie valorize labor devoted to the forceful preservation of 
capitalist economies and the national security state. The “means of production,” Shaw 
confusedly expatiates, “were in the hands of the masses,” “in this case M1’s, 30 caliber 
machine guns, 90’s, 105’s, 204’s, mortars, bazookas...which all worked for the common 
good and the only leisure class were the dead” (636). In this regard, the fulmination of 
Whitacre’s radical past, like the symbolic demise of The Gesture’s Major Harris, mirrors 
the more general break up of leftist energies in U.S. political life and their capture by an 
American universalism: first, in the Americanization of Marx by the Popular Front, and, 
later, in the neoconservative exodus from class to career witnessed in the dismantling of 
the New Deal, the postwar reaffirmation of the capitalist gospel, and the international 
instrumentalism of Cold War liberalism.

With economic affluence on the rise and with the horizons of political life 
stretched to global dimensions in the Cold War, political retraction came naturally. It 
was a time for citizens to tend to their gardens, take stock of their own affairs, and trust 
the business of democracy to the experts. All one should expect, The Gesture’s Whipple 
declares, is to “do the best with human nature the way it is” (243-244). Postwar veteran 
narratives frequently made like appeals to the solace of political retreat: to making do 
with the given world, to finding comfort in domestic tranquility, to sorting through the 
wreckage for what of value remained. A well-known example is Sloan Wilson’s portrait 
of Tom Rath, a World War II paratrooper returned to an unenviable life of organization 
man misery in The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (1955). Although Rath wriggles free
from a dreary existence in the postwar corporation, his freedom revels only in the alternatives presented by middle class married life and the consolations of the cul-de-sac, in the temperate satisfaction of personal responsibility and the “simple justice” of a clear conscience. A similarly drab ennui suffuses Nelson Algren’s tale of a morphine riddled ex-GI in The Man with a Golden Arm (1949) and Merle Miller’s That Winter (1948), the bleak first novel by the wartime editor of Yank magazine. Miller, a socialist, for instance, frequently courted controversy in later decades, authoring one of the earliest “coming out” narratives on his homosexuality in a 1971 issue of New York Times Magazine and a much disputed biography of President Truman in his last years. That Winter, however, focuses on a cadre of veterans—cynical, alcoholic, suicidal—who return mocking tokens of their “delayed adolescence” in the radical or reform tradition (109). Walking away from a job on the editorial staff of Thought magazine—“the guide for the liberal thinking Americans”—the disillusioned narrator bandies about with ex-Daily Worker writers and recovering Harold Laski disciples who have since accepted “compromise” with the material rewards of “success” and the satisfactions of the “inner life” (59, 110-11, 123). Unequipped to mitigate the “purposelessness” of their time, the gangly political optimism of their youth seems rustic and ill-proportioned, unsuited to cope with the gloomier aspects of a changed world.

Noticeably, texts such as these disavow the exceptionalist legend of the Good War, refusing to confirm “Good Samaritan” idealizations of missionary democracy advanced by figures like Henry Luce in his frequently recalled christening of the “American Century” in 1941. Virtually any World War II novel conveys blistering accounts of barracks or home front racism, tales of pig-headed and sadistic officers,
reports of incontinent lost weekends and marital infidelities, and of course visions of the many prolonged and unhappy drudgeries of life at war, scenes which often center on stockades and courts martial at their symbolic extreme. The most flagrant protest feature is surely the characterization of U.S. high command as itself susceptible to fascist aspirations, contemptuously managing the rank and file with all the obdurate indifference of a prison warden. Robert Lowry’s *Casualty* (1946), Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), Ned Calmer’s *The Strange Land* (1950), James Jones’s *From Here to Eternity* (1951), John P. Marquand’s *Melville Goodwin, USA* (1951), and Herman Wouk’s *The Caine Mutiny* (1955) all tender portraits of the upper echelon as, at best, self-interested careerists; at worst, Mephistopholean disciplinarians. Prevailing unequivocally across many of them, however, is the erosion of faith in political advocacy as programs leaning toward structural change—the left wing of the progressive movement, aspects of the New Deal, the Popular Front, the Communist Party—give way to the managed preservation of the status quo and the culture of containment.

Saul Bellows’s *Dangling Man* (1944)—a fictional journal of one man’s trek from Communism to Lockean liberalism to Hobbesian realism—is a study in “drafted” subjectivity, the “strangling” of an exhausted “inner life” and the succor of “regimentation” in the “other hands” of the state (9, 191). Inducted into the military but temporarily postponed, Joseph “dangles” about Chicago in an uncertain “narcotic dullness,” a “moral casualty of the war” (18). “I do not know how to use my freedom,” he confesses at the outset, “because I have no resources—in a word, no character” (12). Crumbling under the weight of an impossible “self-mastery,” “pushed upon” himself, he accepts the draft and its risk of death for the state as a means of deriving some self-
sustaining form (148, 154). “We are called upon to accept the imposition of all kinds of wrongs,” he portents, “to wait in ranks under a hot sun, to run up a clattering beach, to be sentries, scouts or workingmen, to be those in the train when it blows up, or those at the gates when they are locked, to be of no significance, to die” (119). In the end, “The world comes after you. It presents you with a gun or a mechanic’s tool…abridges your rights, cuts off your future, is clumsy or crafty, oppressive, treacherous, murderous, black, whorish, venal, inadvertently naïve or funny” (137). And yet, “you cannot dismiss it.” Accustomed to the “general malignancy” that defines his tragic vision, Joseph will go to war “and make no protest,” he writes, because “between their imperialism and ours, if a full choice were possible, I would take ours. Alternatives, and particularly desirable alternatives, grow only on imaginary trees” (84, 147). The draft thus emerges less as a violation of the social contract than as an assuaging regulation of an unbearable human freedom. “Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirit! Long live regimentation!” (191).

Bellows enigmatic novel pitches about in the dialectic of liberal autonomy and state submission confounding mid-century writers on the war. Marcus Klein views Joseph’s military seduction as a “strategy of accommodation.” “Joseph must give himself to idiopathic freedom, and that way is madness,” he observes, “or submit to the community's ordinary, violent reality. He hurries his draft call. He surrenders” (35-6). Converse to the way most World War II writing highlighted individual particularity, Joseph’s journal discloses desperate longings to relinquish the isolation of liberal autonomy, to abscond his solitary existence in what Erich Fromm, in a popular commentary on the psychic demands of the period, called an “escape from freedom.”
Part of the process of individuation and intrinsic to the free subject, Fromm writes, is an excruciating recognition of one’s aloneness, one’s fundamental separation from the world. Fleeing “the basic dichotomy that is inherent in freedom,” seeking to avoid “aloneness and anxiety,” the free self hunts for “refuges” in either the negative freedom of submission, the beguilement of the totalitarian state, or in “positive freedom” that is a “spontaneous relationship” to humankind and nature, one fuelled by “spontaneous action” that “embraces the world” in an act, ironically, of self-sustaining love (28-29, 259-62). Joseph’s path acquiesces to negative forms of liberty, the collapsing of the autonomous vital center, in that the state’s very challenge to the liberal subject in the form of the draft is obediently accepted as a merciful relief. Thus does the very process of liberal disambiguation and individuation produce the desire for spiritual wholeness in the sovereign totality of the state.

Could a disposition of self be more succinctly matched to the emotional diorama of Cold War political life? The “broad political consensus” that bound Cold War liberalism, explains Sean McCann, was “built on the imperial politics of a Pax Americana…where Democratic and Republican policy goals mirrored each other with small variation,” where the “traditional critical perspectives of both conservatives and liberals came to seem outmoded and irrelevant.” Hovered in centrist indecision—“conservatives abandoning their traditional anti-statism and isolationism and liberals dismissing their support for economic reform and redistribution”—Cold War liberals “coopted critics further to the right and left” (300). Auguring that point of view was the sequence of calamities which now read like a serial of predictable betrayals: the calumny of the Stalin purge trials, the nightmare of the gulags, the astonishing Nazi-Soviet Pact,
the appeasement at Munich, the firebombing of Tokyo and Dresden, the atomic incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the inassimilable revelations of the camps (Bell 370). As progressivism’s meliorist historical dreamworld imploded and finally collapsed, remembered only as the “pathetic” excess of a “foolish youth,” new metaphors of paralysis and impotence moved increasingly to the fore.15

“1948,” neoconservative Norman Podhoretz proclaimed only a few years later, was the year the world “froze to death.” Eric Goldman marked the demise of political history in 1949 with “the communist conquest of China, the announcement of the Soviet atom bomb, and the trial of Alger Hiss.” By 1952, Partisan Review’s “Our Country and Our Culture” revealed “a mood of emotional impasse, characterized by an inability to find viable alternatives, adjustment without affirmation, and a reconciliation to lesser evils.”16 “Almost every commentator,” Stacey Olster recalls, “focused on the word ‘conformity’ in his indictment, and almost everyone ascribed blame to a different cause: the rise of mass society, the unreality of daily events, the debilitating effect of valuelessness, and the paralyzing effect of new technology” (6).17 The bomb explosions alone, wrote Norman Cousins, awakened “a primitive fear, the fear of the unknown, the fear of forces man can neither channel or comprehend. This fear is not new; in its classical form it is the fear of irrational death. But overnight it has become intensified, magnified. It has burst out of the subconscious and into the conscious, filling the mind with primordial apprehensions” (Graebner 20). Considering the impact of that technological disaster on the human imagination, E. L. Doctorow remarked at the lack of any “primary myth” to make it cognizable and thus lend it an acculturating form. “What,” he searchingly asks, is its “mythic reference”? (169, 171).
This was the same epistemological quandary bewildering postwar intellectuals virtually en masse. Snuffing out vestigial longings for political reform—the “chiliastic hopes” of converting “ideas into social levers” and thus “rid[ding] the present of the past”—was humanity’s arrival at the “end of ideology.” The end of ideology, Daniel Bell announced, constituted nothing short of liberal capitalism’s exceptionalist elision of a historical dialectic of rise and fall. Yielded to the indelible verities of original sin, the new “stoic-theological images of man” ambling forth from the writings of Paul Tillich, Karl Jaspers, and Reinhold Niebuhr comported themselves with characteristic resignation and passivity, consigned to the inscrutable, immutable universe through which they now trod. For cultural and literary commentators, similarly, the preoccupations with ambiguity and paradox fuelling the New Criticism gave hermeneutic solace to a generation recovering from an “exhaustion” of political energy. Remapping the activist mass politics of an earlier moment, as Andrew Ross has shown, was a “whole group of influential sociologists and historians,” figures like Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Joseph Schumpeter, and John Kenneth Galbraith, who “favored a pluralistic model of status groups, interest groups, and veto groups, each claiming a potential share in power and influence over decision-making.” Still cohabiting within the national paradigm, however, these thinkers expressed an almost universal admiration for American culture and a more “affirmative” attitude toward national institutions as a bulwark against unregulated “hyperdemocracy,” the “domination by the masses” from below (50-51). As literary critic Newton Arvin put it: “The negative relation to one’s culture has great validity in certain periods; at others, it is simply sterile, even psychopathic, and ought to give way, as it has done here in the past decade, to the
positive relation. Anything else suggests too strongly the continuation into adult life of the negative Oedipal relations of adolescence—and in much of the alienation of the 20s and 30s there was just that quality of immaturity” (qtd. in Lears 40). Directing that migration toward political “maturity,” and the subject of World War II’s most well known novels, was the loss of progressive faith in public advocacy and democratic agency for existentialist valorizations of the lone, individualist survivor weathering conditions beyond his or her control.

II. Conditions Not Theories: The Survivalist (Neo)Liberalism of James Gould

Cozzens, Norman Mailer, and James Jones

No novel inhales the murky air of postwar malaise deeper than James Gould Cozzens’s *Guard of Honor* (1948). Although one of many war novels to appear in 1948, it was the only one to win the Pulitzer Prize, an indication perhaps of just how closely the author’s political barometer matched the mood of his time. Focusing on home front rather than combat scenarios, *Guard of Honor* stages its action over the course of a three-day public relations debacle at Ocanara Air Base in Florida. Having worked in the School of Applied Tactics in Orlando from 1942–45 with the Office of Information Services, as a speechwriter for Henry Arnold, Commanding General of the Air Force, and finally at the Pentagon, Cozzens’s literary portrayal of a crisis management imbroglio traveled familiar terrain. His dreary depiction of the military as an interlocked labyrinth of cinderblock administration agencies, of quad-squatting warrens of windowless corridors mined by clans of close-shaved corporate apparatchiks, peers numbly across a bureaucratic sprawl, the prose its own tediously acrynomic hedge of AFORADs, TWXs, AT-7s, CG/AAFs, AVGs, CGs, and AFSATs. Its phalanx of short-sleeved desk
warriors—haplessly lounging about waiting rooms, listlessly consulting with superiors, hairsplitting memos and table charts—wage the most antiheroic of battles from the remodeled “trenches” of the national security state. Mere extensions of its hypnotic functionalism, their eyes fixed only on the next tier up the grade, they grope through a structure of military authority and its many quandaries of duty.

As with Wilson’s *The Man in a Gray Flannel Suit*, the surfacing of public relations as a prominent literary theme recognizes total war’s overlapping of civilian and military sectors and thus its effectiveness at integrating populations. Among the novel’s preeminent topics is the interrelational nature of “public perception,” the supervision and management of reality as it is understood both within and beyond the compound’s chain-linked fence. In the author’s own words, the characters interact “in what had ceased to be just an ‘organization’” and become, “if not an organism with life and purpose of its own, at least an entity, like a crowd.” To convey that feeling, his novel registers “the peculiar effects of the interaction of innumerable individuals functioning in ways at once determined by and determining the functioning of innumerable others.” Yet like many of the social realist tomes published in the same year, his densely detailed account presents a narrative not of personal absorption but of a complex and intricately layered milieu, of multitudinous wards of swarming activity within which individuals barter for personal prominence. Responsive to the nation’s changing political priorities, the novel’s orchestration of innumerable partisanship in contention allegorically represents the shift in liberal politics generally: from redistribution and overt state management to a politics of “recognition,” from the social restructuring of reform agendas to prerogatives
guaranteeing the “rights” of partitioned interests within subdivided blocs, from programmatic liberalism, that is, to identity politics.19

Two entwined episodes structure the narrative, for instance. The first is a barely avoided aerial crash in which a plane flown by General Ira “Bus” Beal containing many of the main characters nearly collides with a simultaneously arriving cargo plane flown by Tuskegee Airmen, an all-African American combat unit. Reporting for a “special projects” initiative aimed at integrating the armed forces, the nearly catastrophic arrival of soldiers of color metaphorically represents the recklessness of liberal experimentation as utopian policy-making insinuates itself intrusively into the base’s operations, “imposing” democratic mandates onto real world circumstances (250). Some scenes resemble Cooper’s The Gesture: Beal’s close friend Benny Carricker, shaken by the near calamity but clearly riled further by the pilot’s racial phenotype, assaults his offender, Lieutenant Stanley Willis, sending him to the hospital. The second incident involves a forceful attempt by a contingent of black soldiers to desegregate the Officer’s Club once they learn of its off-limits status. It is a fictional depiction of an actual event with which Cozzens’s wartime office had to contend: the “Freeman Field Mutiny” of the 477th Bombardment Group in Indiana which led to the arrest of 162 African American officers in 1945. Together, the two events set in motion a broad-reaching initiative to counterbalance damages, regain order, and appease all factions: the injured black parties, their families, prying local journalists, the national black press, and white reformers eager to appropriate the event for their own agendas; but also an established all-white officer echelon, segregated townships nearby, and a base populated mostly by Southern whites, none of whom care for the newfangled tampering with established codes. Moreover, the
base houses a large auxiliary of the Woman’s Army Corps (WAC), further expanding the representational scale of perspectives encompassed by the full environment of total war when complaints about peepholes in the showers and male examiners’ unnecessary disrobing of female patients at the medical center disturb the placid functioning of base operations. In the “heteromorphic and fantastical Army of the United States,” as events suggest, the “purely local thing isn’t purely local” (248, 497).

Managing the panoply of competing desires are Captain Nathaniel Hicks and Colonel Norman Ross, Cozzens’s corporate prototypes of the military policy maven. A magazine writer and a judge respectively, they seamlessly merge their civilian skills into war service as Public Relations attachés, ambassadors to an amorphous “social consciousness” increasingly cacophonous and contradictory (440). Coolheaded realists, they possess acumen in both civilian and military sectors, are adjusted to institutional procedure, and “look dispassionately” at matters with frankness and aplomb (165). Theirs represents a fundamentally new order of labor. “Public Relations in the peacetime Army, the old Army,” one learns, “were usually handled by those officers whose poor or mediocre performance of other duties made them the easiest to spare.” “In this new, wartime Army, Public Relations, at least at the higher level, was of course in the hands of commissioned civilians—publicists, advertising men, newspaper editors” effecting a “collusion” between the public’s and Washington’s purposes (247-48). Expressive of changing orientations toward military and national life, the novel introduces Hicks’ character busily revising and updating Army Air Forces Field Manual One-dash-Fifteen, the “obsolete” standards of a receding age that their own globally activated, technologically advanced war operations have precipitately outgrown. Like the OWI, he
counsels superiors on means to promulgate the war to a diverse demographic, on how to accustom citizens to its demands by showing them “how it affects them personally” (69). Colonel Ross, similarly, negotiates conflicts in translation, loosening up Washington’s rigid insistence on absolute equity in policy to effectively acknowledge defects in the “local conditions” (170). Facilitators of a middle way, they distance themselves from the coarse, slur-hurling racism of whisky-sloshing good-old-boys on the general staff (outdated anachronisms in the new order of things). But they also stand opposed to the progressive agitators like the simpering Lieutenant Edsell, a “disaffected” and misguided civil rights crusader provoked by the overly idealistic biases of a radical past and eventually outed as a “queer” (461-65).

As the different stakes become entangled, the novel’s central premise emerges—that confusion redounds from an enthrallment with “theories” when what is necessary is more pragmatic attention to “conditions” as they are. “It seems to me that if a man is qualified to be an officer, he is qualified to go to the Club,” exclaims Ross’s wife Cora, “I don’t see how he can be one and not the other” (439). Although she wryly draws out the contradiction inherent in the military’s duplicity, Ross explains the disqualifying disjunction invisibly sandwiched between “black” and “officer.” Like gravity, which is “a condition, not a theory,” the “trouble with the colored officers,” he delineates, is also “a condition, not a theory” (439). “For reasons of justice and decency; and also for reasons of political policy, the War Department decided that colored men must be given a chance to qualify as officers. We have about a thousand of them in the Air Force. In the Air Force, we have somewhere around three hundred thousand white officers. A certain number of these…, an unmanageably larger number, hold that a nigger is a nigger” (440).
The tautology overcomes the contradiction. The army satisfies its obligations by opening
positions of equality that black soldiers may occupy, a rank empty of discriminating
content and granted to black soldiers without qualification. But a numerically
“democratic” assessment of opinion on the ground confirms the need for continued
segregation if law and order is to be maintained. Besides, as Colonel Mowbray asserts,
“The Negroes aren’t the only ones who have rights. If the Southern boys don’t want to
spend an evening socially with Negroes they have a right not to” (250). Mowbray’s
calculus surveys all positions through the optic of realpolits. “A colored boy may have
the same legal rights as everyone else,” he reasons, but they “can’t impose him on the
community.” “Your theory says they ought to…but before you start a fight about that
you better finish the fight you have in Europe and the Pacific” (250, my emphasis).

A huge containment strategy evolves. The outraged black unit is assembled for a
commendation ceremony expressing the Air Force’s admiration for their historic
accomplishments and read an order reconfirming its unbroken commitment to
nondiscriminatory regulations. At the same time, they are informed that, because “group
spirit” is essential to morale, a condition segregation ostensibly maintains on both sides
of the color line, the Officer’s Club will remain off-limits (238). In a ceremony to
placate both him and his father, Lieutenant Willis is presented with a Distinguished
Flying Cross, but as a buffer wedged between base administration and the “general
disorderly surge” of others in his unit (266, 439). Black officers are equally represented
as jurors in the court martial proceedings against the “rioters,” but as a purely phantasmic
display since the verdict is preordained: the law requires them to find members of the
uprising guilty for resorting to force (273). Edsell, “great friend of the downtrodden,”
“against everything all the time,” is similarly defused as a raving incorrigible and probable Communist (129, 178, 473). Having blindly followed hearsay and misinformation, his cavalier and narrowly doctrinaire version of racial justice reveals instincts fed by fanatical roots, especially given his politicking for factions not his own—African Americans and conscientious objectors. As Cozzens in fact implies, the right to disagree with bombasts like Edsell, with his importunate invocation of the Four Freedoms, for instance, is one more example of the kind of freedom of expression U.S. democracy affords (305). In the end, as with “great men” like Roosevelt and Churchill involved in international decision making, “the object was to strike a bargain, a master bargain which was the congeries of a thousand small bargains” (395). The “Nature of Things,” Ross finally reflects, “abhors a drawn line and loves a hodge podge” (572). That democratic mess, that heterogeneity of points of view, ensures the more limited scope of interest of each individual player and thus the path of least resistance to maintaining the culture of the whole.

Guard of Honor’s portrait of the “personal and professional limitations” governed by the “overwhelming organization” of military and political life, its withering conveyance of hopes dashed against a pugnacious outer world’s “sheer accumulation of events,” construes the double-jointed epistemology of the nascent national security state in its clearest distillation: that twin drive toward individuation and totalization subtending the social comity’s governmentality (28, 166). On one hand, the state orchestrates its topographical surveillance of the sundry divisions that make up modern society in such a way as to prioritize a “representative” range of particular points of view while rendering them largely ineffective at fashioning meaningful courses for self-assertion. It presents a
quantitative increase in the social representation, that is, while emptying the representation of any qualitative viability. The incomprehensible scale of the political game, the vertiginous rush of disconnected detail, the indelible human tendency toward “habit” and “inertia”: together these swerve finally into the cynical naturalism of Cozzens’s existentialist cosmology (572). The “dismaying sense” of uncertainty and chance, the “blank amazement” one beholds in the face of the modern world’s extensive and unknowable range of variables, concedes finally to the Cold War realist’s kaleidoscopic universe of accident and risk (28). “Here was nothing they had elected to do and then did,” considers Hicks; “This was done to them.” “The dark forces gathered, not by any means at random or reasonlessly, but according to a plan in the nature of things, like the forces of a storm; which, as long as the heat expanded air and cold contracted it, would have to proceed. When the tempest reached its hurricane violence, uprooting, overturning, blowing away, you must make the best of its million freaks” (29). On the other hand, the lack of discernable causality, the stratospheric disproportions of the “million freaks” with which the modern self contends, burdens it alone with the task of “imposing” some measure of a “pattern”—and this is the best prognosis Cozzens has to offer—with which to “adapt” and find “support” (533-34). The stoic staving off of quarters where the lonely monad survives with some modicum of grace initiates the political backpedaling of the inward turn, the neoliberal truncation of political coalition and the compartmentalization of the self as shield against the void. “The portentous truth appeared by intimation,” Cozzens concludes, “full of comfort though so melancholy, touched with despair yet supportable, that nothing, not the best you might hope, not the worst you might fear, would ever be very much, would ever be very anything. Seen in
this light, all other feelings must weaken, become more temperate—really more indifferent” (573). In short, given the lassitude of a world gone blank with purposeless, the only thing to do is to take one’s ball and go home.

Patently fitted to the dispensational needs of mid-century, that duality of temperament—a hegemonic combination of micro and macro imagining—entertained desires for which modernism had already prepared the way. As Nils Gilman suggests, the political stasis of the “end of ideology” ran concurrent with the “apogee” of modernism in the U.S. (Gilman 56). Both infinitesimally personal and infinitely cosmopolitan, modernism’s psychic economy surveyed the human world through a double optic that merged both personal and planetary perspectives. On one hand, having awakened from a nightmare of “amalgamation,” having adroitly recoiled from “absorption” in the roiling mass, the modernist subject preserved all that was “genuine” in the unattached vaults of the solitary imagination. Cordonning off domains of private authenticity free from the servile dreariness of the imitative crowd, modernists cultivated and nurtured neo-individualist habitats, bastions of symbolic plenitude apart from the grubbier mainstream of mass society. On the other hand, their delocalized and ambient rootlessness, their unbounded pondering of metaphysical runes, shared affinities for increasingly eschatological and existentialist cosmologies. As Joseph Waldmier claims, many war novelists’ “emphasis upon individualism, responsibility, commitment, upon the terrible anxiety of the necessity of choice, their voluntary submission to the paradox of collective individualism, leads them to the threshold of existentialism, the philosophy which continues to grip the creative imagination more forcefully than any other” (158-159). The world’s problems, in the end, were fundamentally spiritual. Whatever else
their tragic experience of modern war revealed, the scale of its significance so exceeded
the human grasp as to have stretched an unbreechable chasm of mystery between the
nomadic aesthetic wanderer and the voiceless origin of meaning in an ultimately
unknowable beyond.

Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) exhibits all the complicated and
contradictory features of this same ideological adaptation. The claim is perhaps an
unwelcome one given the fondness among many progressive critics for Mailer’s agonistic
brio and libidinal free play. For John M. Kinder, for instance, *The Naked and the Dead*
stages a critical intervention into the “cultural amnesia” of Good War memory, disrupting
the “burnished version of World War II” that joined “band of brothers” mythology to a
“shining endorsement of American ideology and military strength.” As Kinder and
others rightly point out, Mailer’s stinging depiction of General Cummings, an
authoritarian tyrant and instrumentalist conductor of society’s “kinetic energy,” posits a
counter narrative to fictions of American greatness at a time when the country was
drifting toward its own “proto-fascism,” an antidemocratic turn witnessed most gallingly
“in the H.U.A.C. witch-hunts, the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act, and the implementation of
permanent Selective Service” (188-189). Kinder’s reading echoes those of Alfred Kazin,
Paul Fussell, and Warren Susman who on earlier occasions applauded the text’s
corrective depiction of the American army as itself fascist, “more of a threat than the
violent enemy” to a militarized U.S. society itself increasingly only “a continuation of the
army by other means.”

From another angle, Jerry Bryant and Sean McCann argue that the characters
populating the text are “ultimately victorious,” demonstrative of “the limits of power”
and Mailer’s confidence “in the impossibility of establishing a planned society enforced by consolidated power.” ²² Like the characters scattering randomly down the side of Mount Anaka who refuse “pluralistic melding” into a “unified common body,” The Naked and the Dead, McCann argues, presents “not the victory of power but its diffusion,” its dissemination into the “bureaucratic and contingent.” Morris Dickstein, dubbing The Naked and the Dead the standard for World War II writing as a whole, claims Mailer and his war novelist epigones represent the “great exception” to the “Jamesian wave” of inward-turn writing for their persevering commitment to “thirties social themes,” for their enduring use of social realism to endorse proletarian truths. A “sour epitaph for the humane but naïve liberalism of the Depression era,” Dickstein writes, Mailer’s holdout for the “conscience” of the “common man” reflected a general fear of war novelists “that victory over fascism abroad had been purchased at the cost of intolerance and regimentation at home” and that the “world [was] threatened not by foreign tyrants and obvious villains but by large, impersonal social organizations” hulking up in the homeland. ²³ If only to add credulity to such views, Mailer, in the year of the novel’s publication, put his newfound celebrity to work with the Progressive Citizens of America, actively stumping for Henry Wallace’s doomed presidential run. Moreover, when Partisan Review held its “Our Country, Our Culture” symposium in 1952, Mailer was one of only two participants in twenty-four to demonstrate resilient commitment to the protest tradition, openly objecting to the conference’s generally “affirmative” attitude toward consensus Americanism. ²⁴

Yet much like the modernists after World War I, Mailer internalized his war experience: absorbing it, sublating it, and eventually feeding it back into the culture.
Faithful to the mode of forerunners like Tolstoy, who enjoyed a “brief renaissance of interest at the beginning of World War II,” but also Theodore Dreiser and James T. Farrell, he developed a social realist epic of multiethnic actors—a Goldstein, Roth, Martinez, Toglio, and Czienwicz—caught in the gears and levers of historical, economic and social forces. A “Time Machine” apparatus borrowed from Dos Passos’s “Camera Eye” in *U.S.A* structures the narrative in a way that affords looks at their backgrounds and circumstances. Like Brown’s portrait of the “lost patrol” in *A Walk in the Sun*, however, the momentum of the action slowly shears away at the form as the hapless platoon proceeds further and further on its ruthless quest across the fictional island of Anopopei. Propelled more by Melvillian than Marxist currents, especially as the Ahab-like Sergeant Croft steers the patrol onto a grueling and purposeless march up Mount Anaka only to have it scurry willy-nilly from a nest of bees, the novel’s absurdist conclusion gains an existentialist momentum that outruns the first half’s concern with historical causation. As the mad cavalcade rolls on, characters’ motives give way to a mélange of obsessions and irrational drives, Mailer’s speculations into what even Dickstein concedes is an “existential view of war” (36). Mailer’s killing off of Lieutenant Hearn, the principled “Max Lernerish” ideologue and, as he would later admit, a “despised image of myself,” sounded yet another death knell for reform idealism.

