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WRITING AMERICAN SOLDIERS:
NINETEENTH-CENTURY VARIETIES OF MILITARY EXPERIENCE

by

Benjamin Cooper

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
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of Doctor of Philosophy

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If I have done my job correctly, then what follows isn't a war story but rather a love story. The last word I reserve for Erika Conti. *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ché la diritta via era smarrita. Grazie mille e tante cose.* The woods are no longer so dark.

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WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT WAR

I.

The story goes that during a diplomatic trip on behalf of the Massachusetts governor to New York City in March of 1787, Royall Tyler for the first time saw professional theater. Tyler's experience with the stage jolted a month-long creative frenzy culminating with *The Contrast*, a trim five-act play which opened at the John Street Theater in New York City on April 16, 1787.¹ Widely credited as the first dramatic comedy written by an American and performed by professional actors, *The Contrast* was well-received by critics and audiences alike.² The play's list of private subscribers includes many prominent readers, among them George Washington (two copies of the play were found in Washington's personal library, one of them autographed by Tyler), Aaron Burr, then Secretary of War Henry Knox, as well as a myriad of other Continental Army officers, from captains to majors and colonels.³ That there were so many military readers of Tyler's first play should come as little surprise. Only a month after the play's initial run, the Constitutional Convention would begin in Philadelphia populated with recent heroes of the Revolution. That the play took as one of its central concerns "the contrast between a gentleman who has read Chesterfield and received the polish of Europe [,] and an unpolished, un-travelled American" soldier, is also of little surprise, given Tyler's recent military life.⁴ Only a few months before *The Contrast's* swift composition and production, the gentlemanly Tyler had joined the army for the second time in his life, on this occasion as a major under General Benjamin Lincoln during Shays' Rebellion.⁵

Tyler was as much an accidental soldier as he was an accidental playwright, and *The Contrast* and its author were in many ways two complementary laboratories of sentiment. The play and the author both wanted to understand the process by which becoming “an unpolished, un-travelled American” was more than a rebuke of European polish, travel, and refinement. Tyler was coming to learn it was also an expression of the vexed military ethos the emerging nation was forging. He was at Harvard in 1775 when the Battles of Lexington and Concord took place only a few miles away. After taking his degree in 1776, he joined the Revolutionary Army in Boston under the generalship of John Hancock. At the request of his mother who already had lost her husband to the war in 1775 and who had another son serving as a spy for Washington, Tyler spent most of the Revolution a safe distance from the front.⁶ Regardless of their duration, Tyler’s intermittent experiences as a soldier visibly left their imprint on his play and its “native themes” (20).⁷

For the audience, *The Contrast* would have appeared as an American take on the English comedy of manners. The crowd quickly comes to learn that the gentleman with European sympathies, “who has read Chesterfield,” is Billy Dimple, a smooth-talking New York dandy. As the curtain opens, Dimple is engaged to be married to Maria Van Rough, a woman from the same social caste, but one who is having nagging doubts about his character. He is, in her eyes, “a depraved wretch, whose only virtue is a polished exterior; who is actuated by the unmanly ambition of conquering the defenceless...” (38-9). Subsequently, the audience becomes acquainted with Henry Manly, the “un-travelled American,” whose role in the play will be to protect and uphold “probity, virtue, [and] honour” (114-15). Manly is a taciturn and somewhat melancholic Revolutionary War

hero from the countryside. He has never before been to the city, “[n]ever nearer than Harlem Heights, where he lay with his regiment” (42). The two men could not have been more different.

The Contrast proposes there is a choice to be made in the representation of post-Revolutionary New England, and that Dimple and Manly illustrate competing alternatives.⁸ On the one hand was the familiar parlor game of Dimple, a con man and a rogue, but a con man and a rogue whom people liked. He is loved by three women, among them Maria, Manly’s sister Charlotte, and Letitia, the richest of the three, and therefore Dimple’s real marital interest. As the scoundrel so succinctly puts it: “I must break with Maria, marry Letitia, and as for Charlotte—why, Charlotte must be a companion to my wife” (66). The play offers an alternative to Dimple in the silent but principled honesty of Manly. After Dimple is exposed and pilloried in the last act, Maria’s affections are cleared for Manly to court and, in the final scene, win. During every stage of the action’s development, Tyler’s characters and narrative structures clearly telegraph where the audience’s sympathies should lie, and so when Maria selects Manly over Dimple, the central tension is resolved and the play may end. She has wisely chosen in Manly something more “American” than his counterpart, Dimple, and presumably, Manly is as much Maria’s pick as he is Tyler’s and the audience’s.

But what precisely does everyone get when we get Manly? The question has occupied much of the play’s scholarship, most of which has often focused on the uneasy contradictions Manly posed for post-Revolutionary America as the country was transitioning into a market economy and trying to articulate for itself where its republican principles stood. A hardworking farmer and a loyal patriot, Manly is the

“overdetermined signifier of American virtue,” at the same time both he and his artless virtue are constant objects of satire. Dimple mocks his naivety. His sister mocks his stubbornness. Even some contemporary reviewers mocked the ways in which he spoke (often in soliloquy).⁹ As Robert Pressman puts it, “everything that he says, the audience is intended to approve. . . . How, then, are such powerful messages to be reconciled with the ironic distancing of the satire?” (98). What has been overlooked in the critical interpretations of *The Contrast* is that the play’s ambivalence regarding its hero’s civic virtues and social value is in truth, a reflection of a yet larger, and for Tyler more personal, rift between literary representation and the lived experience of war. The organizing contrast of the nation’s first drama is not between American and British, not between egalitarianism and decadence, not even between rural and modern, but between soldier and civilian. It is the neglected military distinction that announces all others.

“Sir, there is no character so respectable as that of a soldier,” Dimple exclaims when he first runs into Manly in Act III. The sarcasm fails to land. Instead, Manly gladly internalizes what should have been taken as a back-handed insult. “I declare (it may be my weak side) that I never hear the name of soldier mentioned with respect, but I experience a thrill of pleasure which I never feel on any other occasion” (81). The pleasure Manly takes in his military service is of course not real—at the very least, with the war now many years removed, it is not current—but maintaining the mantle of the war-weary soldier locates Manly if not also Tyler in a comforting memory of their recent military past. Manly never feels more alive, more American, than when he feels a soldier, and though their fighting days had also just passed, the veterans in Tyler’s audience must have sympathized with the sentiment of fading glory. Only five years

after the war, they were already creatures of a different age, and already feeling the exclusion from the nation's larger moral and political communities which men like Dimple controlled. War had done nothing to compel the newly formed nation to listen to its soldiers when they spoke (in soliloquy or otherwise). It had, in fact, only added to the segregation of the soldier's world. What we get when we get Manly is Tyler's forlorn representation of the new nation's first forgetting. Even in the republic's infancy the soldier's consequence for the civilian world was quickly receding.

Dimple mocks Manly in this first scene because the war hero is walking down the street in his old soldier's uniform. All throughout the play, Manly looks out-of-place and out-of-joint, not only to his romantic rival but even to his own family. When Manly first arrives in the city in Act II, his sister Charlotte begs him to take off his uniform: "brother, positively I can't introduce you in these clothes" (50). The old soldier will not listen.

This coat was my regimental coat in the late war...I can only say, sister, that there was a time when this coat was respectable, and some people even thought that those men who had endured so many winter campaigns in the service of their country, without bread, clothing, or pay, at least deserved that the poverty of their appearance should not be ridiculed. (50)

Manly demands undying respect from his sister on the grounds that "there was a time" when his coat represented service and sacrifice. The play seeks to answer whether that time has expired or if it still endures. Manly's regimental coat is a tactile argument for what he sees as the continuity of American character: the military garment is as timeless as the national virtues it carries within its folds. The coat goes with anything, anywhere, but Charlotte, who has lived in New York City for some time by now, is quick to refute

her brother's attitude. "In the time of war, when we were almost frightened to death, why, your coat was respectable, that is, fashionable; now another kind of coat is fashionable, that is respectable" (51). Times have changed, she claims, but Manly refuses to incorporate the new fashions of the day. He will wear his soldier's coat for the remainder of the play.

II.

It is fair to read *The Contrast* as predominantly a play that divides soldiers and civilians in the early republic. Without fail, what one group said was not what the other heard. Manly performs his character as if the war was still happening, and by so doing, he underscores what has long since been a central problem in the tradition of American war literature: which speakers control the conversation, and why? As Daniel Aaron famously remarked of the Civil War, nineteenth-century Americans tended to shy away from the topic altogether during the immediate heat of war, opting instead to relegate the task to later generations. Stephen Crane is often credited today as the most notable author of the Civil War for *The Red Badge of Courage*, except the novel was not published until 1896; in a similar fashion, James Fenimore Cooper did not lay claim to the popular memory of the Revolutionary War until *The Spy*, first published in 1821. Our received wisdom suggests that American war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was often a delayed trigger, "accounted for by...the reticence of veterans, the fastidiousness of lady readers, the alleged indifference of the most gifted writers..., or simply by the general rule that national convulsions do not provide the best conditions for

artistic creativeness.”¹⁰ If war was central at all to the lives of Americans, it was only long after the fact, and only then by civilian artists such as Crane and Cooper whom we accept to be accomplished and authoritative. This dissertation challenges such assumptions by turning to the neglected contemplative writings of early American veterans who did not, in fact, shy away from the writing of war. For the players of *The Contrast*, war could not be further from their minds, and yet Manly will not be denied his chance to constantly remind them of it. Like the larger constellation of soldier-authors from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars this study explores, Manly’s martial presence on the stage demands from his audience members their acknowledgement of the soldier, his suffering, and his sacrifice. That they failed to do so only speaks to the prescience of the play and the larger social and political issues it raises about the authorship of early American war.

Is the war over and Manly no longer a soldier simply because Charlotte and Dimple stop recognizing him as one? Or, by virtue of Manly’s military experience, does he (and implicitly Tyler) have a claim to the immediacy and meaning of war that outweighs the protests and social niceties of a people who just want to move on? Which group in the play finally gets the last word (and the final silence) on the Revolutionary War? Who, for that matter, may speak for any war? Such questions animate the chapters that follow in which what is at stake is the recovery of the early American soldier’s voice. Modern scholars, all of them veterans, have previously made similar distinctions argued here between literature written by soldiers and war literature more broadly speaking (the genre Aaron had in mind). Gulf War veteran Alex Vernon began his 2004 book on Ernest Hemingway, James Salter, and Tim O’Brien by announcing that “[t]he difference

between war literature and veteran literature is important, one that is too often overlooked. To study war literature does not necessarily restrict one to texts by veterans, while to study veteran literature means that in addition to fictional and nonfictional accounts of their war, we also study their texts not directly about war.”¹¹ Notably, Vernon’s scholarship—like the entire field of what could be called veteran studies—has limited itself to the twentieth century. Princeton literature professor *emeritus* and World War II and Korea veteran Samuel Hynes began *The Soldier’s Tale* (1997) with World War I and concluded with Vietnam on the grounds that the twentieth century reflects what he thought were still “our wars.”¹² Early American soldiers of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars have not been afforded the same designation as “our” concern, and as a result Manly and his brethren have largely remained dispossessed in the scholarship. The discussion up until now has overlooked the rich tradition of soldier literature in the United States during the century and a half leading up to World War I. This dissertation starts the process of filling in that gap. Beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, veteran authors developed tropes of representational partition and political estrangement long before more familiar twentieth-century soldier-authors did the same.

Of the modern soldier-critics, one of the most prominent is Paul Fussell, who as a writer has often returned to the cognitive boundaries Tyler first drew. For Fussell, the most intelligible barometer of any war is the volume and timbre of the soldiers who speak. He has noted how the expressive temperaments of soldiers have changed over time, ranging from the textual repression of a figure such as Manly to the emotive freedom of twentieth century soldier-authors such as Philip Caputo and Tim O’Brien. In

“Killing, in Verse and Prose,” Fussell set out to organize the ways in which critics can and should talk about war. He briefly acknowledged the nineteenth-century “antiwar poetry” (104) of Melville and Whitman, but then focused on what he saw as the missing true authority in critical discourse—the common, anonymous, generic soldier. As way of example, Fussell argued the representative Civil War soldier was loud and exuberant, in contrast to the silence of later wars. “In the Civil War, by contrast again [to late 20th century war], it was appropriate for soldiers on both sides to be noisily enthusiastic. As the officer of an Illinois unit reported of his men, ‘on the march they make it a point to abuse every man or thing they see’” (106).¹³ The suggestion here is that war can only be known through the voices of the soldiers who fight, and furthermore, that the historical distinctions we tend to make between different wars should be imagined instead as differences in the vocal propensities and properties of soldiers who speak and write. Depending on a variety of cultural determinants, the combatant’s tendencies have been either to explode into language (as in the Civil War and World War I), or, like Manly, to keep to himself all the anxieties, fears, and boredoms of daily life in a war zone (as in World War II, and the beginnings, at least, of Vietnam).

For participants, the Second War was silent. Not that the explosions made less noise. Rather, no one felt it appropriate to say much, either to try to interpret the war, or to understand it, or even to execrate it. It was simply there, taking place, and there seemed nothing to say. Contrast the troops’ flux of talk in the First World War, their constant bringing of language to bear on the war, their unremitting verbalizing caught nicely in David Jones’s long poem *In Parenthesis*. (106)

This brief passage broadcasts a critical distinction, as does Fussell's work *in toto*, which is not as passing as it might seem. Wars can be thought of as different, he is saying once again, not merely because the sociopolitical causes and consequences of each conflict have varied over time. Rather, a more meaningful contrast to be found is in the forms that soldiers' voices have taken—how they have suffered and how they are delighted, how they have found an audience or have not.

The suggestion of reverberating difference has far-reaching repercussions for the literary study of soldier writing. Regardless of the specific time and place the soldier has found himself in, the genre of his voice—the soldier's voice—has worked to democratize his experience of war. This is why Fussell can in the same page hold up the common and anonymous Civil War soldier against the distinguished First World War poet David Jones. They can be compared across time, space, and nation by the grace of the language of their shared response. For Fussell, World War II was distinguished from other wars by its silence. Its men did not react with an outpouring of *belles lettres* as he argues was the case in the Civil War and World War I. One could certainly quibble with whether or not Fussell is correct in his case for post-1945 literary vacuity.¹⁴ What is a more substantial question as to Fussell's lasting influence on our discussion of war literature is not whether or not he is right in his specific readings of particular wars, but rather whether or not his political assumptions about soldiers and their proprietary claims to voice and authorship are helpful or harmful to the critical frameworks in which we operate.

World War II is prominent in Fussell's work because the war was prominent in his own life. As is well-known, Fussell was a foot soldier in the European theater. He makes no qualms in *Thank God for the Atom Bomb* (1988) for basing his critical stance

(the atomic bomb was necessary because it ended the war and saved the lives of American soldiers) on the authority of his personal military experience. His title essay was written on the 42nd anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹⁵ In it, Fussell argued for “the importance of experience, sheer, vulgar experience, in influencing, if not determining, one’s views about that use of the atom bomb” (2). His critical voice is aggressive, and he refuses to listen to civilian dissent from men such as Michael Sherry who “was safe at home,” or John Kenneth Galbraith, of whom Fussell writes, “I don’t demand that he experience having his ass shot off. I merely note that he didn’t” (5-6). It has been tempting for critics to recoil at Fussell’s chauvinism, and yet it is worth our time to ventilate the objections we might have and give a fuller regard to the soldier’s rhetorical stance of separateness. Fussell is not alone among soldier-critics in his empirical claims. Alex Vernon declared that “[a]s for my own experiences of war and the military, I sincerely believe that they help me understand these writers and their works on a certain level.”¹⁶ J. Glenn Gray remarked in *The Warriors* (1959) that “no outsider has a moral right” to judge the actions of soldiers.¹⁷ Raymond Williams, who served in the British Army during World War II, complained of the impersonal “distance” manufactured by the media coverage of the Falklands War: “I have not heard any talk of that distant calculating kind from friends who had been in actual battles.”¹⁸

My argument comes, at least in part, to praise Fussell, not to bury him. As such an early text as *The Contrast* well illustrates, to talk about the experience of war in the United States has always been a struggle over semantic differences, and an argument slanted by the politics of group identity and civic duty. Who, after all, is a soldier? What behaviors and ideologies characterize his power, his personality, and his political

status?¹⁹ Ever since the American Revolution, soldiering has been for the nation a prominent and ongoing site of cultural anxiety.²⁰ Thomas Jefferson and his coalition of Democrats worried over the possible creation of an aristocratic military class. Their solution was to dilute the soldier's strength by bestowing his title to all able-bodied white males, to in effect limit the soldier's sphere of influence by making military practice a universal expectation of citizenship. "I think the truth must now be obvious that our people are too happy at home to enter into regular service, and that we cannot be defended but by making *every citizen a soldier*, as the Greeks and Romans who had no standing armies..." [emphasis added].²¹ Each American war has largely been conceived in the popular mythology as the people's war, from the Revolution to the war on terror. John Adams would proclaim as early as May 1776, "we must all be soldiers."²² Following September 11, 2001, commentators were all too willing, albeit for different fears, to align themselves with Jefferson and Adams' sentiments, declaring as did Peggy Noonan in the *Wall Street Journal* that "we are all soldiers now."²³ Paul Kahn's recent scholarship on post-9/11 terrorism likewise echoes the sentiment of an American state protected by a citizen brigade, "always on call for the sacrificial act."²⁴ Regardless of the reason, this strand of inclusiveness in our terminology of war perhaps has come at a cost. Not only is it imprecise theoretically, it also disregards the epistemological heart of the problem. Fussell and Tyler would argue that being there is the sole experiential process that transforms citizens into soldiers.