Captured by the psychic turn of his moment, Mailer tilts away from economic and historical modes toward existentialist preoccupations that foreshadow his later departure from revolutionary class membership for the independence of the nihilistic hipster. It is an exchange Stacey Olster identifies as paralleling “end of ideology” epistemologies as
writers confronted events which “could no longer be accommodated within a humanistic tradition” (7). “The aftermath, the end after the end was far more shattering for, in its fullest effect, it involved not just a mere lost of an ideology,” she explains, “but the loss of a faith in an ordered and progressive idea of history” (32). Deserting the millennial praxis of its progressive past, Mailer’s generation was left with “a longing to believe but not much to believe in” (7). “Nihilism, cynicism, and relativism” became prevailing “bases” upon which the American political imagination found itself stranded. Marooned with their “disabled liberalism,” claims Thomas Hill Schaub, postwar literary intellectuals could only contemplate their “unhappy consciousness” in a shift of emphasis from “economy” to “mind.” Cleaving a “splitness” between private “authority” and public “form,” the “suspicion of ideology” leveled against the “socialist explanation of history” led to a disorienting contradiction, one that savored still a “desire for action” while facing the fact that “reality was no longer realistic.”28 As Lee Halprin further asserts, “The liberal imagination could not absorb World War II into its aspirations. The Nazi viciousness was literally unutterable, the implications about human nature unassimilable.” Thus, the “liberal had either to assume that Nazism was the German national character, which meant the fragmentation of mankind, the end of faith in the fundamental brotherhood of human sensibilities; or keep the belief in human homogeneity and see Nazism as not German but human” (185-86). Thus did the abatement of social themes correspond to an increase in first person meditations, a psychic muckraking of the inner self’s “limited,” “fallen,” and “tragic” hieroglyphics.29

For Olster, Mailer’s interior turn, his replacement of the “millennial” with the “existential,” contains a redemptive aspect since the “war that his works chronicle has an
ending that is unknown for being undetermined” (37). For McCann, similarly, far from conceding to ineffectuality, Mailer’s political posturing in the years after the war looms as the great exception to the era’s accommodationism. His characters “exemplify the antagonistic and disunited body they have been throughout the novel” and thus preserve a dispositional agonism characteristic of Mailer’s radical “antiliberalism” (303). McCann equates Mailer’s political desiderata with the dialogic communitarianism of figures like Hannah Arendt, Michael Sandel, and Charles Taylor who disparage the “deontological ethic” of liberalism for the way it empties “public life of compelling bonds,” for its lamentable “disappearance of the civil agon” (308). Staking out a civic republicanism that “mocks the liberal vision of a society joined by tolerance and shared institutions,” Mailer utilizes the form-bestowing aspects of war (and buggery) for the way they “figure alternative modes of political engagement more fundamental than the atomistic formalism and negotiation…of a debased liberal policy,” of its “abstract and universal categories” (313-14). In its place, Mailer recalls citizens to a fundamental “intimacy” similar to that reckoned by Taylor: that is, “an essentially dialogic phenomenon,” an “intersubjectivity implicit in the idea that people are not autonomous beings, but forces whose boundaries are always shifting, overlapping, and imposing on each other” (309-314).

Mailer’s dialectical energies were indeed among the more promising options in a seemingly startled and paralyzed time. But the pulverization of progressive millennialism did not denounce liberal rationality as much as shatter it into its postwar neoliberal formation. Mailer’s brass-knuckled stagger through the public commons always struggles in the grip of a political undertow that, because he views the self as
“radically free” and “self-determining,” is—akin to Bellows and Shaw—“drawn toward sympathy with patriarchy and hierarchical order” finally giving way to “belief in the unifying force of war” (McCann 298). Conceiving of history itself “in terms of war…as a permanent process,” Mailer reverses the utopian trajectory only to stake out the mythical space for his primitivist theories of elemental violence and the essentialism of the friend/enemy binary (Olster 36). He fights not to forge a better future but for the joy of the fight itself. As McCann rightly attests, “Combat is not just a struggle for mastery” in Mailer’s world, “it is a heuristic for knowledge of self and other, enabling you to ‘[d]iscover in your enemy what is most different from yourself’ (AE, 62) and thus to become yourself”—the self as a “form” that is “the record of war.” Consequently, as Peter Aichinger contends, war novelists like Mailer, though wary of “the professional officer’s awesome capacity for ruthless action” “reveal a typically American admiration for his professional competence as a ‘manager of violence’.” Cold Warriors like the neoconservative Norman Podhoretz—similar to the European Romantics who found more to love than hate in Milton’s Satan—admired Mailer’s portrayal of Cummings and Croft for the simple reason that ‘their strength, courage, drive and stamina’ make them infinitely preferable, in the American mind, to the whining defeatism of the other characters in the novel.”  

30 As much an enthralment with as an indictment of power, The Naked and the Dead shares much of the postwar generation’s bewitchment with themes of “force,” its “celebration of the psychopathic as heroic,” and a valorization of what might finally be seen as a distorted presentation of the national character: the rugged, go-it-alone liberal graduated to its ontological extreme.  

31
Mailer’s cultural pluralism, his teams of “bandit republics” vying dialectically in a coliseum-like public sphere, plays for ultimate stakes in what Susan Buck-Morss calls that “wild zone” of sovereign power constituting the symbolic structure of the national security state and its militarization of everyday life “under the sign of War” (7). In such a political environment, as McCann maintains, “mainstream politics would amount less to the conflict among competing visions of a good society than negotiation among various powerful interest groups bargaining for the spoils of an expanded economy” (300).

Under the state’s watch, to put it another way, a politics of social action transforms into a politics of personal being. Within such a universe, his radical protest tends, ironically, toward conservative notions of identity’s fixity, toward the “ascriptive bonds” of “natural and hereditary relations” and the neoliberal celebration of the self’s valiant survival amid the anarchic turbulence of the competitive marketplace (327). Hence, like Schlesinger’s “hard man,” Mailer’s pluralism leads ultimately to the self’s calcification at the same time that it plunges it—alone, unallied—into the “subterranean river of uptapped, ferocious, lonely, and romantic desires, that concentration of ecstasy and violence, that are the dreamlife of the nation.” Published in the same year as Hans Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* (1948), the ur-text of political realism and power politics in US culture, Mailer’s total war paradigm seems more consonant with than interruptive of emerging political ideas. With no world “beyond war,” with “no outside” to war, the seemingly dialectical subject, as John Limon insists, is finally subsumed by its own “de-historicized” permutation into paranoia and a “delinquency” that is little more than “the internalization of combat conditions the state induces” (141-143). Just as the Cold War’s merger of “civility and panic” transformed the homeland into a space of permanent war,
so did its culture of risk and securitization likewise demand that citizens muster their own “self-protection,” the neoliberal displacement of community obligation into a biopolitical “social science of survival.”

For Deborah Cowen and Emily Gilbert, the arrival of this “bionic” citizen was a key development of the militarized society’s self-structuring “neuroliberalism,” a “regime of biopower” described further by Hardt and Negri as “a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life.”

James Jones’s *From Here to Eternity* (1951) presents the same Cold War survivalist, “*a man caught by the army*” as he remarked in his notes, in one of its most intense manifestations. Traversing military and civilian quarters, Jones’s National Book Award winner conflated anxieties about military authority with domestic politics while enfolding both spaces in a field shaped by the story world of total war. For Robert E. Lee Prewitt, army life is life. The antithesis of the citizen-soldier, Prewitt is a “30-year man,” a professional pressured to conform to the army’s “system” of compulsion and duress where “fear of authority” has become an end in itself (71, 337). Against its all-enveloping regime of power—Captain “Dynamite” Holmes’s ruthless institution of “the Treatment” and, higher up, General Sam Slater’s fascist authoritarianism which longs for “complete unquestioned control” of the social “machine”—Prewitt’s “rights” advocacy and “fighting for the underdog” earns him a long and painful struggle with the many creative punishments devised to “break” him.

As if to burlesque Schlesinger’s vital center, the novel’s radical ex-Wobbly Jack Malloy proclaims, “there’s only one way a man can have freedom, and that is to die for it, and after he’s died for it it don’t do him any good” (582). “Give me liberty and give me death,” parodies John Limon (132).
Driving the satire even further, although Scribner’s censored the more graphic original, is the novel’s “queer investigation” of the “Waikiki Tavern gang,” a Dies committee-like inquisition into the military’s gay demimonde (and subsequent suicide of Isaac Bloom), which deliberately exposes the compulsory, enforced nature of state-sanctioned versions of normative desire (410).35 Despite the publisher’s excision of any representation that cast same-sex intimacy as “natural” and “enjoyable,” views Jones actually championed, *From Here to Eternity* was still blacklisted in many arenas due to pressure from the National Organization for Decent Literature.36 The literary event occurred only one year after the U.S. government launched its own queer investigation of the State Department in 1950, which led to the publication of “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government” and the dismissal 425 employees for their “deviant” sexual behavior.

Jones’s queering of the military (which really the war itself did as it hastened “so many individuals into sex-segregated military units”) and rendition of its comprehensive grip on social life were disruptive responses to Cold War militarization, echoing C. Wright Mills observation that commensurate with the involvement in war of “virtually the entire population” was the paradoxical fact that citizens had become “helpless militarily” (189).37 But Jones’s “arch-revolutionary” politics of the “underdog,” like Mailer’s civil agon, is nonetheless mired in the Cold War’s antinomian, negative conceptions of liberty—the liberal imaginary’s ultimately vacant center (274).38 Prewitt’s frequent discourses on the virtue of perpetual aggression reflect Jones’s substantively empty version of political dialectics. His struggle is never *for* anything, but a practice valuable only in and of itself. Charles Rolo declared as much in his review for
The Atlantic where he chastised Jones as one of "those emotionally retarded he-men to whom toughness is the supreme Good, and who see life as synonymous with total war."

"If Communists were the underdog in Spain," Prewitt expounds, "then he believed in fighting for the Communists; but that if the Communists were the top dog back home in Russia and the...traitors were the bottom dog, then he believed in fighting for the traitors and against the Communists" (273). A "chameleon philosophy," Jones’s perpetual war of underdogs versus top dogs regards any politics as illegitimate once it gains a majority of adherents (273). "He believed in fighting for the Jews in Germany, and against the Jews in Wall Street and Hollywood. And if the Capitalists were top dog in America and the proletariat the underdog, then he believed in fighting for the proletariat against the Capitalists." "What are your politics?" he inquires of himself at last. "It is a wrong question," he responds, "one that implies you have to have some kind of politics, and is therefore an unfair question because it restricts your answer to what kind of politics." If one were to follow Jones’s political thought to its logical conclusion, the only society worth keeping would be one balanced evenly atop a neutral fulcrum standing essentially for nothing but a refusal to let the bar tilt.

A meditation on the stockade as an analog of modern life emerges as the text’s organizational metaphor, a theme similarly structuring World War II entrapment novels like Richard Brooks’s The Brick Foxhole (1945), Joseph Heller’s Catch-22 (1961), and Steven Linakis’s In the Spring the War Ended (1965). The frustrating cat-and-mouse antics with regulatory discipline, the experience of authority’s total encirclement, and the uselessness of resistance subsumes the text in what John Limon calls an early postmodernist reckoning with war’s “inescapability,” with its imaginative capture of the
social field that jettisons “any modernist dream of aesthetic asylum.” From Here to Eternity’s encounter with “monarchical” forms of power so overwhelms any recourse to escape as to render any action save death—the one “indelible act” seized upon by Bloom and committed against Prewitt by MPs—pointless (129-30). The stockade’s purest, most irreducible distillate and World War II literature’s recurrent figuration of the disciplinary garrison state is the allegory of “the Hole,” the isolationist confinement that delinquent would-be individualists must endure for prolonged sessions. Calibrated to address the political environment of its time, the hole’s symbolic depiction of the autarchic self surviving a disciplinary military regime lays bare a crucial paradox of Cold War liberalism. Cutting in one direction, it parodies vital center individualism in that persons suspended in the dark well-shaft of private consciousness, divorced from their sustaining social contingency, are “broken” by being left alone with themselves. To be trapped with oneself, in effect, is self-abandoning. From another, Jones’s “fatalist” resignation to universe of blood and fists, a recourse to the naturalism of preparedness manhood, leads him in the end to valorize a masculinist subculture of forbearance and hardness, one steeled to accept the many dispensations of agony that military and, by extension, national life presents. His hardboiled men of barracks #2—the “firm, hardy remainder” of the military’s “sifting” process—rehearse protracted rituals of endurance better to weather suffering and withstand pain (588, 639). A neoliberal refurbishment of preparedness, his idealized community bargains not for social change but, like Cozzens and Mailer, merely for the stamina to outlast intense persecution, a saddling of the self alone, its inner “psychopath,” with responsibilities of self-protection and survival.
Thus were the protest initiatives of World War II’s most revered writers conscripted into the same inward-turning politics that characterized the organizational imaginary of the warfare state and its “reinventing of the liberal as Superman” (Cuordileone 177). The political swashbuckling of Cozzens, Mailer, and Jones, though paradoxical and unstable, renders Cold War liberalism’s ultimate form of political retraction as progressive programs for structural reform mutated into a pugnacious “cult of toughness” and a private bartering for improved social stations within a plural but essentially unchanging social arena. Instantiations of Schlesinger’s “radical democrat,” novelists elided the “politics of fatigue” dilapidating Squaresville, USA, but by valorizing a Cold War masculinity of personal “nerve,” “style,” and “balls” as supreme antidotes to its conformity.39 In such a radically contingent universe, an ambiguous and unpredictable universe governed only by “chaos” and “chance,” by “enormous complexity and mystery,” where was one to leverage progressive desire? (Graebner, *Doubt* 24-5). Given that “truth was a mosaic in gray,” the “contingent, unpredictable world,” claims Graebner, “was no place for grand ideological systems (of whatever political hue) or the idealistic, universalistic nostrums of an Arthur Miller; nor could blame be fixed in any significant way in such a world” (24). “Germany disproved the liberal faith in the continuity of progress,” Halprin bluntly summarizes, “so the liberals turned to self-defense.” Under the pressure of a dilating security paradigm—what Limon, alluding to Foucault, calls militarization’s “carceral city”—World War II novels celebrated only the autonomous self’s delinquent survival in a fundamentally escapeless landscape. Lumbering forth from their most esteemed works were characters—now
harshly differentiated from each other based on logics of racial, class, or regional “type”—in a game of psychic rather than historical or material maneuvering.⁴⁰

    Complicit with the very consensus they abhorred, many war representations authorized a central aspect of the postwar settlement which mandated, as Walter Benn Michael’s famously critiques it, the “primacy of identity,” the “primacy of the subject position” itself, the requirement that one “be somebody.”⁴¹ Determining difference within a pluralist taxonomy thus proffered means to construct a social field of isolated and independent integers fundamentally opaque to each other needs and modes of self-apprehension. Linked within a paradigm of “democratic social engineering,” as William Graebner attests, the encroachment and envelopment of Cold War authoritarianism was often “encoded as democracy” (SE, 181). Be it Schlesinger’s “hard man,” Mailer’s civil agon, or Jones’s “underdog,” the political subject of Cold War liberalism bid farewell to millennial and revolutionary conceptions of history for a truncated politics of personal or group subsistence and steeled adjustment to the rigors of the given world: a version of civil society as Hobbes’s state of nature. For Michael Sherry, the seeming “caprice and chaos” that cultural heterogeneity unleashed “indicated not the absence of militarization but it characteristic American form.” “Pluralistic, civil libertarian, and antistatist traditions, like bureaucratic rivalries,” he writes, “ruled out the operation of any monolithic machine. A political system that both practiced repression and denied the intent to do so allowed authority to scatter in all sorts of directions, which only encouraged its capricious use” (174). As such, the form of much World War II writing partakes of a rationality intrinsic to the politics of security, one that establishes anxiety as end not means and inculcates, as David Campbell expresses it, “the passage from
difference to identity” (42). Insofar as they authorized identity in the master metaphor of the social rebel, furthermore, Cold War novelists, as Leerom Mevovoi argues, “animate[d] a vital national allegory, not simply for American identity, but for an American in which ‘identity’ itself became the century feature of the nation’s identity” (31). Wedded to larger national projects of the period, World War II writing sympathized with classificatory social initiatives that imposed pluralist agendas only to incorporate increasingly differentiated subjects within a system of ontological coordinates manufactured and managed by the state.42

III. The Drafted Subject: The Vacant Center’s Self-Containment

As a stratifying ideology, containment forward the organizational agenda of a security episteme concerned less with overtly coercive activities—excluding minorities, disciplining women, passing laws against dissenters—than with a preemptive intervention into the affective substrate of the political subject.43 Claims Anthony Burke, national security’s political technology “mobilizes two linked techniques of social production and regulation: ‘totalising’ power, of the kind exercised by states over vast areas, economies, and populations; and ‘individualising’ power, which works at the levels of individuals and souls, on their bodies and minds” (6). Similar to the “ecclesiastical polity” of Puritan America, which institutionalized “elaborate practices of public avowals, confessions, and tests of sincerity by which members proved faith to the congregation,” the Cold War metaphysic, claims Frederick Dolan, demanded a “strong sense of private, individual fatality,” “something representable, arguable; a kind of rhetorical self” (74-5). Who you were had less to do with your phenotype or where you
went to church than with the kinds of thoughts you had, the things that made you laugh
and cry.

David Campbell tellingly traces this subtle migration in social regulation
occurring between the Truman and Eisenhower administrations as a shift of observational
emphasis from “loyalty” to “security.” For Truman, what mattered most was subversive
activity: espionage, treason, the promotion of revolution. By 1953, however, the
Eisenhower administration’s adjustments and additions to the loyalty program reveal
concerns less with exterior activity than with the tendencies of citizens’ interior
“characters”: their sexual desires, their general quality of saneness, their capacities for
truthfulness and financial responsibility. “What the Eisenhower security program
reveals,” Campbell explains, “is that concomitant with external global expansion was an
internal magnification of the modes of existence which were interpreted as risks. Danger
was being totalized in the external realm in conjunction with its increased individuation
in the internal field, with the result being the performative reconstitution of the borders of
the state’s identity” (172-73). The McCarthy inquisition, which so familiarly caricatures
the ethos of the moment, was maybe the first instance of right wing demagoguery in the
nation’s history—targeting as it did “Harvard professor and Ivy League diplomats,” the
effete “striped pants boys down at the State Department”—not to appeal to exterior
determinants like race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation, but to solicitudes regarding an
individual’s point of view, the nature of one’s opinions and beliefs, one’s desires
(Englehardt 122). As “both a mode of administrative and governmental action—
bureaucratic, ideological, military and economic—and a system of ‘truths’ that reach into
people’s hearts, framing their identities, feelings and hopes,” claims Burke, the “political
technology” of security constructed means to address a radically interrelational universe, one in which our “fears and desires may not be our own” (6).

The preoccupation with fixing more firmly demarcated personhood responded to catholic fears about the self’s malleability, liminality, and contingency, fears that the Depression, the war (particularly the draft and the bomb), and Communist ideology only helped magnify. Omnipresent across national security culture were anxious depictions of the self’s subversion, invasion, and simulation, images betraying a lack of confidence in the “integrity” of the liberal self imagined by figures like Trilling and Schlesinger.44 Precisely as skin color and place of worship began to recede in significance from the nation’s official hermeneutics of citizenship (albeit taking a different guise), heightened concerns with invisible, “passing” threats to the health of the body politic—the radical, the Communist, the Civil Rights activist, the atheist, the home-wrecking feminist, and, most notably, the homosexual—moved to the prominent fore.

Combining themes of entrapment and self-isolation with a sexual invasion narrative was Charles Jackson’s The Fall of Valor (1946). Having achieved considerable fame for The Lost Weekend (1944), his widely praised novel on the psychology of alcoholism, Jackson looked to duplicate that success in his tale of John Grandin’s emerging homosexuality, similarly treated as infestation by an uncontrollable disease, bodily takeover by an unwanted but finally irresistible other life form. The original book jacket advertises: “the story of one man’s terrifying descent into the cruel web of homosexuality” as “a prisoner of his own natural yearnings.”45 Like the freedom plaguing Bellow’s dangling man, Grandin’s dawning awareness of his same sex desire is experienced as the erosion of self-mastery, as an irrational (at times perverse) force
that—interior counterpoint to the global events he follows in the news—takes shape as an internal war. In Jackson’s conception, the total war experience, its “nameless apprehension,” so utterly seizes hold of persons as to consume their interiors (6-7). An English professor at work on a manuscript titled “The Tragic Ideal,” Grandin is assailed by an “unhealthy preoccupation with self,” a “mounting depression” which yields the need for a “literal retreat” from the menacing world (4-5). He is suspended in a paralysis of self-doubt, a “vague and fearful uncertainty” that is “attributed…to the war” (6-7). “All life was changing alarmingly fast,” he observes, “a battle was no longer an engagement between two armies met in the field but the overrunning, by land and sea and air, of whole nations…and terms like ‘for the duration’ had come to be part of daily speech” (12). Of particular concern to the nervous professor is the discomfiting practice of conscription, the revelation that one’s body can be controlled and owned by forces greater than its self-will. Early in the novel, he observes a slouching line of draftees lingering outside an Induction Center. Where past wars elicited “a wave of mass affection,” here the conscripts and the crowd of witnesses appear “sheepish” and “embarrassed” (21). Shaken by the episode, Grandin reflects that in the matter of only “a very few weeks” they will be so transformed, made “alike” in “the mass,” that one might “scarcely tell them apart”; “their native individuality” will be “lost in the necessary great machine of which they were to become each a resigned, anonymous cog” (21-22). The startling recognition of personhood’s alterability, of the state’s self-molding access to character structure, sends him in panicked flight from the scene.

Commensurate with the state’s “hailing” of citizens is the symbolically correlative hijacking of his sexuality, the self-impressing yearnings of an alien, impostor self.
Vaulting up within him beyond his control is a homoerotic “worship of the male” bound to an incipient fascination with soldiers, a compulsive intrigue with all that is “rugged” and “masculine.”\textsuperscript{46} He is engrossed by images of men in uniform. He lingers achingly over photographs of dead or war-fatigued soldiers in \textit{Life} magazine. He reads A.E. Houseman’s poems on the beauty of youth fallen in battle. The crucial turn occurs when, on vacation with his wife Ethel, he is onset by erotic longing for a handsome but simpleminded marine captain on leave at the same resort. A symbolic conflation of masculinity, nationality, and warfare, Captain Cliff Haufman, like the drafted men at the Induction Center, excites Grandin as an emblem of all that is “typically American.” He is “the very personification of the American boy” that “ceased almost to be an individual” and became “the epitome of a type” (46). Grandin’s ardor is stoked by necrophiliac fantasies of Haufman face down in the lapping foam of a beachhead and imaginative visions of his name appearing on casualty lists. In the crucial scene, Grandin sprouts an erection while Haufman applies suntan oil to his back, a startling event which sends him into paroxysms of confused rage.\textsuperscript{47} As with war, in which “there aren’t any rules,” the lawlessness of desire, its refusal to conform to liberalism’s notions of the bounded, disinterested, rational self, forms the parallel plotline of Jackson’s novel (82). That Grandin has no control over his interior, that he has been drafted into his sexuality just as the recruits were impressed into service, unfolds as a harrowing moment of self-discovery. Wasn’t a person “supposed to be a creature of his own will, able to decide for himself what he wanted and did not want, and to some extent the master of his destiny still”? “It was as if he stood up and shouted in indignant outrage: ‘Look here, I won’t
have it! That’s not the kind of man I am, do you hear?’—only to be forced to accept the reverberating echo which said: But you are” (236-237).

Jackson’s revision of the controlled, self-directed individual—though he struggled with matters of sexual identity in his own life—challenges the naturalized heteronormativity of vital center masculinity. But, as even the title precipitates, it also pathologizes same-sex desire as a postlapsarian symptom of humankind’s tragic “fall,” a symbolic concession to an essential world of repressed violence and appetite confirmed by the shared “neuroses of his fellow men” (238). Jackson’s novel, consequently, dramatizes the way Cold War visions of sexuality, their “mode of incorporation,” were not only productive of “difference” but, as Margot Canaday, argues, of “identity.” In the “mid-twentieth-century,” she argues, “the state crafted citizenship policies that crystallized homosexual identity, fostering a process by which certain individuals began to think of their sexuality in political terms, as mediating and mediated by their relationship to the state” (10). Although a notable early effort to dismiss claims of “choice” from discussions of same-sex attraction—predating Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* (1948) by two years—its correlative fear of sexual fluidity reinforced national security’s contingency anxieties and its ontotheology of original sin. Thus might its critique of the self-contained liberal subject, like those “end of history” prognostications flowing forth from numerous conservative organs since the war’s demise, present not the search for alternative social meanings and values, but psychic reconciliation to an apocalyptic war of each against all.

National security culture’s invention of nature as an indignant and interruptive primal force was integral to securing U.S. insularity from patterns of mutation and cycles
of change that typically characterize historical development. As William Connelly attests, “The state of nature is shock therapy” that “helps subjects to get their priorities straight by teaching them what life would be like without sovereignty.” “It domesticates by eliciting the vicarious fear of violent death” such that “one becomes willing to regulate oneself and to accept external regulations that will secure life against its dangers. The fear of death pulls the self together. It induces subjects to accept civil society and it becomes an instrumentality of sovereign control in a civil society already installed.”

Such is the story that I have presenting thus far. But if containment culture worked to enclose and resolve constructions of selfhood within the totalizing and individuating edifice of the biopolitical society, what Pierre Bourdieu once called “the conductorless orchestra of collective action and improvisations,” some writers at least began to improvise different aesthetic encounters with that self-containing, entrapping universe in order to fashion alternative versions of the political subject less easy to manipulate and manage (Campbell 70). Despite the more general acquiescence and accommodation of the postwar consensus, numerous World War II novelists—often minority, women, and white activist authors—began to write back, working against containment’s Manichean worldview and the stratifying pluralism of Cold War security. Wrestling with contradictions and inconsistencies exposed by mobilization, their novels searched for models to challenge the ideological infrastructure of the national security paradigm and the compulsory subjectifications of the Good War.
Chapter 6

Impossible Subjects:
Literary Entrapment and the Changing Politics of Resistance

If we approach the Cold War as producing something other than just a ‘containment culture,’ however, we can begin to understand the emergence of identity discourse, not as an extrinsic response to Cold War culture based upon the ontological truth of identity, but rather as the production of identity itself as the dialectical antithesis of containment within the cultural matrix of the Cold War world. If ‘containment’ offered a rhetoric of repression, identity countered with a rhetoric of ‘liberation’ that was no less imperative in its reference to the three worlds imagination of its time.

--Leerom Medovoi, Rebels

Maybe the [task] nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to…get rid of the political ‘double-bind,’ which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures…the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us from both the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state.

--Michel Foucault, Technologies of the Self

The pluralization of American nationality was gripped in a conservative undertow that finally swamped the postwar accession to cultural difference, separating the heterogeneous society off into the many stranded and isolated blocs of a developing neoliberal order. Naturalizing a politics of recognition and representation, Cold War liberalism legitimatized the sovereignty of the state not as an instrument of the people’s will but as the overarching manager of society, the supervisor of a contentious individual “rights” within a virtually uncontested capitalist domain. However accepted the multifarious images of the national body now were, citizen desire itself was becoming more scripted and constrained, more aligned within a national infrastructure less and less tolerant of political “difference.” That problems of subjectivization figure so prominently in World War II texts is in large part a literary response to that growing demand for more fixed, more regularized versions of personhood.

Although differently voiced, the existing critical conversation generally recognizes the pervasive attitude of consignment in World War II writing, the general
reconciliation to the given political conditions of the postwar world. Charting an assumed decline in “outrage,” most assessments understandably frame their discussion by contrasting the politics of the World War II novel with its World War I predecessor. Beginning with Malcolm Cowley’s influential 1954 essay, “War Novels: After Two Wars,” and extending through the numerous commentaries that follow his line, critics typically regard Second World War fiction for its “more conservative” tone and lost “capacity for indignation” (Cowley 37, 40). Where modernism presented a “never again” aesthetics of “shock” or “revolt”—so the story goes—World War II novels present a more genuflected “acquiescence” and “resignation” to war’s “apparatus.” Indeed, the argument of the prior two chapters acknowledges and extends that seeming inability of war novelists to resist or refute the evolving public grammar of liberal universalism and national security in the decade following détente.

Identity, however, is never truly stable or impermeable, never forced upon docile bodies in ways complete and satisfactory. It is itself disjointed and fluctuating, continuously remade as the fissures of that “ontological divide” between self and society, friend and foe, rupture under the pressure of inconsistencies and contradictions beyond the political order’s control. And if war is a determining event that binds together the political imaginary, it also dislocates it. Unmooring the national self from its more familiar ground, submitting it to unapprised and problematic structures of authority and obedience, forcing it into radical encounters with cultures and values of difference, the collective experience of war-making often renders established modes of self-comprehension dysfunctional. The radical encounter with injury and death, especially if one is unwillingly hailed into service by the draft, can produce a consequent cognitive
jamming, bringing into relief the many paradoxes of an authoritarian military regime
protecting and extending the values of liberal democracy. Precisely because war-
making’s maximum violation of civic prohibitions requires that the governing order
justify its ends and means, the collective embodiment of war mobilization can fracture
the symbolic structure of national belonging, exposing those problems of legitimation in
the very foundation of the state’s organizational imaginary.³

As pluralism’s many zones of cultural distinction corroded and finally toppled the
abstract nationality carried to such magnificent heights during World War I, a literary
politics of self-decipherment emerged that at times reinforced the national security ethic
but, at others, worked to dismantle it. Despite a fretful climate of Red-baiting and loyalty
oaths, despite the disappearing prospects for social reform, circles of political resistance
remained active in some quarters of the culture after the war. Although mostly dormant,
small pockets of the literary left used the experience of the war, the very event that
allegedly secured the propriety of American hegemony, as an occasion to question and
challenge the consensus culture cropping up in its wake. They found here material they
could resignify and repurpose to disavow the culture of fear, obedience, and conformity
upon which the “age of affluence” thrived. It would be overstating things to say that their
work “constructed” or “produced” the political awakening that took shape as the Civil
Rights Movement or the best versions of the Counterculture. But together they represent
a counter-hegemonic force that, in a politically suffocated period, opened valves for the
intake of fresher political air.

For many minority authors especially—African American, Jewish, and proto-
feminist novelists, but also white radical and homosexual writers—the experience of
World War II urged encounters with the symbolic structure of identity itself. Arising time and again in World War II narratives, and as consequence of the war’s rhetorical concession to multicultural inclusion, are accounts of citizens contending with priorities of self-affiliation, with the vexing instrumental rationality of becoming identified. Cognates of the “entrapment” novel—Bellows’s *Dangling Man*, Wouk’s *The Caine Mutiny*, Jones’s *From Here to Eternity*—they nonetheless reject the Cold War’s brand of cultural pluralism and its coordinating form of subjectivization. Refusing to complete coherent versions of nationality (a breakdown in personification) or assuming more dialectical stances against the state (an inassimilable recalcitrance to governmental authority), they pose versions of literary subjectivity as a breakdown or revolt against non-democratic forms of sovereign power. Their dramatizations thus defy the moral optimism of American universality, opposing both the hypostatizing self “invasion” of the militarized citizen and the imperial topography of the American Century.

I. Drafted Loyalties and Dilemmas of Homefront Inclusion

Similarly racialized, Chester Himes’s *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and John Okada’s *No-No Boy* (1957) present homefront tales of two drafted subjects. Himes’s account of Robert Jones, an African American leaderman in a war industries shipyard, discloses the brutal contradictions of the color line surfacing in wartime Los Angeles. In the beginning, Jones feels “the importance of the whole war,” “[t]hat filled up feeling of my country.” “I felt included in it all,” he declares; “It was a wonderful feeling” (38). All Jones wants—in a gendered imaginary similar to the vital center (and unfortunately as patriarchal)—is to be an autonomous man, to be “a male human being,” to be “accepted as a man” (153). But as intense racial hatred overwhelms the city, especially
ironic since it mobilizes against fascism, Jones becomes saturated with a “tight, crazy feeling of race” that leaves him “scared, walled in, locked up” (4). Where race had only been a “handicap” before, the war’s escalation of political stakes and dislocation of traditional barriers intensifies racial strife, lending it a kind of subjective primaey (3). The “white folks teaching” was “inside of me”; “they had drummed more into me than they been able to scare out” (152-53). In addition to his own persecutions, Jones witnesses the state’s roundup and relocation of Japanese Americans under Roosevelt’s Relocation Order 9066, the Zoot Suit riots against Mexican Americans by white servicemen, and his boss Tebbel’s workplace diatribes on an alleged Jewish conspiracy for world domination, which, taken together, finally put to rest any “jive” about “liberty and justice and equality” underwriting the liberal nation (151). Against his fiancée Alice Harrison’s gradualism which promotes “compromise and patience and loyalty,” “spiritual values, intrinsic values,” he surmises only an un-budging “nigger limit,” an ascriptive system of racial barriers predetermining and obstructing his freedom of mobility (151, 169). When a white woman falsely accuses him of rape, a white lynch mob violently assaults him, sending him to the hospital within an inch of his life. “The whole structure of American thought was against me,” Jones concludes, “American tradition had convicted me a hundred years before.”

In the end, however, when penned in by a “choice” between a prison sentence for his “crime” and the alternative prospect of joining the draft, he enters the military as the only available means to survive, even though it denies him a chance at the independent, self-governing manhood he so craves. Himes’s portrayal of Jones’s “lucky” alternative to imprisonment plays out as a satire on the “tolerant” accommodationism of liberalized
military inclusion, a strategy which weighs the “national good” against countervailing “racial tension” (200-201). Jones’s predicament reveals the false inclusion of national security pluralism, what Robert J. Corber calls its “postwar settlement.” Rosie the Riveter and the Tuskegee Airmen may have helped to win the war, but “the only way women, African Americans, and other historically disenfranchised groups could gain recognition for their contributions to the war effort was by limiting their demands for such recognition” (2). Given such an intractably prohibitive milieu, Jones’s quest, although conceptually akin to that hardboiled survival ethos of bionic liberalism, ultimately presents a figure of incompleteness: an “impossible subject” whose “inclusive” participation in the Good War against fascism is figured as a self-denying rather than self-fulfilling ordeal. His acceptance of the draft represents not a longing for alternatives to free society but, as with his incarcerating second “option,” the consummate destination for anyone who would seek to make good on freedom’s promises.

Amid the repressive, interrogative atmosphere of the 1950s, John Okada’s *No-No Boy* (1957) similarly dramatizes Ichiro Yamada’s politically ambivalent search for a viable self in the years following the war. Like roughly 110,000 fellow Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans in the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Yamada is extricated by Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to a camp like Tule Lake or Heart Mountain. Classified “4C”—“enemy aliens”—by the Selective Service, persons of Japanese ancestry fell victim to a preemptive purge based on racial phenotype and historical origin regardless of citizenship or national loyalty. Their quandary reflected submerged racial biases within the culture that, at points of crisis and extremity, trumped formal citizenship rights and constitutional
guarantees of protection under the law. Even FDR articulated views of Japanese Americans as a racially “discrete, unified group,” “unassimilable aliens”—driven by forces inherent “in the blood.” And though he knew it blasted “a tremendous hole” in the Constitution, Henry Stimson, fresh out of retirement and obsessive in his prosecution of the war, believed race outran citizenship and law, and aligned with advisors urgently lobbying for internment (Takaki 144).

Although the roundup and interment met with little resistance from the American mainstream, it played worrisomely into the hands of Japanese propagandists. The OWI’s Elmer Davis counseled Roosevelt that the nation’s internal security and the interests of the war effort mandated that the U.S. government respond to the demands of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), to their petition that the military enlist Nisei (native born) forces in order to “prove”—despite their belittling incarceration—their loyalty to the U.S. (Ngai 182). Announcing that Japanese American desire for participation was “of great interest to the OWI” as “counter propaganda,” Davis propounded the fact that their inclusion would countermand “Japanese propaganda to the Philippines, Burma and elsewhere that insisted the war was a ‘racial war’” (Ngai 156-157). The U.S. government—increasingly aware of liberal inclusion as rhetorically essential to the nation’s security—conceded, passing “registration” statutes conditional upon affirmation of the “loyalty questionnaire” in the “Application for Leave Clearance.” As Eric Muller poignantly quips, Japanese Americans were now free, “free to die for their country.”

Those who refused were dubbed “no-no boys.”

Like Himes’s novel, Okada’s No-No Boy depicts the perversity of that option, of what Mae Ngai calls an “impossible choice” for “impossible subjects” (201). As a no-no
boy, a dissenter, Ichiro serves two years in prison for spurning the draft. Although Okada himself actually participated in the war, his protagonist’s predicament reflects perhaps the doppelganger of his own compliance with the American state. The skewed lines of affiliation appear early in the opening chapters when, on a return trip to Seattle, Eto Minato, a Japanese American veteran, spits on Ichiro for his refusal to serve. As it turns out, however, Ichiro’s nonconsent was less the consequence of moral aversion to war or loyalty to the Japanese homeland than an act of submission to his mentally unstable mother who, even in the aftermath of the surrender, believes Japan to be victorious. As Ichiro measures his estrangement from both the national mainstream and his ethnic community, he comes to regret his noncompliance. A lingering reminder to others of the frail membrane stretched between inclusion and exclusion, Ichiro’s non-identity renders him a pariah in all camps. Even his younger brother Taro snubs him, eager as he is to enter the army and attain an exclusively “American” self.

*No-No Boy* thus demonstrates the war’s exhumation of the color line, its more “inclusive” but increasingly proscriptive mandate that Japanese Americans choose between discreetly conceived, rigidly categorical loyalties. For Ichiro, the war’s racial reconfiguration provokes an insuperable dilemma. According to Jinqi Ling, from one direction, the novel “appears to tell a story of the return of the prodigal, one who comes to recognize his ‘error’ and to embrace the promise of America” (360). Having “picked the wrong side,” Ichiro feels that he “turned his back on the army and the country and the world and his own self” (46, 40). Emi, his love interest, guides him back into the American fold: “I can remember how full I used to get with pride and patriotism when we sang ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ and pledged allegiance to the flag at school
assemblies,” she recalls, “and that’s the feeling you’ve got to have” (96). Anguished and embarrassed by the “troublemaking, the strikes, and the riots” caused by the “rabidly pro-Japanese faction,” Emi tutors Ichiro to be repentant, to “forgive” the “frailties” of once misguided American authorities and “be grateful to them and prove to them that you can be an American” (96, 98). Conversely, his friend Kenji, one who answered the call “to prove that he deserved to enjoy those rights which should rightfully have been his,” grows increasingly disenchanted with his decision to comply, suffering from an infected leg amputation that eventually takes his life (121). “It wasn’t worth it,” he admits as his wound deteriorates (60). Wracked with guilt that his assimilation required the taking of human life, he longs for an open world of “only people,” a world that refuses the racial specificity of “Japs or Chinks or Jews or Poles or Niggers or Frenchies” (165). The possibility of Kenji’s imagined universe of deracinated coexistence recedes further from view when Ichiro learns of a ruthless assault on a black man at a friend’s job and similarly witnesses a Christian congregation’s refusal to seat a black worshipper (230). The final scene, a bar fight and ensuing death, renders Okada’s parting vision of race and violence as constitutive features of the liberal body politic.

Like If He Hollers, No-No Boy represents an important literary intervention into American multiculturalism and the refurbishment of the liberal state after the war. If the biological racism that prevailed prior to Pearl Harbor tended to generalize broadly about racial groups, it was the loyalty questionnaire’s turn toward liberal inclusiveness and tolerant assimilation—a shift from homogenous racial grouping to the coordination of personal loyalty—that oversaw the national security paradigm’s changed approach to social engineering. The shift reflected the political evolution from outright racial
discrimination to the new liberalism’s preference for dealing individually with each particular case, a more constricted surveillance of personhood seeking access to feelings and dispositions—what one thought about, read, enjoyed—more than stereotypical racial assumptions. Consistent with the Cold War’s dossier-styled identity politics, the liberalization of racial discourse actually helped sharpen subjective contours, more distinctly etching out citizens’ most classifiable self-representations. If before the war Japanese Americans embraced multivalent, crosscultural alliances—practicing traditional Japanese customs while cheering for the Yankees or dancing to Glen Miller—the war’s close demanded more precise, documentary demonstrations of unambiguous individual loyalty. As Mae Ngai claims, the questionnaire’s accommodationist turn suggests how the “[l]iberals that ran the War Relocation Authority actually caused more damage than biological racists” since they “saw it as good opportunity for ‘social planning’” and as means to facilitate speedier assimilation (177). Milton Eisenhower, the director of the WRA and associate director of the OWI, viewed the involuntary internment—like the voluntary war preparedness camps at Plattsburg during World War I—as a project aiding “community building” and an “ironic testimony to the value of American democracy” (Ngai 179). Part of its broadening culture of oversight, national security’s construction of the pluralist society concerned itself less with overt control than with what David Campbell calls “the reproduction of a standard, an optimal mean, around which those modes of being considered ‘normal’ could be organized” (173). Even J. Edgar Hoover disapproved of the internment policy, however, and what followed was less an opportunity to transcend a habit of racial demarcation than to erode static forms of
cultural identification in favor of segmented individuation under a rhetorical canopy of national inclusion.\textsuperscript{7}

Within such a compulsory domain, \textit{No-No Boy} walks a jagged line. Problematic features of Okada’s text, akin to Himes’s castrating images of both white and black women, are complicit with the more conservative features of Cold War masculinity, most notably misogynistic fears of an overly coddling or ball-busting “momism.” The domestic sphere’s reflection in miniature of social welfare’s “nanny state,” momism, accused Philip Wylie, David Levy, and Edward Strecker, momism directly threatened national security, since, as a “psychoneurosis,” it led ultimately to the male child’s “sissification.”\textsuperscript{8} Within Japanese American culture, in particular, Ichiro’s obedience to his mother’s wishes inadvertently reproduced the “mass delirium” excuse invoked by Japanese American renunciants during the 1950s repatriation procedures, an explanation for disloyalty which commonly complained that “coaching” and “coercion by ultranationalists” was responsible for decisions to defy the state. As Ngai indicates, “the problem with the overemphasis on intimidation and coercion is that it casts the renunciants as victims without individual agency.” “It constructs them,” she adds, “as people whose actions were controlled by others, whether coercive parents or fanatical pressure groups” and thus “reproduces stereotypes about Japanese culture as extremist, as manifested in patriarchal families and fanatical nationalism” (200).

Yet representations like Okada’s are less denials of agency than intransigent refusals to complete that unallied yet unified masculinity of the liberal civic ideal. Okada’s inability to locate a discrete, monolithic subject position for Ichiro—either all American, all Japanese, or assimilated blend—reflects not so much a lack of “agency” as
an inscrutable ambivalence about the given form of those possible identifications.
Ichiro’s failure to fully individuate along either racial or national lines leaves No-No Boy’s final message unresolved, another testament, claims Ling, to the impossibility of assimilationist ideology at a time when the allegedly “exotic” but “nonthreatening otherness” of Japanese Americans, their “patient, docile” fidelity to “law abiding traditions,” made them enticing boosters for a dominant narrative of “successful assimilationism” (361-362). “Okada wrote and published the novel in an era when Cold War ideological drives toward U.S. nationalism and legitimation of material abundance promoted tendencies to embrace a common national character and a ‘seamless’ American culture” (360). As “cultural mediators,” he adds further, Japanese American assimilationist stories were often drawn upon “to refute Communist bloc charges of racial discrimination and class oppression within the United States,” to promote “Japan’s postwar alliance with America in the global contest with Communism,” and to diffuse “civil rights agitation on the home front by African Americans” (361). Gainsaying those enclosures, No-No Boy elevates an important cultural contradiction, exposing the self-limiting dilemmas of inclusion and disavowing “the discourse that governed the relations of Japanese Americans to the mainstream” (363). In so doing, claims Ling, it “transformed the conventional novel by making it subversively unfamiliar and problematic” (375).

Navigating comparable struggles between autonomy and state submission was Dan Levin’s popular Mask of Glory (1949). For the Russian-born Levin, a Jewish American Marine Corps sergeant who participated in campaigns at Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima, war participation unearthed numerous problems of political legitimation and
Mask of Glory’s central task is to explore and expose them. Its many multiethnic, inquisitive soldiers, particularly the protagonist Glenn Manson, cast about for reasons to explain the “great cause” and “goal” of their compliance with war mobilization (71, 79). Despite the novel’s harsh portrayal of army racism, the sheer volume of questions and answers reveals the way a pluralist social calculus can privatize a diversity of interests, modulating and arranging them to accommodate each. For some, the war represents a chance to break ethnic stereotypes, “to prove,” like the Jewish character Rosie, that “the Hebes weren’t cowards” and could “fight like wildcats” (241, 260). For others, the war is fought “for your buddies” (187). For others still, many of whom confess to being on WPA “relief,” the war defends the globalizing principles of the New Deal, of “making a better living for people everywhere” in what Henry Wallace once promoted as the “Century of the Common Man” (234). Manson’s quasi-Communist confidant Anton Elbrus, furthermore, views the war as an opportunity to amend his earlier failure to volunteer in Spain, a second chance to be “onto something” that is “bigger than himself” (109-111). But, for most, getting “ahead” stands as provocation enough.

For Manson, cause for participation vacillates between romantic idealism—a coupling of Zane Grey-inspired Western myth and Protestant appeals to sacrifice—and a converse cynicism—a tendency to agree with Morton, his unit’s nay-saying “objector,” that they are all just “peons” fighting for “Number One.” At first, he is powerfully desirous of integration. “He tried to do everything the way the others did. He didn’t want to rebel,” Manson explains. “He was part of a panorama, and he felt that his own will didn’t count, that a great collective will was working on him and shaping him” (30). Manson’s “New Life” is undertaken as “habits of obedience without reflection were
grafted and grew within him” (45). He experiences a “spiritual craving,” a “starvation for reasons to explain his new inflexible universe.” He marvels at “the knitting of himself into the others, the surrender of his individual self” into the “one humble body” (45, 64). Overhearing men in his unit griping, Manson’s chief officer, Captain Prout, explains that the Marine Corps are “a church,” that they are “parts of a living body” with “a chance to obey.” “We need unity, and—a fixed order,” he tells them, and the chance to “forget what you were.” As it is in much World War I era preparedness literature, self-amnesia is therapeutic; in “sacred” self-forgetting one enters a “Christlike” transaction and becomes “something more” in the “Heavenly Order” (115-17).

The farther Glenn disappears into the military machine, however, the less he can comprehend a reason for his participation. “I want to think I’m something special,” he admits. “There must be something of Me, some Me” (178, 295). Eventually he recognizes that his motive is intensely personal. What ultimately triggers the epiphany is his relationship with Nobuko “Isabella” Watanbe, a Portuguese-Japanese American living in Hawaii who without reservation calls herself an American (123). Yet mindful of her “mixed heritage,” Glenn thinks of her only as a “gook,” “foreign, half-wild, dark.” Her unmoored heterogeneity troubles him with “all kinds of uneasy feelings” (123, 157-158). When he searches “the roots of his being” for his own “secret source,” however, he is assailed by a dizzying rush of familial recollection. He is not really Glenn Manson, the novel relents in the climactic scene, but Kasimir Minkiewicz, a Polish immigrant, a “plant without roots,” who went to war for the U. S. in order to undergo his own “transfiguration by fire” (297). “Flinging himself into the past,” he rages against the remembered humiliation of his family’s poverty and, as Polish immigrants, their
disaffiliation from the national mainstream. Manson believes that war participation, transforming him into “a shield against the heart of the land,” will bequeath that self-conferring badge of inclusion in the mystical corpus of the nation. “He could no longer be thought of as a boy, as an American boy, as a frightened, eager Polish-American boy. Now he was a symbol, he was manhood, he was power, he was wish-fulfillment” (326, 341). Summoning that sacramental conflation of national belonging and sacrificial violence, the smelting process through which “Americans are made,” his war service, he is assured, guarantees him a place in public life (299-300).

Like Socrates, however, whom he reads throughout the course of the narrative, Glenn ultimately dies for the state, thus ending his hoped for triumphal return with Isabella in one hand and the G.I. Bill in the other (199, 205). A sequence of violent battles at Dai Shima kills off virtually every member of his unit, and Levin’s prose cinematically pans the fly-bitten heaps of decaying, forgotten matter stacked in mounds about the beach. Once home, Lewicki, a fellow Polish American from Manson’s platoon, visits his family to see how they are holding up. Hotly, Glenn’s overwhelmed brother George declares, “They didn’t ask who we was. They just asked for volunteers” (346). Levin drives home the symbolic wedge between the rhetorically multicultural nation and its failure to acknowledge the “raggedy-ass kids” of the “grocery order families” who died to preserve it (347). Although the “immigrant volunteers” went to war to “prove” they “were really Americans,” ultimately they were “duped by the big-shots.” They “believed what the papers told them,” decrees the agonized brother, only “to be killed like flies and dumped in a ditch.” But now, he bitterly threatens, “Glenn and Kisimir is the same thing”; “because of Glenn…they were sealed into their country” (347-349).
Aspects of Levin’s point of view jibe with the democratic agonism of figures like Mailer and Jones. “In my green uniform,” Levin once commented about the war, “I could leave behind my disappointments over career, quandaries over marriage, and struggles over identity. War could even give me my theme, for I needed a theme to become a writer. I seized the chance as if I had been lying in wait for it” (Wald 245-246). Alan Wald points out that Levin’s drift from war opposition in the 1930s to embrace World War II ultimately as “a glorious campaign to destroy Nazism and fascism” was linked to “psychological benefits” that might accrue if he enlisted. Once an activist leader in Cleveland’s Communist-led American League for Peace and Democracy, a Popular Front organization, Levin’s participation in the war probably had less to do with particularly national stakes than his solidarity with global antifascism. Although he left the party in 1940, he was still, as Wald claims, “a Communist by inclination” (245). *Mask of Glory*, from its satiric title on, unfolds how the war opened political spaces for an unassimilated self-identification that the national security ethos could not contain. In the end, the novel eludes any synoptic expression of purpose and, instead, lays bare the paradox of sacrifice the war demanded, leveling charges of political betrayal and making the case for national change. “The worst thing is not to know why you got it,” concludes George, leaving the novel’s inquiry into the mysteries of participation finally unresolved.

Although differently positioned and at times fraught with sexist resentment, narratives of self-irresolution like Himes’s, Okada’s, and Levin’s resisted the Good War’s hegemonic cooption of racial and ethnic heterogeneity, its symbolic abduction of minority figures to stand in as assimilated and representative emblems of American
superiority. Dissonant and incomplete, their representational failures renounced inclusion in the anesthetized community of the postwar consensus. But if their patriarchal subtexts built their complaints on a bedrock of violated manhood, some women writers advanced their own critique of “domestic containment”: those ideologies of “female subordination and domesticity” mushrooming across the cultural marketplace in the war’s aftermath. And theirs was as difficult a protest to wage. Eager to rehabilitate and reharmonize the disrupted sexual economy “restructured” by nearly two decades of depression and war, national security organs hounded the country’s disorganized gender relations, imploring the nation to “get itself together” and restore the “traditional gender roles” that were the building blocks of national security (May 90-91). Chief among their worries was finding employment and housing for the legions of broken and maladjusted veterans returning from Europe and the Pacific, men no longer resourceful enough to persevere in a world without military routine and structure of command. Adding to their dismay were the “domineering,” “independent,” and, worse, “promiscuous” women who, having absconded the claustrophobic private sphere during mobilization, refused to return to the natural separation of an older domestic economy.10

To address the concerns of such a fragile social milieu, claims Gordon Hutner, popular “readjustment” novels came forth “to tranquilize for the middle class the trauma from which so many returning soldiers suffered” and to urge restored belief “in a coherent comprehensible society, where ex-GIs and their loved ones” could “learn again how to conduct themselves” (243). Anticipating the psychological hardships and challenges of the healing process were “representations of adjustment” like Zelda Popkin’s *The Journey Home* (1945), Gertrude Mallette’s *Once is Forever* (1946), Alice
Parson’s *I Know What I’d Do* (1946), Betsey Barton’s *The Long Walk* (1948), and Elizabeth Janeway’s *The Question of Gregory* (1949). But others like Maritta Wolff castigated the revived domesticity thriving in the postwar years, indicting its constricted possibilities as well as the alleged moral altruism of its returning male chaperones. Drawing connections between the war-making of the “domestic” home front and the damage the war wreaked in the everyday lives of the “domestic” household, *About Lyddy Thomas* (1947), for instance, brings the war home in the most dramatic of ways, exposing the war’s disruptions of its veterans' psychic health.

Redirecting “entrapment” themes resonating through war fiction by male writers, *About Lyddy Thomas* relates the story of one woman’s harrowing flight from her murderous, alcoholic husband, an abusive returned veteran whose “psychoneurotic” homecoming seeks to restore the prewar arrangement (131). But Lyddy’s years of independence—especially the satisfaction she experienced as a worker at an aircraft plant (“one of these ex-lady riveters”) and in a brief affair with Marco Riggs, an affectionate, respectful admirer—leaves her with a sense of “a whole world of things going on” beyond the “bottled up” compound of her home, “the kitchen sink” world Ben expects her to resume (75, 198, 331, 387). She longs to travel, to listen to jazz, to eat in restaurants, to drink beer with friends. “I’m not even the same person that you kissed good-bye and thought about all that time over there,” she tells Ben, “I can’t help it, I’m just not. I’m so different” (76). Wolff depicts Ben’s surging aptitude for brute force as a propensity quickened by the war and fostered by American military training. When Lyddy finally informs Ben that she wants a divorce, he forcefully repairs his dominion
through a sequence of savage physical assaults, a vicious rape, and finally aspirations to murder her.

In one sense, Wolff’s dolorous novel could be taken as part of the larger domestic preparedness outlook, readying citizens for postwar trials and acclimating them to the psychic demands accruing in the war’s aftermath. But About Lyddy Thomas also presents another portrait—especially graphic for its time—of impossible subjectification, a dissembling breakdown of the self’s possibility in the social roles proffered by postwar gender norms and the dichotomously structured artifice of the nuclear home. The bulk of the novel figures Lyddy’s flight from Ben in the same symbolic registers of the slave narrative. Ben hunts her as his rightful property, a claim with which the community and the legal structure seem reluctant to interfere. Assisted by a friend’s money, she is secreted through a network of YWCA rooms in clandestine passage from city to city, a trek that finally returns her to a hidden location in her hometown. Along the way, Wolff also shows other households destroyed by the absence of unreturned husbands and sons killed in action. The novel’s frantic, mounting tension at last leaks away when Ben, having discovered Lyddy’s whereabouts, is stabbed to death by Lyddy’s neighbor, Mother Macciatto, after drunkenly chasing the Italian matriarch’s daughter-in-law to her doorstep with apparently lascivious designs. That Mother Macciatto delivers the grisly coup de grâce is yet another symbolic stroke since she is another of the text’s psychically damaged figures, a mother deranged by a refusal to accept her son’s death in the war. About Lyddy Thomas thus reveals the placidly normative order of the homefront’s insulated “rear” for the crisis zone of a war front that it actually is. “The god-damned
war,” one character utters in the final scene, “What’d they mean, it’s over? So another hunk of it ends here in an alley back of nowhere” (447).