Similar to Dimple and Charlotte in *The Contrast*, the unlikely quartet of Jefferson, Adams, Noonan, and Kahn assume otherwise. They each insist that the soldier is a transient identity thrust upon a people in a time of need, an emergency duty that fades

when it is no longer required. Not quite the same as citizenship, soldiering is nonetheless a constitutive component to it. This model of Cincinnatus, echoed for example in both the life of Tyler and in the character of Manly (Evelev 79), finds a strong pattern in American letters because it describes the soldier in terms that deny his permanence. He is, as much of *The Contrast* caricaturizes, a lovely ideal rather than a murky reflection of military reality. For Fussell, among others, the cultural usage of the term “soldier” has been too generous, and as a result, misplaced. Its meaning and its history has been much more exclusive and proprietary than has been generally considered, especially for the men and women who have identified themselves accordingly. Such semantic slippage can explain how it is that “[t]he intelligence officer of the U.S. Fifth Air Force declared on July 21, 1945, that ‘the entire population of Japan is a proper military target,’ and he added emphatically, ‘*There are no civilians in Japan*’” (“Atom” 13). Only a soldier like Fussell would claim that “[i]ndeed, unless they actually encountered the enemy during the war, most ‘soldiers’ have very little idea what ‘combat’ was like. As William Manchester says, ‘All who wore uniforms are called veterans, but more than 90 percent of them are as uninformed about the killing zones as those on the home front’” (16). The ontological distinction produced by combat and “the killing zones” distinguishes “veterans” (as well as noncombatants) from *bona fide* soldiers.

Were some who were there not really there? Citing Lloyd B. Lewis’ study of Vietnam nonfiction narratives, *The Tainted War* (1985), Alex Vernon noted that “by excluding texts written by anyone above company grade (lieutenants and captains), by sailors and airmen, and by soldiers in support roles who did not see combat, it attends to ‘less than 5 percent of all the GIs connected with the tragedy of Vietnam’.”²⁵ This

stratification of soldier communities likewise troubled soldier-authors throughout the nineteenth century. Modern civilian critics who oppose the coherence and exclusivity of the soldier's identity assume that his identity is both coherent and exclusive. They subsequently critique his literature on the grounds that such a narrow focus on the soldier could not possibly tell the full and complete story of war. In the early 1990s, Lynne Hanley protested the aura of definitiveness the public had placed on Fussell after his influential *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) was published. Her critical objection was that all of Fussell's literary examples were written by white, British soldiers. "None [of the reviewers] challenged Fussell's omission of all literature by women and civilians, none challenged his assumption that war literature is written by and about soldiers at the front."²⁶ Her argument assumed, not without merit, that since war is such a convoluted phenomenon, affecting not only the homefront but also future generations in untold ways, it could not possibly be narrated on the shoulders of soldiers alone.

Without, I believe, a single conscious thought on the matter, Fussell and the critics and anthologists he draws on stake out a territory for war literature that excludes every account but that of the literate, British or American soldier. The locale of war literature is the front, the battlefield. The author of war literature has to have been there. If we accept this definition, there is little we can do but choose among the stories of soldiers. (31)

The objections Hanley raises are understandable, as are similar objections from others such as Susan Jeffords and Helen Cooper, yet these complaints are in truth about more

than Fussell and the implicit patriarchy in his choices.²⁷ They are really larger objections about the nature and organization of the war canon, about what texts get read and the reasons for how and why they should be read at the expense of others. And even though Hanley might not agree, her objections also point to a larger problem concerning the impacted genre of war literature. The category “war literature” is broad and rich, and the variety of its soldier and civilian interpretations alike are done justice in Hanley’s work. A distinction, however, needs to be made once again. That type of broad textual practice, wherein anyone can and does write about war—and what I agree with Alex Vernon to be war literature broadly speaking²⁸—should not properly be grouped alongside the type of documents that Fussell analyzes, the soldier text.

Soldier literature is not an impenetrable category, nor is it blessed with an ontological distinction that renders it impossible for the civilian mind to understand. But it often imagines itself to be both, and that self-awareness deserves a serious and thoughtful response. This dissertation interrogates the body of early and nineteenth-century American soldier literature through the lens of the oftentimes contradictory isolationist terms it sets for itself. Such a critical posture is the same courtesy we afford Native American literature, women’s literature, and numerous other categories of literature that have been forged through the bonds of group identity and common experience. When we talk about African-American literature, for instance, what we are really talking about is the creative work written by and subsequently about African-Americans, albeit with some arguable white exceptions such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and William Styron. Inevitably, war experience falls into a similar instability in defining what exactly it encompasses. One could imagine that a woman refugee noncombatant

subject to endless rapes and displacements would have much more to say about war than a career infantryman who was never in a live theater. The earliest of American soldier writing was sensitive to the unsure dynamics of what “counted” as war experience. Twentieth-century veterans such as Fussell fetishized combat as the sole determinant, but the nation’s earliest soldiers emphasized their violent suffering and political isolation rather than killing. To paraphrase Drew Gilpin Faust, the cultural work of the nineteenth-century soldier was not to kill but to suffer and die.²⁹

III.

I imagine the present study to be the neglected heritage of twentieth-century American soldier literature, yet beyond its contributions to our understandings of war and soldier identity, this dissertation also intervenes in early American and nineteenth-century literature broadly speaking, and life writing in particular. The selections of soldier writing which follow, from prisoner-of-war narratives to veteran memoirs and novels, were chosen because they represent the salient rhythms of the soldier’s textual death in the years between the early republic and Reconstruction. More often than not, these veterans survived in a living tomb—excluded, silenced, and in various ways made unwelcome by the world they oftentimes begrudgingly addressed. The explanation as to why these voices have been suppressed for so long is as much historical as it is literary. Soldier stories and soldier accounts in the United States have historically been muted within a public narrative presided over by civilian judges and readers. Here is Manly once again, who spoke truth to power to deaf ears.

I came hither to solicit the honourable Congress, that a number of my brave old soldiers may be put upon the pension-list, who were, at first, not judged to be so materially wounded as to need the public assistance. My sister says true [*to Maria*]: I call my late soldiers my family. Those who were not in the field in the late glorious contest, and those who were, have their respective merits; but, I confess, my old brother-soldiers are dearer to me than the former description. Friendships made in adversity are lasting; our countrymen may forget us, but that is no reason why we should forget one another. (94)

No full and fair pension system was established by Congress for Revolutionary War veterans until 1832, almost fifty years after Tyler wrote. The regular United States Army and Navy remained small and largely unfunded organizations until well after the Civil War. Repeated evidence of neglect and disinterest presses the question this dissertation seeks to answer at every turn: what can be learned from early American soldier writing that cannot otherwise be learned from the broader canons of war literature we already read? Historical readers were reticent to entertain the possibility there was in fact anything to learn from such a class.

What counted as an authentic war story during the early republic was a question entangled with the larger question as to what counted as a life worth writing about. Many of the soldier texts under discussion here would be considered autobiographical, a term and a field fraught with difficulties. James Olney dates the birth of critical interest in “life writing” to a 1956 essay by the French critic Georges Gusdorf entitled “*Conditions et limites de l’autographie.*” Gusdorf established some of central tensions modern critics

of autobiography have been exploring ever since, that the desire of the self (*autos*) to write (*graphie*) of its life (*bio*) is peculiar to Western civilization and its tendencies toward narcissism and healthy self-regard, and that the textual practice of redeeming “the individual being” by having “a second reading of experience” through the very act of writing one’s own life is always to some degree distorted by the self-interests of the autobiographical text.³⁰ Looking backward, the autobiographical author is ultimately constrained by his “deepest intentions,” which are to force into existence a record of a life that matters to the rest of the world.

Of course the same need for value and recognition could be said to drive the writer of any text, be it autobiography, novel, poem, or diary. Shortly after Gusdorf, the philosopher William Earle in *The Autobiographical Consciousness* (1972) argued as much, that autobiography “is a question of a form of consciousness rather than of literature.”³¹ Olney’s *Metaphors of Self* (1972), the first book-length study of autobiography as literature, shared Earle’s basic assumption that autobiography was a latent ontological impulse rather than a strict literary genre. “It is not at all my present purpose to try to define a literary form, or to distinguish and classify all the varieties and types of autobiography; indeed, definition of autobiography as a literary genre seems to me virtually impossible, because the definition must either include so much as to be no definition, or exclude so much as to deprive us of the most relevant texts.”³² For Olney, autobiography had to signify everything or signify nothing. He chose the former route, insisting that “the literary critic... is a closet autobiographer,” just as the casual reader and serious “student of the autobiography is... a vicarious autobiographer.”³³

Not everyone has agreed with Olney's inclusiveness, which, at the very least, has been a contributing factor to a longstanding debate over terms and definitions. How are we to recognize an autobiography when we see one? How is autobiography different from (or the same as) memoir?³⁴ Philippe Lejeune in a 1975 essay entitled "The Autobiographical Pact" laid out a rigid system for what properly could be considered autobiography.³⁵ Reacting against Olney, Lejeune determined autobiography was only "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (4). For him, autobiography was its own unique genre signified by its scope (totalizing narrative), its equivalences (between author and narrator and protagonist), and its stance (backward-looking). By these criteria, memoir, biography, "personal" novels, poems, diaries, and reflective essays did not meet the standard of the form. "Autobiography is not a guessing game: it is in fact exactly the opposite. What is missing" in the open critical stance of someone like Olney, "is the essential, what I call the *autobiographical pact*," wherein the voice of author, narrator, and protagonist is accepted to be the same. In the presence of autobiography, the reader takes on faith the unity of these three selves, for their "[i]dentity is a *fact* immediately grasped—accepted or refused, at the level of enunciation."³⁶ Autobiography ultimately distinguishes itself from other literary forms by its constant denial of fictiveness. The "I" is always what it says it is.

Post-structural critics certainly quibbled with Lejeune's assumptions about fixed identity and stable selves, yet the scholarship of American autobiography overall has tended to side with Lejeune's sense of fidelity beginning with the earliest studies by Robert Sayre in *The Examined Self* (1964) and Daniel B. Shea in *Spiritual Autobiography*

in Early America (1968).³⁷ Similar to Shea, William Spengemann in *The Forms of Autobiography* (1980) wanted to "view autobiography historically, not as one thing that writers have done again and again, but as the pattern described by the various things they have done in response to changing ideas about the nature of the self, the ways in which the self may be apprehended, and the proper methods of reporting those apprehensions."³⁸ Autobiography for Spengemann was an evolving literary form, from the early philosophical ruminations of Augustine and Dante to the fictional or "poetic" manifestation of the authorial self in Hawthorne's fiction. To this end, Spengemann highlighted what he saw as the most representative autobiographies of these larger shifts. So too did Shea (Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Shepard, and John Woolman) and Sayre (Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, and Henry James).

These early studies of American autobiography focused on the historical contexts of Emersonian "representative men," yet there were thousands more examples of North American life writing dating as far back as pre-colonial times. In 1961, Louis Kaplan chronicled more than 6000 autobiographies composed before 1945 in *A Bibliography of American Autobiographies*, the first bibliography of its kind. Decades later, Mary Louise Briscoe built on Kaplan's work to conclude an additional 5000 autobiographies had been written between 1945-1980.³⁹ This vast proliferation of life writings throughout the nation's history, produced by the noteworthy but also and more often than not by the unknown, caught the attention of John Paul Eakins in the early 1990s. In Eakins' edited collection *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* (1991), such distinguished critics as Shea and Lawrence Buell tried to account for the relative anonymity of the great majority of American life writers in the eras before the accomplishments of Franklin,

Emerson, and Thoreau. More recently, Stephen Carl Arch's sardonic title reveals a similar attempt by literary scholars to recover the obscurist life writer: *After Franklin: The Emergence of Autobiography in Post-Revolutionary America, 1780-1830* (2001). Harkening back to the genre scholarship of Lejeune and Spengemann, Arch's analysis insists that "autobiography did not (and could not) exist until after the 1810s."⁴⁰ Such a term was historically unavailable, and so he creates a new name, "self-biography," to categorize texts such as Ethan Allen's captivity (1779) and Benjamin Rush's *Travels Through Life* (1789-1813).

Over the past half-century, autobiographical scholarship has often worried over its definitions, its form, and its worth—not only what makes an autobiography, but what makes a good autobiography.⁴¹ While aware of the uncertainty surrounding the terms and the vigor of the debate, the methodology that follows in the proceeding chapters is not allegiant to one side or the other but rather open to the idea that the varieties of writing by early American soldiers matter, both because their presence informed the literary imaginations and forms of the civilian literature of the nineteenth century we now recognize and value, and moreover because they tell us something more generally about the struggles of the early nation to integrate its veterans. Autobiography in its historical development will forever be uncertain, "an unstable category," Laura Marcus calls it, "yet one on which a great deal rests."⁴² As a result, this dissertation understands the life writing of early American soldiers in the most general sense, and the term "soldier life writing" will be most often used throughout because it signifies the common representational task of the soldier grappling with his memory and experience.

Few of the Revolutionary prisoner-of-war narratives from Chapter One would be considered “autobiography” in the modern academic climate. They are generally short and almost exclusively interested not in communicating a full life but rather in expressing the limited timeframe of military captivity during wartime. They are also visibly influenced by other literary traditions such as the slave’s narrative and Native American captivity narrative, as well as by the invisible hands of editors and war propagandists. Nevertheless, prisoners-of-war construct the earliest instance of soldiers telling their stories which our literary history provides. Beginning in the late 1820s and extending through the 1840s, a second wave of soldier writing took shape. In 1830 when Joseph Plumb Martin published his comprehensive account of his suffering in the Continental Army, he had the benefit of a clear tradition of egoistic memoir composed by Revolutionary War generals as well as by civilian celebrities such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Chapter Two focuses on this gathering of texts which could more properly be recognized as memoir, though memoir influenced by the political appeals of aging veterans.

Many terms are not meant to be exclusive since they were never exclusive in their historical context. Laura Marcus corroborates Arch’s account of a nascent autobiographical genre asserting its autonomy around the beginning of the nineteenth century in Britain. An anonymous reviewer of Isaac d’Israeli’s *Miscellanies* in the *Monthly Review* was the first to use the term “self-biography” in 1797. Robert Southey coined the actual term “autobiography” in 1809 in reference to the Portuguese poet Francisco Vieura (also in *Quarterly Review*).⁴³ Both terms did not signify a coherent literary practice, only a gradual distinction authors were making between second-hand

“biography” and self-reflexive retrospection. This newfound focus on the self in the early parts of the nineteenth century was not without its fair share of controversy and revulsion both in England and the United States. In both locations, spiritual autobiography’s legacy of self-denial made many balk at what was perceived to be shameless self-promotion and vanity. Indeed, ever since the early nineteenth century, readers have distinguished between the “serious” autobiographical text that documents an “inner compulsion to write of the self” and the purely “commercial” autobiography, thought during the early nineteenth-century to be aligned with the mercenary and “mercantile aspects of writing.”⁴⁴

Were soldier life writings any different in this regard?⁴⁵ Lawrence Buell notes that of the approximately 6000 autobiographies Kaplan documented that were written before 1945

roughly one-eighth were written between 1800 and 1870. Of these, two-thirds to three-quarters fall into two rough categories: spiritual narratives, mostly produced by clergymen, and diverse types of topical narratives of extreme suffering (e.g. Indian captivities, slave narratives, and prisoner-of-war experiences) or adventures with romantic or sensational interest (criminal’s confessions, maritime and/or military exploits, frontier and forty-niner narratives, etc.).

Buell further noted that spiritual narratives generally appealed to the gentry whereas narratives of extreme suffering were largely consumed by “plebeian” readers.⁴⁶ Grouped as it often is with other forms of “popular” boilerplate literature, early soldier life writing has all too often been easily dismissed. The commercial realm, Marcus claims, was

“clearly viewed as decadent and dangerous in its licentiousness;” its representation of “‘interior’ life is itself repeatedly described in terms of danger and guilt” (22). The early prisoner-of-war narratives and soldier memoirs detailed in the first two chapters increasingly reflected more the nation’s guilt than the soldier’s. Despite the incoherence of their own community, soldiers and sailors subversively excluded their imagined civilian readers from the Whitmanian “real war” they were silently putting in the books.

Most of these early soldier texts were saddled by questions of authenticity, propaganda, and hoaxing. As the nineteenth century progressed, life writers of various backgrounds became increasingly comfortable with the culture’s accusations of vanity, “individuality, singularity, [and] eccentricity” (Arch 42). Amidst the relative breakdown of class distinctions and the growth of a vast reading public, “a new populism within autobiographical writing” emerged around the time of the American Renaissance (Marcus 30). Chapter Three documents civilian writers such as James Fenimore Cooper and Herman Melville who capitalized on the sensational and romantic potential of soldier life writing by rewriting military experience in their novels. Antebellum civilian novelization denuded the defiant ontological and political registers of the early soldier’s voice, insisting instead on representations of the soldier as suspicious tricksters who endured and survived in spite of their disloyalty and unreliability. This shift in confidence was representative of a larger change at mid-century in the American “I” which Buell charts, from the historical “I” of Mary Rowlandson and her commitment to “objectifying the self either through its effacement in favor of a narrative of events...,” to the expansive “I” of Whitman, “an ‘I’ that explicitly or implicitly proclaims its boundlessness in relation to social and literary norms, its impatience with preexisting

narrative frames, its inability to be typed and formulated even by itself” (64). Caught amidst the enlarging multitudes of subjectivity and national expansionism that culminated with the Mexican-American War, the early soldier’s voice became an unsung casualty of an increasingly egoistic civilian American “I”.