Like Himes, Okada, and Levin, Wolff disrupts the constellating rhetoric of family virtue that dominated the conservative organs of the cultural industries during demobilization. Assailing “warm hearth” ideologies of the postwar domestic revival, tropes that honored the family domicile as a “secure private nest,” Wolff’s acerbic proto-feminist novel anticipated critiques of suburban domesticity that would swell at least one current of the Second Wave (May 3). Exploring the enlarged range of desire that war emergency presented women, it also thwarts the postwar amnesia that pulpits, marketing agencies, television, and other media outlets encouraged in their daily tributes to domestic bliss. Indeed, it is Gogarty Hall, the rollicking household where Lyddy finally lands, that presents alternative visions of family life in the jocular fellowship of its chummy boardinghouse community and makeshift jazz club. Thus rendering Lyddy Thomas as a figure unmade by domestic enclosures and hunted for her violation of them, Wolff defied the compulsory femininity shuttling women back into the idealized havens of the private sphere. But if these writers crafted portraits of self-incompletion, others used the profound upheaval of the war itself to search for substantiations of positive value beyond their subjective lack. Searching for forms of meaning extrinsic to the “negative” parameters of liberal ideology, they presented stories of personal completion in visions of community life, visions radically at odds with the monist insulations of the liberal-capitalist state. In their case, the experience of war-making itself, of collective military invasion, rendered no self-fulfilling citizenship in the nation’s “trial by fire” but a powerful guilt that finally denationalized their point of view.
II. Simpatico and Sympathy: Narratives of Dissociation; or, the Wavering Line Between Love and War

A decade before William Lederer and Eugene Burdick’s cloddish “ugly American” went roaming abroad, a handful of U.S novelists fashioned World War II stories that labored to dissolve the national security state’s Manichean moralism. A year after the war ended, Robert Lowry, named “the best writer in America” by Ernest Hemingway, published *Casualty* (1946), a semi-autobiographical novella about a private named Joe Hammond working in a photoreconnaissance and public relations office in Italy. Deemed “defeatist and antiwar” by his commanding officers, the drafted Lowry, like his protagonist, was court-martialed and demoted to private for “misuse of army equipment and stationary.”12 Greenwich Village hipster that he was, one of Anais Nin’s “transparent children,” Lowry regretted his participation in the war and wonders in *Casualty* (originally titled “War”) at citizens’ unthinking compliance with mobilization. “Why haven’t more of us done more desperate things against this life?” Hammond considers, “Why haven’t more of us cracked up, insulted officers, gone over the hill?” Balked by the knowledge that “he could go nowhere the army wouldn’t find him,” his entrapment narrative echoes other contemporaneous depictions of total war’s social incarceration. “[O]nce a man became part of an army,” Lowry writes, “his reasons were all gone, good or bad, he was just part of an army, doing whatever the army made him do” (63). Against the internationalism of figures like Shaw and Hersey, Lowry excoriates the military’s “powerful propaganda machine calling out Liberation and yet changing nothing, allowing nothing to be changed. Renting houses for the officers to live in from the Italian fascists, flaunting well-fed bodies before a starving population” (63).
If a friend/enemy antinomy structures national belonging, Lowry’s *Casualty*, a literary elision of such self-demarcation, constructs a denationalization narrative, reaching out only for some non-categorical dimension of unqualified common humanity. Eschewing his affiliation with the army—“a Fascist institution itself” in which individuals strive only for “personal betterment” and a chance to “enhance themselves”—Hammond disavows all logic of “sides,” not as toleration of the fascist “side” but to annul any exclusive counteractive association with U.S.13 “He felt that he was on neither side of the war,” Lowry writes, “It was *their* war”: “The enemy out there, hundreds of miles away, was an unknown quantity, something Joe had never seen. But he saw these fools, these great men of the American Army…[who] could adapt themselves to the inhuman army system because they were nobodies themselves, men without personal morals, men who did not think or stand for anything” (118). Lowry appropriates Stephen Crane’s “unknown quantity,” an attribution of self linked to the imperial context of the 1890s, simultaneously to describe and negate the logic of unknown enemies and to point out the emptiness of that surviving discourse in the “bunch of heels” that now constitute the “invading army” of the U.S. (119-120). Hammond’s cancellation of military virtue, of its “blank experience,” nullifies the binary structure of national inclusion, opening self-imagining to the more substantive possibilities in unaffiliated, transpersonal joy (119). Attempting to outrun the military’s “dead life,” he is killed by an automobile in the final scene, but not before acknowledging the common life he shares with an Italian laundress—lousy, dressed in “dirty rags, bathless”—filling him with an emotion he can only call “love.” You are a lovely person,” he thinks, “the most beautiful creature I’ve ever seen” (120-121).
Such redemptive identifications are always fraught with misgiving, treading a narrow course between communal humanitarian desire and the colonizing universalism of the military transnational. Given that the power relations between U.S. soldiers and the citizens of countries they occupy are highly asymmetrical, and given that the objects that inspire such declarations are often women in uncertain, usually desperate circumstance, the advocacy for so nebulous a quality as love carries no small share of wincing indecision. Yet unlike Hemingway’s Spain or James Michener’s South Pacific, where war experiences seem always bound up with compounding, self-confident expansions of being, Lowry’s text earnestly yearns for forms of self-extension connected to shared community and common good. Like Alvah Bessie, his longing to break free from national constraints is centrifugal, crossing lines of class, sex, and region of birth to share a sense of interconnectivity and contingency with a wider, more humane world. However entangled the pastiche of motives these outward-bound projections of self may be, at their best they move in opposition to a national security ethos which typically reigned in human desire disconnected from national interest.

Other writers focused similarly on the occupation of Italy and transnational love for its disclosure of human immanence, its evisceration of nation-based topographies, its “sympathetic” and “simpatico” versions of interactive belonging. While Italy was the arena with which they were most intimately familiar, many having served there during the war, it was also the war’s most unstable and inconsistent political space: a constantly shifting zone of liminality which they celebrated all the more for its indeterminacy. Occupied by both Allied and Axis powers, its symbolic territory was both disrupted by and disruptive of the war binary. At times approaching caricature or outright idolatry of
Italians, novels like John Horne Burns’s *The Gallery* (1947), Alfred Hayes’s *The Girl on the Via Flaminia* (1949), and Mitchell Goodman’s *The End of It* (1961) nonetheless resist Good War nostalgia, offering disparate modes of internationalism unhinged from the Cold War’s paranoid planetary fantasia.

According to John Diggins, John Horne Burns, a second lieutenant and intelligence officer during the war, was among the finest of American war writers for “his profound ability to see the liberation from the Italian point of view, thereby peeling rhetoric away from reality and providing an incisive critique of American ‘ideals’ in action.” “[T]he one literary document of World War II that succeeds in rising above a narcissistic nationalism,” he proclaimed, *The Gallery* “should remain a sobering reminder of the Americans' limitations for such transcendence.”14 Such a claim stands in stark opposition to John Aldridge’s disparaging assessment of Burns as an ersatz “neo-Hemingway”—an assessment he also ascribed to Lowry—rescuing one of the best war novels (or story-cycle) from wrongful relegation to the dustbin (107-109). Told through a sequence of vignettes, alternately titled “promenades” and “portraits,” *The Gallery* is one relentless howl of execration, a bristling account of national dispossession and portal to zones of alterity thriving in the demimonde of the Galleria Umberto Primo in Naples (as well as Casablanca and Algiers). In contrast to Hersey’s blithely optimistic military transnationals, Burns’s miasmatic Italian arcade plays host to a throng of American parasites: an incontinent population of drug addicts, syphilitics, alcoholics, xenophobic officials, thieving racist priests, puritanical ministers, war profiteers, and opportunistic Red Cross nurses. So many “stupid little lives,” he maintains, misled by “myth and delusion” (17). The unflinching opening portrait, for instance, studies Michael Patrick in
a belabored alcoholic routine, marauding his way through the war’s crass “merchandising
and selling,” in search of lost love and connection (13, 16). The first of many anti-
pilgrims, Patrick sets the stage for the “river-rushing of people fleeing and seeking and
pretending and betraying” that flow through Burns’s angry commentary on American
war-making abroad (17).

A graphic, unambiguous meditation on the form of modern personhood itself, The
Gallery gives lengthy consideration especially to the failed structures of national identity
that war participation so vividly displays, projecting individuals into circumstances that
reveal their fundamental artifice. Against a valorized liberal subjectivity, an American
“neatness of soul,” Burns posits a seamy underworld of human “synecdoches” (his word),
“dots in a circle that never stops,” wrestlers with a “riddle” of personification that the war
has “shaken up” (20, 342). “I think it was in Casablanca,” he writes, “that the bottom
dropped out of my personality,” and “it dawned on me that maybe I’d come overseas to
die” (20-21). Painfully “uprooted,” divested of national “abstracts,” “every pattern of life
shrivels up,” “the logic of Main Street or the Weltanschauung of Samuel Goldwyn”
unravels (21-22). In his portrait of “Hal,” an anti-Shakespearean redaction of St.
Crispen’s Day-style war glorification, he presents a soldier who suffers from vertiginous
panic attacks and a gnawing sense of the self’s inner vacancy. Leaving New York harbor
for the war, Burns writes, the liberal idealist earlier felt “something being lifted from
him,” as if he was a “free agent responsible to no one” (67). But as the war begins to
“seep into his bones,” he becomes unhinged, “reduced to a zero” before its “intense
displacement.” Like “a twin whose double has died at birth,” he “hunt[s] between
sections of himself” for some “rational explanation” that finally deserts him (72-73). “He
was seeking something missing in himself,” Burns writes, “something like his own
double, which would confront him with the image of something positive” (63, 84).
Whittling away at “the mysticism and metaphor” of national fictions, a mythos that
impresses bodies into ruinous expressions of “duty,” The Gallery stages another drama of
imaginative failure, a fracturing of national compensation or self-resolution (89).

Burns’s 1947 text interferes with the wholesome complacency and platitudes of
the postwar Truman malaise. In opposition to its crude materialism and worship of
security, the ideological vestments of the consensus society, he predicates only
unadorned, spontaneous human community as the single source of social value, “the
image of something positive.” “I remember…the first time I’d come upon the European
idea of being sympathetic,” he writes, “an idea which doesn’t exist in the American
language. It came to mean much to me—sympathetique, simpatico—anything, so long as
that sympathy existed” (49). A kind of borderless and unsentimental love, Burns’s notion
of sympathy, a “positive” and more adequately “vital” conception of liberty in the
egalitarian community, serves as antidote to the more rigidly demarcated subjectivities of
the Cold War binary. It is a quality manifested most explicitly in the sexual interzone of
Momma’s Bar, a queer-encoded space reluctant to calcify selfhood into some impervious
autonomy. “Momma tried to spell out for herself some theory of good and evil,” he
writes, “but the older she got and the more she saw, the less clear cut the boundaries
became to her….The masculine and the feminine weren’t nicely divided in Momma’s
mind as they are to a biologist. They overlapped and blurred in life. This trait was what
kept life and Momma’s bar from being black and white” (144-145). Embracing that
condition of self-permeation and contingency, the condition the national security state
most feared and pathologized, Burns’s utopian netherworld serves as a libidinal
counternarrative to the emotionally frostbitten, socially cauterized normativities
championed by the Good War’s defense of the heterosexist family. From a clandestine
culture of back-alley trysts in the gay underworld, illicit intimacies forge intersocial
connections to remedy the disconsolately “legitimate” world of war and violence that
surround it. Gore Vidal pronounced it “the best book of the Second War,” but Burns
never achieved the same prestige, writing only two more poorly received novels before
dying of a brain hemorrhage from alcoholism in 1953.

Another radical novelist to employ an Italian backdrop was Alfred Hayes, a writer
most famous for penning the socialist “Ballad of Joe Hill.” A British-born poet and a
screenwriter, Hayes lived and worked in the U.S. much of his life, serving in the Special
Services division of the U.S. military during the war. Although his first novel, All Thy
Conquests (1946), dealt with war corruption in Italy, The Girl on the Via Flaminia (1949)
gained him the most critical and economic acclaim. Like Lowry, Hayes’s depiction of
American liberators satirizes Good War memory, refusing to distinguish between the
fascist occupiers and the contemptuously smug, culturally illiterate U.S. forces that
replace them. Huge American trucks rumble through the opening pages, for instance,
indifferently trammeling the Roman citizens they have just ostensibly just “rescued” (5).
But the story’s central conflict involves an American inability to break modes of
comprehension linked to a liberal-capitalist heritage: the commodification of social life
by a market culture that reduces all human relationship to a calculus of self-interest and
exchange. Like Casualty and The Gallery, Hayes’s novel shows the war imaginary for its
obstruction of sympathy, its privatized hardening of lines between self and other which is finally expressed as a refusal of love.

Mirroring the nation’s “conquering” of Italy in microcosm is the novel’s central relationship between Robert, an American serviceman, and Lisa, a destitute young Italian woman. Having reached a point of desperation, Lisa exchanges sex with Robert, though it brands her with a “yellow card” as a prostitute, for his provision of food and shelter (35). The compromise is humiliating for Lisa, especially since sex in largely Catholic Rome is intimately and intricately “complex,” bound up in a web of other social realities: the laws of the land, gendered behavior standards, religious ideals, and her hopes for the future (86). An “ad man” in civilian life, Robert is incapable of registering cultural distinctions, the many shades which tinge Lisa’s every concession to circumstance. “[Y]ou may have Leonardo da Vinci,” Robert tersely admits, “but we’ve got U.S. Steel” (37). Submitting their interchange to the “simple” logics of purchasing leverage and contractual obligation, he complains at the messy situation that unfolds: “I thought I would just be exchanging something somebody needed for something I needed. Something somebody wanted for something I wanted” (86-87). For him, “the deal” is a balanced swapping of goods and services on a singular and symmetrical scale (121). “I went to bed with a girl. She was hungry. All right: the account’s square, isn’t it?” (120). Perturbed that “only the girls” are marked under the indecency statutes, Lisa will not be subdued (135). Robert offers to marry her and take her to safety in the U.S., but his ostensible gesture of goodwill is made in the colonizing language of possession and ownership. Lisa flees down the Via Flaminia, escaping not simply Robert but also the
constraints of the American salvation myth, the false mutuality of the sexual contract, and
the Good War’s veneration of utopian marriage.

More like Burns, Mitchell Goodman employs the love theme to portray the
opening of the self to a radicalizing contingency and sympathy with others. The End of It
(1961), dubbed “the only good writing by an American about our part in World War II”
by Hayden Carruth, is a blistering antiwar polemic and another story to seize upon the
theme of “sympathy,” even if it tilts at times into an overly rhapsodic hymn to Italian
virtue. Radicalized by American military involvement in global affairs, Goodman—
along with his partner, the poet Denise Levertov—worked as an organizer in the 1960s
Peace Movement, an effort he hoped would morally offset his experience as an artillery
lieutenant during World War II. Awakened from “apolitical” insularity by the Korean
War, he became an antiwar activist, eventually joining Norman Mailer in 1968’s
Pentagon demonstrations against the American involvement in Vietnam.17 (Mailer
chronicles those events in Armies of the Night [1968], winner of both the Pulitzer Prize
and the National Book Award.) Goodman’s antiwar organizing and speaking eventually
landed him—along with Benjamin Spock, Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Michael
Ferber, and Marcus Raskin—in a conspiracy trial in which he was charged with agitating
violation of the Selective Service Act of 1948 (Mitford 31). Urging Stanford faculty to
sign a “pledge of mass civil disobedience” in solidarity with student draft resistance,
coauthoring “A Call to Conscientious Resistance to the War” with Levertov and poet
Henry Braun, and carting a coffin through the streets of Washington with a like-minded
coterie of World War II veterans, Goodman’s energetic resistance to the national security
state and its organs of administration lasted the remainder of his life.18
The End of It, however, represents the literary emergence of that point of view. Similar to Burns’s and Lowry’s novels, its vision of unraveling nationality countermands the state’s justification for legitimate violence, lunging outwardly and affectionately for community in the open political society alone. The focalizing soldier, the euphemistically named Lieutenant Freeman, reveals an increasing alienation from the war’s purposes as the novel proceeds. Splicing the phrase “do not know” countless times into the dialogues and descriptions of events, Goodman conveys a growing sense of disorientation at the spectacle as soldiers are pathetically paraded off to death in mindless collaboration with the “machine” of the war’s “corporation” (24). Conditioned unthinkingly to “fill the holes in the line,” the men “play soldiers” with no justification for their sacrifice. The “crumbling of his simple certainties” worsens as Freeman learns that his colonel was a foreman in a Ford plant. The war?: just another “[m]ass production, a saturation of the market, invented and perfected by the technicians of the Corporation” (56, 58). “It grew, as all the best corporations grow,” he ruminates, “until it was beyond the comprehension of any one man, and existed for its own sake” (28). A “perversion of nature,” a necrophiliac worship of the machine, his scenario of men at war is of fiends “in a wild dance,” an orgy “in rhythm with the guns” of the “armed corporation” (24, 131). Winsome “Conquerors,” wedged in “the immaculate contraption” of the “automatic war machine,” the U.S. military’s “liberation” contrasts angrily with the warm “vitality” and “joy in life” exerted by Siena’s native villagers and their rustic communal customs (20).

Goodman bluntly invokes the paradox of military service for the liberal state as Freeman unravels in a “vertigo of not-knowing” (215). Observing a scene of brutality as
it unfolds before him, Freeman is assaulted by a rush of questions: “How can a war be fought with anything but volunteers; how can you ask a man to die until he has offered?” (55). “[E]verything in this war is necessary,” he shrewdly declares, “except that I should die, because if I die than it is all unnecessary” (77). Casting about him for some reassurance, the contradiction of dying for a country continues to haunt him: “You’re dead. For your country. But now you have no country, and if you are one of a million dead in the war, or twenty million, who will count you as one?” (71). “My countryman,” he demands in exasperation, “Where does the machine end and the man begin?” When the men of his company rape a local woman—a personal atrocity but also clearly Goodman’s metaphor for the figurative rape of the Italian occupation itself—the borders of his national affiliation are finally undone. He elects to fight no longer for the Four Freedoms—impugned now as the freedom “to steal, to rape, to destroy, to kill”—but for the “final freedom,” the “freedom from death.” He becomes, in the end, “a stranger to himself” (123).

The malignant culture he flees—a knot of capitalist exploitation, imperial conquest, and masculine violence—leads him to search for an interactive life in combination with “others,” with others who live “for the love of life in each other” (111, 117-118). He discovers his political ideal through conversations with the Italian Lorenzo, a member of a band of antifascist partisan guerrillas with whom he now fights. “What is it, your liberty,” Lorenzo asks, “this word you speak as if it belonged to you?” He expounds upon on its emptiness of value and ultimate elective affinity with a culture of permanent war: “It is the right to do whatever does not harm another. That is what you mean. Which means to do nothing for the general good, which is the same as to act
against the general good. But it is even less than that—it is the freedom to loot and steal, and call it profit. But to make profit is to steal. To buy cheap and sell dear. It is war. Your country is always at war, it has no peace” (213). Lorenzo identifies the form of American social organization loyal to the liberal contract to be itself a heuristic of war: “The waste, each man grabbing what he needs to live, and then more, because he is afraid of starving and so he can never have enough. That is a war, each man against every other man. To grab, and to defend himself by wealth from the grabbing of others. It is disorder…preying on one another. And calling it freedom” (213-215).

An idyllic, wine-swilling contingent flush with a lust for communal life, Goodman’s Robin Hood-esque band of brothers admittedly spills over into the bathetic at times when his sermonizing on the purity and perfection of Italian living inflames to the point of overkill. But in opposition to the war machine—German, Italian, or American—which makes “things” of life, Freeman’s newfound collective struggles viscerally for the preservation of a genuine, immanent freedom against the diverse fascisms of all nationalities (245):

Men of intelligence and energy, they had made a choice with their eyes open; they came up from the grave of their slaughtered country to fight another kind of war in their own way. Not plugging along the roads in the mud, to find relief in the occasional pleasure of destruction. Not moving blind in corporate masses to manufacture total destruction. They fight out of the need to live, to uprise: in small groups, to clear the ground, to cut out the diseased parts of their own bodies, to destroy a malignant growth with the knife, with fire. Pruning, for the sake of
new growth. To atone. To bleed. But more than that: to rise again from the prison that had become a tomb. (206)

Goodman, another author to abscond the entrapment paradigm, maligns the enclosed society for, in trying to preserve freedom, making of it a “prison” and “tomb.” At the conclusion of *The End of It*, an American solicitor offers Freeman a trip home with an expense account to be a preparedness worker, to “help the war effort out by traveling around to boost morale in the factories” (270). Choosing his international collective as “his people,” he moves “out of the machine” and immerses himself in the crowd. “He walked away from what he had been” (283, 285). He becomes, echoing Burns, “simpatico” (212)

One could certainly argue, and with good authority, that the kind of cosmopolitan sensibility that “chooses” one’s people is itself—like Joppolo’s and others’—a symptom of imperial desire. But unlike Hersey’s exported Americanism and not unlike Alvah Bessie’s antifascist commitment, Goodman’s plunging of the self into the mass opts for visions of mutually substantive, egalitarian community in sharp contrast to the culture of self-preservation and privatized security of Cold War neoliberalism. Its stark revision of vital center masculinity, its dissolving of HUAC’s “dossier self,” its search for positive self-valuation against market-based versions of negative freedom: together, these scenarios mock the vacuous personhood of the national security model. Its quest for *incompletion*, for reciprocity, that is, resists the obsessive project of self-ownership fashioned by modern subjects, that instrumentalist self-as-possession identity that “shepherds” Being into the designs of the state (Burke 79-80). In refusing to complete
that reification, Goodman opts for a democratic personality that would define the better version of an ascending Counterculture and its refusal of permanent war.

**III. The Double V: African American Writers and Comparative Internationalism**

While racial divides persisted unabated on the homefront, prominent black citizens, galvanized by war mobilization, uttered a rhetoric of equality and freedom with renewed frequency and force. That the nation made war against racist ideology—despite the continued and hypocritical observance of Jim Crow law—aroused sections of the African American population to line up behind the flag. Luminaries like Walter White, Roy Wilkins, Joe Louis, and Duke Ellington lent their support to the war, subordinating factional strife to promote unified cooperation. Unfortunately, war mobilization’s embrace of pluralist rhetoric reflected not an unqualified turn toward democratic ideals as much as a pragmatic concession to the needs of national security. “Not only was integration necessary if the armed forces hoped to meet their manpower requirements,” argues Michael Hogan, “it was also essential if American leaders were going to block the spread of radicalism at home, particularly in the African American community, and present the United States as the champion of democracy worldwide” (425). An amicus brief later filed by the Justice Department in *Brown v. Board*, for instance, reproduced a revealing wartime statement from Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In it, Acheson worried that, at a time when national harmony was most needed, “hostile reaction [to American racial practices] among normally friendly peoples…is growing in alarming proportions” and jeopardizing “the effective maintenance of our moral leadership of the free and democratic nations” (Gerstle 250). In such an ideologically unstable milieu, “diversity” thus emerged as a discursive stitching point that, while never substantiating
racial equality in any real way, could enfold the tension of racial accommodation within an inoculating grammar of national unity. That slight of hand was implemented in such a way that the war and its aftermath could boast of increased minority inclusion even as the flexibility and power of that expanded body of citizens closed down. Powerfully promoted in the hugely popular Freedom Train exhibit and presided over by sentinels of the American Heritage Foundation which produced it, liberal “inclusion” had a tempering effect on society, and was crucial to the production of national security programs.

Yet the “recognition” of African Americans in official wartime “representation” also in many ways intensified the problems of the color line (Ehrenburgh 8). Although diversity consecrated the morality of American war aims in opposition to its enemy’s, the reality of their celebrated inclusion only exacerbated the felt sense of inequality for many black citizens and soldiers. Contradictions were reflected from the top down. George C. Marshall and Henry L. Stimson, both of whom served as Secretary of State and Secretary of War/Defense, were unabashed white supremacists, believing that “leadership is not embedded in the negro race” (Adams 84). Pointing most obviously to discrepancies between rhetoric and reality were policies that segregated the armed forces and relegated of nearly all black companies to maintenance details. And despite continued segregation, the comparative proximity of black and white soldiers and workers during mobilization set loose its own torrent of social spasms, everyday reminders of intractable racial fissures running through national ideals.

In a variety of ways, the African American experience of World War II and a changing national discourse spurred a dynamic culture of dissent and refueled the dialectic of race and nation that had long shaped black activism. Most prominently, the
Pittsburg Courier’s famed “Double V” campaign—victory against racism at home and abroad—gave political duality to the war, resignifying the mono-directional power of the war binary by instituting a second civil variant to amplify the war’s stakes in domestic contexts. Jennifer James rightly argues that African American war writing, in particular, invoked a potent “political instrumentality,” delineating the contradictions of home front exclusion even as it documented inclusive accounts of minorities engaged in the nation’s most esteemed work (26). If war possesses a tendency toward “gross dichotomizing,” one that, as war theorists like Paul Fussell claim, “insists upon identification with one side or the other of two opposing forces,” James points out that African Americans, “as racially and culturally hybrid,” “have traditionally existed between oppositional terms” (27). That assimilative failure, like the homefront protests of Chester Himes, would prove potentially combustible outcomes for the national security state as African American literati used the occasion of black participation to hoist problems of allegiance more deliberately into view.

William Gardner Smith, having returned home to Temple University after a stint in Germany as a clerk-typist for the army and contributing reporter for Afro-American and the Pittsburg Courier, authored Last of the Conquerors (1948) as a student. Published in the same year as Truman’s desegregation of the armed forces, the novel’s politics are enfolded in an awkward double-bind. On one hand, the novel excoriates the nation’s profoundly contradictory racial realities: its invocation of self-congratulatory democratic credos while in reality defaulting on them. Smith’s crucial maneuver is to suggest, on more than one occasion, that the black experience of fascist Germany is imminently preferable to African American life in the United States. On the other hand,
Last of the Conquerors delivers its protest through a highly masculinist lens, an imperial demeanor James describes as “an extension of a nationalist drive that finds its political expression in domination” (207). Although Paul Gilroy views its black man-white woman relationship as potentially utopian, James positions Last of the Conquerors as a “narrative of innocence,” diverting attention “away from the role African American men often willingly played within the military machine and a culture of violence” (205).

Smith centers his novel in Germany during the postwar occupation. But although Nazism has been vanquished, racial persecution still survives in the “nigger hell” of Bremburg, an integrated U.S. base presided over by Captain Polke, a racist Texan who lectures black men on their racial inferiority and discourages their mingling with white women (111). Although purportedly waging a fight for global democracy, the fictional characters read non-fictional reports of homefront slights, of U.S. General Joseph T. McNarney’s claim that “the Negro” will need one hundred years of evolution to achieve parity with whites. In another real world cameo, they read about the blinding of returned black veteran Isaac Woodward by one of South Carolina’s finest, Sheriff Linwood Shull. Smith’s sardonic recollection of the U.S. as “the land of the Common Man,” “where all are guaranteed the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” reads bitterly against the novel’s portrayal of the American Legion’s continued segregation. When the chief protagonist, Hayes Dawkins, interviews a German ex-POW who served time at Fort Leonard Wood in the U.S., the former inmate recounts an experience where black guards escorted him to a restaurant to eat only to be barred from entering the establishment themselves. “In America,” he claims, “they do almost the same thing with your people—the black Americans—as the Nazis did here to the Jews”
 Particularly biting to the cultural world of 1948 would be one black character’s defection to the Soviet sector in search of equality beyond the grasp of American MPs (36).

Things only get worst when the military imposes the odious Gillem Plan—an actual historical order designed to decrease the number of black soldiers in the service through vaguely defined pretenses of “undesirability,” an oblique condition invariably left up to white, often Southern, commanders to determine (184). Dawkins and a team of black clerks are forced to type deceitful reports on their “lazy” and “inefficient” fellow soldiers, reports which lead to the discharge of half the battalion to be replaced, even more insultingly, by German POWs (180). Those who disobey are marked for “insubordination,” another capricious charge their commanders measure without oversight (192). Although their white captain is eager to befriend them, his undisguised anti-Semitism constitutes merely another strain of American prejudice. In a metatextual moment, Hayes thinks: “I’ll write a book about how Germans listen attentively to speeches on democracy and then look around at the segregated camps and race riots over white women and listen to the slurs on Negro soldiers on the streets, and then how the Germans in the coffee houses along the Hauptstrasse and Berlinerstrasse gather and laugh at the Americans who preach a sermon on what they, themselves, do not know” (125).