Chapter Four on the immediate literary aftermath of the Civil War reiterates and recasts the representational and political challenges of soldier writing from earlier wars. Only months after Appomattox, *Harper’s Weekly* held an essay-writing contest for disabled veterans of the recent war. The contest was a great success but none of the entries were ever published. This suppression serves as a coda to the entire project by asking once again how the soldier’s voice came to be silenced after the most traumatic war of the century. A more visible soldier-author, John William De Forest, wrote while still in the service what would become an 1867 novel, *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*. Readers likewise did not read him, and De Forest’s anonymity can be attributed to the fact that he wrote the fragmented and disillusioned war experience he knew, not the national memory others quickly condensed, bought, and sold in the popular romantic fiction of national reconciliation. His emotionally detached gaze at battlefield gore is a more significant factor than we usually acknowledge in the unease of the great realists in their ensuing military representations. De Forest’s obscurity in 1867 eerily harkens back to the outcast Manly on the stage in 1787, and while it is perhaps unsettling to think that the variety of nineteenth-century soldiers have been denied a full study by scholars of war literature, by scholars of American life writing, and by scholars of early and nineteenth-century American literature, the present study begins the task in the hopes that others will soon follow.

¹ Massachusetts had outlawed theatrical productions in 1750, but not New York. See Ada Lou Carson and Herbert L. Carson, *Royall Tyler* (Boston: Twayne, 1979) 28, William Shield and John O'Keefe, *The Poor Soldier (1783)* (Madison: A-R Editions, 1978) 21.

² The play was aware of this singular status, billing itself as “Never performed... a COMEDY of Five Acts, written by a CITIZEN of the United States.” See the introduction by Helen Tyler Brown in Royall Tyler and James Benjamin Wilbur, *The Contrast: A Comedy in Five Acts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920) xxix. For a discussion of contemporary reception to *The Contrast*, see Tyler and Wilbur xxiv, Carson 28. For a useful history of the play’s production history and its effects on legitimizing American theater, see Tyler and Wilbur xxx-xxxii.

³ See Tyler and Wilbur 7-19 for a reproduction of the list of subscribers. The play was not published until 1790, and then privately by Thomas Wignell.

⁴ Tyler and Wilbur 112. Subsequent references in the text will likewise be taken from Tyler and Wilbur, *The Contrast: A Comedy in Five Acts*.

⁵ Tyler and Wilbur xxvii. For a fuller portrait of the causes and consequences of Tyler’s military beginnings, see Richard S. Pressman, “Class Positioning and Shays’ Rebellion: Resolving the Contradictions of *The Contrast*,” *Early American Literature* 21.2 (1986): 90-91.

⁶ Carson 16-17; Tyler and Wilbur xxv-xxvi.

⁷ After the war and for most of his life, Tyler abandoned the soldier mantle of his youth. He practiced law in Vermont and Massachusetts, and continued off-and-on to write other plays as well as a novel of some merit, *The Algernine Captive*. Upon Tyler’s death in 1826, a Vermont newspaper celebrated the complexity of his life. “As a man of genius, a poet, an orator, a civilian and erudite and accomplished scholar, and a gentleman of the most elegant and endearing manners in social and domestic life, his memory will long be cherished...” (Tyler and Wilbur xxxviii). Of all the labels attached to Tyler, the obituary leaves out his tenure as a soldier.

⁸ See Royall Tyler and Cynthia A. Kierner, *The Contrast: Manners, Morals, and Authority in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) 1-9.

⁹ John Evelev, “The Contrast: The Problem of Theatricality and Political Crisis in Postrevolutionary America,” *Early American Literature* 31.1 (1996): 80, 74-76.

¹⁰ Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) xviii-xix.

¹¹ Alex Vernon, *Soldiers Once and Still: Ernest Hemingway, James Salter, & Tim O'Brien* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004) x.

¹² Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin, 1997) xiii. Like myself, Hynes analyzes professional writers as well as “one-book men,” his main criteria being “whether the book speaks with a voice that is stubbornly distinct, telling us what it was like, for *this* man, in *his* war” (xv). As a consequence of his search for immediacy, general and senior officers are not included. He also rejects “narratives written with the help of another hand” because “they fail my primary test: they lack an individual voice” (xv). See also two of the earliest critical studies of soldier literature, Charles V. Genthe, *American War Narratives, 1917-1918: A Study and Bibliography* (New York: D. Lewis, 1969), Peter Aichinger, *The American Soldier in Fiction, 1880-1963: A History of Attitudes toward Warfare and the Military Establishment* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975). One of the first book-length studies of Tim O'Brien was written by a fellow Vietnam veteran: Mark A. Heberle, *A Trauma Artist: Tim O'Brien and the Fiction of Vietnam* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001). Vernon’s edited collection on

military autobiography is a necessary starting point for any student of war writing. See Alex Vernon, ed., *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2004). To the best of my knowledge, “Veteran Studies” does not currently exist as a discipline, though many humanists, especially those listed above, advocate for the importance of veteran writing. The University of Utah announced in May 2010 that it was forming the National Center for Veteran Studies, “the first of its kind.” See their announcement at <<http://today.law.utah.edu/2010/05/university-launches-national-center-for-veterans-studies/>>.

¹³ “Killing in Verse and Prose” appears in Paul Fussell, *Thank God for the Atom Bomb, and Other Essays* (New York: Ballantine, 1988). Fussell cites another anecdote as proof of his claim. A survivor remembers of an Indiana regiment:

Our regiment yelled at everything they saw and heard. When another regiment passed, they yelled at them....As they tumbled out to roll-call in the morning, they yelled....After a hard day’s scouting they were never too tired to hail the end of their tasks with a joyous yell....A yell would start at one end of the division, and regiment after regiment and brigade after brigade would take it up and carry it along, and then send it back to the other end; few knowing what it was about, and caring less. (106)

¹⁴ While still fighting in the Pacific, Norman Mailer wrote what would become *The Naked and the Dead*, published in 1946 when he was just 23 years old. Although it did not come out until thirty years after the war’s end, Studs Terkel’s compilation of the oral history of World War II, *The Good War* (1984), opposes Fussell’s claim of World War II silence. Fussell does praise *The Good War* briefly (111-12). Fellow soldier-authors Joseph Heller and James Jones likewise would have a right to protest.

¹⁵ First published as “Hiroshima: A Soldier’s View” in *New Republic* (August 1981). Rpt. and quoted here as “Thank God for the Atom Bomb” in Fussell, *Thank God for the Atom Bomb, and Other Essays*.

¹⁶ Vernon, *Soldiers Once and Still: Ernest Hemingway, James Salter, & Tim O’Brien* 25. Vernon does concede, however, that “[i]n asserting that belief, however, I do not mean to suggest that some aspects of their works are inaccessible to those without such experience, only that my own experiences doubtless influence my reading of their texts. Feminist criticism’s validation of experiential knowledge in interpretive scholarship I find liberating and fruitful.”

¹⁷ J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 201.

¹⁸ “Distance” in Raymond Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989) 40.

¹⁹ For the sake of consistency in sentence constructions, I have gendered my pronouns, but this is not to disallow the obvious real presence of and contributions by enlisted women. Among the many excellent studies concerning gender and war, see Elizabeth D. Leonard, “To ‘Don the Breeches, and Slay Them with a Will!’: A Host of Women Soldiers” in Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue, eds., *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 69-82, DeAnne Blanton and Lauren M. Cook, *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), Judith Stiehm, *It’s Our Military, Too!: Women and the U.S. Military* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Steve Estes, *Ask & Tell: Gay and Lesbian Veterans Speak Out* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). I touch briefly on issues of gender and the Revolutionary War, in particular the figure of Deborah Sampson. For primary sources from the Civil War, see in particular Sarah Rosetta Wakeman and Lauren M. Cook, *An Uncommon Soldier: The Civil War Letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, Alias Private Lyons Wakeman, 153rd Regiment, New York State Volunteers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), S. Emma E. Edmonds, *Memoirs of a Soldier, Nurse, and Spy: A Woman’s Adventures in the Union Army* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999). For a more

recent example, see the Gulf War prisoner-of-war narrative, Rhonda Cornum, Peter Copeland and Ellen Stout, *She Went to War: The Rhonda Cornum Story* (Novato: Presidio, 1992).

²⁰ While I am most interested in the United States and its soldiers, similar lines of argument could apply to other Western nations. The Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) influenced European literature as diverse as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Alessandro Manzoni's "The Fifth of May" (1821). Tolstoy was a second lieutenant of an artillery regiment during the Crimean War (1854-1855). His military experience helped accelerate *War and Peace* (1869), a retrospective novel set during the Napoleonic Wars. Most conventional military histories are less interested in national specificity. See for example John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin, 1976), Charles Townshend, ed., *The Oxford History of Modern War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Jeremy Black, *War: A Short History* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

²¹ Thomas Jefferson to John Wayles Eppes, September 9, 1814. Reprinted in Thomas Jefferson and Paul Leicester Ford, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Federal ed., vol. 11, 12 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1905) 426.

²² Qtd. in John Phillips Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999) 2. See also Resch 65-92. George Clinton Jr. echoed Jefferson and Adams, speaking before New York City's Tammany Society in 1798: "in a republic every citizen should be a soldier....The means of the national defense should rest in the body of the people" (qtd. in Resch 66). The trajectory of Resch's book traces the changing meaning of "the people's war" in the first fifty years or so of the republic. "At the turn of the nineteenth century, Americans viewed the Revolution as a people's war won by a virtuous citizenry. Within twenty years Americans conceived the Revolution as a people's war won by the Continental Army" (x). The image of the lone suffering soldier changed fairly quickly.

²³ Peggy Noonan, "We're All Soldiers Now: Survival Tips for the New War," *The Wall Street Journal* Nov 2, 2001. Available online at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/pnoonan/?id=95001413>.

²⁴ Paul W. Kahn, *Sacred Violence: Torture, Terror, and Sovereignty* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008) 35.

²⁵ Vernon, *Soldiers Once and Still: Ernest Hemingway, James Salter, & Tim O'Brien* 36.

²⁶ Lynne Hanley, *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991) 26.

²⁷ See Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich and Susan Merrill Squier, *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

²⁸ For a useful discussion of definitions, see Aichinger, *The American Soldier in Fiction, 1880-1963: A History of Attitudes toward Warfare and the Military Establishment*. "I would define the term 'war novel' as any long work of prose fiction in which the lives and actions of the characters are principally affected by warfare or the military establishment" (x). This definition is already expansive enough, but still, Aichinger soon runs into problems with the restrictiveness even such a broad word as "novel" places on him and his scope of inquiry (xi).

²⁹ See preface and chapter one to Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008) xi-31.

³⁰ James Olney, *Autobiography, Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 9, 29-42. Vernon notes that the only study of American military autobiography before Fussell was Genthe's *American War Narratives* (1969). See also the introduction to Vernon, ed., *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing*. A decade before Gusdorf's essay, Bell Irvin Wiley published *The Life of Johnny Reb* (1943), and later *The Life of Billy Yank* (1952). Segments of both studies discuss the writing and reading habits of Civil War infantrymen. Both works are still seminal. For a discussion of the common soldier's practices of reading and writing, see Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) 165-79, Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) 152-57.

³¹ Qtd. in Laura Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 186.

³² James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 38-39.

³³ Olney, *Autobiography, Essays Theoretical and Critical* 5, 27. See also James Olney, *Memory & Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

³⁴ For a more detailed account of the history of the debate surrounding autobiography, see Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* 179-91. The definitions Marcus offers for autobiography and memoir are the basic ones that reappear in the literature, and they are useful roadmaps to give the critic firmer cognitive footholds when discussing life writing: "The distinction most frequently made is that between autobiography as the evocation of a life as a totality, and 'memoirs' which offer only an anecdotal depiction of people and events" (3).

³⁵ Philippe Lejeune and Paul John Eakin, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 3-30.

³⁶ Lejeune and Eakin, *On Autobiography* 13, 21.

³⁷ Robert F. Sayre, *The Examined Self: Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Henry James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), Daniel B. Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). Shea is quite conscious of form, insisting that he will not consider diaries in his study because "autobiography represents a further stage in the refinement of immediate experience, a stage at which the writer himself has attempted to introduce pattern and moves consciously toward generalization about his life" (xxvi). Even then, "some straining of the distinction is unavoidable" (xxvi).

³⁸ William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of the Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) xiii.

³⁹ Louis Kaplan, *A Bibliography of American Autobiographies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), Mary Louise Briscoe, ed., *American Autobiography, 1945-1980: A Bibliography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982). Quantities cited are taken from the introduction to Paul John Eakin, ed., *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

⁴⁰ Stephen Carl Arch, *After Franklin: The Emergence of Autobiography in Post-Revolutionary America, 1780-1830* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001) ix. Arch prefers the term "self-biographies" to autobiography because the latter term was historically unavailable to writers before 1830 (11). His book argues that other self-biographers besides Franklin were just as important before 1830, and it seeks to "recover" them for a modern audience. A few figures are relatively well-known such as Ethan Allen and

Stephen Burroughs, but others such as Alexander Graydon (a soldier, though his military life bears little weight in Arch's analysis), John Fitch, and Elizabeth Fisher are given a new life in Arch's retelling.

⁴¹ Not until the advent of memory studies and trauma theory in the early 1990s by such interdisciplinary scholars as Shoshana Felman, Judith Herman, and Cathy Caruth did critics really begin to disregard questions of history and genre and swing back to Olney's insistence on the autobiographical impulse to testify. As Leigh Gilmore explained it in 2001, "[a]s a genre, autobiography is characterized less by a set of formal elements than by a rhetorical setting in which a person places herself or himself within testimonial contexts as seemingly diverse as the Christian confession, the scandalous memoirs of the rouge, and the coming-out story in order to achieve as proximate a relation as possible to what constitutes truth in discourse." Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) 3. See also Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992), Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). For a response to Felman, Herman, and Caruth, see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Summer 1999): 696-727.

⁴² Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* 12.

⁴³ Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* 11-12.

⁴⁴ Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* 3-4.

⁴⁵ Some twentieth-century soldiers certainly viewed their literary practice as distinct from autobiography. "War narratives aren't like autobiography, either. Autobiographies narrate continuous lives; but a war narrative concerns a separate life that, however vividly it remains in the memory, is not continuous with the life the teller lives as he writes.... For everyone except career soldiers, military service is a kind of exile from one's own real life, a dislocation of the familiar that the mind preserves as life in another world." In Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* 8.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Buell, "Autobiography in the American Renaissance," *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Paul John Eakin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 48.

REVOLUTIONARY CAPTIVITY AND THE SOLDIER'S SELF

The Eagle of his Nest
No easier divest—
And gain the Sky
Than mayest Thou—

Except Thyself may be
Thine Enemy—
Captivity is Consciousness—
So's Liberty.

Emily Dickinson (c. 1862)

In some time past (I've thought it best)
Of the war I did partake;
With anxious care, and hardships there;
My nature I did break.

Benjamin Fowler (1776)¹

I.

We recognize captivity narratives by their violence. Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, first published in 1682 and reprinted well into the nineteenth century, testifies to this basic fact. Violence is there from the opening pages that reproduce the fateful moment when she is removed from her home in Lancaster, Massachusetts at the hands of a band of Narragansett Indians. Her memory holds little back. The bloodshed is widespread and indiscriminate. All about her, friends and family try to escape by means of bribery and emotional appeals to the Native American captors. All is to no avail. One "begged of [the Indians] his life, promising them money (as they told me) but they would not hearken to him, but knocked him on the head, stript him naked, and split open his bowels."² It goes on. "Some in our house were fighting for

their lives, others wallowing in blood, the house on fire over our heads, and the bloody heathen ready to knock us on the head if we stirred out” (5-6). This violence is a barbarism that cannot be reasoned with, cannot be fought against or out-manuevered, cannot, in the end, be remedied by appeals to sympathy and humanity.

Many have argued over the lessons to be learned from the captive’s brutal tale of helplessness, but everyone to date has at the very least agreed that the relentless textual violence acts as a powerful instrument of instruction for Rowlandson and her Puritan readers. Mitchell Breitwieser has argued Rowlandson’s captivity allowed her to negotiate the needs of her personal traumas on earth with a Puritan orthodoxy that prohibited mourning (since everything, even an individual’s suffering, was part of God’s hidden plan). Richard Slotkin famously positioned captivity violence such as Rowlandson’s to be the archetypal conversion experience pressing on the early American mind. Such savagery as in her opening scene was a spiritual gateway that plunged colonial America from its original state of grace into the depths of experience, then back again.³ Puritan resolve was constantly pitted against unfamiliar hardships of the New World, among them an alien system of Native American morality and the prolonged separation of white settlers from civilization. Anglo America could not recognize itself in this savage land, and as a result writers such as Rowlandson evoked “the myth of regeneration through violence, [which] became the structuring metaphor of the American experience” (Slotkin 5). Forged in violence, the captivity texts that followed were tests of regenerative resolve at the service of Anglo society building.

Before I knew what affliction meant I was ready sometimes to wish for it.
When I lived in prosperity, having the comforts of this world about me,

my relations by me, and my heart cheerful, and taking little care for any thing; and yet seeing many (whom I preferred before myself) under many trials and afflictions, in sickness, weakness, poverty, losses, crosses, and cares of the world, I should be sometimes jealous lest I should have my portion in this life. But now I see the Lord had his time to scourge and chasten me. The portion of some is to have their affliction by drops, but the wine of astonishment, like a sweeping rain, that leaveth no food, did the Lord prepare to be my portion. Affliction I wanted, and affliction I had full measure, pressed down and running over. (Rowlandson 121)

Victimized by the indiscriminate carnage of King Philip's War, Rowlandson nonetheless becomes refreshed by her "portion" of extreme suffering. Rather than give in to her suffering and suppose it carries no purpose, she symbolically undoes the violence done to her by imagining her anguish to be a period of instruction. She has learned something about how to endure the wreckage of her world and, she hopes, so have her Puritan readers.

Modern interpretations of captivity narratives in America have often focused on the interpersonal nature of emotional links between captive text and captivated reader, specifically on how such sympathetic appeals changed as the needs of audiences changed from seventeenth-century religiosity to eighteenth-century sentimentality and nineteenth-century sensationalism. Between its initial publication in 1682 and the years leading up to the Revolution, Mary Rowlandson's *Captivity* was reissued only once, in 1720.⁴ It was republished three times in 1770, once again in 1771, and twice more in 1773. What was it about the Native American captivity narrative, and this one in particular, which

resonated with a people about to wage the Revolutionary War? Critics who have taken note of the phenomenon such as Robert Denn have attributed the Native American captivity narrative's wartime popularity to the political passions of the people. Wartime readers returned to the Native American captivity narrative because they could identify with the analogous dread of occupation in their own lives and saw a bit of their own political subjection in the stoic endurance of female captives. Greg Sieminski has noted that in 1770 when Rowlandson first reappeared in circulation, the city of Boston had already been held captive by the British for two years.⁵ External political occupation exacerbated nativist resistance, reaching its boiling point in the Boston Massacre in March later that year.

The body of scholarship on the captivity narrative in the Revolutionary era supposes that imagined acts of violence in a text such as Rowlandson's helped readers rationalize their real acts of violence during the war years. According to this line of thought, contemporary Revolutionary prisoner-of-war narratives contributed to the same rationalization. The *Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity* (1779) was the first and, along with another anti-British invective the *Narrative of John Dodge* (1779), the most widely read soldier narrative of the late eighteenth century, going through eight printings before the war was over.⁶ Undoubtedly soldier texts helped fuel larger political systems of war propaganda (and, in the case of Allen, his own vain bravado).⁷ In their contemporary reception, military captivities such as those by Allen and Dodge underscored British injustice in order to help foment a separate and hopefully coherent political identity for their colonist audiences. Unnoticed, however, is how military prisoners such as Allen and Dodge worked for proto-national identity at the expense of

their own political enfranchisement. As Charles Metzger has argued, Revolutionary prisoners on both sides were “divested of all rights by capture”; neither their treatment nor the conventions for exchange were ever standardized.⁸ Denied rights and a political process for appeal, soldiers and other wartime prisoners were held in “custody rather than punishment” (61), an indication that soldier and sailor prisoners were unrecognized not only by their readers but by the emerging state as well.

Working in periods both before and after the Revolution, modern scholars of captivity have overlooked this political crisis that the nation’s earliest soldier authorship revealed. On average, soldier captives did not legitimate the republic they fought for as Denn and Sieminski suggest, but rather resisted the affective potential of their captivities which their civilian readers celebrated. This distinction runs against most critics who have long supposed that at each interval along the tradition, combinations of violence and captivity have engendered a symbiotic agency for the captive by producing a similar transformation in the reader. Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier have traced the evolving “instructional value of the captivity narratives” from the Puritan discipline of the soul to Revolutionary and mid-nineteenth century *causi belli* (the latter aimed at Indian nations, and like their Revolutionary cousins, little more than “propaganda and outright bigotry” to justify Indian removals).⁹ In *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699), the volume that contained the captivities of Hannah Duston, Sarah Gerish, and Hannah Swarton, Cotton Mather professed shock at his own affective investment. “I know not, reader, whether you will be moved to tears by this narrative; I know I could not write it without weeping.”¹⁰ Hand-to-hand killing liberated Hannah Duston, both in the literal sense that through her brutal retribution she was physically

released from the conditions of her captivity, but also in the more revolutionary political sense in which violence brought with it a quasi-legal justification of her humanity and an explanation of natural rights and the law. Her killing of her Indian masters anticipates Patrick Henry and other fervent patriots of his day: "...being where she had not her *own Life* secured by any *Law* unto her,... she thought she was not forbidden by any *Law*, to take away the *Life*, of the *Murderers*...." Being thus resolved, Duston enrolls two fellow captives to her cause, "& they all furnishing themselves with *Hatchets* for the purpose, they struck such Home Blowes, upon the Heads of their *Sleeping Oppressors*, that e're they could any of them struggle into any effectual Resistance, *at the Feet* of those poor Prisoners, *They bowed, they fell, they lay down; at their feet they bowed, they fell; where they bowed, there they fell down Dead.*"¹¹ Fighting back not only liberated her, it also made the enemy supplicate. As the captive's freedom was refreshed, so the systems of power were inverted and the world was set right.¹²

Both Rowlandson and Duston ultimately find dignity as well as political freedom in the aftermath of their violent Native American captivities.¹³ So too would John Williams in *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1704) and Jonathan Dickinson in his popular journal (1697).¹⁴ Captive stories of the eighteenth century followed suit and traced not only Anglo self-discovery but also increasingly the humanity of their Native American captors.¹⁵ Published in 1780, the narrative of Elizabeth Hanson's 1724 captivity highlights her great surprise at recognizing something like empathy in her Indian assailants. One moment they kill and scalp two of her children, then the next they offer to nurture her surviving infant.¹⁶ "The Indian, my master, would mostly carry my babe for me, which I took as a great favor of God...he showed some humanity and

civility, more than I could have expected: for which privilege I was secretly thankful to God, as the moving cause thereof” (116). When at one point Hanson’s master abandons her only to angrily return and threaten to kill her once more, the chief’s wife unexpectedly comes to Hanson’s bed and consoles her. Ultimately Hanson’s captors convert to Christianity, thus rendering her captivity commendable, for “none knows what they can undergo until they are tried” (120-23; quot. 121). In the words of the amanuensis of Isabelle M’Coy, another eighteenth-century captive, “she did indeed find the journey fatiguing, and her fare scanty and precarious. But, in her treatment from the Indians, she experienced a very agreeable disappointment. The kindness she received from them was far greater than she had expected from those who were so often distinguished for their cruelties.” Even after being removed to Canada and sold as a servant to a French family, “so comfortable was her condition there,” M’Coy did not think of returning home (145).¹⁷

As the examples of Hanson and M’Coy suggest, by the time the genre had reached the 1780s and 1790s, the captivity narrative had become, as Michelle Burnham claims, “virtually indistinguishable from sentimental novels.” Like Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, the captive’s story had become both sensationalistic and sympathetic, and these affective structures of threatened female sexuality helped to form docile Anglo political subjects.¹⁸ The years before, during and immediately after the war witnessed a significant proliferation of such anxiety, including the abduction and murder of Jane McCrea (1777), the so-called “Panther Captivity” of 1787 (in which the unnamed female protagonist is, like Hannah Duston, a dangerous white woman with a tomahawk), Benjamin Gilbert’s captivity of 1780 (published in 1790), and Susannah Johnson’s

retelling of her captivity from the French and Indian War (1796). Novels such as Eliza Ann Bleecker's *A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan* (1795) and Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799) also mirrored what was happening in Native American captivity narratives. Indeed, recent scholarship on the early American novel echoes the critical genealogy of the captivity narrative outlined here.¹⁹ Print culture of the early national period was a *mélange* "of individuals blending their voices *with* each other" in the service of "democratic fellow feeling," a phrase Julia Stern transports from Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).²⁰ Smith theorized that fellow-feeling arose in the beholder's imaginative sense of his own self (or "case" as he phrases it): "Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, or your reason by my reason...of your love to my love."²¹ Elizabeth Barnes takes Smith at his word by reading the fledgling fiction of the new nation as "a mediated experience in which selves come to be constituted in relation to...other imagined selves."²²

Captivity critics such as Burnham and June Namias have similarly insisted on the sympathetic exchange between the text and the reader, noting "the popularity of the captive story came from a fascination with both the other and the self."²³ Always through the affective exchanges of sympathy, captive subjects became enlightened citizens. Writing about North African Barbary captivities of the same period, Paul Baepler agrees. "Suffering, when made public in writing, becomes instructive, capable of reaching the reader's imagination and evoking a sympathetic understanding; the captive's body becomes an interpretable site where the reader gains from pain."²⁴ Their pedagogical strength cresting during the Revolutionary era, captive selves of all varieties have been

interpreted as hidden political selves who coached readers how to resist, how to survive, and ultimately how to repatriate themselves as citizens of the new republic.

When captivity narratives written by Revolutionary soldiers and prisoners-of-war have been included in this line of thought at all, they have been lumped together with other “Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic”—the subtitle to Daniel E. Williams’ 2006 anthology, *Liberty’s Captives*, the only anthology of its kind and a critically discriminate collection of post-Revolutionary captivity texts which expands the field away from the well-worn captivities of Americans by Native Americans to include “the textual experiences of American prisoners of war, Americans enslaved by North Africans, Africans enslaved by Americans, Americans imprisoned by other Americans, American mariners forced to sail on British warships, Americans taken by pirates, and Americans shipwrecked on desolate, hostile shores.”²⁵ Williams’ rationale for binding these scattered and largely unknown texts together across disparate races, geographies, and contexts centers on what he perceives to be their shared sense of a rhetorical strategy of liberty, one that temporarily shackles the captive’s autonomy only so that it may be restored at the end with newfound purpose. After indulging for a while in “the deepest fears and desires of American readers, particularly fears concerning tyranny and slavery,” these “narratives of confinement” each resolve widespread anxieties by reestablishing liberty in a “dynamic enactment” that replicates both “national and personal selfhood.”²⁶

Once again the project of the self—here in the form of liberty viz. the citizen and the body politic—matters for early national representations of captivity, broadly speaking. To make this claim as well as his broader editorial decisions, Williams must

presuppose like scholars before him that there is lurking in the generic category of the captive an embryonic political “self” that has been throughout different contexts and time periods relatable to, and instructive for, other similar selves. Jay Fliegelman has argued that American readers “on the eve of Revolution... [chose] a crash course on rational pedagogy” following Locke’s influential theory of the self as a *tabula rosa* to be molded by education and social nurturing.²⁷ Such modes of instruction and development also formed the basis of the Bercovitchian self of an American redemptive history.²⁸ That the captivity tradition had grown and changed so much from the days of the Puritans through the middle of the nineteenth century while maintaining its popularity only bolsters the argument that the captive’s self has been a successfully adaptable cipher, able to evolve its aims as political anxieties changed from the colonial to the national period.²⁹

II.

An untold number of soldiers and sailors were detained in one way or another during the Revolutionary War, although the fragmentary nature of military records and reports makes it impossible to come to a final reliable number.³⁰ Ethan Allen supposes some 11,000 prisoners died, while various other sources estimate 11,000 died onboard the prison ship *Jersey* alone. Historians since have put the number closer to 18,000 Americans captured by the British between 1775 and 1783. Of that number, about 8500 died from disease or starvation. Edwin Burrows’ recent accounting has revised the total number of prisoners to 30,000, of which he believes approximately 18,000 died during confinement.³¹ What can be said is that between 1779 and 1830, more than twenty

Revolutionary soldiers and sailors published narratives detailing their experiences as prisoners-of-war (hundreds more who were never detained, among them generals such as Henry Lee and James Wilkinson and regular infantrymen such as Joseph Plumb Martin, published their journals and reflective memoirs mostly after the War of 1812; the latter is the focus of the following chapter).³² These prisoner-of-war narratives cover a range of conditions and circumstances. Soldiers and sailors were held in Indian villages under British control, in commandeered churches and makeshift prisons in American cities, onboard prison ships off the coast of New York, and in large detention centers in England.

No work of scholarship has tried to take these texts as literary documents that reflect the early American soldier's foreclosure from social and political life—no Revolutionary War literary history, no work on early American autobiography, no study of captivity narratives.³³ Robert Denn has, like Williams, simply subsumed them, arguing that prisoner-of-war narratives were a logical and popular subset of the Native American captivity narrative because both modes worked within a fairly overt system of propaganda that confirmed the “image of the American...in simple, homely virtues—loyalty, perseverance and honesty.”³⁴ Undoubtedly soldiers and their editors were aware of their complicity with the long tradition of Native American captivity narratives. Soldier Nathaniel Segar's publisher made the connection explicit, claiming that “Mr. Segar's case is the more memorable as being the last, and marking, as a distinct monument, the termination of that long line of barbarities which commenced at the memorable era of Philip's war.”³⁵ Yet taken as a group, soldier captivities are noteworthy for their relative *lack* of violence, sympathy, and instruction, the very features

of political selfhood that stretch from Rowlandson to the Revolution. Military captivity, as written by the variety of soldiers and sailors, deserves to be read somewhat apart from other captivity narratives because its representations of listless military custody did not reform or instruct a shared political community as had other captivity narratives but rather showcased the soldier's estrangement from that community. As a result of the restricted community of veterans implied by many of these texts, prisoner-of-war narratives began an experiment of political identity that later memoirists would continue. Fraught with guilt and contradiction, soldier-prisoner texts imagined a parallax citizenship reserved solely for a nascent and tormented soldier society.

Twentieth-century biographers of Ethan Allen emphasize his heroic endurance amidst great injustice and maltreatment from the "barbarous" British and imply that his heroism was largely derived from the retelling of his experience of imprisonment.³⁶ Readers could learn something about resisting tyrants by reading him, and I cannot deny that the *Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity* (1779) was probably conceived and most likely consumed as war propaganda. Yet the text also undermines such a coherent reading because it contains little of Allen's own sense of his political standing. Military custody was a suspension and deferment of the Anglo political self, "capitalist citizenship, and the imagined fraternity of white men," rather than their training grounds.³⁷ Allen opens his narrative while a militia officer at the siege of Fort Ticonderoga in New York. His captivity begins as does Rowlandson's in a moment of localized and racially charged violence, here following the Battle of Longue-Pointe near Quebec.

I handed him [a British officer] my sword, and in half a minute after a savage, part of whose head was shaved, being almost naked and painted, with feathers intermixed with the hair of the other side of his head, came running to me with an incredible swiftness; he seemed to advance with more than mortal speed (as he approached near me, his hellish visage was beyond all description, snakes eyes appear innocent in comparison of his, his features extorted, malice, death, murder, and the wrath of devils and damned spirits are the emblems of his countenance) and in less than twelve feet of me, presented his firelock...[Allen manages to escape] but in less than half a minute, I was attacked by just such another imp of hell....³⁸

Allen represents the encounter as an exaggerated contest of race and nationalism in which the white and proper Patriot honorably gives up his sword in rhetorical contrast to the dark and depraved “imp of hell,” no better than a mercenary, whose heart lacks any humane compassion. This storyline seems predictable enough, yet soon Allen begins to internalize and question his racist and patriotic bravado. Shortly into the incarceration, Allen feels his captors are not treating him with the respect due an officer: “to give an instance upon being insulted, in a fit of anger I twisted off a nail with my teeth, which I took to be a ten-penny nail” (10).³⁹ One could argue that as Allen is transforming into a captive, he merely embellishes his descriptions for the sake of his own bravado, but if that is simply the case, then why must he act throughout like an animal? Why must he describe himself so similarly to the “naked and painted” savage who has just made him a prisoner?

Here and elsewhere, the text reveals that the parameters of humanity for the Revolutionary soldier-captive have changed. As his captivity gets longer, Allen often wants to write himself as above the fray, still the detached gentleman concerned with Parliamentary law and the real likelihood of his execution once he arrives in England (13-19). But even when he is trying to remain civilized, emotional fissures of fear and loathing betray the text's cultured airs: "humanity and moral suasion would not be consulted in the determination of my fate" (13). Appeals to humanity fail Allen because such transactions take place only between lives that *de facto* are recognized as human, and the war had changed the politics of recognition. His existence while a prisoner constitutes what Judith Butler has meant recently by "precarious life," or how it is that the apprehension of "life" in the context of war depends upon the frames in which other people are viewed. One is only alive if your life is considered by your enemy to be worth living and consequently worth mourning.⁴⁰ In Allen's captive world, only soldiers mourned other soldiers because the rest of the world considered them animals.

For I reasoned thus, that nothing was more common than for men to die, with their friends round them, weeping and lamenting over them, but not able to help them, which was in reality not different in the consequence of it from such a death as I was apprehensive of; and as death was the natural consequence of animal life to which the laws of nature subject mankind, to be timorous and uneasy as to the event or manner of it, was inconsistent with the character of a philosopher or soldier. (15)

For sympathy to work as it did in earlier female captivity texts, two human beings whose lives are both recognized and valued as human must interact. Allen writes his own plight

and the plight of his fellow combatant captives around him as though he has reached the very ends of sympathy and mutual recognition, not their beginnings. Martin Heidegger once compared the condition of captivity to a stunned animal existing somewhere between consciousness and unconsciousness, “within an environment but never within a world.”⁴¹ Allen’s soldiers “of animal life” lack a similar sense of world in which compassion allowed access to the psychic life of others. Mourning for dying soldiers was an unfinished affect since the watcher was “not able to help them”; every soldier would die inhuman, which was to say anonymous and unknown.

Paul Fussell inscribes a similar sentiment in his twentieth-century autobiography, making the case repeatedly that being a soldier “requires a severe closing-off of normal human sympathy so that you can look dry-eyed and undisturbed at the most appalling things.”⁴² While lying convalescent in a makeshift Allied hospital after being badly wounded, Fussell like Allen notes how the dying, writhing men around him produced no effect on his emotions. “If I’d not been a soldier whose powers of sympathy had already been virtually exhausted, I might have been more moved” (153). Anticipating Fussell two centuries later, Allen’s captive life is spent trying to understand the violence done to his own powers of sympathy. He never knows how to feel about his captors. When he is not insulting them (“As a nation I hate and despise you” (39)), he is praising their “munificence...so unexpected and plentiful” (17), and wondering about “the generous enemy” who took time to save an American “wounded by a Savage with a tomahawk” (9). He similarly does not know how to feel about his fellow prisoners. At first he “remonstrated against the ungenerous usage of being confined with the privates, as being contrary to the laws and customs of nations” (23). He hates being placed alongside

“murderers, thieves, and every species of criminals” (33). Allen’s most recent biographer Michael Bellesiles has argued that the *mélange of hoi polloi* forced Allen and his fellow officers to learn “democracy whether they wanted to or not. They shared in their sufferings and ‘divided our scanty allowance as exact as possible,’ casting aside all previous distinctions, even those of military rank” (qtd. in 153).⁴³ Looking at a huddled mass of prisoners comprised of various ranks of common soldiers and officers, Allen realized their common condition, although what he discovered was less democracy than democratic dehumanization.