Remarkably, postwar German society is accepting and inclusive of black American soldiers. Basking unmolested on German beaches with his white girlfriend, Ilse Muller, Dawkins reflects on the irony that he had to come to “the land of hate” to experience real democracy (35). Another black soldier poised for a return home to “white folks country” breaks down, unwilling finally to leave the “freedom” he has
discovered in Germany (56). “It’s the first place I was ever treated like a goddamn man,” he exclaims. “You know what the hell I learned? That a nigger ain’t no different from nobody else. I had to come over here to learn that. I hadda come over here and let the Nazis teach me that. They don’t teach that stuff back in the land of the free” (57). Even “Hitler’s children,” the encircling legion of fawning white women, declare Germany’s superiority to the U.S.: “In your country you may not walk down the street with a white woman,” one proudly announces, “The white Americans hang you from trees if you do” (27). Continuously reminded of their situation’s gross incongruity, Ilse and Hayes are terrorized and shaken down by swarming white MPs in Jeeps as they surveil the American apartheid’s segregated sexual economy, eventually beating Hayes into a pulp and submitting Ilse to a humiliating and unnecessary VD inspection (83, 172-76). To parse the confusion for a confused and querulous Ilse, Hayes thinks, “I could have told her that when Germans come to America they are no longer German but American, and being American, and white, they would be in one corner and I in another with a concrete wall in between” (23).

Smith’s odd vindication of a nation only recently divested of “Aryan” rule is surely hyperbolic. Like the dissolution of “sides” in other writers’ treatment of the Italian occupation, however, it is intended to elevate into better public view the schism running not only through Good War memory but one that would obstruct recognition of the ideological coherence connecting Berlin and Birmingham. Yet where others attempt to convey a non-colonizing expansion of sympathy and outward bound love, Smith’s figuration of Dawkins admittedly shares an elective affinity with valorizations of male sexual conquest, co-opting the white female body as a site upon which to act out
colonizing fantasies as “the last of the conquerors.” As occupiers, James argues, Hayes and his friends exploit the country’s economic deterioration, eliding the fact that German women’s “neediness had been created to a great extent by the very American forces that quite purposefully blasted their city to pieces” (206). “The territorializing of German women’s bodies,” she argues, thus “places their relationships with black soldiers within a complex system of compliance and dependency fostered under American military governance” (204). In the imperial situation, “The black male body suddenly becomes very American”: “Hayes sees himself as a racialized subject seeking freedom from oppression, but he does not know himself as an already nationalized subject; even if he exists only in the margins of the nation, he carries within him ideologies shaped by his emergence within its boundaries” (207).

While aspects of this cautionary reading are undeniably true, the sense that Dawkins’s character is “already nationalized” comes with no small share of difficulty. Within the historical taxonomy of U.S. nationality, Dawkins’s black phenotype automatically rendered him Other—a somatically encoded, ascriptively assigned bottom rung of the nation’s racial hierarchy. As Nikhil Singh suggests, the “negative dialectic” in which “black intellectuals and activists recognized…racial belonging operates at scales that are both smaller and larger than the nation-state, and voiced visions of communal possibility that consistently surpassed the conceptions available in the prevailing idioms of U.S. political culture.” Literary figurations like Smith’s, consequently, might be seen to promote forms of communal identity that “cannot be reduced to the nationalist teleology of American universalism and its dominant discursive frames of market individualism and civic-nationalism” (44). Although he searches for self-completion
through military participation, furthermore, Dawkins’s “service” in Germany is—crucially—not that of a voluntary national emissary but of a subject drafted by the state, an expendable unit conscripted to protect the interests of a national security edifice that not only fails to protect him but, thus far, has only shown him indignity and harm. As a draftee, Hayes Dawkins is, in a sense, doubly disenfranchised: racially barred from equal inclusion in “white man’s country” and stripped of political protection by the draft’s evisceration of the social contract. His station is not self-amplifying, to put it another way, but self-dispossessing. As James readily admits, “The internal sexual/racial war through which that manhood will be lost or found takes on a greater significance than the external war waged by the nation because fighting with the white man in his wars has not brought about the swift, permanent acknowledgement of manhood participation in war has promised; he must, therefore, fight against him” (209). A subject of the imperium, he is likewise a plank in its fifth-column.

*Last of the Conquerors* is unique in this historical context, particularly for its refusal to sublimate black recognition struggles within the nation’s prevailing political legend, one that treats stories of minority inclusion as evidence of its overarching democratic vitality. If political discourse was reinventing national identity as a pluralist mosaic, drawing black freedom struggles into an exceptionalist historiography of advancing multicultural permissiveness, Smith holds out for more contradictory stakes than many black writers and activists were able to express, particular in 1948. As the dominant culture incapacitated black activism by equating it with Communist affiliation, flouting its “perversion of America’s own revolutionary traditions” in its evocation of the “Cold War color line,” the historic black quest for a “second revolution” announced by
William Cooper Nell in 1885 was persistently hamstrung by a conservative backlash, by a counterweight of compulsory national allegiance. More squarely dialectical, Smith’s novel resists conflation in that grammar of national inclusion, turning national security culture against itself as it recalls the American war imaginary to its revolutionary-democratic origins. By the novel’s close, Hayes aligns himself with Corporal Kenneth “Steve” Stevenson, a character whose rampage against the dehumanizing and racist military order took the form of revanchist violence. Hayes’s embarkation for home in the novel’s final scene thus suggests the return of a subject to a political order that clearly cannot accommodate his contradiction. Anticipatory of the racial convulsions that would seize the nation in the coming years, Smith dramatizes a form of political malfeasance that resists capture by the national security semiotic and its strategy of identity containment. If procedural security initiatives like the infamous Smith Act contained the preemptive power to make “words treasonable,” to make charges of future conspiracy and subversion apply in the present, novels like Smith’s act to designate that legislation as treasonable, marking its violation of the founding Word of the American revolutionary past in the decrees of the Declaration of Independence (Whitfield 47).

That warning becomes most disarmingly evident in John Oliver Killins’s *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1961), a candidate for 1962’s Pulitzer Prize—recognition itself perhaps endemic of mounting security interests and the speculative pressures of the increasingly foreboding “negro problem.” As the Defense Department’s conservative worldview naturalized warfare as endemic to global reality, Killins’s novel regards war as an explicitly institutional production, a byproduct of institutional and ideological systems sanctioned by racism, capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism. As
Keith Gilyard and Mel Watkins contend, Killins avoids conscription into the “integrationist tradition”—in particular a unifying nationalism based on personal ambition and liberal individualism—to assert “a racial consciousness that is marked by an overriding concern for black unity.” While Killins’s “nationalist jeremiad” gives expression to a neglected episode in black military history, it also forecasts the “racial turmoil” that preceded the “critical civil rights legislation of 1964 and 1968 [that] had yet to be enacted.” Like Chester Himes’s domestic account of self-racialization, but fomenting more dialogic energies, Killins presents an account of Solomon “Solly” Saunders’s peregrination from the liberal optimism of personal opportunity in the “great American story,” to his embrace of the Double V, to outright revolt against an unbendingly racist and imperial regime. As Wald professes, “And Then We Heard the Thunder is not only a major contender for the finest U.S. novel of World War II; it is also a text that is critical for understanding the elements of continuity between the old and new African American left” (50).

Leaving behind his wife, Millie Saunders, an assimilationist bourgeois liberal from New York, Solly accepts his summons by the draft and joins the war effort with hopes of becoming “the best damn soldier,” of becoming “an American instead of a Negro” (4, 7). A disciple of the American Dream, he at first desires deracinated personal regeneration in a nationalist historical vision, the chance to “forget who one is” in the concatenated “we” and, like Levin’s Manson, enter the arena of military contest where citizenship is made (7, 17). Like his white commander Lieutenant Samuels, he believes that he wages war against “everything we hold to be self-evident” (69). Rattling through Trenton, New Jersey in a truck with fellow conscripts, a landscape of revolutionary
memory which symbolically inflames his thoughts, Solly reflects, “It felt good to be a part of this. All of his future was a thing of the past. And everything merged madly in the present. And the present and the future was the Army and Army life. And the War to Save Democracy. It was his war and he believed in it. He would throw all of himself into it” (24). With a common enemy in fascism, he declares, “We’re Americans first and Negroes incidentally” (107). His early views, as Wald attests, are those “promoted by the Communist-led Popular Front, which looked upon World War II as a democratic war against an external threat far greater than…domestic racism” (46).

Yet Solly’s experience of life in the army refuses to confirm that affectionately assimilationist creed. His patriotic zeal is constantly flouted by a host of other political attitudes that Killins marshals as the many different faces of black political discourse, both national and international. “Who the hell is we?” asks one irritated recruit in the wake of one of Solly’s flag-waving pontifications. “Somebody sing the Star-Spangled Banner,” another sneeringly croons (16). Joseph “Bookworm” Taylor, moreover, expresses racial solidarity with the Japanese, fellow “colored” people whose war-making prods “crackers” to run “like hell with their shirttails out” (45-46). Jerry Abraham Lincoln “Scotty” Scott, the most venomous of the black soldiers, aims his complaint less at “Japs and Germans” that “ain’t done me nothing” than at the “cracker” American army that persistently undermines his “manhood” (86).27

Like Smith, Killins invokes the revolutionary imaginary of the nation’s founding to give ideological framework to the action. Not far into the novel, Solly’s Brooklyn-bred belief in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness is crushed out by his training camp experience at a Southern base: a Gestapo-like hellhole nicknamed “Rutherford’s
plantation” after a Captain who refers to his “slaves” as “niggers.” When Solly looks for reprieve from the local authorities, he discovers only a masochistic courtship between MPs and local police, both of whom savagely assault Solly as a “sassy nigger” for letting his “uniform go to his head” (84, 128). As it does for Smith’s Dawkins, the line demarcating German and American ideals collapses: “There’s Americans who believe in Herrenvolk. The American Army is based on Herrenvolk” (71). The experience initiates a long sequence of reversals for Solly. “He hated the Great White Democratic Army of the United States of America,” he concludes. “They had taken one of their mighty cannons and placed it up against his forehead and blown away forever the brains of his grand illusion about the army and the war” (132). Embracing the “Double V,” he identifies the politics of Deutschland and Dixieland as of a piece: “Hitler and Tojo and the governor of Georgia are on the same damn team” (48).

*And Then We Heard the Thunder* critiques not only postwar “democracy” but recasts mobilization—a socializing but also destabilizing affair—as itself productive of a two-fronted “race war,” a rending of the social fabric that provides terms for political revision and destruction within rather than outside the nation. In the army’s breaking down of the individual to ensure loyalty and allegiance to the corps, for instance, Killins sees the potential for the breakdown of the liberal subject, veering it into other forms of political embodiment antagonistic to both individual and national self-imagining. In the same way that Marx envisioned capitalism’s social organization, the clumping of workers in the industrial factory, as unforeseen means to its own undoing, so Killins considers the “plantation” of an all-black company as an assemblage sliding easily into a revolutionary network. At first, the men organize a letter writing campaign. “We Negro soldiers find
ourselves in hostile country in a racist-type undemocratic army preparing ourselves to go overseas to lay down our lives in a world struggle against Racism and Fascism and for the cause of Freedom and Democracy” (173). Disparaged as “troublemakers” for such “Communist plotting,” they find themselves assigned to a new company, excluded from the segregated post-exchange, and denied access to a Red Cross-sponsored party for American soldiers. When the white liberal Samuels counsels patience and gradualism, Solly contemptuously countermand the need for more “revolutionary slogans” (223). “You tell me what a black American has to fight for,” he finally demands (241). With his friend and developing love interest, Fannie Mae, he surmises “nothing for us to fight for excepting freedom here at home. All the Negro soldiers should be conscientious objectors. They have no business in the Army” (242). As his company finally boards ship for war, the sendoff band switches from playing “God Bless America” to “Darktown Strutters Ball,” a cultural exclusion which only reinforces his identification with black community alone (249).

The international experience of the war further dislocates Solly’s national allegiance, making increasingly specious the legitimacy of its enemy designations. Geoffrey “General” Grant, for instance, discourses on the underlying “colored” unity of Japanese and black soldiers (259). Suffering the indignities of labor battalion work despite the fact that they are trained for combat further aggravates the loyalty gap. “My father died in the war to end all wars,” Solly muses, “and my child’s father will die in the war to end all wars, and my child’s child’s father. And why and why and why goddamit!” (287). Again, levitating contradictions of consent into view, Solly decries the dilemma of dying for the state: “He wondered why men took life so seriously and yet
gave it up so willingly on the altar of patriotism at the behest of high-priest politicians and high-priest ammunitions makers and high-priest newspaper publishers and all the other Bee-Essers and high-priest profiteers, and what do we ever really get out of it except death and destruction and widows and orphans and Tag Day for the Disabled Veterans?” (287). Rebuking the strained logic that one can “die for freedom,” Solly declares that he has a “right” to live and a “right” to the freedom that the war is purportedly all about guaranteeing (298). “How can you fight a democratic war with an undemocratic army?” Solly’s vexingly inquiries; or variously, “how in the hell are you going to fight a democratic war with a racist army?” (316, 333).

The day of reckoning occurs when, after his first enemy kill, he realizes that he quarters no hate for him (349). The ordeal finalizes his sense that soldiers, those violent arms of the state, are all just “hired murderers” for a cohort of institutional interests which merely exploit them (299). When racial tension mounts in Bainbridge, their Australian station, he resolves to live only for the love of “people,” a love undefined by national borders. Bainbridge erupts in a vicious race war—like Smith’s, a fictional account of actual events that occurred in Brisbane, Australia during World War II. But for Solly, it is finally the “real war” come into focus: “This is my war, not that Murder Incorporated up on the islands” (436). In a drastic revision of the “we” with which his military journey began, Solly’s nationality capsizes and he joins the fight against the white army of the United States in what Solly christens “the profoundest battle for democracy” (438). “[H]e was who he was whoever the hell he was, he had to go join his buddies and be a part of what they were a part of” (438). In solidarity, numerous white
Australians as well as his white Lieutenant Samuel—newly converted from liberal gradualist to radical revolutionary—unite in common cause.

For Solly and his men, the standoff recognizes a form of black collectivity not in a biological essentialism like Claude McKay’s World War I-era *Home to Harlem* but as a body constructed within and against a nexus of white power. “Before we can go any further together,” Solly attests, “we have to decide who we are” (460). The racial affiliation eclipses national ones: “The lines were burning between Washington and Bainbridge” (469, 477). “I am a black man,” Solly asserts, “and I’m going to get to my buddies even if I have to wade through a goddam river of white folks’ blood” (460).

Although Killins’s literary work after his World War II novel would more stridently embrace the separatist tenets of Black Nationalism, in 1961 he still imagined interracial bridges. For Samuels, who dies fighting for the black cause, the lines are not so clean. “I am white man and I am your friend,” he shouts, “and you are a Negro man and you are my best friend, and we are both friends of the human race. Don’t hand me any other kind of half-assed nationalistic shit!” (476).

Despite its seeming endorsement of retributive violence, which, like some modernist aesthetics, absorbed rather than shunned the war imaginary, *And Then We Heard the Thunder* resists the affirmation of war culture itself, renouncing the bloody events as the consequence of the more general lynchpin of racism from which the conflict necessarily springs. As James attests, it presents a “profoundly dystopic vision of warfare,” implicating African Americans in the very culture “they seek to transgress” and suggesting that “consenting to war may be the greatest and most devastating accommodation of them all” (James 264-65). “I will always fight the men who beat the
drums for war in the name of Holy Patriotism in any nation, any language,” Solly declares (482). Rather than fomenting retribution for the sake of retribution, moreover, Killins hopes that his literary account of a real-world incident—the non-fiction story having been silenced by the American press—might alert the U.S. community to the dangers of its structural disease, its allegiance to a social order that would produce such a disastrous upheaval. “Maybe it’s not too late yet,” he finally wonders, “if I tell it to the whole wide world, tell them if they don’t solve this question, the whole damn world will be like Bainbridge is this morning!” (483). But to prevent retaliation comes with no small concession and cost. “There is no peace,” he finally cautions, “till freedom” (484).

IV. Enemies of the State: The Flight from Containment

Some war writers portrayed the breakdown of citizen agency; others wrote accounts of denationalization and absorption in a broader human community; others still, like Smith and Killins, turned the war imaginary against itself to behold the enemy in the racist structure of American society itself. For others, however, a culture of violence so saturated the U.S. political order that any form of reconciliation was impossible. Flight and escape thus emerged as the only resolutions worthy of literary consideration. Similar to James Jones and Norman Mailer, but refusing to adjust to permanent war and a politics of private survival were novels like Richard Brooks’s The Brick Foxhole (1945), Joseph Heller’s Catch-22 (1961), and Steven Linaskis’s In the Spring the War Ended (1965).

Brooks, better known as a prominent Hollywood film director, did well with The Brick Foxhole, and (although he was contractually barred from working on the screenplay) the film industry looked to capitalize on that success in Crossfire, a 1947 film adaptation. The forlorn and loveless “damnation” of life in a brick foxhole, a dreary
war-production barracks on the homefront, is Brooks’s allegory for modern American life itself, and thus submits another sordid account of a citizenry “trapped” by the army (viii-ix). Caught up in an operations network filled with vile and unprincipled soldiers—a “brick casket filled with living corpses”—a painfully lonely Corporal Jeff Mitchell discovers the wartime truth that being “pro-American” typically means “being ready to fight anyone at any time for any reason and beat them” (9, 10). A Disney animator drafted into service to make propaganda films, Mitchell is quickly disabused of the idealism of U.S. war aims, recognizing in the American soldier only a fusion of brutal “realism” and weepy “sentiment,” a knuckle-dragger who “enjoy[ed] the pastime of killing” (23, 24). “Liberty, humanity, freedom were merely words,” he laments, “the men who fought on Eniwetok and Kwajalein and Guadalcanal had peculiar ideas about liberty and freedom which sounded [more] like white supremacy and protestant justice” (23).

Much of Brooks’s account, to be sure, accords with the “inward turning” mood of the postwar malaise, that masculine endurance culture anticipatory of the hardboiled, hungover barracks universe of James Jones where fighting is a way of life: “Kill or be killed. There you have it. That’s the rule of our civilization” (58). Yet resisting urges to essentialize violence as an innate ingredient of human psychology—topoi ubiquitous in the culture industries of the time—Brooks finds causes rooted more in local American political ideologies than primordial instinct: “Rugged individualism. The competitive system. The American Way.”30 When the novel’s crisis emerges, the sporting rape and murder of a homosexual by a U.S. soldier, the culprit is none other than the uber-patriotic Monty Crawford, also an ignominious bigot, whose racist diatribes fuel the first half of
the novel. As Robert J. Corber suggests, Brooks positions Crawford—“a model soldier who strictly enforces military discipline”—in such “common man” attire to “interrogate Popular Front categories and assumptions” about the wholesomeness of the “representative American” (87). “At first Monty’s intolerance of racial and sexual minorities is difficult to reconcile with his patriotism,” he adds, “but as the novel progresses it becomes increasingly apparent that they are mutually reinforcing” (88). The violence against Mr. Edwards, “the fairy,” is in fact spurred on when Edwards queues a record by Paul Robeson. Portrayed, like Maritta Wolff’s husband figure, as a symptom and consequence of military training, Crawford’s indifference toward human life, the ease with which he murders, reveals the warfare state’s conditioning of callous and psychotic subjects, a verity only confirmed by other accounts in the text of U.S. soldiers killing local prostitutes (64, 158). Interestingly, Brooks, who worked for Frank Capra on his Why We Fight series, wrote the novel while still a marine at Quantico, VA and was nearly court-martialed for failing to submit his manuscript for official clearance.31

A case of mistaken identity subsumes the second half of the novel when the investigation begins to suspect Mitchell of the crime. A fugitive drama unfolds, yet another narrative of entrapment, positioning the audience on the other side of military authority and might that it might witness the power of its disciplinary machine from the perspective of the enemy. The Brick Foxhole, then, might be seen as one of the first World War II texts—inverting the narrative of Bellow’s The Dangling Man—to employ the theme of escape (or its impossibility) in ways foreshadowing later postmodern narratives of military victimization: Heller’s Catch-22, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.’s Slaughterhouse V (1969), and Thomas Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow (1973). But the
mistaken identity theme also intervenes in the vital center’s culture of the autonomous, self-owning citizen, concentrating on the radically contingent “intricacy” of the historical self and its interrelational currents (206). “What had happened?” the text finally asks. “How had he come to be in uniform? Who was it that made the decisions which could yank him away from a life, uproot him, wipe out everything that had been, and substitute this?” (204). The dearth of answers inaugurates a search for clues and causes, a longing to understand the nature of a life tied into such vast and dilapidated political architecture and of consent to its “great expenditure of life and dreams” (206-07).

Judith Smith worries that Brooks locates his critique of military culture “within the conventions of tough-guy literature,” normalizing it within the ubiquitous “masculine standards” familiar to the culture that could “make the victimization of homosexuals [seem] unremarkable” (142, 148). From another point of view, however, Brooks’s text jettisons the liberal masculinity that valorized so stridently the go-it-alone man in the dominant ethos of the Cold War, what Arthur Redding in an interesting locution calls “a consensus of non-conformity” (Medovoi 4). “They were trying their best not to fit into the pattern of the whole, to keep from being absorbed into this thing that was so much bigger than themselves,” Mitchell observes, but “because they wanted to stand alone they were destroying themselves” (211). And as Smith points out, perhaps sensing the text’s challenge to containment masculinity, numerous reviews of the novel condemned Mitchell’s character as “neurotic” and “overmothered.” In the end, rather than simply endure persecution in an unchangeably hardboiled world, Brooks’s surviving characters, as Smith rightly observes, opt for a “border-crossing cosmopolitanism” that “pushed popular antifascism,” particularly a progressive recalcitrance to fascism’s homegrown
strains, “in an important direction” (145, 149). Hopeful for “a new kind of people coming into the world,” The Brick Foxhole’s conclusion, focalized through Mitchell’s wife Mary, awaits a world in which people, having “cured themselves” of an “inside” shaped by war, will finally put an end to compliance with the state and its paranoid culture of death (236-37).

The military world envisioned by Greco American Steven Linakis in his obstreperous first novel, In the Spring the War Ended, also invokes themes of penal entrapment. Haunted by the memory of taking human life, Private Nicholas “Nick” Leonidas and his circle of fellow American AWOLs spend the entirety of the book fleeing MPs through the streets of various Belgian cities, refusing to comply with the war’s chief industry, its “corpse factory” (27). A Merry Men-styled circuit of black market bandits, loyal to no country, they steal military vehicles and parachute silks to survive in a post-Armistice Brussels lurking with suspicious MPs and other agents of the state. They subsist thus in a kind of liminal, denationalized limbo, alternating between coordinated hits on supply depots and, afterward, celebratory booze benders with their cohort of prostitutes and other outcasts of the postwar demimonde. As veterans of Omaha Beach, they have seen enough war to know that the its “reality” does not match up to the gustier rhetoric of the “crusade” promulgated by Eisenhower back home (78).

Few texts are as acerbic as Linakis’s, and the cat-and-mouse theme is in many ways consonant with the political diorama of the inward turn. A survivalist, Leonidas subscribes only to the “one man warpath” (275). Like his partner Bill who would “argue pro-communist with the royalists and pro-royalist with the communists,” Leonidas, like Jones’s ultimately apolitical Prewitt, eschews loyalty to any particular “side” (102).
Bombed by his own country, assaulted by New York City cops turned MPs, he is “Audie Murphy in reverse” (274). To elude what they take to be meaningless acts of war, the characters of *In the Spring the War Ended* will do virtually anything: feign craziness, endure the hole, live out durations in “solitary” with only bread and water, submit persistently to recapture (67). Cataloging military hot spots, Leonidas lists the many places within the military structure people can go to have their body flayed and beaten to shreds, a travelogue of U.S. war culture’s many inquisitorial sites and their inventive and imaginative talent for the infliction of pain and torture. “The purpose of all this,” he satirizes, “was to make you into a better soldier, to love and respect your country” (77). Finally overtaken, his tour of duty defending freedom abroad ends with a return to the U.S. to serve twelve years in the stockade—another castaway of the imprisoned society, jailed for his refusal to conform to its repressive incarceration.

Claiming to have written out of heightened anger, Linakis adopts a tone of outrage from the earliest pages, the disconsolate mood reflective of attitudes that would later shape American narratives on the Vietnam War. Rather than internalize the culture of permanent war, Linakis renounces the valorization of an each against all postwar paradigm. “I suppose what really finished me with the army,” he writes, “was the Hürtgen.”

I’d been hit with our own mortar. It blinded my platoon lieutenant and burned my legs with phosphorus. That was the day after we broke off the attack. Division had seventy percent casualties in three weeks. Love Company was reduced to seven men. I’d spent six months solid on the lines, and I’d had it. Everything had gone wrong in the Hürtgen and they were all dead in that splintered timber where
eighty-eights were huge buzzsaws cutting down the trees. That was when you saw your infantry taking off, going AWOL by squads, yelling their heads off, “Fuck the war! Fuck the lousy war!” and nobody tried to stop them. (32)

Among Linakis’s tribute to AWOLs is a non-fictional account of Polish American draftee Eddie Slovik, a soldier with the unhappy distinction of being the only known American officially executed for desertion (although 21,049 did likewise during World War II) since the Civil War: “Four snowballs [MPs] hauled him out of P.D.B. [Paris Detention Barracks] in a weapons carrier that January. Over by a château in France, they executed him by a firing squad from his regiment” (33). Slovik’s death leads Leonidas and his band of rebels, like Killin’s Solly Saunders, to turn their sites back upon the army, reversing the conceptual trajectory of “enemy.” “The army was making examples all right, but they overlooked what it would mean and what it would do to us. A different kind of war was starting in the rear” (33). With “darned near a fifth to a quarter of the actual front line” “over the hump,” Linakis poses the real “war” as one waged between those who comply with the U.S. military power and those who do not (34).

Compared with Jones’s *From Here to Eternity* upon its release, Linakis’s novel, though panned in *Time* and *Library Journal*, met with mostly solid reviews, a sign perhaps of a political drift in its American readership. Frank Sinatra promoted it for film production and, believing it would be a blockbuster, it was optioned by Larry Truman. But the film was never made. Sinatra was stigmatized as a Communist for his willingness to produce such an un-American film (a smirch on the Robert Kennedy campaign with which he was involved) and, due to the typically salty language, book clubs refused to serialize it (though a “piece of it” ran in *Man Magazine*) (Collier 178).
Yet despite the obstructionism of some pietistic segments in the U.S., the novel went on to become a bestseller in Holland and “[f]oreign editions were published in France, Holland, Germany, England, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, and Japan” (Collier 178).

The most notorious of World War II fiction’s unassimilable fragments, however, is surely Joseph Heller’s Captain Joseph Yossarian in *Catch-22*. If the impossible subjectification of figures like Okada’s Ichiro leaves them unfigurable within the dominant culture’s national symbolic, Yossarian represents a character whose consciousness is utterly consumed by the environment of the text itself. Another impossible subject, he is pure character, unvarnished ficticity. Overwhelmed and effaced by the preposterous scene of his narration, he defies even the function of characterization, a refusal even to stand in for a plausible human subject. His disappearing act into Sweden at the novel’s close marks him finally as an individuality unrepresentable within the self-constraining environment of the military corporation, a phantom at large in a hypothetical world poised beyond even the parameters of allegory. At the same time, his inability to cope with the military’s inhumanity refracts a prismatic light beyond the text, illuminating readers’ own implication in the absurd political story world of the military-industrial complex, one spreading its jurisdiction across the political landscape of the early 1960s.

For some critics, Heller’s protagonist is demonstrative of the disjointed but successful social enclosure that the warfare state had finally accomplished by 1961, of the way its all-encompassing order eclipsed any prospect of aesthetic sanctuary that was the project of at least some modernist war writing. Beneath its ludic word play and delightedly absurdist cinematography smolders a potent literary disavowal of
militarization’s dominion over the form of modern human life—fascist, communist, or capitalist. Identifying what he calls its “apocalyptic vision” of “postmodern paranoia,” John Limon, for instance, claims that *Catch-22* portrays the institutional domination of human existence to the point that “there is no outside” to the “incarceral city” of total war (141-142). As “a function of international—borderless, ubiquitous, absconded—capitalism, to which there could be no dialectical response,” war suffuses so completely that no conceivable alternative seems possible (153). When exile no longer exists as a strategic domain, the only remaining literary recourse is “absence”: collapse and disappearance into a state of pure textuality.