I saw some of them sucking bones after they were speechless; others who could yet speak, and had the use of their reason, urged me in the strongest and most pathetic manner, to use my interest in their behalf.... (27)

Being held captive reduced officers and infantrymen alike to the shared experience of being dispossessed. All of them, anonymous and silenced, “sucking bones” in a savage manner, have trouble speaking for themselves. When conditions became “deplorable” enough, Allen takes it upon himself to speak for the group by complaining and “writing to the Captain [William Cunningham], till he ordered the guards, as they told me, not to bring any more letters from me to him” (22). Allen will speak for the others.

Allen takes pity here because his captivity has exposed the larger political paralysis of the soldier captive whose struggle to express his suspended selfhood might be thought of in terms of what James Dawes means by the disciplinary relationship between language and violence.⁴⁴ Allen’s scrawled entreaties to his captor, metonymically reflecting the larger aspirations of the written text as a whole, did nothing to improve the soldiers’ circumstances since, as Dawes suggests, the “mere accumulation

of words bears no fixed relationship to the processes of liberation and peace: the expansion of discourse is itself sometimes a form of violence, as thinkers from Antonio Gramsci to Michel Foucault have observed...” (15). One might expect that the freed soldier would be, like Rowlandson, glad once he has rejoined the world, and that he wrote about his military experience in order to celebrate his newfound and emboldened freedom; that was not typically the case. Allen insists as he transitions back into civilian life that captivity had not changed him, nor had it taught him anything of big ideas such as society and humanity. “As I was drinking wine with [British officers] one evening, I made an observation on my transition from the provost-criminals to the company of gentlemen, adding that I was the same man still....” (40).⁴⁵ Once freed, Allen insists he has not been transformed by his time in custody, not even by his time spent among the voiceless soldiers who had provoked in him a nascent sense of proprietary fellow-feeling. The abjection in his reaction is a reflection of the soldier-captive’s pathological alienation from himself, from the brotherhood of his fellow soldiers, and from the larger world. Specifically here, Allen is caught between internalized racial boundaries, between the rank-and-file and the officer corps, and between the bare life of his captivity and the promise of his new life as a born-again civilian.

As the first literary form of military experience in the American continent, the Revolutionary prisoner-of-war narrative repeatedly resisted inchoate categories of community such as class and race. Published shortly after Allen’s narrative, the *Narrative of John Dodge* (1779) was an immensely popular anti-British document during the war, read both at home and abroad.⁴⁶ There would be three editions of Dodge in America and one in England.⁴⁷ Both Allen and Dodge fueled rumblings already going

through New York and New England about British cruelties toward American prisoners-of-war. “As I have [been] one of [greatest sufferers] that is now in the United States of [America] both in Person and Property,” Dodge wrote to Congress in 1779, he felt compelled to publish the injustices suffered at the hands of Henry Hamilton, the British Lieutenant Governor of Detroit.⁴⁸ Dodge’s depictions of Hamilton’s cruelty were so effective that George Washington cited them as evidence in his public reprimand of the British army’s behavior after the war.⁴⁹ Whereas Allen is unsettled largely by the soldier-captive’s intermingling of rank and class, Dodge is much more disturbed by the racial confusion military captivity breeds, about which as Daniel Williams points out, Dodge was “remarkably ambivalent.”⁵⁰ Though by 1775 when the narrative begins Dodge had been working and trading peacefully with a number of tribes near his home in Sandusky, Ohio, he repeatedly dismisses Native Americans as “Savages.” At the same time he dehumanizes Native Americans, Dodge also defends them from what he sees as the even more savage British.

Dodge’s text represents Governor Hamilton as a sweet-talking swindler who assures the Indians “[t]hat he was their father, and as such he would advise them as his own children; that the Colonists who were to meet them at Pittsburgh were a bad people...all they want is, under the show of friendship, to get you into their hands as hostages....” (qtd. in 30). As a function of its anti-British tone, the tract produces competing colonial paternalisms: the cowardice of British exploitation runs parallel to Dodge’s “disinterested” colonial supervision. Both Anglo patrons want to take advantage of Native American labor, yet ironically by defending Native Americans during the war, Dodge himself becomes colonized. Dodge sees Hamilton and other British officers

inducing otherwise peaceful Native Americans to do their violent work of soldiering for them, and in response he defames their policy of racial exploitation and military recruitment. His protest causes his arrest and subsequent captivity.

Those sons of Britain offered no reward for prisoners, but they gave the Indians twenty dollars a scalp, by which means they induced the Savages... [to take American prisoners, and] in cold blood, they murdered them, and delivered their green scalps in a few hours after to those British Barbarians, who on the shrill yell of the Savages, flew to meet and hug them to their breasts reeking with the blood of innocence, and shewed them every mark of joy and approbation, by firing of cannon & c. (42)

The Revolutionary prisoner-of-war captivity narrative enlarged the contact zone from earlier narratives of captivity to implicate Anglo masculinity in the crimes of war and violence. White men, after all, were Dodge and Allen's actual captors. Rather than a racial other, a face that looked an awful lot like his own deprived Dodge of his freedom. "I asked [Hamilton] whether he intended to try me by the civil or military law, or give me any trial at all? To which he replied, that he was not obliged to give any damn'd rebel a trial unless he thought proper, and that he would hang every one he caught, and that he would begin with me first" (34-35). Racial boundaries that had organized violence during Rowlandson's captivity were transgressed during the Revolutionary War.⁵¹ Dodge identifies with Native Americans more than with white systems of violence and power, in large part because the soldier-captive and the Native American were both powerless to those systems.

The erosion of military hierarchy under Allen's captivity and the racial inversions of violence under Dodge's indicate how Revolutionary soldiers in their writings muddled the clarity of civilian norms of authority that organized early national society and group identity.⁵² A civilian early republic was largely shaped by what Dana Nelson has theorized as the collective fantasy of national manhood, a "functional community that diverted [white male] attention from differences between them" at the same time it insisted on external markers of difference such as race and gender.⁵³ Christopher Castiglia similarly has emphasized how the always-unresolved negotiation of psychological conflict and bodily compulsion came to be the predominant metaphor of democracy during antebellum America.⁵⁴ In both of these studies, the conflicted antagonisms within class, race, and desire helped stabilize the identities of reading publics in the early national period. Such antagonisms repeatedly were relaxed in prisoner-of-war narratives, in effect disrupting the fantasies of community Nelson and Castiglia describe. The Native Americans whom Dodge and Allen encounter were in their political status and social behavior soldiers like themselves, invisible and inhuman, simply doing what they were told by their overseers.

The soldier's proximity to Native American identity was a matter of some anxiety to Lemuel Roberts, who while in the middle of plotting an escape from a Montreal prison joins forces with none other than John Dodge.⁵⁵ The pair is joined in their escape attempt by three other soldiers named Holmes, Blackman, and Pue. Temporarily free, the men come upon a Native American village where they are soon captured. The village chief is under direct British orders to return all escaped prisoners.

On our way [back to prison] one of the Indians began to deride and pester Pue, calling him [I]ndian, and placing his wampum cap upon his head, the long feather of which almost reached the ground, Pue being very low stature. For a while I thought all was going well, but Pue being angry, called to me, engagedly, to fight.... (81)

June Namias writes about the White Indian as a figure who comes to welcome assimilation and identification with his captor's culture.⁵⁶ The Revolutionary prisoner-of-war was a derivation of this trope, like Pue initially resistant to being "called Indian," but finally dehumanized to the point where he could recognize the similarities in political subjection and social difference.

In another case of reluctant transformation, Luke Swetland was living near the Susquehanna River in July 1778 when he was "cut off by the Indians, and with my family was captivated with many others...."⁵⁷ After a quick and fortuitous escape, he comes upon "a party of continental soldiers" who "were going back to retake the place and also to harvest the grain." Unfortunately for him he is caught again, and this time he is in the company of soldiers (rendering him a soldier by association). All are subsequently ordered to be executed (3-4). Swetland is identified and treated by the Native Americans (operating under British orders) with prolonged abuse and intimidation. Speaking for the absent British commander, the Indian overseer "would often call to me and say come in my dog, as much as to say come here my dog, and when I was come to him would cock his firelock and put it to my breast and grin and put his finger to the trigger with an air of much fury, at first I thought it was the last moment of my life...."; then, he would "put it to my forehead with the same furious motions as before, and so went on all that day

doing every thing he could invent to afflict me” (5). Swetland’s torture ultimately opens him to the suggestion, as his Indian captain tells him, that he has entered into a new family: “this old squaw is your grandmother, and pointing [to] the biggest of the little ones said that is your sister, and then two little ones are your cousin, and so went on through the town telling me who were my relations, and said I should soon be an Indian.” After having “lived twelve months and two days” in this community, Swetland begins to act the part his captor prophesizes, after which “[t]he Indians were remarkably kind to me” (7). Gordon S. Wood has described the radicalism of the American Revolution in terms of the people’s shifting self-image from subject to citizen.⁵⁸ For the soldier-captive, becoming Indian meant giving up the emotional and political claims to such an emerging Anglo American selfhood. Soldiers largely stayed subjects until after the Civil War.

III.

As it developed in the early decades of the nineteenth century, captivity became as much a metaphor for soldiers’ affect of social alienation and political displacement as it was the recording of actual wartime imprisonment. Swetland’s turn-of-the-century description of his gradual crossing over anticipates the pervading sense of misplaced guilt and betrayal in other veteran narratives that rendered the violence of their authors’ experience of war as a mixture of class, race, and gender. These representations dismantled national political character rather than help construct it. Consider Mrs. Deborah Gannet (*née* Sampson), the most famous female soldier of the war and the

subject of the widely popular “romanticized memoir” ghostwritten by Herman Mann, *The Female Review* (1797).⁵⁹ Sampson’s transgressions of gender were well known and well circulated in the immediate aftermath of the war. With Mann’s financial backing in 1802, she began delivering public lectures throughout New England in which she detailed the eighteen months she served as a cross-dressing soldier in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment.

Her speech sounds like a prison-house confession. Sampson describes herself as possessing a “juvenile mind” (9), and her decision to lie about her sex and join the army under false pretenses “an *error and presumption*, because I swerved from the accustomed flowery paths of *female delicacy*, to walk upon the heroic precipice of feminine perdition!” (24). Her self-flagellation peaks just as the address comes to a close whilst comparing her story to the Biblical parable of the Prodigal Son. “Who, for example, can contemplate for a moment, the *prodigal*—from the time of his revelry with harlots, to that of his eating husks with swine, and to his final return to his father—without the greatest emotions of disgust, pity and joy?” (27). The compelling reason, she claims, to make the rounds of the lecture circuit was to redeem herself and walk as “a penitent for every wrong thought and step” (28). She wants redemption, though for what is not exactly clear. Sampson’s guilt represents a larger stain in soldier literature that emphasized a shared anxiety over the perceived lack of postwar political agency and moral clarity.

Joseph Ritter’s memoir similarly describes the soldier in images of the Prodigal Son, even though Ritter’s text like Sampson’s has no indication of profligate or sinful ways. Regardless, his posthumous compiler Joel Laire notes, “[i]t appears from his own account that, at one period of his life, he was like the prodigal son who had strayed far

from his father's house, and had wasted his substance in riotous living; but in great mercy and loving kindness he was brought back again to the banqueting house, where the Lord's banner over him was love."⁶⁰ Joseph Ritter was just sixteen when he found himself serving in the Pennsylvania militia at the Battle of Brandywine.⁶¹ As that skirmish is about to take place, an overwhelming sense of wrong descends on him.

An awful pause preceded the engagement and some of us stood in solemn silence. I then remembered what I had seen and felt of the mercies of God, and was afresh convinced that it was contrary to the Divine Will for a christian [sic] to fight. I was sensible in my own heart that I had done wrong in taking up arms, and the terrors of the Lord fell upon me. I then secretly supplicated the Almighty for preservation, covenanting that if he would be pleased to deliver me from shedding the blood of my fellow-creatures that day, I would never fight again. (14)

Ritter internalizes his guilt over the impending violence as sin and looks to the Lord for deliverance, a popular narrative strategy among soldiers especially as the years passed and combat guilt continued to weigh heavily on memory.⁶² "I knew I had sinned in entering into the war, and no man going to execution could have felt more remorse" (16). At the same moment Ritter is describing himself as a sinner and a criminal deserving execution, "a party of Hessians came in and took me prisoner" (16). In Ritter's retelling, his self-verdict is thus confirmed, and his subsequent imprisonment in Philadelphia was punishment for participating in the war. He looks back upon the chastening of the soul the prison produced with some relief, and when Ritter is finally paroled, he makes his way back home as did the Prodigal Son.

My relations and friends were rejoiced to see me, for they had not heard of me after the battle, and had supposed me dead; but my dear mother had maintained a belief that she would see me again, and would often say, ‘my child is yet alive.’ (19)

This rhetorical strategy shared by other soldiers in the first decades of the new century reflected contemporaneous theories surrounding the prison. Prison reformer Benjamin Rush conceived of the prison as a space of self-reflection for the convict, from which he could return like the prodigal soldier to reenter society, as “one who ‘was lost and is found—was dead and is alive’.”⁶³

Caleb Smith has documented how the rhetoric of American penitentiaries after the Revolution emulated the democratic virtues of the nation’s founding. Alongside other prison reformers such as Cesare di Beccaria, Rush imagined the modern prison to be “a living tomb,” a place where the convict’s self could become enlightened. The purpose of the military prison for the criminal is not discussed by Smith, nor for that matter is the military prisoner a concern for Rush who described soldiers as afflicted with a widespread “madness” and “Military Mania” that made it “impossible to understand a conversation with these gentlemen without the help of a military dictionary.— Counterscarps, morasses, fosses, glacis, ramparts, redoubts, abbatis, &c. for the beginning, middle, and end of every sentence. They remember nothing in history, but the detail of sieges and battles, and they consider men as made only to carry muskets.”⁶⁴ The soldier-captive was a prisoner in custody whose soul and self were not deemed suitable objects of reform (the case of Ritter notwithstanding). Prisoners-of-war were thus doubly damned. They were not generally considered topics of humanitarian reform because their

custody was not technically a punishment for a crime, and yet soldiers had always been associated even before the beginnings of the American republic with a direct threat to law and order.

Legal debate over the soldier's moral conduct dates back as early as William Blackstone in *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769).⁶⁵ James Wilson of the first United States Supreme Court cited Blackstone in his decision to Hayburn's Case, one of the first cases brought before the Court, in which what was at issue was whether or not the courts had jurisdiction to hear pension claims from veterans of the Revolutionary War (they concluded the courts were no place to hear soldiers plead their case).⁶⁶ Soldier texts of the early republic attest again and again to episodes of clandestine lawlessness within military life, as well as to the questionable punishments (or lack thereof) that resulted. New York soldier Abraham Leggett was captured and made a prisoner-of-war in late 1776. Faced with no other alternative, his regiment agreed to the conventional terms of surrender only to be stripped naked and robbed by the British:

...but the moment we Surrender'd they Crowded in upon us and began to Strip and Pillage what Ever we had on or about us. I spoke To Tu[r]nbull myself Sir you Promist us Good Quarters—your Soldiers are stripping us and leaving us naked—his answer was They have Captur'd the Fort at the Risk of There lives and I Cant Restrane them.⁶⁷

Leggett looked at war and wanted legal recourse, but American jurisprudence at this point was still inchoate.⁶⁸ Soldiers were left to their own moral compasses, if they had any. While Sampson and Ritter share the sentiment of penitence with other self-described prodigal texts such as *A Narrative of the Life & Travels of John Robert Shaw*

(1807) and the *Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking of Chatham, Connecticut* (1810), lasting reform for the soldier rarely happened. Many soldiers did not atone at all. In *The Autobiography of a Criminal* (1807), Massachusetts militiaman Henry Tufts documents his time as a soldier, thief, deserter, and con man.⁶⁹ He fornicated (18), swiped food (94), stole horses (201), and cheated fellow soldiers out of their money (104). His life as a soldier was a revolving door of arrest for desertion (195, 207) and subsequent escapes from jail (197, 209). When once held long enough to force a formal military trial, Tufts “shuffled and prevaricated so dismally” that his “attorney, taking the proper advantages, overthrew the whole testimony, and procured my discharge” immediately (202).

Tufts never apologizes, nor for that matter does *The Memoirs of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs* (1798), “the first full length rogue narrative” in the United States and a bestseller throughout the nineteenth century, “published nearly thirty times in fourteen different cities.”⁷⁰ Daniel Williams’ accounting of early American criminal literature notes that Burroughs is unique in the tradition that dates as least as far back as Cotton Mather’s *Pillars of Salt* (1699) insofar as “Burroughs made little pretense of moral instruction” (14). Partially modeled after the European picaresque, the soldier and the criminal alike came to be popularized in their positions as outsiders looking in. Most likely readers of prisoner-of-war narratives in the 1790s and early years of the 1800s were readers of other captivity and criminal literature.⁷¹ Seaman Joshua Davis, for example, shared the same Hanover, New Hampshire publisher as Burroughs (Benjamin True). The soldiers who wrote and the printers who shaped their texts often associated the practice of war with the soldier’s moral failings, which included not only racial mixing and gender crossing but also opportunistic rape and pillaging. Implicit

criminality justified the soldier's unspoken segregation from local communities and individual families. Some reacted by wanting to be welcomed back into the fold like the Prodigal Son (an image soldier authors would continue to use throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).⁷² Others were less receptive to reintegration.