Aiming to explode and exhaust the legitimacy of a permanent war rationale, the whole enterprise of *Catch-22* is to reveal or manufacture a metaphoric *beyond* to that degenerative social order, to open horizons for cultural renewal as yet invisible. If only to desire that it be so, Heller imaginatively convenes the social heuristic of the preparedness oeuvre, but as an open field of parodic play, reinforcing contrarian perches from which to observe the innumerable paradoxes of obedience and sacrifice. His purposes, considered against the long tradition of preparedness fiction, seem deliberately designed to revoke the security function of that archive’s aesthetic gaze. Although the depiction is absurdist, his eschatological vision strategically renders the mechanisms of modern war making not as a detonations of primitive and immutable social instincts but as the institutional dividend of social, cultural, and historical forces that humanity must finally abrade, abrogate, and abolish. In contrast to national security culture’s existentialization of war, as Leon Seltzer suggests, “the novel's absurdities—comic and otherwise—operate almost always to expose the alarming inhumanities which pollute our
political, social, and economic systems” (290). Within such an environment, Yossarian’s struggle for apertures of escape discloses “not only the destructive absurdity of the military establishment, but the American business ethic and the rationale of capitalism” molding the caricatures that surround him (Way 268).

The grating circular logic forbidding exit from Heller’s distorted military environment is perhaps the most prescient assessment of the military’s foreclosure on the democratic promise it allegedly defends. In a universe of maximum and absolute unfreedom, what rectifying role could the military and accordant “service” within it ultimately play? What of value could possibly be protected? Although ostensibly forged to secure freedom and democracy, the military machine becomes the very instrument to annihilate what it safeguards. The parasite incorporates its host. Thus does Heller’s ludicrous cartoon world most realistically resemble and imitate the entity its antirealism spoofs. For Brian Way, Yossarian emerges enigmatically within such a historical formation as a “sane paranoiac” (264). His persistently paranoid assertion—“They’re trying to kill me”—is, in fact, true (16-17). Yossarian’s delinquent defiance, his “Jehovah complex,” reacts only from a temperament conditioned to view the democratic agent as self-evidently valuable and to be preserved from harm, a vision of liberty the military guarantees as justification for its legitimacy (20). Observing what he regards as a disordered personality, however, Major Sanderson diagnoses Yossarian as a “frustrated, unhappy, disillusioned, undisciplined, maladjusted young man!” “The trouble with you,” he thunderously accuses, “is that you think you’re too good for all the conventions of society.” “You’re immature. You’ve been unable to adjust to the idea of war” (302). The social conventions Yossarian holds out for, of course, are the liberal idealizations he
is purportedly defending as an officer in the U.S. army—freedom, equality, democracy, justice.

The normalization of cruelty and terror as social realities and the habit of thinking that pathologizes Yossarian’s “deep-seated survival anxieties,” that theme of self-regard in war stretching back most clearly to The Red Badge of Courage, are the dueling arms of Heller’s political satire (303). Interrogated by Colonels Cathcart and Korn, Yossarian recognizes with epiphantic clarity what Heller has been sparring with all along: that military life and national life have become synonymous. “Won’t you fight for your country?” Korn demands; “Won’t you give up your life for Colonel Cathcart and me?” “What’s that?” Yossarian exclaims, jolted by the illogical prospect of sacrifice for officials of the state. “What have you and Colonel Cathcart got to do with my country? You’re not the same.” “How can you separate us?” Korn retorts; “You’re either for us or against your country. It’s as simple as that” (423). That the two colonels, outsiders to the civilian order, stand in as national homologies only compounds Yossarian’s final inability to assimilate. If the distinction between national and military realms has disappeared, the text finally declares, the nation dissolves into a militarized international nexus as fluid and borderless as Milo Minderbender’s M and M Enterprises. The only freedom left to defend is the free market, a market that, in another vicious circle, reproduces the wars that protect its legitimacy. Thus does Catch-22 lay bare the mendacity of the liberal state’s danger metaphysic, the performative logic of the security form’s “evangelism of fear,” that simultaneously produces the legitimacy of state sovereignty and the rationally self-directed subject it allegedly protects from exterior not interior threats.36
What Yossarian ultimately wants, however, is not only to evade his own meaningless death in a permanent war but to preserve positive structures of symbolic valuation beyond the war imaginary’s overpowering encirclement. It is less his own particular demise that so distresses him than the apprehensive awareness that the terms justifying those kinds of sacrifices may no longer exist. “They’re trying to kill me,” that is, expresses anxiety about the death of his material body but also the demise of a collective meaning beyond a merely personal range of interest. The last of the humanitarian idealists, Yossarian finally refuses to accept not only the prospect of unwarranted self-sacrifice but that the extra-personal reservoirs of communal significance from which self-sacrifice might have been legitimately drawn have been drained of any referential validity. It is this often neglected fact that makes *Catch-22* less a slapstick comedy of errors than a terrifying forecast of potential human tragedy. As Yossarian revoltingly recognizes, to be “sent home” to America—the consolation extended him at the novel’s end—would be “a way [not to save but] to lose myself” (447). Survival for its own sake in a world that manufactures only death is the final absurdity.

This is “Snowden’s secret,” the knowledge that unfolds in the novel’s cataclysmic scene—Snowden’s pitiful, whimpering death in the rear of a bomber plane over Avignon. “Where are the Snowden’s of yesteryear?” Yossarian wonders in the novel’s opening pages (35). The inquiry after Snowden’s whereabouts intersects more deliberately with the problem of sacrifice than any other rendition of the obligation question to perturb American war novelists. If *Catch-22* lacks sequence in time, it is because Snowden’s pathetic annihilation is the founding trauma around which the remainder of the text orbits. Yossarian’s memory is haunted, irreconcilably attached to the brutal episode in
which, attempting to help Snowden with his leg injury, he unzips his wounded friend’s flak jacket only to watch “a soggy pile” of entrails slither onto the floor (439).

Displaying the limit and contradiction of the social contract, Snowden dies protecting a political community of which he is a part. “That was the secret Snowden had spilled to him on the mission to Avignon—they were out to get him; and Snowden had spilled it all over the back of the plane” (171-172). Yossarian’s resistance to flying missions immediately follows this scene, not as a solipsistic act of self-preservation but as a consequence of radical empathy with Snowden’s ruinous end. “It was easy to read the message in his entrails,” Heller writes, “Man was matter, that was Snowden’s secret. Drop him out a window and he’ll fall. Set fire to him and he’ll burn. Bury him and he’ll rot, like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden’s secret. Ripeness was all” (440).

Like all “apocalyptic visions,” Catch-22 announces one epoch’s demise but, in so doing, it also hastens the arrival of the “unfinished forward dream,” the “knowing hope” that figures like Ernst Bloch once imagined in the progressive possibility of a more humane and sustainable future (Kumar 212). However immured, compressed, and overdetermined Catch-22’s totalized setting, the text cannot help but fantasize some possible unwritten exterior to the militarized perimeters that constraining it, an expectation for some more open realm of promise beyond the self-subordinating capture of institutional life. Having unmasked the false dilemma of the American contract, Yossarian deserts one malignant order to scout another in a total flight from total war. In this regard, Sweden is the consummate symbolic destination—a zone not just of national dearticulation, like Burns’s and Goodman’s Italy, but also of warfare’s dearticulation
since its “policy of 1812” prohibits participation in armed conflicts. Yossarian’s ejection from the text thus validates not abandonment and desertion as ends but the search for political recommitment, an affirmation of what his chaplain can only describe as the “miracle” of “hope” (448). Like Orr, who rowed to Sweden before him, Yossarian seeks simply a recovery of “conscience” (451). “It’s such a negative move,” Major Danby insists, “it’s escapist.” But, Yossarian proclaims, “I’m not running away from my responsibilities. I’m running to them” (451). Positing the promise of value in worlds as yet uncharted, Yossarian absconds the cultural dominion of capitalism and war and their self-replicating imperial regimes.

**Conclusion: The Crisis of Democracy**

The “postwar settlement,” as Corber describes it (following Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclou), recognized American society as embroiled within an “infinite play of differences” but—channeling the state’s desire for containment—one that worked “to fix or halt that play of differences in a structured network of meaning” (*Name*, 5). In numerous ways, popular World War II writers attempted to limit and dissemble that “structured network of meaning,” creating narratives of breakdown and resistance, points of imaginative stress and delayed fulfillment, muting the legitimacy of the established order. Although frequently demonstrating the ideological limits of their time, they competed forcefully against a powerful rising national security system, challenging the Manichean imprecations of well-entrenched conservative ideologues, and at a time when such activity was politically inadvisable. In some cases, especially given the more repressive climate of popular reception, the terms of their protest pondered political designs far more radical than the moderns, their allegedly more insurrectionary
forerunners. Eluding a culture of “consignment” and “appeasement,” their political vision formed one strut of a wider political and cultural staging ground, seizing upon the rhetorical occasion of the nation’s great military trial to impute the unquestioned authority of the political edifice towering up triumphantly in its aftermath.

Frederick Dolan claims that, “In the world of the Cold War, the loci of agency can never be fixed; the answer to “Who’s they?” is endlessly deferred. Living in such a world,” he laments, “is largely a matter of reconciling oneself to the aleatory amorality that governs it” (61). But, in another sense, the most promising and strident protest World War II literature advanced was a refusal to complete forms of viable “agency,” to defer self representation within that sameness producing accommodation of difference that liberal pluralism forced always toward the front. In highly divergent ways, authors found their literary target in the project of identification itself, vetoing the universalist optimism the Good War so evidently claimed as a distinctively American eminence. Blazing trails for a contrarian politics that would pave the more open roads of the Civil Rights Movement and the Counterculture, they vetted forms of oppositional consciousness, heuristics of resistance, responsive to the practice of war-making—internal and external—that has existed unabated, if somewhat more disguised, for over fifty years.

At the heart of that political transaction was a refusal, finally, to conjoin the projects of security and democracy. In his section of The Crisis of Democracy, the 1975 report to the Trilateral Commission, neoconservative war theorist Samuel Huntington—mindful of an ascendant “democratic distemper”—warned of what he reckoned to be an “excess of democracy” threatening to upset the “balance” of national security. Looking
back across the “expansion of participation” in political affairs during the 1950s and ‘60s, he complained of depleting conditions of “governability” as “previously passive or unorganized groups in the population”—particularly those that emphasized “the primacy of equality” like “blacks, Indians, Chicanos, white ethnic groups, students and women”—gained “markedly higher levels of self-consciousness.” Essential to social stability in a democracy, he knew, was “some measure of apathy and noninvolvement” and thus “a greater degree of moderation” was needed to retain a restorative “balance” between democratic “vitality” and a more controlled “governability.”

“A decline in the governability of democracy at home,” he concluded, “means a decline in the influence of democracy abroad” (106).

Huntington’s starkly dyadic figuration of the structure of social control presents the realist’s bifurcated metric for the policing of home and abroad in its clearest distillation, a conservative barometer calculating and shaping the domestic and global *ecumene* of our own time. At the center of that dichotomous tension between the public will of democracy and the governmental order is the recognition of security’s enculturating power: its self-constituting, self-structuring access to the ontology of citizenship. But it also concomitantly reveals the overlapping and mutually constitutive nature of the human field, an interrelated social meshing that the prevailing logics of security—liberalism, nationalism, militarism, capitalism—work hourly to silence, segregate, and obscure. The U.S. war story, an artifact crafted from within the nexus of empire and often arbitrating its most destructive theoretical ambitions, also covets hopes for the imperium’s obliteration, a hope with which we should be more apprised.
Conclusion

The Making of National Security:
Liberal Identitarianism, the Political Ontology of Threat,
and the Cunning of History

Threat is from the future. It is what might come next. Its eventual location and ultimate extent are undefined. Its nature is open-ended. It is not just that it is not; it is not in a way that is never over. We can never be done with it. Even if a clear and present danger materializes in the present, it is still not over. There is always the nagging potential of the next after being even worse, and of a still worse next again after that. The uncertainty of the potential next is never consumed in any given event. There is always a reminder of uncertainty, an unconsummated surplus of danger. The present is shadowed by a remaineder surplus of indeterminate potential for a next event running forward back to the future, self-renewing.

--Brian Massumi, “The Future Birth of the Affective Fact”

If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere.
--Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond Identity”

In this study, I have described how U.S. war literature interacts with an evolving “war imaginary”: that vehicle for the symbolic constitution of self and other constructed out of a basically stateless Progressivism and arriving full-bloom in the military-industrial society. The linchpin of that story is the invention of modern political subjects preoccupied at once with an inward-looking politics of self-fashioning (a cultural analog of neoliberal rationality) and American universalism’s historical framework (a neoconservative rationality).¹ Effectively consolidating U.S. power, that ideological double-optic imposes a zone of indistinction between the citizen-subject and the governmental order, routing political desire into expressly micro- and macro- forms of self-imagining. In so doing, social meaning is witnessed through a combination of psychological and existential valences, eclipsing the everyday workings of state institutions and capitalist expansion arranging and reshaping social life both within and without the imperium. Thus does the cultural logic of modernism converge with the political logistics of modernization.
In the U.S. context, such an instrumental point of view took shape as a compensatory response to an overly coercive program of state compliance: the social template of Progressive uniformity (and its enforcers) that demanded 100% nationality. Giving way to the more strategic acumen of liberal governmentality and biopolitical rule, political agency that once addressed the total capitalist system retracted—for both the individual and the state—into subdivisions of self-promoting interest groups and their struggle for recognition. The splintering of the polity into multitudinous “factions,” the same dissembled society Progressives once feared, proved a healthy habitat for the growth of the managerial state. The American state took hold precisely because such a dynamic political landscape required an overarching and sovereign source of power to arbitrate local disputes, a single addressee in a competitive system of aggrieved “rights.”

Less doctrinaire, less absolute than the monist society once envisioned by Progressives, the liberal state adopted a softer, more flexible approach to public regulation. In so doing, it fashioned the form of liberal government that has prevailed well into our own time. “What is argued by theorists of the present conjuncture,” Ben Anderson summarizes, “is that the excess of [political] affect is now not so much regulated as induced, not so much prohibited as elicited. Modulation replaces constraint” (168).

In order to elicit this modulation of self, “identity”—conceived as the private aspiration toward “self-rule”—emerged as the master topos of modern citizenship ideals. As “psychopolitics,” Leerom Medovoi maintains, the construction of identity was especially crucial to consolidating U.S. power in response to the crises of Fordism domestically and the Cold War internationally. Prominent postwar luminaries, worried about social cohesion, anxiously pondered the collapse of a stabilizing “mass culture.”
How, they wondered, would a political community that had historically prized “critical non-conformity,” and that was reconstituting that adversarial consciousness in numerous sectors across the culture, levy the kind of decisive and unequivocal consent required of a Cold War regime which was now permanently at war?

Introduced by Erik Erikson in Childhood and Society (1950), “identity” presented means to resolve contradictory tensions between democratic freedom and national loyalty. His concept was summarily performative, acknowledging and touting cultural non-conformity in the “insurrectional citizen” while reifying that “archetype of the freedom-loving American” as a token of political consent (Medovoi 43, 54, 59).

“Indeed,” Medovoi insists, “one of the most distinctive aspects of ‘identitarianism’ is that, from the start, the ideal it espoused sought to reconcile the traditional liberal tension between the individual and the collectivity by mediating between their respective claims to sovereign self-determination. The identity of a collectivity, after all, typically appears as its individual member writ large, just as the political sovereignty of a state is modeled upon the liberal doctrine of the self-determining individuals who are its citizens.” Consequently, that commensurability between citizen and society, an “allegorical equivalence” ideologically inflected, “works to harmonize them as necessarily reciprocal images of one another in the struggle for sovereign selfhood” (55). Herbert Marcuse noted as much during the time: “Under the rule of a repressive whole, liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination” (7). Given war mobilization’s dismantling of class-based alliances and the deradicalization of labor, the rebellious individual signaled the production of an identity structure easily assimilated into an overarching bildung narrative—both personal and national—of liberal maturity (Medovoi
54, 60). Precisely because its reactionaries mirror its virtues, that is, the liberal state absorbs its own antagonists.

If the promotion of identity analogously nationalized the insurrectional citizen, the discourse of national security—essential to social management in the afterlife of mobilization—reversed that personal-to-national trajectory. As discourse, security rhetoric could permeate and inhabit more emotionally specialized, individually effective quarters of the self. Accessing the most basic substrate of desire, security discourse recodified the citizen as a kind of passively biologized life form, an entity acted upon by harrowing forces all the more dangerous for being mostly unknown. “This contract of security for quiescence,” writes Srinivas Aravamudan, “was the ideal limit of the pacification project of the state…even though the result was state-sponsored war, taken to the unprecedented level that the planet has known since early modernity” (1508).

Numerous recent commentators, building upon the later work of Foucault, have theorized the “state of emergency” (or the “state of exception”) for its capacity to exert extralegal power over the “bare life” of citizens. But essential to that process of social calculability has been the capture of citizen desire by what Brian Massumi describes as a “political ontology of threat,” the “ontogenetic effectiveness of the nonexistent.” Generating “affective publics,” Ben Anderson explains, “threat,” like “morale,” emerges as a state “resource”—“the extension of a state apparatus of prediction, preparedness, and repair”—capable of insinuating the battlefield, the “spatial form of war,” into “every sphere of life” (170-71, 175-176). For Neil Smith, threat’s “abstract geography” creates an immanently manipulable “ontological insecurity.” “In the resulting insecurity state,” he laments, “war is justified as necessary for the guarantee of domestic security, but this
security, conversely, needs to be guaranteed only insofar as the here and now is already characterized as dangerously insecure” (390-91). Danger, then, has a curiously circular effect, manufacturing its own feared objects even as it prepares to defend against them.

Threat’s ability to configure “the here and now” in such politically disabling ways is what the hegemony of a liberal progress narrative, a historical narrative which the U.S. military is summarily invested in perpetuating, has persistently obscured. War as liberation from tyranny, war as the founding of the republic, war as emancipator of those in bondage, war as harbinger of suffrage and international democracy, war as the remedy to fanatical or totalitarian regimes, war as the buttress to faltering markets and protector of national interests, war as the principled expansion of freedom: the potency of these normative rhetorics stifles a parallel recognition of war as the principle agent in the divestment of sovereignty from public life, the ultimate instrument of citizen subordination to the state. “[I]f subjects escaped the arbitrary violence of the state of nature,” as Aravamudan attests, “they were in turn swallowed into the composite figure of the Leviathan that adorns Hobbes’s frontispiece, becoming part of the war machine that would be directed against other polities and enemies of the state.” Normalizing “the logic of a world defined by state-centered conquest,” perpetual war disguises a “pathological” relation to state power (1508). That pathological relation, naturalized to the point that the trace of its artifice has all but disappeared, becomes visible when one takes a longer look at the war-as-progress narrative. Akin to what Nancy Fraser, in another context, deems “the cunning of history,” the state’s cooptation of sovereignty betrays that “subterranean elective affinity” that struggles for liberal self-recognition share with the production of state power (114). Participation in World War I
mobilization, for instance, may have endowed women with the long-awaited ballot, but that exchange cannot account for the fact that the election of 1924 witnessed a 50% decline in voter turnout from elections held only thirty years prior. Liberal “recognition” triumphs like Truman’s de-segregation of the military in 1948, an increase of African American “inclusion” and “visibility,” would probably elicit few cheers from the drafted black G.I. wading through the jungles of Southeast Asia in 1971, conscripted “equally” into a compulsory program of state violence. That the demand for unqualified gay and lesbian inclusion in the war machine drives contemporary dialogues with such political force, dialogues that often complain of homosexual dismissals as a forfeiture of the nation’s most skilled Arabic translators, only underscores the Pyrrhic victory of liberalism’s alliance with the military. Increases in inclusion, put bluntly, typically divest that more recognized subject of the power to affect the political body in which she is now more “freely” ensconced.

I have traced the history of this “dangerous subject” from the incipient moment of the preparedness campaign to the seizure of the population at large by an ideology of national security. Yet danger’s self-fulfilling prophesy—“Self-renewing menace potential is the future reality of threat”—has governed American political development in unbroken ascendancy in the decades since (Massumi 53). The solicitous parsing of domino theories, the cosmic forebodings of an “evil empire” or “axis of evil,” the much ballyhooed apprehension of a “clash of civilizations”: these report on a state of the world ensnared by such distended metaphysical struggles that any recourse to democratic problem-solving seems pathetically inadequate. Such flatulent prognostications have gained ready purchase in American foreign policy assessments precisely because the
political soil has been loosened and fertilized by a debilitating discourse of “the end of ideology,” of history’s terminal arrival at the last stop on its dialectical sojourn. The “cosmifying” language, a lexicon spawned out of the paranoia of the neoconservative mind, lends an apocalyptic dimension to basically material, economic events. It lifts human struggles out of historical time, out of a recognizable narrative of causation, and thus out of a dreamed futurity where the “normality” of state violence might cease to exist. And at the same time as mythic rhetoric invests military activity with such cosmic purpose, the appeal to the actual soldier is increasingly cast in less political, more personal terms. Neoliberalism’s shrinkage and abbreviation of war aims—a symptom of the “new American militarism”—increasingly erodes military work’s civic component, figuring it as a kind of entrepreneurial adventure in a cost-benefit calculus of personal “becoming”: the “army of one,” now “army strong,” being “all you can be.”3 Collapsing war participation into the privatized narrative of Americanism, substituting the language of adventure and gain-through-risk for traditional appeals to war’s “just” purposes, the modern military reinvents its members as strategic brokers of a personal journey, the delighted consumers of “extreme” experience: “It’s not just a job, it’s an adventure.”4

This is the scene of a culture devoured by a permanent war mentality. “What is specific to our era,” argue Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, “is that war has passed from the final element of the sequence of power—lethal force as a last resort—to the first and primary element, the foundation of politics itself. Imperial sovereignty creates order not by putting an end to ‘the war of each against all,’ as Hobbes would have it, but by proposing a regime of disciplinary administration and political control directly based on continuous war action. The constant and coordinated application of violence, in other
words, becomes the necessary condition for the functioning of discipline and control” (21). How else might we understand the “replacement of ideology by ontology,” the tendentious transmutation that persistently constructs criminal-enemy identities out of patently social phenomena, conditions, and practices: the war on poverty, the war on drugs, the war on crime, the war on terrorism? As Walter Benn Michaels insists, terrorism, for instance, is not an identity but a tactic.6

How might we dismantle such strangulating progress? How might we extricate a more humane political lifeworld from the dragooning hegemony of this “necropolitics,” Achille Mbembe’s coinage for that habit of “becoming subject” indelibly linked to forms of “enmity” and “confrontation with death”? How do we undo what Madelyn Detloff calls the intractable “persistence of modernism” and its alignment, likewise, with an “ideology of death” (14)? If the dominion of a war imaginary, itself devolved from a “carceral state,” so enculturates modern subjectivity, where might persons turn for reprieve from those fabrications of self and other, as Nikhil Singh describes them, that rely upon “new murderous divisions within humanity” structured along “incommensurable spheres of existence”? (“Afterlife” 77-78, 83). Perhaps worth remembering in this context is Peter Gowan’s assurance that the form of destructive “primacy,” especially as it was elaborated during the Cold War, maintains political power, only “in the form of the cold war”; that is, only by reinforcing those rigidly dyadic barricades—friend and enemy, self and other, good and evil—that lend shape and contour to modern subjectivity. And as much as those barricades are produced, perpetuated, and resuscitated by cultural and literary forms— the substance of this study—cultural and
literary forms may yet be the material with which to build, fashion, and foster more open, more generous, more spontaneous visions of joy and community in the “common world.”

In Chapter 6, I enumerated how a number of authors converted or redirected war’s arousal of hatred, that very conduit of affective enmity stretched between self and other, by repurposing its self-conferring form into a transpersonal experience of love. Against a Cold War imaginary that shields against contingency and contamination, they posited instead models of interconnectedness and codependency. Thus might the old mantra, the intimation of a “thin line between love and hate,” speak to the caprice and indeterminacy of the modern condition. This is, I think, what Ian Baucom, following Judith Butler, strives for in his search, a search fleshed out in his own appraisal of war, for a more sustaining politics of love: “love as precariousness, as insecurity, as knowing that we cannot secure ourselves from being undone.” It is worth quoting at length:

Perhaps a politics of love (whether of the neighbor or of the inimical) begins with a willingness to experience what Butler describes, to live with a fear of having our own subjectivity radically, inimically, extraneously undone by what might threaten us. In living so, in seeking to frame a language of living so the first word of a politics of love might be to refuse an obligation to seek to expel or contain the fearsome by contracting our share of passions (as a still-dominant Hobbesian ‘modern’ political theory instructs us to do) to a commonwealth, or state, or other sovereign power that pledges to deliver us from fear so long as we accede to its reasons of state. To put things another way, perhaps the opening articulation of a politics of love is to refuse that offer of exchange, through which our various states, commonwealths, and sovereign authorities make us safe from fear if we
will license them to quarantine (or annihilate) all that we have been instructed to hold inimical to ourselves. This politics asks that we refuse to abandon love as, itself, a fearsome thing—something, in all its urgent capacity to undo us, more than capable of reminding us that in our lives as subjects and citizens we are, and must continue to be, “fluid and permeable.” (1717)

Sixty years after the moment when security culture valorized a “hard,” “inimical” self, a rigidly liberal identity pitched against the flux and impermanence of a contingent world, we return to the promise of an old human story, of love. Love, “fluid and impermeable,” as “open ended” as is the political ontology of threat, might deliver us not merely from a history conditioned by structures of enmity but lure us as well into that frightening, interactive life world where an experience of real freedom, “freedom as nonsovereignty,” resides (Zerilli 19). This, I think, is literature’s best hope: the discovery of that more passionate “language of living.”
Notes

Notes to the Preface to Part I

1 http://ibiblio.org/eldritch/nh/fp04.html
2 See Richard Slotkin, “Unit Pride.” He also makes the important case that the Mexican-American War witnessed a transference of American heroism from pioneer subjects—Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Lewis and Clark—to military heroes. It was a conversion of sentiment that would be sustained and gratified by episodes like the defense of Fort Boonesboro (1777), the Alamo (1835), Custer’s Last Stand (1876), and the Charge of the Rough Riders (1898).
4 On the politics of the Mexican-American War, see Shelley Streeby, American Sensation, particularly pages 168-169.
5 See John Whiteclay Chambers, To Raise an Army, 13-39.
6 Ibid., 13.
7 See Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State, 3-35.
8 See Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, v. 2, 264-267. Democratic societies, he argued, because of their professed equality, naturally desired peace and equanimity to develop individual “interests” while, ironically, the promotional structure of professionalized “standing armies” within a democracy naturally spurred men toward the most inflamed of warlike desires and military ambitions. “All the ambitious spirits of a democratic army,” he claimed, “are consequently ardently desirous for war, because war makes vacancies and warrants the violation of that law of seniority [characteristic of armies in an aristocracy] which is the sole privilege natural to democracy.” Unlike aristocratic, European armies where class fixity offered little hope for a plebian rise through the ranks, democratic armies, he worried, were perpetually impelled toward militarism because professional “service” was the means by which those among the lower ranks could acquire self-interested advancement.
9 It is true Washington supported at least some accommodation of a professional military class in the form of a “Continental Militia” and a national military academy. But he understood the popular reluctance toward militarization and supported individualism and localism as the only sustainable forms of belonging.
10 The uncomfortable contradictions in the “subjective unity” of liberal republicanism were at least temporarily sutured in the country’s early years by various ideologies of fraternal association that linked private interest with the relative stability of the marketplace. See Dana D. Nelson, National Manhood, esp. 22, for instance, where she explains the exclusive and unified character of “fraternity” in early US history as a conservative ideology that channeled white male desire into an excorporative hierarchy. Skeptical of deracinated, gender-neutral accounts that depict this period as an uninhibited political body of individual citizens, she challenges the received history by showing how early republican white male citizenship was codified in a “symbolically fraternal, reassuringly ‘common’ manhood” and an incorporating managerial understanding of “unity.” As a subordinating logic of identification with a “more abstracted bodily bond of whiteness,” national manhood was more conscripted than voluntary and meted out social order through marketplace rivalry. Numerous other texts document the Constitution as an effort to placate “unruly Americans” as a means of “taming democracy.” See Woody Holton, Unruly Americans; Terry Bouton, Taming Democracy.