That the nation had forsaken and marginalized its soldiers during and immediately after the Revolutionary War was a common complaint of military men. At Valley Forge, Joseph Hodgkins wrote to his wife Sarah about the civilians back home who had ““Lost all Bowls of Compassion if They Ever had any””; they ““have Lost all there Publick Spirit I would Beg of them to Rouse from there stupidity and Put on som humanity and stir themselves Before it is too Late’.”⁷³ Ebenezer Huntington entered the Continental Army as a private soon after the war began, and by 1780 he was a Lieutenant Colonel who had experienced a wide array of military life.

The Rascally Stupidity which now prevails in the Country at large is beyond all description...Why do you Suffer the Enemy to have foot hold on the Continent? You can prevent it, send your Men to the field, believe you are Americans[,] Not suffer yourselves to be dupd into the thought that the french will relieve you and fight your Battles...It is a Reflection too much for a Solider. You don't deserve to be freemen unless you can obtain it yourselves...I despise my Countrymen, I wish I could say I was not born in America. I once gloried in it but am now ashamed of it...The Insults and Neglects which the Army have met with from the Country, Beggars all description, it must Go no farther and they can endure it no longer...I am in Rags, have lain in the Rain on the Ground for 40 hours

past, and only a Junk of fresh Beef and that without Salt to dine on this day, recd no pay since last December, Constituents complaining, and all this for my Cowardly Countrymen who flinch at the very time when their Exertions are wanted, and hold their Purse Strings as tho' they would Damn the World, rather than part with a Dollar to their Army—⁷⁴

First in captivity and later in reflective memoir, Anglo soldiers represented the Revolutionary War as the failure of civilian fraternal fantasies of citizenship. Like the criminal and the racially marked, early American soldiers were adrift in their own segregated world.

IV.

Social death led soldier-captives to write not only of their proximity to Native Americans and wayward criminals but to black slaves as well. Prisoner Ebenezer Fox was racially transgressive in the ways Ethan Allen feared and Luke Swetland accepted. While a prisoner onboard the British prison ship *Jersey*, Fox describes his defection after extensive physiological and psychological torture. “Many were *actually starved to death*, in hope of making them enroll themselves in the British army,” he notes; moreover, “[a]s every principle of justice and humanity was disregarded by the British in the treatment of their prisoners, so likewise every moral and legal right was violated in compelling the prisoners to enter into their service.”⁷⁵ Despite his best efforts at rationalization, the experience of crossing over to the British side traumatizes Fox. He cannot sleep while stationed in a lazy British garrison in Kingston, Jamaica, far removed from the vagaries

of violence. “I still felt myself in a state of servitude,—a prisoner, as it were, among the enemies of my country—in a thralldom, from which I was desirous of being released” (117). Technically free but nonetheless psychologically enslaved, Fox spends time with a number of negro slaves whose state of captivity he imagines to be similar to his own. The slave and the soldier would oftentimes dream together of a joint escape.

I had become acquainted with several negroes in Kingston, and always found them kind and willing to give any information that was in their power to furnish. They appeared to feel a sort of sympathy for the soldiers and sailors; seeing some resemblance between their own degraded condition and that of the miserable military and naval slaves of British despotism. Whatever might be the cause, I always found the negroes in and about Kingston ready to give every facility to a soldier or sailor who wished to desert. (125)

As Fox’s sympathetic sentiment suggests, the Revolutionary prisoner-of-war narrative and the African-American slave narrative shared several formal features and restraints.

Britton Hammon’s 1760 captivity is notable for its near complete avoidance of race, a feature John Sekora attributes to its having been written like John Marrant’s narrative of 1785 by a white amanuensis.⁷⁶ A free black, Marrant describes himself as a “young soldier” (14) traveling across Nova Scotia to proselytize, “that strangers may hear of and run to Christ; that Indian tribes may stretch out their hands to God; that the black nations may be made white in the blood of the Lamb....” (37-38).⁷⁷ Like many Anglo readers of slave narratives before Frederick Douglass, Sekora assumes these whitewashed words could not possibly be Marrant’s, yet Marrant’s editor the Reverend Mr. Aldridge

proudly proclaimed, “I have always preserved Mr. Marrant’s ideas, tho’ I could not his language...” (qtd. in Sekora 488). Heavy editorial hands influenced the “language” of many soldier narratives as well. Compare Aldridge’s words with those of the amanuensis-editor of Revolutionary soldier Enoch Crosby (a central source for James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Spy*): “The *substance* of the following pages may, therefore, be depended upon, as *facts* related by Mr. Crosby himself. It is true, the *language* is, in most instances, the Compiler’s; but the *ideas*, with very few exceptions, are Crosby’s own.”⁷⁸ As Sekora rightfully notes, “[o]ne need not be a philosopher of language to feel uncomfortable with such easy assumptions about the separability of language from ideas in the narrative of a human life” (488); both the slave and the prisoner-of-war narrative raise questions about authorship and literary authority that remain largely unresolved.⁷⁹ They are both “species of autobiography” (485) at the same time they counterintuitively are interested in the “suppression of selfhood” (510) in the subjects they claim to represent. Neither the slave nor the soldier was impressed for the purpose of turning captives into enlightened selves and productive citizens. Within both literary traditions, finding and developing an authentic and reliable voice would take much of the nineteenth century.

Jesse Lemisch has already compared impressed eighteenth-century seamen with chattel slaves, the former group historically remembered “in many ways surprisingly like the Negro stereotype...because he was treated so much like a child, a servant, and a slave.”⁸⁰ Impressed sailors and enslaved blacks oftentimes would organize together in rebellions and riots such as in Boston in November 1747 and in Newport in June 1765, where “five hundred seamen, boys, and Negroes rioted after five weeks of impressment”

(391). H. Bruce Franklin has associated the systems of diasporic slavery with the wage labor exploitations of early nineteenth-century seamen and sailors.⁸¹ Sailors in particular were in a “state of semibondage,” in which “a person experiences very directly a connection between work and what is defined as crime” (33). Seaman Joshua Davis, “*Who Was Pressed and Served on Board Six Ships of the British Navy, He Was in Seven Engagements, Once Wounded, Five Times Confined in Irons*” corroborates Lemisch’s comparison. Similar to John Blatchford’s 1788 account of being captured off the coast of Massachusetts in June 1777 and sent to England and then later Sumatra, Davis’ meandering tale published in 1811 described a Middle Passage in reverse.⁸²

Soldiers and sailors were frequently snatched from the colonies and circulated through prisons in England and the Far East. Like many slaves in the Americas, Davis eventually grew numb to his cycle of imprisonment, escape, and exchange (or sale). In order to get his “Reader [to] imagine what must have been my feelings at that time!” (43), Davis compares his condition to that of a slave. After being robbed on the streets in Ireland, Davis is left “—without money—without friends” and the situation “made me call to mind *the Galley Slave*—‘Hard, hard is my fate, oh how galling my chains, / My life’s steer’d by misery’s chart’” (43). Davis’ description of naval impressment echoes a similar episode from Olaudah Equiano’s *Life* (1789), the well-known “prototype of the nineteenth-century slave narrative,” in which Equiano is involved in several naval battles during the Seven Years’ War.⁸³ Conditions of the slave and the prisoner were of course not interchangeable, but prisoner-of-war narratives often imagined that they were.

Resonating with some of the trademarks of the early slave’s narrative, many first generation prisoner-of-war narratives up through the War of 1812 began by identifying

birth and parentage; some are prefaced by high-standing members of the community who verify the legitimacy and accuracy of the text; a number detail to some extent the process of learning how to read and write and the benefits of their subsequent literacy.⁸⁴

Ebenezer Fletcher was sixteen years old when he was taken alongside Ethan Allen at the Battle of Ticonderoga. A decade later, his war experience was documented in *A Narrative of the Captivity & Sufferings of Ebenezer Fletcher* (1798). Its title page attests to the author's authenticity, "Written by Himself, and Published at the Request of His Friends." So too would the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845).⁸⁵

Fletcher's opening lines are equally reminiscent of Douglass: "I, Ebenezer Fletcher, listed into the Continental Army" (3) deploys the same rhetorical strategy as "I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland."⁸⁶ Both salutations serve to alert the reader to the defining moment of the author's trauma; for the soldier, that moment was the throwing off of civilian life at the point of enlistment; for the slave, it was the fact of his birth to an enslaved mother.

In *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass describes the plantation as "a little nation of its own, having its own language, its own rules, regulations and customs."⁸⁷

Early prisoner-of-war narratives likewise imagined a separate political economy.

Fletcher concludes his text with remarkable ambivalence: "And now, kind reader, wishing that you may forever remain ignorant of the real sufferings of the veteran soldier, from hunger and cold, from sickness and captivity, I bid you a cordial adieu" (21). His text does not hail or welcome the non-soldier reader, but rather puts him at a distance.

Nathaniel Segar was in the Continental Army for a little less than three years, during

which time he reports of no battles and no encounters with the enemy. He is not captured until nearly two years after his military discharge in 1779.

During the time of our imprisonment here, our sufferings were great and very distressing. We had to endure a hard winter, which was tedious to us, under our other sufferings...Hunger, fatigue, confinement, and anxiety, we experienced during our captivity; together with cruel savages, and unfeeling soldiers to guard us. Those, who have experienced the same, know how to pity, and can sympathize with us, and we with them.⁸⁸

The captivity trope of military experience insists that readers who have experienced the same know how to pity, but by extension those who have not experienced the soldier's custody cannot sympathize. Distinguished from the sentimental captivity narratives that historically surround them, the Revolutionary prisoner-of-war narrative evolved into a literary form of political protest against an early republic tendency not to recognize the humanity and value of military life. The civilian United States increasingly disavowed the national significance of military experience as well as the political selfhood of the common soldier up through the 1830s, then disavowed him and his service almost entirely amidst the rise of military professionalism and the expansionist lead-up to the Mexican-American War. In response, soldiers in later years recorded their experiences of the Revolutionary War in retributive memoir, a textual practice that imaged a republic all their own.

¹ Poem # 384, cited in Emily Dickinson, *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961) 88. Benjamin Fowler, *The Lamentation of Poor Benjamin Fowler, Who Served Faithfully in the American Army, Eight Years and Four Months, in Which Service He Lost One Eye; and His Health Is So Disabled, as to Claim the Attention of the Generous Publick*. ([Massachusetts?]: Printed for the author, [who in a short] time must have one of his legs [cut off on ac]count of an incurable cancer [that is in it], [between 1783 and 1800]).

² More commonly and hereafter cited as Mary White Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity & Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (Fairfield: Ye Galleon Press, 1974) 3-4.

³ Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973) 101.

⁴ Greg Sieminski, "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution," *American Quarterly* 42.1 (March 1990): 35-38.

⁵ Sieminski, "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution," 37.

⁶ Edwin G. Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* (New York: Basic Books, 2008) 161. Allen's original publisher was Robert Bell who also published Philip Freneau's "The British Prison Ship," detailing the poet's time aboard the *Jersey* (168). Burrows is skeptical of the veracity of Freneau's captivity, as well as many other soldier texts (174). See also Robert C. Doyle, *Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW Narrative* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994) 12. Subsequent reprints of Allen appeared in 1805, 1807, 1814, 1834, 1838, 1845, 1846, 1849, 1852, and 1854. The last appeared in 1930.

⁷ Michael A. Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993) 149.

⁸ Charles Henry Metzger, *The Prisoner in the American Revolution* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1971) vii-viii.

⁹ Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne, 1993) 21, 26.

¹⁰ *Decennium Luctuosum*, quoted as the epigraph to Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997) 1.

¹¹ Cotton Mather, *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances. A Brief Discourse on the Matter and Method, of That Humiliation Which Would Be an Hopeful Symptom of Our Deliverance from Calamity...* (Boston: Printed by B Green, & J. Allen, for Samuel Phillips at the Brick Shop, 1697) 46-47.

¹² See Teresa A. Toulouse, "Hannah Duston's Bodies," *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, eds. Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). The rationale for Duston's violence was that in the midst of "an all-encompassing lawlessness," violence became "the very source of law itself—the physical control of one body by another" (204). For a longer discussion of gender and violence in the captivity narrative, see Teresa Toulouse, *The Captive's Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

¹³ Dignity and freedom are terms that writers from Hegel to Charles Taylor have used in discussing the political gains of subject formation through violence. The violence of the Revolutionary War was thus a cousin to the violence of captivity insofar as both practices forged a relational self. Hegel imagined the self as a reciprocal circuit of mortal violence. “The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a *person*, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness,” he wrote in his dialectic of the master and the slave from *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), reprinted as G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 114. Locked in the grips of their death struggle, “each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other,” and without the recognition of the dignity in one’s fellow combatant, “its own self-certainty still has no truth” (113). “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged” (111). Hegel’s anecdote corroborates Charles Taylor’s conclusions about the Revolutionary period almost two centuries later. See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 25-73. Writing in the 1820s, even Carl von Clausewitz, the most prominent and widely read theorist of nineteenth-century war, imagined the minutiae of combat as a revolutionary series of infinite and individual confrontations between cognitive selves. “War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. If we would unite in one conception the countless duels of which it consists, we should imagine two wrestlers. Each seeks by physical force to overthrow the other, render him incapable of further resistance, and compel his opponent to do his will. *War is thus an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will.*” Carl von Clausewitz, *War, Politics, and Power: Selections from on War, and I Believe and Profess* (Chicago: Regnery, 1962) 63 [italics original].

¹⁴ I mention in particular Williams and the Quaker Dickinson because along with Mary Jemison’s captivity, these authors remained the most often reprinted captivities until well into the nineteenth century. Their popularity even spiked during the Civil War (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 14). Derounian-Stodola and Levernier attribute the constancy of nineteenth-century interest in Indian captivity narratives to the persistent threat Anglo Americans felt of being captured by Native Americans. This fear was concentrated in the receding frontier but also in settled areas of New England. Mid-century reviewer James Everett Seaver puts the matter of clear and present racial danger squarely:

These horrid tales required not the aid of fiction, or the persuasive powers of rhetoric, to heighten their colorings, or gain credence to their shocking truths....It is presumed that, at this time, there are but few native citizens that have passed the middle age who do not distinctly recollect the hearing of such frightful accounts of Indian barbarities, oft repeated, in the nursery and in the family circle, until it almost caused their hair to stand erect, and deprived them of the power of motion. (qtd. in 15)

¹⁵ See James Axtell, “The White Indians of Colonial America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 32.1 (January 1975): 55-88. See also June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) 51-81. Namias typescasts the male captive into two molds, the “Hero” such as John Smith, John Williams, and Daniel Boone, and the “White Indian” such as John Dunn Hunter and John Tanner. These categories can also travel to female captives, e.g. the “Heroine” Hannah Duston and the “White Indianess” Mary Jemison.

¹⁶ Samuel Gardner Drake, *Indian Captivities or, Life in the Wigwam: Being True Narratives of Captives Who Have Been Carried Away by the Indians, from the Frontier Settlements of the U.S., from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Auburn: Derby, Miller & Co., 1850) 115. Drake’s collection was one of the most read anthologies of captivity narratives during the nineteenth century.

¹⁷ The most famous captive to never return home from the contact zone was Dehgewanus, *née* Mary Jemison, who while a teenager during the French and Indian War was captured by a band of Shawnee Indians. She would later be adopted by the Seneca in Pennsylvania and remain separated from white society for the remainder of her life. See James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison, Who Was Taken by the Indians, in the Year 1775, When Only About Twelve Years of Age, and Has*

Continued to Reside Amongst Them to the Present Time...And Many Historical Facts Never before Published (Canadaigua: Printed by J.D. Bemis and Co, 1824).

¹⁸ Michelle Burnham, "Between England and America: Captivity, Sympathy, and the Sentimental Novel," *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*, eds. Deidre Lynch and William Beatty Warner (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 55-56. For a comparison with Richardson, see 47.

¹⁹ See for example Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 66-68.

²⁰ Julia Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 5.

²¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1761) 1-10; quotation taken from 21.

²² Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 5.

²³ Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* 11.

²⁴ Paul Baeppler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 16.

²⁵ Daniel E. Williams, ed., *Liberty's Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006) 1. Other recent collections also do not include any prisoners-of-war, e.g. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1998), Gordon M. Sayre, ed., *American Captivity Narratives: Olaudah Equiano, Mary Rowlandson, and Others* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

²⁶ Williams, ed., *Liberty's Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic* 4-6.

²⁷ Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 40.

²⁸ Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

²⁹ Earlier scholars commenting on still earlier captivities have made similar assumptions regarding the development of the form and the captive's growing desire for empowerment and self-definition. In a sustained reading of Mary Rowlandson, Tara Fitzpatrick concludes there was a certain "American rhetoric of self-creation in these Puritan captivity narratives" that mirrored a shift of concern from the communal and covenanted salvation of the colonies to questions of the individual's own salvation. Tara Fitzpatrick, "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative," *American Literary History* 3.1 (Spring 1991): 3. Rather than liberty, these early texts assured the individual's soul. Rowlandson after all is incredibly self-reflective in sharp rhetorical contrast to the "Indians [who] exist in her account as mass man, devoid of individuated interiority and thus lacking the capacity for self-examination;" Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, "The American Origins of the English Novel," *American Literary History* 4.3 (Autumn 1992): 395. (Armstrong and Tennenhouse provide an interesting take on how female captivity narratives inspired the modern British novel viz. Defoe and Richardson). Like its forebears the spiritual autobiography and the conversion narrative, the captivity narrative has in one way or another been imagined as a smithy of extreme suffering from which some social and political good has always been forged. The development of self-respect unites the textual practice of captivity across the centuries. Christopher Castiglia asks the question that if the opposite were true—if captivity

narratives only worked to degrade women and enforce racial and gender hierarchies—then why would white women continue to write them throughout the nineteenth and even the twentieth century? For him, the production and subsequent circulation of captivity narratives supplied women writers with an esoteric solidarity, “a self-esteem” (18) engendered by having overcome great trial and tribulation. Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³⁰ Metzger, *The Prisoner in the American Revolution* 32. The line between soldier and civilian is still a matter of some debate. See my introduction.

³¹ Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* x-xi.

³² These are my estimates, though corroborating tallies appear in Richard Mercer Dorson, *America Rebels: Narratives of the Patriots* (New York: Pantheon, 1953) 1, Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) 150. Dorson estimates 200 “narratives,” although the number is closer to 500 if we include short sketches and journals. See James Kirby Martin’s remarks in the beginning of chapter two. Other helpful collections and bibliographies include John C. Dann, *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), J. Todd White and Charles H. Lesser, *Fighters for Independence: A Guide to Sources of Biographical Information on Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

³³ Moses Coit Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1898) 228-45. Tyler’s study was for the Revolutionary War what Edmund Wilson’s *Patriotic Gore* (1962) was for the Civil War, the first “comprehensive” bibliography and analysis of the Revolutionary War. Within two volumes and well over a thousand pages, only four prisoner-of-war narratives are ever discussed. They are the most prominent and well-read of their time: Ethan Allen, John Dodge, Thomas Andross, and Henry Laurens. As noted in the introduction, the first compiler of American autobiography was Kaplan, *A Bibliography of American Autobiographies*. Kaplan consciously excluded “Most episodic accounts, such as those relating to Indian captivities, military imprisonments, ‘overland’ narratives, and escapes from slavery” (v).

³⁴ Robert J. Denn, “Captivity Narratives of the American Revolution,” *Journal of American Culture* 2.4 (Winter 1980): 579. For a discussion of the narrative’s propaganda function, see 575-77. Propaganda of course traveled both ways across the Atlantic. See the British officer Robert Prescott, *A Letter from a Veteran, to the Officers of the Army Encamped at Boston* (New York: Printed by Hugh Gaine, 1774).

³⁵ Anonymous editor in Nathaniel Segar, *A Brief Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Lt. Nathan ‘l Segar, Who Was Taken Prisoner by the Indians and Carried to Canada During the Revolutionary War, Written by Himself* (Paris, Maine: Printed at the Observer Office, 1825) 5.

³⁶ Stewart Hall Holbrook, *Ethan Allen* (New York: Macmillan, 1940) 113-27, Charles A. Jellison, *Ethan Allen: Frontier Rebel* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969) 166-75, John Pell, *Ethan Allen* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929) 122-30.

³⁷ The quotation is the subtitle to Dana D. Nelson, *American Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

³⁸ Ethan Allen, *A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen's Captivity, from the Time of His Being Taken by the British, near Montreal, on the 25th Day of September, in the Year 1775, to the Time of His Exchange, on*

the 6th Day of May, 1778: Containing His Voyages and Travels ... Interspersed with Some Political Observations (Boston: Draper and Folsom, 1779) 8.

³⁹ Multiple sources confirm Allen really did eat the nail. See for example Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* 153. Allen's superhuman anecdote is also referenced throughout other soldier literature as a distinctive mark of his personality.

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009).

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 239.

⁴² Paul Fussell, *Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996) 123. See also Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*. Gray universalizes his experience in World War II, claiming the soldier's "ego temporarily deserts him," thereby causing a "raptness" which results from the "deprivation of self" (33). Near the end of his memoir, Glen becomes decidedly more pessimistic:

None of us can be to another as we really desire to be, for we strike against something strange and alien in him. The sympathies of even the most reflective and sensitive do not extend far enough to overcome entirely the antipathy toward his fellows that is in nearly all of us. In some facet of our being we are closed and indifferent, not open to others or concerned with their fate. (206)

⁴³ See Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* 150-53. "On its surface, the *Narrative* is a classic piece of war propaganda," but "[a]t a deeper level, however, Allen's *Narrative* is an intensely personal document. Allen used his book as a sort of therapy to banish his depression and restore his ruptured self-esteem" that arose after his captivity. Though he had done much of the groundwork for the political identity of Vermont, the state wrote its constitution without him during the period of his captivity (148-49). To that slight, Bellesiles argues Allen was overly self-dramatic, a "scoundrel" with an "overactive ego," as well as a "charismatic charlatan" (4).

⁴⁴ James Dawes, *The Language of War: Literature and Culture in the U.S. From the Civil War through World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) 17-20.

⁴⁵ Burrows corroborates Allen's unease when he observes that most of the captivity narratives that had come before were in some way or another courses in atonement, and yet Allen's impressment "cannot be understood as a voyage of self-discovery or moral progress, because he never has second thoughts or regrets"; in fact, his survival depended upon remaining "the same person, 'a full blooded Yankee,' to the end" (162; 163).

⁴⁶ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* 29. Dodge is usually read as a boiler plate anti-British document. There certainly were other anti-British works of propaganda. See for example Mary Lewis Kinnan, *A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan, Who Was Taken Prisoner by the Shawanee Nation of Indians on the Thirteenth Day of May, 1791, and Remained with Them Till the Sixteenth of August, 1794* (Elizabethtown: Printed by Shepard Kollock, 1795). Kinnan is interested in portraying Indians as dupes and the British as swindlers (10). Citing in particular Allen, Dodge, and Kinnan, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier argue that the prisoner captivity narrative was mostly used to incite anti-British sentiment. Whenever hostilities between England and the United States flared during the nineteenth century, captivity vitriol flared with it. The authors cite the wartime journal of Elias Darnell who served in the War of 1812 (30). Like Kinnan and Dodge, Darnell represents the British as the unscrupulous seducer of noble savages. See Darnell's text in Frederick Drimmer, ed., *Captured by the Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750-1870* (Mineola: Dover, 1985). See also the anti-British inflammation of Nathaniel Fanning, *Narrative of the Adventures of an American Navy Officer, Who Served*

During Part of the American Revolution under the Command of Com. John Paul Jones, Esq. (New York: Printed for the Author, 1806).

⁴⁷ See Clarence Monroe Burton's introductory notes to John Dodge, *Narrative of Mr. John Dodge During His Captivity at Detroit, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Second Edition of 1780* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1909). The first edition was published in Philadelphia in 1779. The second edition, whose words I quote here, was published in Danvers, Massachusetts in 1780. Burton notes that Dodge's narrative also appeared in the *Connecticut Gazette and Universal Intelligencer* on February 2, 1780. For the British version, see John Almon, ed., *The Remembrancer; or, Impartial Repository of Public Events* (London: Printed for J. Almon, opposite Burlington-House, Piccadilly, 1779) 73-81.

⁴⁸ Dodge, *Narrative of Mr. John Dodge During His Captivity at Detroit, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Second Edition of 1780* 8.

⁴⁹ Dodge, *Narrative of Mr. John Dodge During His Captivity at Detroit, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Second Edition of 1780* 55-56, Derounian-Stodola and Levermier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* 30. Dodge's words had an immediate effect on the personal fate of Governor Hamilton. As irony would have it, Hamilton was at the time of Dodge's composition himself a prisoner of Virginia. Having by that time already read Dodge's narrative, the Council of Virginia resolved in June, 1779 to mete out justice through retaliation: "this board has resolved to advise the governor [of Virginia] that the said Henry Hamilton, Philip Dejean and William LaMothe [Hamilton's immediate subordinates], prisoners of war, be put in irons, confined in the dungeon of the public jail, debarred the use of pen, ink and paper and excluded all converse except with their keeper, and the governor orders accordingly" (qtd. in Dodge 13).

⁵⁰ Williams, ed., *Liberty's Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic* 17.

⁵¹ See also Segar, *A Brief Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Lt. Nathan'l Segar, Who Was Taken Prisoner by the Indians and Carried to Canada During the Revolutionary War, Written by Himself*. Segar corroborates Dodge's confusion between race and violence. "A bounty had been promised the Indians by the British officers, of eight dollars for a scalp, or for a prisoner. This is a most savage and abominable act, even for a savage, but much more so for a civilized people...." (21).

⁵² Dodge, *Narrative of Mr. John Dodge During His Captivity at Detroit, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Second Edition of 1780* 22. As another point of irony, Hamilton was arrested for murder in the execution of a Frenchman convicted of stealing. Hamilton was arrested and confined as a prisoner-or-war, "put in irons, confined in the dungeon of the public jail, debarred the use of pen, ink and paper and excluded all converse exception with their keeper" (qtd. in 13).

⁵³ Nelson, *American Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* 6.

⁵⁴ This is the central argument of Christopher Castiglia, *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). See in particular 18-22.

⁵⁵ Lemuel Roberts, *Memoirs of Captain Lemuel Roberts Containing Adventures in Youth, Vicissitudes Experienced as a Continental Soldier, His Sufferings as a Prisoner, and Escapes from Captivity, with Suitable Reflections on the Changes of Life Written by Himself* (Bennington: Printed by Anthony Haswell, for the author, 1809) 75.

⁵⁶ Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* 51-57.

⁵⁷ Luke Swetland, *A Very Remarkable Narrative of Luke Swetland, Who Was Taken Captive Four Times in the Space of Fifteen Months, in the Time of the Late Contest between Great Britain and America...Written by Himself*. (Hartford: Printed for the Author, 1780) 2.

⁵⁸ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992) 169-82.

⁵⁹ Judith Hiltner, "'She Bled in Secret': Deborah Sampson, Hermann Mann, and *The Female Review*," *Early American Literature* 34.2 (1999): 190. Mann was a publisher and bookseller in Dedham, Massachusetts.

⁶⁰ Joseph Foulke, *Memoirs of Jacob Ritter, a Faithful Minister in the Society of Friends* (Philadelphia: T.E. Chapman, 1844) vii.

⁶¹ Foulke, *Memoirs of Jacob Ritter, a Faithful Minister in the Society of Friends* 13. Anticipating criticism, Foulke claims "...the narrative of Jacob Ritter was, at his own request, committed to writing many years before his decease, and was carefully preserved among his papers" (iii).

⁶² Conversions to Christianity are often reported in the later soldier captivities from the 1820s and 1830s. Even then, the amount of time spent on praising the Lord is usually minimal, often appearing as background or way of conclusion. See for example David Perry, *Recollections of an Old Soldier. The Life of Captain David Perry, a Soldier of the French and Revolutionary Wars* (Windsor: Printed at the Republican & Yeoman Printing-Office, 1822), Roberts, *Memoirs of Captain Lemuel Roberts Containing Adventures in Youth, Vicissitudes Experienced as a Continental Soldier, His Sufferings as a Prisoner, and Escapes from Captivity, with Suitable Reflections on the Changes of Life Written by Himself*. Notable exceptions which focus almost exclusively on Christian conversion and service are Thomas Andros, *The Old Jersey Captive; or, a Narrative of the Captivity of Thomas Andros, (Now Pastor of the Church in Berkley) on Board the Old Jersey Prison Ship at New York, 1781* (Boston: W. Peirce, 1833), Andrew Sherburne, *Memoirs of Andrew Sherburne: A Pensioner of the Navy of the Revolution, Written by Himself* (Utica: William Williams, 1828), Jonathan Burnham, *The Life of Col. Jonathan Burnham, Now Living in Salisbury, Mass....* (Portsmouth: Printed and Sold at S. Whidden's Printing Office, 1814), John Robert Shaw, *A Narrative of the Life & Travels of John Robert Shaw, the Well-Digger, Now Resident in Lexington, Kentucky, Written by Himself* (Lexington: Printed by Daniel Bradford, 1807). Prodigal Son stories at the time were not unique to soldiers. Jay Fliegelman traces the symbolic "American revolution against patriarchal authority" (116) in the popularity of such prodigal narratives as Robinson Crusoe and Benjamin Franklin. See Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800*, in particular 68-83, 107-16.

⁶³ Quoted in Caleb Smith, *The Prison and the American Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 10.

⁶⁴ "On the Different Species of Mania" in Benjamin Rush, *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947) 214-15. In somewhat of an opposition, Beccaria views soldiers in *Of Crimes and Punishments* (1764) as already enlightened citizens not needing correction. See Marquis of Beccaria Caesar Bonesana, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*, trans. Edward Duncan Ingraham (Philadelphia: Philip H. Nicklin, 1819). "The discovery of crimes, it is said, requires severity: it is the war of human justice against iniquity—But, even in a state of war, there is something like generosity and compassion. The soldier is compassionate—Shall the lawgiver alone encourage the exercise of barbarity?" (228-29).

⁶⁵ Quoted in William Blackstone, *A Summary of the Constitutional Laws of England, Being an Abridgement of Blackstone's Commentaries* (London: 1788). Blackstone describes soldiers as a class of men prone to perpetual cursing and swearing who are in need of fines (141); as idle and "wandering soldiers and seamen" (169-171); and as liable to incite mayhem and thus a constant threat to the general peace (182).

⁶⁶ Mere weeks after the Invalid Pension Act of 1792 was enacted, United States Attorney General Edmund Randolph petitioned the Circuit Court of Pennsylvania to approve the pension application for veteran William Hayburn. The Pennsylvania Court (composed of Supreme Court justices riding the circuit) declined to hear the petition, claiming in a jointly written letter to George Washington that the Pension Act unconstitutionally required them to perform duties reserved for Congress. See Hayburn's Case 2 U.S. 2 409 (1792). "It is a principle important to freedom that in government, the judicial should be distinct from and independent of the legislative department" (411). Hayburn's Case was only the fourth to be heard by the Supreme Court, and the first to declare a law passed by Congress unconstitutional. Civilian courts were unwilling and the laws ill-equipped to evaluate the demands of soldiers.

⁶⁷ Abraham Leggett, *The Narrative of Abraham Leggett* (New York: New York Times, 1971) 17.

⁶⁸ See Metzger, *The Prisoner in the American Revolution* vii-21. Metzger details how during the Revolutionary War, "in an age when the distinction between soldier and civilian was meaningful, and it was the accepted rule that, on the whole, civilians enjoyed immunity from attack, arrest, and imprisonment" (16) both sides lacked any true legal system to handle the volume of, and distinctions between, civil and military cases.

⁶⁹ The original title of the autobiography was *Narrative of the Life, Adventures, Travels and Sufferings of Henry Tufts, Now Residing at Lemington, in the District of Maine. In Substance as Compiled from his own Mouth*. The 1930 edition edited by Edmund Lester Pearson suggests that the text most likely was ghostwritten by a major familiar with Tufts' story (xv). Thomas Wentworth Higginson "discovered" Tufts in the 1880s and helped reissue the volume. Textual references are from Henry Tufts and Edmund Lester Pearson, *The Autobiography of a Criminal* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1930).

⁷⁰ Daniel E. Williams, "Rogues, Rascals, and Scoundrels," *American Studies* 24 (Fall 1983): 14.

⁷¹ Most soldier narratives were short enough (less than a hundred pages) to be issued as relatively inexpensive pamphlets or included in chapbooks with other narratives of captivity and intrigue. The textual history of Daniel Boone is illustrative in this regard. Before he became a romanticized hero of the frontier in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Boone was a soldier in the French and Indian War (he was present at Braddock's Defeat) and an intermittent captive. The first of Boone's many amanuenses came in the form of John Filson, a longtime resident of Pennsylvania and one of the first surveyors of Cincinnati. Filson found his way to Kentucky in the years soon after the Revolutionary War, met Boone, and began drafting Boone's story as early as 1784. Boone's life was published as its own separate volume in Wilmington, Delaware later in the year, and then in 1786 the Connecticut publishers John Trumbull and Humphrey Marshall published *The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon* in a joint volume alongside *A Narrative of the Captivity and Escape of Mrs. Francis Scott*, and then again (and with better distribution) in 1793, as a supplement to Gilbert Imlay's popular *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, there under the refashioned title *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucky*. Filson's *Discovery, Settlement, and Present State* would prove to be the ur-text for the Boone industry throughout the nineteenth century. Soon after its release, John Trumbull's "kinsman and teacher" Henry Trumbull incorporated Filson's version of Boone into his *Discovery of America* (1810), "the most popular anthology of Indian war tales in the period" (Slotkin 399). *Discovery of America* was published in New England, as was Humphrey Marshall's *History of Kentucky* (1812), yet both texts, along with Filson's, quickly circulated to the south and the west. In 1813, the Virginian Daniel Bryan published a rather ambitious and quixotic verse, *The Mountain Muse*, "Comprising the Adventures of Daniel Boone; and the Power of Virtuous and Refined Beauty." Cathy Davidson notes that Bryan's rendition of Boone "had a phenomenal 1350 subscribers from Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and—the most by far—Virginia" (87).

⁷² Examples of Prodigal Son imagery are many, ranging across wars; for example, Davy Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett, of the State of Tennessee*, ed. Joseph J. Arpad (New Haven:

College & University Press, 1972), E. E. Cummings, *The Enormous Room* (New York: Modern Library, 1934).

⁷³ Qtd. in Ray Raphael, *A People's History of the American Revolution: How Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence* (New York: New Press, 2001) 102.

⁷⁴ Letter from Ebenezer Huntington to Andrew Huntington, dated July 7, 1780. Reprinted in Ebenezer Huntington, *Letters Written by Ebenezer Huntington During the American Revolution* (New York: Chas. Fred. Heartman, 1914) 87-88. An introduction by G.W.F. Blanchfield who discovered Huntington's letters in Hartford, Connecticut notes that immediately after taking his degree from Yale in 1775, Huntington went to Boston where he enlisted as a private (9). He would work himself up through the ranks during the war to become a general. After the war, President Adams appointed him Brigadier-General of the United States Army in 1799, and Huntington would subsequently become a member of Congress (10-12). For more on Huntington, see Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) 314-15.

⁷⁵ Ebenezer Fox, "The Revolutionary Adventures of Ebenezer Fox of Roxbury, Massachusetts," *Narratives of the American Revolution as Told by a Young Sailor, a Home-Sick Surgeon, a French Volunteer, and a German General's Wife*, ed. Hugh F. Rankin (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1976) 101, 99.

⁷⁶ John Sekora, "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," *Callaloo* 32 (Summer 1987): 488.