15 See Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 412-424.


18 As Etienne Balibar claims, societies produced by a “founding revolutionary event” establish an internal antagonism regarding how the historical continuity of the nation will be maintained. On one hand, there is “the permanent temptation to repeat its form, to imitate its episodes and characters” and, on the other, a “temptation found among the ‘extreme’ parties to suppress it, either by proving that national identity derives from before the revolution or by awaiting the realization of that identity from a new revolution which would complete the work of the first” (87).

19 See Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice*, 51.


21 Ibid. 124.

22 According to Richard Turk, Mahan was thrilled at the election of McKinley. He wheeled the U.S.S. Chicago into New York harbor in 1895 just as Roosevelt was elected police commissioner of New York. While Roosevelt concerned himself with the “nuts and bolts” of “planning for war an empire,” Mahan was pontificating on the impending “survival of the West.” “We stand at the opening of a period when the question is to be settled decisively, though the issue may be long delayed, whether Eastern or Western civilization is to dominate throughout the earth and to control its future” (25-6).

23 See Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 98; See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 77-88. According to Hans Kohn, in his contribution to Irving Talmadge’s *Whose Revolution?*, Nietzsche would explicitly connect war to freedom: “For war trains men to be free. What in sooth is freedom? To grow more indifferent to hardship, to severity, to privation, and even to life itself. To be ready to sacrifice men for one’s cause, one’s self included. Freedom denotes that the virile instincts which rejoice in war and in victory prevail over other instincts; for instance, over the instincts of happiness. The man who has won his freedom, and how much more so the spirit that has won its freedom, tramples ruthlessly upon that contemptible kind of comfort which tea-grocers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen and other democrats worship in their dreams. The free man is a warrior” (35).

24 [http://people.virginia.edu/~mmd5f/holmesfa.htm](http://people.virginia.edu/~mmd5f/holmesfa.htm)


26 See Amy Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*, 4, 106.


28 This is the subtilted of Walter Karp’s book *The Politics of War*.

29 See Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 254-258. A neoconservative, Huntington has had more influence on the construction of geopolitical realism in the U.S. context than perhaps any other figure.


31 See Catherine Holland on the performative function of the Declaration of Independence. “Declaring independence installs at the origin of the act of declaring, as the origin of that act,” she declares, “a ‘We’ that the act of declaring in fact produces.” “That American ‘We’ names a collective that is accomplished rather than simply described by the Declaration, a text that works retrospectively to transplant and transform that ‘We’ from end-product to origin” (9).

32 Merle Curti, *The Roots of American Loyalty*, 174 elaborates the “superperson” of the nation as part of a long philosophical tradition on the “organic theory” of national belonging.
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Notes to Introduction

1 Even a text as generally-agreed to be antiwar as Erich Maria Remarque’s has a jagged dimension of fun and adventure to it. As George L. Mosse explains, “despite the surrounding realism,” the “absorbing way in which these adventures are told” “made even a left-wing journal (Die Weltbuhne), describe the book as ‘pacifist war propaganda’” (114).

2 C. Wright Mills writes: “If it is too much to say that, for many of the elite, domestic politics have become important mainly as ways of retaining power at home in order to exert abroad the power of the national establishment, surely it is true that domestic decisions in virtually all areas of life are increasingly justified by, if not made with, close reference to the dangers and opportunities abroad” (186).

3 See Claude LeFort, Democracy and Political Theory, 19-20.

4 The commentary on nationalism begins perhaps with Ernest Renan’s declaration of it as “a soul, a spiritual principle” constituted by a past and a present or Max Weber’s characterization of it as a “community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state.” See Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism 17, 25.


6 See Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crimes,” in Bringing the State Back In, eds. Peter Evans, Dietrich Reuschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, 169-75. The question of legitimacy and violence is described by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri as conditioned by “the constant presence of an enemy” and “the threat of disorder”: “The constant presence of an enemy and the threat of disorder are necessary in order to legitimate imperial violence. Perhaps it should be no surprise that when war constitutes the basis of politics, the enemy becomes the constitutive function of legitimacy. Thus this enemy is no longer concrete and localizable but has now become something fleeting and ungraspable, like a snake in the imperial paradise. The enemy is unknown and unseen and yet ever present, something like a hostile aura. The face of the enemy appears in the haze of the future and serves to prop up legitimation where legitimation has declined. This enemy is in fact not merely elusive but completely abstract (30-31).


9 See Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism.” National literatures change in late nineteenth century, he argues, largely as a result of a “spatial disjunction” which is the result of the loss of a complete picture of the “spatial connection” tying together first and third worlds: “daily life and existential experience in the metropolis can now no longer be grasped immanently; it no longer has its meanings, its deeper reason for being, within itself” (51). For Susan Friedman similarly adds: “Recognizing modernisms on a planetary landscape involves identification of intensified and proliferating contact zones that set in motion often radical juxtapositions of difference and consequent intermixing of cultural forms that can be alternately embraced, violently imposed, or imperceptibly evolved. Traveling and intermixing cultures are not unidirectional, but multidirectional; not linear influences, but reciprocal ones; not passive assimilations, but actively transformative ones, based in a blending of adaptation and resistance. All modernisms develop as a form of cultural translation or transplantation produced through intercultural encounters.”

10 Gordon Haight, “Introduction,” in John Williams DeForest, Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty, xiii.

11 One proto-realist novel by a woman writer was Rebecca Harding Davis’s Waiting for the Verdict (1867). As Elizabeth Young explains, however, “Rather than simply ignoring women’s writing, men’s commentary about the Civil War was haunted by the specter of women ‘flourishing’ phallic pens” (7). A correspondence between William Dean Howells and John De Forest, veteran author of Miss Ravenel’s...
Conversion from Secession to Loyalty (1867), gives credibility to such a claim in that it laments the profusion of female authors of the Civil War novel and the corresponding female consumer base that popularizes them. Howells champions De Forest as the first to “treat the war really and artistically” as opposed to the irritating “young-lady writers in the magazines” who have been fighting the campaigns “as ladies would have fought them.” In spite of Howells’s admiration for De Forest’s acerbic, manly realism, the novel was remarkably unsuccessful and led De Forest to write Howells in 1879 complaining of what he considered to be the stunted aesthetic sensibility of an ignorant female readership. “I don’t understand,” he wrote, “why you and I haven’t sold monstrously except on the theory that our novel reading public is mainly a female or a very juvenile public, and wants something nearer to its own mark of intellect and taste” (7).

See also, David Shi, Facing Facts, 64.

12 See Michael Mann, States, War, and Capitalism, 172.

13 See Lauren Berlant, “National Brands/National Body,” 112-13. “The American subject is privileged to suppress the fact of his historical situation in the abstract ‘person’ [of the citizen]; but then, in return, the nation provides a kind of prophylaxis for the person, as it promises to protect his privileges and his local body in return for loyalty to the state.”


15 See Paul Kahn, Putting Liberalism in Its Place, 16-20, 92-95. “This idea of the community of the faithful [in which the divine has overcome the “lack” of sin/reason] begins in the church, but becomes central to the Western concept of nationhood. A political community is not merely an organized structure for the development and deployment of reason. Its foundation lies in will, not reason. Modern political thought expressed this idea in the notion of “sovereignty.” The sovereign is the point of reification of the common will of the nation. The sovereign has will, not reason and not desire. Indeed we come to the idea of the sovereign through that of the will: Because there must be a national will, there must be a subject in possession of that will. This is the sovereign (151).

16 “As a delegate to the 1879 California constitutional convention clearly stated, ‘What is political sovereignty? It is the fruits of the sword,’ and women, he noted, had not taken up weapons in the nation’s defense” (Barr 135)

17 See Balibar, “The Nation Form” on the “transfer of religious affects” effected by the nation, 95.


19 See also Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, 22

20 This is the organizational theme of George Sorel’s Reflections on Violence (1908) which has compelled commentary from thinkers on both left and right, Marxists and Fascists, who could both rightly claim him as their own. Sorel noted in the Christian army the model for the modern state (13-14). The dominant distinction is between “proletarian” violence which links creative violence to the dialectical general strike and revolution, and the state’s co-optation of violence, a more passive militarization. Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence” describes this duality as its “lawmaking” and “law-preserving” functions (284). The most compelling discussion in our own time, however, most certainly is expounded by Giorgio Agamben in Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford 1998) and State of Exception (Chicago 2005). Other versions are elaborated in Paul Virilio, Speed and Politics (Semiotext(e) 2006); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Treatise on Nomadology-The War Machine,” A Thousand Plateaus (Minnesota 1987); Michel Foucault, “Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976 (New York: Picador 1997); Benedict Anderson, The Imagined Community, p. 10; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Multitude (New York: Penguin 2004), 6, but see 3-36; Jean-Luc Nancy, “War, Right, Sovereignty—Techné,” Being Singular Plural (Stanford 2000); Catherine A. Holland, The Body Politic: Foundings, Citizenship, and Difference in the American Political Imagination (New York: Routledge 2001). For a useful discussion of these tangled lines, see Beatrice Hanssen “On the Politics of Pure Means: Benjamin,

21 See Paul Virilio, Speed and Politics, 96-114.

22 "The act of killing, motivated by 'care for the nation'," claims Elaine Scarry, "is a deconstruction of the state as it ordinarily manifests itself in the body. That is, in consenting to kill, he consents to perform (for the country) the act that would in peacetime expose his unpoliticalness and place him outside the moral space of the nation….an act of “unmaking” himself, in which he “deconstructs himself, empties himself of civil content” (121-122). "If the democracy for which one dies existed in a world safe for democracy, one would not be dying to make the world safe for democracy” (132).

23 Identifying its ontological relationship to nation-making, she denotes the way the soldier “decivilizes himself [sic],” “divests himself of civilization,” even as he lunges forward in defense of that civilization (122). In transcending its strictures, war reveals the nation as a “cultural fiction” (128).


29 Writes Bruce Porter: “Adam Smith’s The Wealth of Nations is almost a work of holy writ for modern economic liberalism, yet it reflects also the moral paradoxes of military power and insecurity in the modern age. While most of the book praises the virtue of homo economicus, market economies, and an open international system, Smith in often overlooked passages also extols the value of standing armies, mass military training, and modern firearms for the preservation of civilization and order. The visionary who wanted government out of economic affairs very much wanted it in when it came to the defense of the ‘opulent and civilized’ against the onslaughts of ‘the poor and barbarous nations’. The Father of Laissez-Faire acknowledged that military spending is inherently unproductive, that it may ruin states through excessive debt, that armies may threaten basic liberties, but he endorsed their necessity nonetheless—something must maintain the civil order essential to free commerce. Confronted with the reality of war, the consummate liberal in unmasked in these passages as the consummate conservative” (20).

30 See Michel Foucault, “Governmental rationality,” 34-35, 38, 43-44.

31 See Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in The Foucault Effect, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 95.

32 See Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 47, 162.

33 See Paul Virilio, Speed and Politics, 54-57, 68, 97, 125.

34 See Pierre Bourdieu, 58, 61, 64, 68-69.

David W. Blight uses the expression “American Iliad” in “A Quarrel Forgotten or a Revolution Remembered?” Both he and Jim Cullen treat Ken Burns’s *The Civil War* in their discussions of popular culture and the war. See especially Cullen, “The Past Keeps Changing,” 9-13. It is worth noting that PBS has recently issued an advertisement in which an Asian American talks about his inability to feel part of American culture, of being a separate entity, until viewing Burns’s *The Civil War*. It was his story, he realized. It made him proud to be an American.


3 See Lisa Long, *Rehabilitating Bodies*.


5 On the subject of sacrifice and its gendered undercurrents during the war, see Drew Gilpen Faust, “Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War,” 1200-1228; Alice Fahs, “The Feminized Civil War: Gender, Northern Popular Literature, and the Memory of the War,” 1461-1494.


7 The theme of “forgetting” is omnipresent in the “reunion studies,” but for a highly compelling study on its relationship to the liberal political imaginary, see especially Catherine A. Holland’s *The Body Politic*, chapter 5.


9 See Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 11. As Jim Cullen explains, the turn-of-the-century moment was dominated by a “homogeneity” expressed in the exceptionalist stature of the republic. “Nowhere was this sense of consensus more clear,” he claims, “than in the Nationalist tradition of Civil War historiography” (22).


12 Stephen Skowronek marks shifts in political policy during this period designing a bridge from the “patchwork” state to its fuller “reconstruction” on the “corporatist” model. “The institution that late-century military professionals scorned as a debased appendage of local interests and an all consuming democratic politics had, in the intervening years undergone an organizational, procedural, and intellectual transformation,” he claims. From a “standing contradiction” the state and military nurtured the values of “professionalism,” “nationalism,” and “corporatism” to “take the army beyond the era of the Indian Wars and into the era of preparation for international conflict” (212, 224).


15 See Alice Fahs, “The Feminized Civil War,” 1493; The Imagined Civil War, 313.
16 See Alice Fahs, The Imagined Civil War, especially the “Epilogue” 313-318. David Blight, “A Quarrel Forgotten or Remembered?: Reunion and Race in the Memory of the Civil War, 1875-1913.” Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War.
17 See also Kristin Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood, 200-208.
18 For an excellent account of this “paradox,” see Kirk Savage, Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves, 167-170.
19 Olmstead, who incidentally characterized women’s Civil War mobilization based on voluntarism and “benevolence” as “misrule,” revitalized urban space based on the more “masculine” principle of discipline and design. Frequently, that structuring meant marginalizing ethnic communities and breaking up troublesome crowds.
24 Advancing the segregationist logic of “separate but equal,” Washington had assured a nervous white audience that “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”
26 Ibid. 18, 34, 75.
27 The corporation gained legal status under the 14th Amendment as an individual precisely as individuals were having to “incorporate” to stay afloat.
28 See George Fredericks, The Inner Civil War, 217-225.
31 See Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Huntington relishes this moment in history because it stresses “the continuity and value of history,” accepts the nation state as the highest form of political organization, “recognizes the continuing likelihood of wars among nation states,” “emphasizes the importance of power in international relations,” and because it is “pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic” (79).
32 The Declaration of Independence, it should be noted, was often cited by Southerners to legitimate secession.
33 Surely Philip King is Bellamy’s not-so-subtle tweaking of King Philip, the American sobriquet for Chief Metamora/Metacom against whom they fought the bloodiest war in American history in 1675-76.
34 See Edmund Wilson, Patriotic Gore, 595.
37 Ibid. 391, 393, 439.
38 Ibid. 134, 394, 431, 440.


42 Ibid. 137, 171, 174.


45 Thomas Clark, in his introduction to the novel, references an early reviewer for *Outlook* as expressing concern over the novel as arousing “the worst passions in his readers” at a time when “harmony between North and South was most vital” (v).

46 See Michael Rogin, “’The Sword Became a Flashing Vision’: D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*” in Robert Lang, ed., *The Birth of a Nation*, 250-93. In *White Women, Black Men*, Martha Hodes examines the complicated politics of interracial sexuality that dominated the white imaginary at the turn of the century. “The volatile intertwining of sex and politics in the Reconstruction South,” she contends, “brought in its wake violence at any person who transgressed traditional moral boundaries.” The conflation of sex and politics, the terrorization of black men, the abuse of white women, and the violent condemnation of any behavior deemed morally transgressive—these were interlocking elements in the broader sexualization of politics in the Reconstruction South. Every form of power exercised by freedmen meant a parallel loss of power for white men. That included newfound authority over black women in the domestic sphere, as well as any invented or observed agency or aggression in relation to white women, whether in the form of marriage, cohabitation, fornication, adultery, familiarity, brazenness, harassment, sexual assault, or rape. (170-2)


48 See Willa Cather, *Kingdom of Art*, 409.


53 Shelton Stromquist, *Reinventing “The People,”* 69


55 See Elizabeth Young, *Disarming the Nation*, 198, 200, 231.

Notes to Chapter 2

1 See John Chamberlain, *Farewell to Reform* (New York: Liveright, 1932), 296.

2 Woodrow Wilson used the term “knitting” to speak of the “stimulating comradeship” unleashed in the war. See Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, 209. But the use of the terms “synergy” and “knitting” in proximity is from an essay by Theda Skocpol, Ziad Munson, Andrew Karch, and Bayliss Camp. See “Patriotic Partnerships: Why Great War Nourished American Civic Voluntarism,” in *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*. As they argue, wars reshape a polity’s “associational universe” in ways that draw on all sectors of the citizenry (134). Rather than view war emergency as simply conditioning a hierarchical structuring of populations through managerial resorts to “propaganda” or “coercion,” we should consider the mutual growth and shifts that wartime nationalism inculcates from all points on the political spectrum—from the networks of government agencies to an individual’s compliance in reporting to a draft board. During World War I, in particular, they note that the United States developed a particular kind of “associative state.” Linking federal agencies, business groups, and local communities, the associative state involves a “synergy” or “knitting” of society into “an elaborate associational infrastructure.” It forms, they contend, “two-way bridges across communities and between leaders and led,” between federal government, voluntary associations, and civil society (152, 157, 170). What follows, or rather what the war emergency unearthed is a “complimentary between state power and an engaged civil society,” the crucial “genius of American associationalism” envisioned as the preventative stroke against “Tocqueville’s nightmare” of big wars on democratic nations (139, 170). “In many ways,” they declare, “World War I set the civic mold for the United States as a global power” (151). It developed a vast cooperative network since it could no longer rely merely on business-government work.


7 See Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton UP, 1992). The event led Walter Lippman to declare the speech “the most important diplomatic event that our generation has known” and Hamilton Holt to suggest that the address “cannot fail to rank in importance with the Declaration of Independence” (76).

8 Numerous writers working for George Creel’s Office of War Information were university professors. In the appendix to *How We Advertised America*, document after documents attributes authorship to a host of Big Ten professors working for the bureau. The National Security League, as well, formed the “Patriotism through Education Series” as a sequence of pamphlets and lectures penned frequently by college professors to outline a positive view of intervention, a theory of just war, and a rationale for anti-German feeling.


10 That American Jews were not enthusiastic about alliances with a recently pogrom-friendly, Tsarist Russia, that Irish-Americans were not excited about coalitions with England, and that German-Americans were reluctant to join forces against their home country led many dominant white groups and recently assimilated ethnic groups to exert massive repressive networks against anyone not in favor of the war, at least partially as a form of ethnic control or political coercion.


13 By now, there is a colossal body of writing on the “imagined community” or “fictive ethnicity” of nationalism. Perhaps most salient to my thinking here, however, is Etienne Balibar’s discussion of the “nation form.” See “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*; Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*.

14 The discourse of “maturity” reaches its apex during the early decades of the Cold War. A proto-form of that eventual crystallite, however, is evident from the 1890s on. See Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years*, chapter III.


16 See Woodrow Wilson, *The Politics of Woodrow Wilson*, 104. Wilson’s delight in figuring the war as a “crusade” and a “mission” excited a public conception of the war as a transcendent struggle against undiluted evil. The persistent referral to war as a “baptism” similarly cloaked the practice of war in spiritual garments as a type of inner revival, a morally cleansing purgative. It was, in fact, prior to his presidency that Wilson advanced the notion of a spiritualized American nation and his own concept of holy war. “The most solid and satisfying peace,” he claimed, “is that which comes from this constant spiritual warfare, and there are times in the history of nations when they must take up the crude instruments of bloodshed in order to vindicate spiritual conceptions.” “For liberty is a spiritual conception,” he continued, “and when men
take up arms to set other men free, there is something sacred and holy in the warfare. I will not cry 'peace'
so long as there is sin and wrong in the world.”
17 See http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/18078
18 See Paul K. Kahn Putting Liberalism in Its Place, 229-230.
20 See Conigsby Dawson, The Glory of the Trenches, 15. Dawson was an English resident of the U.S. who
worked as a literary advisor to George H. Doran Publishing company before volunteering with the
Canadian army in 1916. After being wounded in the war, he returned to the United States on lecture tours
tenlist support for military preparedness before becoming an investigator in the British Ministry of
Information. Devout Christian and governmental subject, he was a central figure in classifying the war as
an event that drew upon inner, spiritual reserves.
21 Ibid. 14-15, 117.
22 As a Harvard educated prosecutor of political offenders in Queens County, New York and President of
the National Institute of Arts and Letters, it should come as no surprise that Train dedicates his work to
Arthur Woods, “a patriotic citizen who, as commissioner of police of New York City 1914-1917, “Realized
the Highest Ideals of Public Service.”
23 See Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, Old Glory, 3-4.
24 See Capozzola, 56-60.
25 See Randolph Bourne, War and the Intellectuals, 67, 71-72. Despite the terms of his polemic, Bourne,
as Milton Cantor has argued, was “no radical or socialist.” As “an anti-war liberal possessed of a vision of
an organic national culture, he generally shared the New Republic’s hope for an efficient and humane
social order that would transcend ‘internal class struggle’” (Dissent 220).
26 Describing the frenzy of preparedness mobilization, Stearns offers this portrait: “The bewildered small
town lad hustled into a training camp whose perplexed soul longed for some assurance that he was an
instrument of righteousness against evil speedily discovered that he was fighting for something far more
emotionally satisfying than the nebulous task of making the world safe for democracy. He found he was
fighting to exterminate a devil in human form, a slayer of babes, a raper of women, a murderer of old men,
a foe of civilization and art and all that a normal man holds dear. The newspapers told him so; the
preachers told him so; his officers told him so. Atrocity stories and propaganda appeared again with
special virulence. Our compact and highly organized newspapers all were filled with the same stuff. He
heard it on every side—the whole force and drive of American mass opinion was behind it” (96)
title of Chapter 4 is “Emotional Breakdown Before War Hysteria.”
28 See Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism. Also, Timothy
Brennan has pointed out the unique origin story of the U.S. forbids its ritual re-enactment or acts of
repetition. See Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right, 51.
29 Amy Kaplan, borrowing the term from Michael Kammen, links the “de-revolutionizing” impetus to
structures of masculinity in this period (Anarchy 51). See also, Paul Buck, The Road to Reunion, 1865-
1900, 310-320; Nina Silber, The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900; and David
Blight, Race and Reunion.
30 See Willa Cather, One of Ours, 86,142, 222, 253, 328, 331, 339.
33 See Edith Wharton, The Marne, 49; A Son at the Front, 35.
34 See Edith Wharton, A Son at the Front, 11, 36, 99, 102.
35 Ibid., A Son at the Front, 78, 166-167.
36 Ibid., A Son at the Front, 167, 208, 213.
37 See Thomas J. Knock, To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order, 14.
39 See Michael Pearlman, To Make Democracy Safe for America: Patricians and Preparedness in the
Progressive Era, 38.
40 The phrase comes from the title of John Patrick Finnegan’s study of military preparedness, Against the
Specter of a Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914-1917, which argues that
the Preparedness Movement had less to do with quelling international threat than it did with functioning as an end in itself for its socially disciplining potential.

41 On the shift in representational tone, see Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*—still probably the most generally regarded take on the shocking new temperamental order brought about by the first real modern war. See especially, 21-22 on the shift in rhetoric, from “feudal,” “high” diction to the terse, laconic idiom of the new.

42 Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard/Belknap, 1981), 79. Samuel Huntington is a cultural conservative whose military viewpoint has been crucial to twentieth century American military philosophy. Chapters 9 and 10 especially offer an opposite view from my own, one supportive of militarization.

43 The reference to a “strenuous life” recalls Roosevelt’s most famous speech.


45 As he surveyed the glee with which men threw themselves into the maw of the beast, Harold Stearns declared that “it is rather naïve of pacifists to dwell too realistically upon war’s horrors—it is these very horrors which constitute one of war’s major attractions,” “an irresistible psychological attraction, which paradoxically enough is not diminished but increased by the knowledge of the terrible consequences which must result from war’s declaration” (156). He connected it to a dispossession the French called “nostalgie de la boue.” “[W]hile they do not pretend to like lice and mud and sudden pain and hunger and cold and an iron discipline that reduces their individuality to a zero,” he maintained, “it would be idle to deny that they find in all these things a kind of deep gratification that life is not the smooth, round, tasteless monotony which the industrial revolution had almost succeeded in making it” (158).

46 Leonard Nason, *Chevrons*, 166, 238.

47 This is a fact that at least complicates Margot Norris’s contention in *Writing War in the Twentieth-Century* that World War I writing is haunted by the repressed bodies of the inconceivable numbers of war dead, an erasure of war’s bodily damage.

48 See <http://proquest.umi.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/pqdweb?index=8&did=624745581&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1281624317&clientId=36305> See also, <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch00699>


55 Hervey Allen, *It Was Like This: Two Stories of the Great War*, 5.

56 Hervey Allen, *It Was Like This*, 5-13

57 Hervey Allen, *It Was Like This*, 24, 32, 79, 84, 126.


Notes to Chapter 3


3 The monumental body of writing produced by women in response to and support of the war represented a reversal in some tenets of the proto-feminist discourse of the time, ideas that largely saw irreducibly distinct differences in “nature” between men and women. For writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for instance, war was the result of inherently masculine dispositions toward government and politics, while
women were to be understood as the natural emissaries of goodwill and peace. As Kimberly Jenzen has pointed out, however, wartime “service” witnessed women’s increased advancement into the public sector, but in ways that actually worked to reinforce nationalist ideals and bourgeois standards of decorum. Women gained in status only in proportion to their loyalty to the war effort and their support of the military; that is, their support of militaristic institutions as another front upon which to make claims for “equal access.” No longer did they seek to transform the paradigm of citizenship that equated full civic status with military service. Rather, they sought equal access to that service “to fulfill the requirement of citizenship as it stood” (142).

4 See Alan Brinkley, “A Familiar Story,” 32.
5 See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here* 161-162.
6 See Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 424. He uses the term to address the subject of white American’s ascriptive “Americanism” as essentially a racialized form of identity. But it strikes me that, in combating many of the racist underpinnings of American citizenship ideologies—however much of a pragmatic appropriation it may have been—many minorities internalized it.

9 *Home to Harlem*, 57-58, 109, 196-197, 320.
10 Ibid., 111, 197, 265.
11 See Painter 219, 226, 331-332, 356.
13 In 1919, Harold Stearns commenting on the exploitation of conscientious objectors had this to say: “He was the ultimate refutation, the ultimate challenge. He was the bad conscience of the drafted men, and the vengeance they wreaked upon him in training camps was merely the expression of their anger at his revealing to them their own moral cowardice, for there is no getting around the fact that most of the men in their hearts did not want to go—that is, at first before the propaganda and social pressure had overwhelmed their native reluctance (95).
15 That the Plattsburg Advisory Committee was made up of prestigious college presidents—Henry Sturgis Drinker of Lehigh University, Princeton’s John Grier Hibben, Cornell’s Jacob Gould Schurman, and Yale’s Arthur T. Hadley—as well as wealthy business interests suggests how far from representative democracy were the wellsprings of their motivational currents.
16 Henry Stimson, more accurately expressed the “democratic” view of Plattsburg and UMT as an “acculturating institution,” the “functional equivalent of the vanishing frontier,” which would “make real Americans of this foreign horde,” a swarming public mass who had presumably migrated to the United States to pursue the more liberal acquisition of “mere money” (Pearlman 128). In a similar vein, Nicholas Murray Butler, member of National Americanization Committee, had before the war expressed “confidence in American racial harmony and opposed preparedness on grounds that it was militarism and that munitions dealers started wars. By 1916, however, fearing that the country was “breaking up” into nationality blocs and lobbied by the “so called hyphen pressure groups,” he endorsed the war as a “unifying force of national necessity and conscious national purpose” (Pearlman 129). Stauch preparedness advocate, Rene Coudert, director of New York Peace Society and executive member of National Security League expressed likeminded anxiety of the unrestrained “mass” mind and sought—through a classic example of contradictory progressive attitudes—to use his “peace movement” to foment support for interventionist belligerency. In Michael Pearlman’s apt words, Coudert’s peace movement viewed war as the “sine qua non of national vitality,” the antithesis to mass society’s endorsement of neutrality—the symptom of a “heterogeneous assortment of conflicting racial entities…drifting towards some moral oblivion” (Pearlman 122-123). In the end, Secretary of War Newton Baker finally so approved of the nationalist “mills” the camps had become that he devoted himself to plans to turn military camps into colleges, “the result [of which] was the Student Army Training Corps (SATC), which drafted the male body into the service but assigned their training to the campus,” a phenomenon which virtually made higher education into a big army post” (Pearlman 155).
17 Conspicuously absent from Plattsburg ostensibly democratic recruitment was even a single representative of the country’s African-American population. Though immigrants were to be Americanized, there was a tacit understanding that “American” was congruous only with recognized qualities of “whiteness.” Though the Rough Riders counted two segregated black units among their numbers, Leonard Wood, according to
David Kennedy, “gagged at the idea” of black officers in his training camp. Balking at the notion of “niggers with guns,” Wood, like his Southern cohorts whose support was integral to his vision of national unity, refused to allow black candidates at his famous outpost. Claimed Wood, he could never allow the inclusion of those “with whom our descendents cannot intermarry without producing a breed of mongrels; they must at least be white” (160-61). Wood’s racial ideas extended beyond American shores as well. Having administrated the rebuilding of Cuba in the wake of the Spanish-American War, Wood’s term as military governor sought policies of UMT as a way of “uplifting” Cubans from their “naturally indolent” tendencies. In equally familiar language, he described Filipinos as “black people, only partially civilized, in whom the old spirit of savagery has been more or less aroused by years of warfare.”

18 The Germans were often depicted in highly racialized ways, a monumental irony considering that the German nation was only a decade and a half away from its legendary campaign of Aryan supremacy. Americans, however, managed to transform “the Hun” in ways that cast him in the racial stereotype of a gorilla, a diminutive typically aimed at American blacks.

19 For Croly, “The majority of Asiatic and African communities can only get a fair start politically by some such preliminary process of tutelage; and the assumption by a European nation of such a responsibility is a desirable phase of national discipline and a frequent source of genuine national advance” (259).

Imperialism, it seems, is good for both parties involved. And lest one entertain any thin-lipped liberal recourse to debate, persuasion, and diplomacy, Croly assures that “congresses and amicable resolutions” will never produce what “can be effected only by the same old means of blood and iron” (264). “Disorganized peoples have a comparatively small power of resistance,” he would assure his readers, “and a few thousand resolute Europeans can hold in submission many million Asians” (259). Viewing Americans as “Europeans” for their shared superior racial stock, Croly articulates the familiar discourse of paternalist benevolence in the form of White Man’s Burden imperialism: “An individual has no meaning apart from the society in which his individuality has been formed. A national state is capable of development only in relation to the society of more or less nationalized states in the midst of which its history has been unfolded. The growing and maturing individual is he who comes to take a more definite and serviceable position in his surrounding society,--he who performs excellently a special work adapted to his abilities. The maturing nation is in the same way the nation which is capable of limiting itself to the performance of a practicable and useful national work,--a work which in some specific respect accelerates the march of Christian civilization. There is no way in which a higher type of national life can be obtained without a corresponding individual improvement on the part of its constituent members (263).

In conclusion, he provides the summative logic of relational selfhood: “Association is a condition of individuality. International relations are a condition of nationality” (263-4)

20 See Gail Bederman, *Manhood and Civilization*, 77-120. As Matthew Hannah elaborates, the new images and practices of manhood espoused during this period “were more or less consciously intended to unite native-born white American men in a community of interest, to put them in the best possible position to cope with the foreclosure of widespread upward mobility without resorting to class struggle, and to counter the surge of immigrants into American life, the appearance of women in public spaces and the generally faster pace accompanying the industrial world” (92).

21 It is perhaps worth noting that, despite all of Boyd’s anxiety about absorption, he was actually a devout political leftist, joining the CPUSA and running for Governor of Vermont as the Socialist candidate in later years.

22 See *The Gun and the Pen*, 17, 29, 40.

23 As a feature writer, reporter, cultural critic, and editor for the New York *World* and *Sun*, he was also the widely recognized author of Broadway plays, among them his own depiction of Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*.

24 May documents their aesthetic revolt as a negation of three accepted doctrines of nineteenth century “civilization”: “the certainty and universality of moral values,” “the inevitability, particularly in America, of progress,” and “the importance of traditional literary culture” (6).

25 The famous exchange between Malcolm Cowley and Archibald MacLeish in the pages of the *New Republic* during 1933 set the dialogic pace for discussing the war as watershed. Though commending Laurence Stallings’s work in *What Price Glory* (1924) and his grisly photographic commentary *The First World War* (1933), MacLeish attacked the “imbalance” of the Lost Generation writers and their failure to dramatize the “totality” of the war—its “human” as well as its “inhuman” side. As an art of “negation,” he felt that they failed to flesh out the war’s more complete picture, its nobility and glory as well as its
monstrosity. Cowley’s responded that “negation” was not artistic failure but the most accurate depiction of “the whole truth” of the war, its most complete rendering, since it was the only mode that could testify that all was summarily “in vain.” In a withering excoriation of its futility and waste, Cowley argued that the war’s destruction reduced the category of the human to the very objects Stallings portrayed: “they became the things Stallings shows in his photographs—a hand sticking out of a pile of mud, a carcass blown by flies, a unit in a pile of corpses, an entry in a ledger at headquarters” (my italics). Though MacLeish pleaded that he honor humanism’s traditionally aestheticized “death for death’s sake,” a “generous” acknowledgement of death-in-battle “as a nobility unto itself,” Cowley would have none of it. An ambulance driver like Hemingway, Dos Passos, and cummings, he joined “the great refusal” to enclose the war and its impact “into patterns limited by the abstractions of highly intellectualized aesthetic standards” (Cooperman 199-204). Nick Adams of “The Big Two-Hearted River”—a study in traumatized consciousness and an embodiment of the war’s unassimilability—is a classic rendering of an artistic negation as he fumbles only with daily minutia at hand, a mental levee staving off the flood of unspeakable memory held in strained abeyance.

26 James Stevens, Mattock, 4, 198-199, 222, 228, 310.
27 See Memoir, 25, 27, 81. As Pound articulated in his revised 1934 Preface, “the real trouble with war (modern war) is that it gives no one a chance to kill the right people” (140).
28 See Ezra Pound, A Memoir of Gaudier-Brezska, 22, 28, 84, 120-121, 134, 144.
29 See Richard Pells, Radical Visions, American Dreams, 7. Describing the anti-nationalist character of the moderns, Aldridge discerns “active, conscious revolt and self-exile from a country which was neither gay enough nor nurtured enough to deserve their presence” (12).
30 Even radical sectors of American cultural life compromised with the nation. Waldo Frank, Max Eastman, and Sydney Hook adapted Marxist thinking to the exceptionalist liberal pragmatism of the American creed and a politics of the “inner man.” The problem no longer was capitalism’s rampant historical exploitation of the working class but the psychological effects of its “inhumanity.” Restoring individual forms of consciousness and a commitment to social order, it was believed, would recuperate a lost “wholeness” (Pells 96-150). Kenneth Burke’s promotion of “the people” over “the worker” and the Popular Front’s redefinition of international class struggle in ways that resembled more of a “working class Americanism” signaled the strengthened power of national identification (Singh 85).
31 John Limon sees in modernism’s “cult of intransigent artistry” more than simple imperialism, but almost a fascist preoccupation with control. On cummings, he claims, “A modernist mind gets outside the war, the war prison, the government, the guards—and imprisons them in a self-commanding imagination that mechanizes and maims” (90-91).
32 Limon, in one of his many astute but often overblown observations, notes the disappearance of main characters as a symptom Andrews’ “cannibalistic” tendency to dominate the story (89).
33 Harold Stearns used the theme of “standardization” throughout Liberalism in America.
34 The language of “slavery” was used by many whites in response particularly to conscription. Harold Stearns, vexed at the “emotional break-down before war hysteria” and the general tolerance of the draft, labored throughout the war on Liberalism in America (1919), an investigative treatise aimed at recovering liberal citizenship from its “slavery” to the state. For Norman Angell in Britain, but remarking on the U.S., “the impersonal entity known as THE STATE,” was a monstrous “abstraction,” a machine” to which “you may at any moment become the slave.” With the exception of the fact that soldiers were paid, however meager, they’re not far off. One had to perform assigned duties whether they wanted to or not; go where they were told whether they wanted to or not; if they refused jail and often “punishment by musketry” was the reward.
35 See Rogers Smith, 412-415.
36 See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, 9-10.
“mandate a complete mobilization of civil society” in a way that [otherwise] cannot be satisfied under existing institutional arrangements and patterns of state-society relations” (30-31). Its “considerable opportunity for autonomous state action and innovations that may thoroughly recast the relationship between the state and key social groupings” provides the means “for the kind of discontinuous evolutionary periods” that can rapidly reframe the political organization of human social life (30). In the case of World War I, the state learned a kind of “compensatory state building” that wove together—in a way that would have been abhorrent to nineteenth-century taxpayers—a military-industrial network that bore witness to tremendous centralization of authority, bureaucratic professionalization, and new patterns of interest intermediation that would become the organizational model for society itself in the “new regime” of the twentieth century (34-41). Because the New Deal would actually be modeled on the wartime bureaucracies and emergency policies imposed by World War I—procedures increasingly becoming permanent features of American political life—it would refocus political questions onto dialogues about “distribution and conservation, not production and ownership” (42). When state capacity becomes contingent on corporate profitability and voluntary cooperation, it becomes both profoundly conservative and far more inflexible that would be the case had it developed in accordance with a different model. This, however, was the model adopted in the war. It was also the model embraced during the New Deal, as policymakers sought to discover some means of managing the effects of the Great Depression. Indeed…if one wants to know why so many reform efforts failed and so many regulatory policies benefited the regulated, one must confront the issue of institutional design and the decisions made in the early decades of the twentieth century under the veil of emergency. (42)

Notes to Preface to Part II

1 For a classic summation of the New Deal Administration as an “analogue of war,” see Leuchtenburg, “The New Deal,” 81-143.
3 See Alan Brinkley, “A Familiar Story.”
4 See Hegeman, Patterns for America, 57-65.
5 Military historian James Burk, for instance, offers this validation of the compatibility of democracy and military life: “The key point, I believe, is to recognize that these dimensions of moral change—increasing citizens’ rights, limiting race and gender discrimination, and expanding the benefits of a democratic peace—are not marginal developments, but reflect core U.S. values. In these endeavors, there is little evidence of a growing gap or isolation between the military and society. On the contrary, by adjusting to the changing expectations of society, the military has retained its moral integration with society and protected its status as a legitimate institution. Coupled with its continuing high material saliency, we are justified in concluding that, over ten years after the Cold War, the military remains what it was during the Cold War, a central institution in American life” (270).
6 The tension between “racial” and “civic” nationalism is the thesis that he develops throughout American Crucible (5).
7 See Alan Brinkley, Liberalism and Its Discontents, 46-47
8 See Anthony Burke, Beyond Security, Ethics, and Violence, 5-6.
9 See Burke, Beyond Security, 27-53.
10 While many critics have pointed out this cinematic tendency, it is Richard Slotkin who has actually used the “roll call” designation to denote the pluralistic in American films of the period. See “Unit Pride,” ALH v. 13, no. 3 (Fall 2003), 485.

Notes to Chapter 4


3 See Sean McCann, “The Imperiled Republic,” 304.

4 See also, Alan Wald, Trinity, 18-45 for an extended analysis of Bessie’s background.


6 Bernard Dick uses the expression in his treatment of the Hollywood Ten, Radical Innocence, 114.

7 First, though it was an international effort, fascist resistance was also part of a front set on achieving Spanish legitimacy; that is, the “common cause” so often articulated as the shared goal of the IB was a shoring up of support for a republican Spain, a cause seen as the international effort to achieve the more “legitimate” or “authentic” version of a nation, Spain. Against oppressive and “totalitarian” orders within Spain—the fascists, the Catholic Church, the aristocracy, and business owners—“the people” represented republican and peasant masses only. Yet, the totalitarian bodies were also technically “Spanish.” What emerges ultimately is a contest over the right to determine the meaning of a fictive abstraction, the national artifice of Spain itself. As Frederick Benson has expressed, “The type of ideological war that was waged in Spain was possible only because of the political climate of the time from which could be generated a special brand of idealism predicated on the rights of oppressed people, the justice of foreign intervention on the side of the oppressed, and the right of a people to self-determination. But if the Spanish conflict reflected the prevailing social and political attitudes of the 1930s, it is equally clear that the particular circumstances of the war were possible only in Spain, with its feudal system of land ownership, its powerful Church, its decadent aristocracy, its unique susceptibility to anarchism, and its angrily irreconcilable political parties (6). Secondly, different national actors frequently took great pains to marvel at the heroic contribution of their own volunteers as indicators of an expressly national propensity for valor or as indices for prideful celebrations of the “Polish,” “American,” or “Spanish” “character” and its ability to stand tall in the face of adversity. Thirdly, the suddenly close proximity of different ethnic and cultural persons often reinforced long-standing generalizations about the “natures” of national others rather than overthrowing them. Bessie, for instance, comments often as an observer of innate Spanish dispositions—a strident nationalism, a distrust of foreigners, and a childlike sexuality among others.

8 See Richard Pells, The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age and Radical Visions and American Dreams, 96-150.

9 See Michael Denning, Cultural Front, 425-434; Richard Pells, Radical Visions, 292-329; Nikhil Pal Singh, Black is a Country, 82-87.

10 See Nikhil Pal Singh, Black is a Country, 85.

11 See Peter Carroll, The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, 84-88. The Thirties belief in a “life of action” was most palpably communicated by figures like Max Eastman and Floyd Dell. Raymond Williams’s “The Writer: Commitment and Alignment” spells out the schism between the political commitment of the Thirties and the withdrawal from social life in the 50’s as an attendant sign of the age’s sensed “maturity.” If one did not actively recant one’s “alignment” with the left, or indeed politics of any kind, one at least converted “commitment” into “careerist” or even market-based understandings of its significance (77-87). Integral to his discussion is Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1947 long essay Between Existentialism and Marxism, which, anachronistically held out for the political commitment of writers at a time when that attitude was in recession.

12 Neugass was aware of the cliché of the masculine war writer. In a great passage, one that probably should be read against the Hemingway mystique, he humorously derides what he seems to recognize as a warring artist tradition: “I don’t like the literary, intellectual, here-to-be-revolted-by-the-horror-of-war, later-to-write-a-book, Alan Seeger mock heroism tradition that lies behind my job. First comes Jurgen, in the sophomore year at some hated Eastern college, then an ambition to write, then an apartment in the village, then a number of book reviews and equally unfortunate copulatory romances, then a war and then the ambulance, and ever afterwards, a Harris tweed jacket, a collection of James Joyce firsts, a wife with dough and a house on the dunes of Cape Cod. But all those fellows were non-political. Art kept them pure and embalms them” (23).
In an even more bizarre political turn, when *Johnny Got His Gun* went out of print during the war years, it was the farthest sector of the American political right that came to its rescue. Claiming that its unavailability was a civil liberties issue, Trumbo recalls, waspish, racist, anti-Semitic “pacifist groups” and “Mother’s groups,” on “elegant stationary” from “tidewater addresses” “all over the country began showering me with fiercely sympathetic letters denouncing Jews, Communists, New Dealers, and international bankers who had suppressed my novel to intimidate millions of true Americans who demanded an immediate negotiated peace” (4-5). Their “network of communications that extended to the detention camps of pro-Nazi internees” delivered “a letter campaign to pressure the publisher for a fresh edition” (5).

“Nothing is more alien to the thought and spirit [of Marx],” he continued, “than to transmogrify him into a suprahistorical superman, timeless and placeless” (154). The more successful activist, consequently, will be anything but programmatic and will make use of the “intricate, changing global mosaic of class, national, and social contradictions and conflicts” (155).

“True,” he explains, “as proponents of Communism they represented a theoretical and political community, and almost all of them, moreover, were taught in the exacting school of Communist International; they were shaped by such common influences, but simultaneously each was molded by its antecedents, by its experience and inner development, and most of all by the factors—economic, political, historical, cultural—that make up its particular national environment” (146-147).

Jeffrey Walsh uses the term “apolitical” in his discussion of Hemingway (96).

Key to that apprehension was the wide acceptance of the “second chance” ideology enabled by the grim short history of the twentieth century to that point. According to Michael Sherry, the second-chance ideology was shaped in part by the view that “the calamities of economic depression and world war had been avoidable, caused by the abdication of leadership by the United States and by the failures of the world’s democracies.” Having “imposed a punitive peace that poisoned German politics, disrupted the global economy, and helped to usher in a global depression, which in turn bred the conditions that dictators exploited,” the victorious nations of World War I had simply been the victims of their own shortsightedness. Furthermore, “They squandered the chance to use the League of Nations to control economic chaos and military aggression, in part because the United Sates had refused to join it.” “Instead,” claims Sherry, “the Western democracies tied [together] policies of appeasement, disarmament, and isolationism that emboldened their aggressors—an invitation to Mussolini, Hitler and the Japanese warlords to run the world,” according to Navy Secretary Forrestal in 1944. And they failed to grasp the dangers posed by new technologies and ideologies operating in a closed world system.” In effect, the second chance ideology expressed the view that “For many Americans, the Versailles Treaty ending World War I symbolized the start of these follies, Munich their apogee, Pearl Harbor their consequences for Americans, and German V-2 rockets the future that such foolishness could bring. Soon Hiroshima and the Holocaust would join the litany of symbols.” To Sherry, “It was a strikingly dark and self-castigating view of the past for a triumphant nation to adopt” (85).

See Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, especially 265-71; see also, Brinkley, “Legacies of World War II” in *Liberalism and Its Discontents*.

See Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 220-236; Brinkley, Legacies of World War II.”


See //www.theatlantic.com/doc/200307/kaplan, also see
http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume2/june_2004/6_04_2.html

The Army’s page continues: “GWOT era demands leaders who can fight as well as their Cold War predecessors could but who can also transition quickly and effectively to stability operations and nation building to defeat radical Islam and its proselytizing terrorists.”

“How does Hersey’s status as outsider,” Nadel asks, “change from marginal to central, and how does that change affect the principals whom Hersey attempts to represent? In converting his absence from the events of Hiroshima into the omniscient historical presence that represents it, Hersey thus relies on the fissure between “history” and “event,” claims Nadel, “in order to invest history with the rhetorical authority of fiction” (64).
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24 For Norris, the dead are ultimately unassimilable. As she rather beautifully explains, “The dead of the atomic bomb blast are the moral keloids of Hiroshima’s history that resist the abrasion of memory, the suture of repentance or forgiveness, the sublation to narrative and art” (174).
26 On “liberal political realism” and the invocation of the “sentimental,” see K. A. Cuordileone, 214.
27 Map makers portrayed Japan and US as dangerously close and encouraged viewers to think of US and Europe as joint makers of an Atlantic community; press offers images of America’s “encirclement” in a “closed space” world system (39).
28 See David Campbell, *Writing Security*, 166. As an account of how the “society of security played out in the Cold War, see 153-186.
29 Marshall Berman uses the term “expressway world” in *Everything Solid Melts into Air* to describe “the modern environment that emerged after World War II” that “would reach a the pinnacle of power and self confidence in the 1960s, in the America of the New Frontier, the Great Society, Apollo on the moon.” He adds this interesting note: “The developers and devotees of the expressway world presented it as the only possible modern world: to oppose them and their works was to oppose modernity itself, to fight history and progress, to be a Luddite, and escapist, afraid of life and adventure and change and growth” (313)

Notes to Chapter 5

1 See Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center*, ix, 245-46, 253, 256.
2 Ibid., ix, 153, 156, 245, 253.
9 The term “rarification” is David Campbell’s (20)
11 Ibid.
13 It is worth noting that Shaw grew up in a Jewish household. His lauding of Christian values is given full account in an earlier section of the novel where he has his Jewish protagonist Noah Ackerman warm to a message of Christian love extolled by a minister in a scene discussing the killing of Germans.
14 See Collier and Lakoff for a further discussion of “Cold War liberalism,” 125.
15 See Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope*, 78.
17 See also, Walter Benn Michaels, *The Shape of the Signifier*, 19-26
20 Jennifer James reproduces an actual army order from the same period that reads as follows: “Every effort should be made by the War Department to maintain the social and racial conditions which exist in civil life in order that the normal customs of white and colored personnel now in the Army may not be suddenly disrupted. The Army can, under no circumstances, adopt a policy which is contrary to the dictates of a majority of the people.” See *A Freedom Bought with Blood*, 28.
Notes to Chapter 6

1 John Aldridge complains that, distinct from modernist literature that derived “its power from disillusion, shock, and social change,” World War II writing demonstrates a cold, resourceless “maturity” in which “the energy of rebellion has been dissipated” (238-240). Charles Eisinger, in 1963’s *Fiction of the Forties*, herd all the novels he discusses into a forking channel, corralling them into discrete expressions of either “patterns of despair” or “patterns of affirmation.” Joseph Waldmeir’s *American Novels of the Second World War* (1969) makes distinctions between novels that are “realistic,” those that trace the effects of war on the psychology of the participants, and those that are “ideological,” or expressive of “propagandistic” qualities of a Manichean “gung-ho” temper. For Peter Aichinger, World War II novels portray only “glum
resignation,” a “firm, unemotional, and realistic” self-diminishment in response to the overwhelming and incomprehensible scope the event. Charles Eisinger mourns the lack of a modernist “genius” for protest and defiance in the postwar era as a symptom of repetition and defeat. Jerry Bryant similarly describes the body of novels he treats as occupying one of two groups—the dissenting but still patriotic or the anti-social which retains no patriotic orientation. For Wayne Charles Miller, the novels of World War II are “a divided stream”—some are “liberal,” some “conservative.” And to add to his signature to manifesto declaring a decline in modernist protest, he casts a general net over the entire body of World War II novels to lament that they are “much less doctrinaire than their forerunners” which, he regretfully concedes, were more apt to show “shock, dismay, or disenchantment” (134, 145). For Thomas Myers, finally, though he notes the perseverance of a “protest impulse,” World War II writers generally display a “radical shift from the World War I modernist perspective.” Accepting war as a “regrettable but predictable manifestation of American culture,” writers, he claims, generally “did not display the initial sense of shock and outrage or the later disillusionment of their earlier counterparts” (19).

3 See Walter Holbling “The Second World War: American writing, 212. He writes, “[C]onflict becomes the occasion for questioning the validity of those individual and collective values and concepts of self and other in whose name one migh die prematurely—especially at moments when victory is uncertain. Thus, the literature of war brings forth models of a nation’s (or a people’s) ‘storifying of experience’: acts of ‘literary sense-making’ (or the lack of it) performed in response to particular historical situation—situations that, effectively, require the suspension of norms crucial in peaceful societies and sanctify the use of collective force” (212).
6 See Eric Muller, *Free to Die for their Country*.
7 See Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory*, 145. A perfect index of this shift is in the repatriation of the “renunciants” who forfeited their US citizenship during the turmoil of the war and out of the many layered necessities compelled by internment. “Of the 5,409 requests for restoration of citizenship,” according to Mae Ngai, “4,978 were granted,” a seeming concession to a more permissive, tolerant order (196). People like “Edward Ennis, who as head of the Enemy Alien Control Unit had vigorously pursued deporting the renunciants,” were pleased with the determination, a “turnabout [which] reflected the shift in political winds between the war and the mid-1950s” (197). “[T]hough it anticipated the liberalism of the Warren Court, still a few years away,” claims Ngai, “the Ninth Circuit’s decision ordering individual determinations was more representative of the McCarthy era’s obsessive suspicion of alleged subversives” (197). And though the Immigration and Naturalization Act (McCarran-Walter) of 1952 “repealed Japanese exclusion and the racial requirement for naturalization,” it did so “based on dispersal, assimilation, and ethnic denial” (197).
15 Claims K. A. Cuordileone, “Desire—intractable, unwieldy, all-consuming, mature, immature, normal, perverse—underlies all political behavior in *The Vital Center* (27).”

19 See *The End of It*, 109-113, 123, 273, 275.


21 See Michael Hogan, *Cross of Iron*, 426-34. The Freedom Train was a traveling string of railroad cars, a “traveling archive of historic documents that visited more than three hundred cities between September 1947 and January 1947” (426). It insisted upon desegregated attendance and cancelled in Southern cities that wouldn’t comply. It’s intent, however, was to promote identity of interest Americanism in contrast to the totalitarian menace abroad. As such, it “celebrated consensus and triumphs at the expense of divisions and failures” (430). Of the 127 documents in train, the combined narrative boosted an image of an America devoid of internal conflict, “only global conflict which unites us more.” Though it included the Emancipation Proclamation, for instance, was “enshrined as a symbol of presidential leadership rather than a byproduct of regional conflict and Civil War”. 9,000 people visited it every day and the ceremonies concluded with a National Security official to lecture on key doctrines of National Security—a “realistic” orientation toward the globe and the need for collective understanding of “total war. The last act was usually a prayer for American unity and a plea for “God’s help” as necessary to survive the struggle against Communism (433).

22 The reality of the preference for enemy combatants to one’s own countrymen recalls Lena Horne’s refusal to sing for an audience where German POWs were put in the front rows before blacks.


27 It should be noted that, at times, Killins expresses his conception of manhood in ways that are problematically homophobic. While he is, of course, drawing on a long history of black male writing that defines manhood as the denied marker of identity prohibited by whites, accruing masculine substance by strategies of othering “faggots” throughout the novel is an unfortunate betrayal of the same democratic “rights” Killins wants afforded to blacks.

28 John Oliver Killins, *And Then We Heard the Thunder*, 186-188, 272-273.

29 For an extended account of the racial and sexual politics of this transference, “recasting the victim,” see Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America*, 84-100. See also Judith E. Smith, *Visions of Belonging*, 150-55.

30 See Warren Susman, “Did Success Spoil the United States?” Enfolded in the “dual collective representation” characterized by a tension between affluence and anxiety, the period’s “structure of desire,” he claims, viewed the psychopathic as “heroic.” “Culture shapes desire, and desire helps shape the nature of the culture. In this regard both collective representations so pervasive in postwar America become essential. One is not simply the criticism of the other. The vision of man as alienated, anxious, psychopathic, and outside social bonds becomes part of the people’s needs. Perhaps audiences did not fully comprehend the meanings of their desires, but that is why film noir and juvenile delinquency films and certain detective stories, particularly Mickey Spillane’s popular novels featuring the psychotic hero Mike Hammer flourished. Watching these deranged heroes and heroines, audiences felt genuinely sad that their illusions were hopeless. Yet they were also exhilarated by the living grace of the doomed heroes and heroines they saw on the screen. In other words, when men or women saw themselves in the mirror as alienated, weak, and anxious, they cherished that feeling every bit as much as they did while characterizing themselves, in the other collective representation, as heroic and self-sacrificing” (28-30).


32 Kurt Vonnegut also mentions Slovik in *Slaughterhouse Five*.

33 Such destabilizing depictions, consequently, point out the failure of imagination in accounts like William Bradford Huie’s *The Execution of Private Slovik* that claim, “Something hopeful has been happening to the army.” “With much of the world moving toward more secrecy, suspicion, and slavery,” Huie wrote, “the army is becoming more tolerant of civilian examination. As long as pictures like *From Here to Eternity* and books like *The Execution of Private Slovik* can be produced with the cooperation of the army, free inquirers need not lose hope.” “An American army,” he added for effect, “has nothing to hide except weapons and battle plans” (vii-viii)
Notes to Conclusion

1 For a thorough analysis of this enjoinment, see Wendy Brown, “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy.”

2 Threat, for Massumi, should be understood as “autopoietic,” “self-causative,” an “operative logic”: “a felt dynamic form of unbounded activation germinal of determinate feeling—pure affect, in a redawning universe” (63). “Understanding the political ontology of threat,” he claims, “requires returning thought to this affective twilight zone of indexical experience. In that bustling zone of indistinction, the world becomingly includes so much more than perception reveals. For that reason, thought’s approach cannot be phenomenological. It must be unabashedly metaphysical. It must extend to that which conditions what is appearing next, itself never appearing. (66)


4 I have discussed these developments, particularly their alliance with an evangelical worldview, at length elsewhere. See Jonathan Vincent, “Left Behind in America: The Army of One at the End of History.” Reframing 9/11: Popular Culture in the Global War on Terror.

5 See also Nikhil Pal Singh, “The Afterlife of Fascism.”

6 See Walter Benn Michaels, The Shape of the Signifier, 169-182.
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