⁷⁷ John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black, (Now Going to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia) Born in New-York, in North-America; Taken Down from His Own Relation, Arranged, Corrected, and Published by the Rev. Mr. Aldridge* (London: Printed by Gilbert and Plummer, 1785) 37-38. See also Briton Hammon, *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man, ---Servant to General Winslow, of Marshfield, in New-England; Who Returned to Boston, after Having Been Absent Almost Thirteen Years...* (Boston: Printed and sold by Green & Russell, 1760).

⁷⁸ H. L. Barnum, *The Spy Unmasked; or, Memoirs of Enoch Crosby, Alias Harvey Birch, the Hero of Mr. Cooper's Tale of the Neutral Ground; Being an Authentic Account of the Secret Services Which He Rendered His Country During the Revolutionary War (Taken from His Own Lips, in Short-Hand) Comprising Many Interesting Facts and Anecdotes, Never before Published* (New York: Printed by J. & J. Harper, 1828) xiv [emphasis original].

⁷⁹ For a counterpoint to Sekora's denial of the slave's voice, see Rafia Zafar, "Capturing the Captivity: African Americans among the Puritans," *MELUS* 17.2 (Summer 1992): 19-35.

⁸⁰ Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 25.3 (July 1968): 380.

⁸¹ H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 31-33.

⁸² See John Blatchford, *Narrative, of the Life & Captivity, of John Blatchford, of Cape Ann in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Containing a Particular Account of His Treatment and Sufferings, While He Was a Prisoner of War in the Late American Revolution, in Novascotia, the West-Indies, Great-Britain, France, the East-Indies...* ([New London, Conn.]: [Printed by Timothy Green], 1788).

⁸³ For the episodes of Equiano's wartime impressment, see Olaudah Equiano, "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African," *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Signet, 2002) 74-98. Quotation taken from Gates' introduction, 8.

⁸⁴ For an example of birth lineage and authenticating documents, see Joshua Davis, *A Narrative of Joshua Davis, an American Citizen, Who Was Pressed and Served on Board Six Ships of the British Navy; He Was in Seven Engagements, Once Wounded, Five Times Confined in Irons, and Obtained His Liberty by Desertion the Whole Being an Interesting and Faithful Narrative...* (Boston: B. True, 1811) 2. For an example of the soldier teaching himself, see Charles Ira Bushnell, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Levi Hanford, a Soldier of the Revolution* (New York: Privately Printed, 1863). Growing up, Hanford only had a little education because he had to work in the fields, but following his military service he “retrieved to a great extent by constant study, and by reading and conversation acquired considerable general knowledge, so much so that he became, in after life, somewhat noted for his acquirements and general intelligence” (7).

⁸⁵ See also the preface to Fanning, *Narrative of the Adventures of an American Navy Officer, Who Served During Part of the American Revolution under the Command of Com. John Paul Jones, Esq.*

The author of the following pages, at the time they were first written, never intended that they should appear before the public eye. But through the earnest solicitation of a number of friends, who having read his Journal, from which the following sheets have been compiled; he has been induced (together with a view of opposing the zeal with which certain characters in this country have strove lately to debase the American name, by branding it with the epithet of coward, paltroun, ‘not so brave as an Englishman,’ and the like which has often sounded in the ears of the author,) to change his intentions, and to commit the whole to the press.

⁸⁶ Ebenezer Fletcher, *A Narrative of the Captivity & Sufferings of Ebenezer Fletcher, of New-Ipswich; Who Was Severely Wounded and Taken Prisoner at the Battle of Hubbardston, Vt. In the Year 1777, by the British and Indians at the Age of 16 Years...* (New-Ipswich: Printed by S. Wilder, [between 1813 and 1828]). The earliest known version was printed by Samuel Preston out of Amherst, N.H. in 1798. Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Signet, 2002) 339.

⁸⁷ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Modern Library, 2003) 22-23.

⁸⁸ Segar, *A Brief Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Lt. Nathan'l Segar, Who Was Taken Prisoner by the Indians and Carried to Canada During the Revolutionary War, Written by Himself* 28.

“THIS REPUBLIC OF MISERY”: JOSEPH PLUMB MARTIN AND THE SOLDIER APPEAL

“Well, right now,” she said, “I’m *not* dead. But when I am, it’s like...I don’t know, I guess it’s like being inside a book that nobody’s reading.” “A book?” I said. “An old one. It’s up on a library shelf, so you’re safe and everything, but the book hasn’t been checked out for a long, long time. All you can do is wait. Just hope somebody’ll pick it up and start reading.”

Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990)

I have this consolation, that I have labored for the benefit of my beloved country and posterity. I hope the results of my toils and sufferings will be acknowledged by my country, and prove a lasting blessing to it, and be handed down unsullied to the latest posterity.

Nathaniel Segar (1825)¹

I.

One of the latest Revolutionary prisoner-of-war narratives, Captain Thomas Dring’s posthumous memoir *Recollections of the Jersey Prison-Ship*, was published in 1828. In 1782 at the age of twenty-five, Dring had been for the second time in three years “confined on board the prison ships of the enemy,” where he would stay for five months.² Dring’s text remembers his captivity three decades later as an overlapping series of crossings over. As the narrative opens, a small boat conveys Dring across a Stygian Wallabout Bay to the *Jersey*, the most notorious prison ship of the war; “some of the prisoners, seeing us approaching, waved their hats, as if they would say, Approach us not” (10). Dring attributes his lack of welcome in prisoner society to the deplorable state of humanity he witnesses once on board. Rather than men, Dring finds a “multitude” of “skeleton carcasses” (13), a mulling “throng” (16) and “crowd of strange and unknown forms, with the lines of death and famine upon their faces” (15). The narrative quickly

darkens and enters a hellish vision of communal life wherein human beings have been reduced to mere “other objects” (17) who pass by one another unannounced and unacknowledged.

Wartime captivity had enervated civilization, but not completely. Dring soon finds himself crossing over into the prisoners’ ad hoc society. As would most who made their way on board, Dring immediately locates a prisoner in the early stages of small pox and exchanges blood with him in the hopes of being inoculated. Sharing antibodies was one kindness. Shaving each other was another (37-41). These brief moments of generosity are juxtaposed with moments of betrayal. There were “among the prisoners...about half a dozen men, known by the appellation of ‘*Nurses*’” (53), who were traitors to their fellow inmates. “They were all thieves” (53), Dring notes, and though they were as much prisoners as were their patients, the Nurses stole from the sick and the dead. Similarly, the “Working Party,” composed only of officers, gained fortune and favor by working closely with their overseers (45-49). The multitude—the most frequent word used to describe the gathering of captives—often behaves in the text just like the enemy, without allegiance, concern, or fraternal bond. Similar to Ethan Allen and the myriad prisoners-of-war who wrote during and immediately after the Revolutionary War, Dring is still unsure many years after the fact how he should feel about his fellow prisoners who were alternatively kind and cruel. He retired from the service in 1803 and did not begin writing about his military captivity until 1824. Cut short by his death in 1825, Dring’s manuscript found its way to his eventual posthumous editor, Albert G. Greene, who published the volume in 1828.

Unlike Dring and the preponderance of Revolutionary soldier-authors who had come before, ex-soldier Joseph Plumb Martin was never held captive. His memoir appeared concomitant with Dring's, and both texts mark a subtle shift in the political nature and literary form of early soldier writing during Jacksonian America. Joseph Plumb Martin was born in Berkshire county, Massachusetts on November 21, 1760, a day "I have been told...[which] was a thanksgiving day."³ His father, Ebenezer Martin, was intelligent and ambitious, a graduate of Yale, though he was also prone to extravagance. Notoriously bad with the family finances, Ebenezer eventually failed as the Congregational minister in the frontier town of Becket. His bankruptcy forced him to send Joseph at the age of seven to live with his grandfather in Milford, Connecticut, where, Joseph recalls in his 1830 memoir, *Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*, life was even and pleasant enough for him up until around 1775.⁴ Against his grandfather's wishes, Martin joined the Continental Army in June 1776 at the age of fifteen and stayed for the duration of the war, being mustered out in 1783 at the age of twenty-two.⁵

During his service, Martin fought in several major engagements, including the defense of New York City and the Battle of White Plains in 1776, the Battle of Germantown in 1777, the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, the near mutiny at Morristown in 1780, and the siege of Yorktown in 1781. He was as seasoned as they came, a soldier who had served longer than most and lived to tell about it. After the war, Martin married and relocated with his wife Lucy and their four children to the town of Prospect, near the Maine coast, where he would serve as the town's clerk for most of his adult life. In 1830, a Hallowell, Maine printer published his *Narrative* to "virtually no public notice." He

died in 1850 poor but not quite destitute, having fought for and finally received an eight dollar-a-month pension from the federal government that allowed him and his aging wife to barely get by.⁶

The belated telling of Dring's and Martin's respective literary lives raises important questions about the repressed emergence of soldier memoir and its relationship to larger traditions of nineteenth-century life writing. Before the age of Douglass, Thoreau, and Emerson, autobiographical writing was a much-maligned category often associated with being a hoax; the serious person had to be clever in order to avoid recriminations of vanity and licentiousness. Thomas Jefferson, for one, did not begin writing his autobiography until very late in life, and did not publish it until 1821. Although composed between 1771 and 1790, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* was not published as a complete volume for English readers until 1818. Both of these texts embody what Sacvan Bercovitch meant by auto-American-biography.⁷ They document the public events their authors helped shape and are less a reflection of the statesmen's inner lives than of the nation they helped to mold. The very opposite is often said of soldier writing. Daniel Shea has suggested "the autobiographical writings of veterans of the War for Independence, such as Joseph Plumb Martin's...are the military memoirs of the common soldier rather than perspectives on the transformation from a colonial to a national identity."⁸ Plumb Martin has not been recognized as a national actor—he certainly was no Jefferson or Franklin—and yet the course of his writing career followed a parallel path. Almost fifty years after his military service had ended, having had in the past no formal schooling or inclination to write, and while still mired at the age of seventy in a cycle of poverty that required most of his time and energy to overcome,

Joseph Plumb Martin decided with little hope of financial return to record his memories of the Revolution in print.⁹ Why so late after the war? Why, for that matter, at all?

The critic James Kirby Martin estimates that in addition to prisoner-of-war captivity narratives, there are extant today more than five hundred Revolutionary soldier texts, ranging from ephemera such as autobiographical sketches and diaries to polished prose in public memoirs, “but Martin’s *Narrative* represents [by far] the most complete memoir by a common soldier.”¹⁰ By most complete, Kirby Martin suggests Plumb Martin’s was the most detailed and most contemplative, and indeed the *Narrative* does exhibit many of the political and affective concerns common to aging soldier-authors of the time. When Daniel Webster dedicated the Bunker Hill monument in June 1825, he paid particular homage to the dead (“We are among the sepulchers of our fathers”) and when Lafayette returned to the United States in 1824, his grand tour corroborated the heroic glamour of the extraordinary man. But the living ordinary veteran had no champion. Unlike Jefferson, Franklin, or Lafayette, Martin, Dring, and other aging veterans well into the 1840s were in fact very worried about their relationship to the nation and about what was still owed them. Struggling to endure after decades of poverty and perceived mistreatment, they began to write memoirs in the late 1820s in order to control and correct the threats to the meaning of their private military experiences.

The folklorist Richard Dorson has attributed the distinct latency of early soldier memoir production to a national disinterest in war in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Most Revolutionary War memoirs like Martin’s were published between 1820 and 1840 because by that time a certain “historic glamour” had been attached to the Revolution and to the individual soldier’s aura.¹¹ Grandchildren of aging veterans

wanted to hear about their family's predisposition for valor and courage. Demand was also spurred following the War of 1812 by a post-war and largely non-military generation of readers who looked back more and more nostalgically on the Revolution because by then it was becoming increasingly apparent that the nation was going to take.¹² The growing production of soldier memoirs begun in the late 1820s was overwhelmingly the work of Revolutionary veterans, and while this revival of Revolutionary soldier-authors suggests their memories satisfied the nationalistic needs of their contemporaries, the truth in fact is more often the opposite.

Lawrence Buell calculates that between 1800 and 1870, less than ten percent of American life writing was penned by creative writers in the trade. Very few would publish more than one book. Almost three-fourths of this literature was "topical narratives of extreme suffering," including "Indian captivities, slave narratives, and prisoner-of-war experiences," all generally considered at the time to be "plebeian."¹³ Soldier-authors were self-consciously working class, but not necessarily popular with the downtrodden nor with the ruling class. Revolutionary soldier Christopher Hawkins prefaced his 1834 memoir by announcing the divisions he felt in American society.

No literary ambition has prompted its publication. I am an unlettered man, and cannot possibly have a desire to be ranked among the *literati* of my own or any other conuntry [sic]. The literary critics of course will not notice my work, for in it, there can be no food wherewith to feast their refined and delicate appetites. To refined and classical writing I offer no claim. It is my desire to leave behind me a faithful and unvarnished narrative of my early sufferings, in which I was not alone. My intention in

publishing this narrative is confined to the attention of my children, grandchildren, and their descendants, with the hope that they will duly appreciate not only my own sufferings, but those of my contemporaries in the arduous struggle of my country for independence, in which, success crowned the efforts of those who embarked in the American cause....¹⁴

Dring, Martin, and Hawkins were writing a private war quite different from the one being remembered publicly. Their war they viewed as ontologically distinct by virtue of the soldier's suffering, although who and what the term "soldier" included was an undecided matter still decades after hostilities had stopped. In historical hindsight, the experiential sign of an "authentic" soldier would seem impossible to prove, and yet Martin in particular was determined to be different from other men. "Mr. Reader, every one can tell what he has done in his lifetime, but every one has not been a soldier, and consequently can know but little or nothing of the sufferings and fatigues incident to an army" (2). Where the nation and its government had failed, Martin and other-soldier-authors like him would create a separate peace set far apart from the civilian public and its literary marketplace, a "republic of misery" as Dring would term the prison ship *Jersey* (100). By the mid-1820s, unmitigated and overwhelming suffering emerged as the Revolutionary soldier's warrant to write.

II.

Dring and Martin represent the first instances where common soldiers of the United States were writing what could properly be recognized today as memoir. Their

extensive accounts reveal how the purposes of composition for the American soldier had intensified. Not unlike David Walker, veteran literature in the late 1820s was a species of literary appeal licensed by extreme suffering. It sought redress and correction to the ways soldiers and the war had been remembered and emplotted as a common sacrifice of the American people. Protest undergirded second-generation soldier writing, which helps to explain why mostly only Revolutionary veterans were writing and publishing during this time. Largely absent were veterans of the Barbary and Indian Wars and the War of 1812, in large part because those conflicts were fought by militiamen and mercenaries who were not as troubled as Dring and Martin were with what it meant to be a soldier amidst a larger community of soldiers, and with what it meant to be a soldier amidst a larger national society.

Sarah Purcell has argued that as the early decades of the nineteenth century unfolded, civic memory of the Revolutionary War expanded. Plans for public memorials of the prison ship *Jersey*, for instance, got crafted in the years leading up to the War of 1812, but only then because hawkish Democratic Republicans wanted to raise support for the war by recasting Revolutionary heroism as a popular uprising instead of something relegated to a few “great men.” Federalist ideology, in contrast, insisted the looming war with England was a war of choice rather than the populist war of necessity the Revolution had been.¹⁵ At the heart of the struggle over the meaning of the Revolutionary War in the early decades of the century was a debate over the nature of civic sacrifice, and for Purcell at least, these overlapping memories of the Revolutionary War “created national identity by allowing early Americans to imagine a shared history of common sacrifice, at first by great war heroes and then increasingly by average people as well” (6).

Whichever way it was cut, the glorification of the common soldier's military service was a retroactive halo inaugurated in large part by an upswing of patriotism after the War of 1812. Joseph Plumb Martin wrote against this false memory of common sacrifice as did many soldiers who remembered the war separately. Alfred Fabian Young has noted that Boston did not hold public celebrations of the fiftieth anniversaries of the Boston Massacre until 1820 and of the Tea Party until 1823. "The 'jubilees' of local military events, on the other hand, were observed in the mid-1820s on a scale without precedent, dwarfing the annual Independence Day celebration." Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, politicians commonly exploited veteran celebrations on the campaign trail.¹⁶

Similar to Purcell, John Resch recently has suggested that the nation's neglect of ordinary soldiers after the war was likewise a result of the widespread political belief that the Revolution had been "a people's war won by a virtuous citizenry."¹⁷ Since everyone was expected to sacrifice and serve, no one could claim special status as having sacrificed more. It followed that no soldier would have any claims to the public welfare. Folk heroes such as George Washington and Israel Putnam certainly needed no community assistance, nor did they seem to need constant reminders of their country's gratitude. In particular the popular mythology surrounding Putnam, rumored to have laid down his plough in the field and walked to the front line after hearing about the Battle of Lexington, advanced the normative ideals of a citizenry averse to the belief that war produced separate classes. Putnam squarely personified American republicanism: he was the Cincinnatus of old, self-regulated by his civic virtue and sacrifice, and loath to covet political power. One of the Hartford Wits, David Humphreys, was the first to celebrate Putnam's life story in an address before the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati in

1788.¹⁸ His publishers reissued the biography in 1794, and it would enjoy numerous runs thereafter: New York in 1796, 1810, and 1815; Philadelphia in 1798 and 1811; Vermont in 1812; Delaware in 1814 (in a volume alongside the life of John Paul Jones); Boston in 1818. In the 1820s, James Fenimore Cooper was still celebrating the folk hero Putnam in his novels (Cooper's influence for the meaning and memory of Revolutionary War soldiers is a concern of the following chapter). In the 1830s, privates would rely on Putnam's celebrity in their pension applications.¹⁹

In contrast, Martin remembered Putnam and the officer class as exploitative and disconnected from the real suffering of the war. The end of Martin's military service in 1783 coincided with the near disbandment of the entire Continental Army, a dissolution that came not a moment too soon. Many soldiers had not been paid for several years, and the tone of the Army was growing more and more mutinous by the day.²⁰ Martin recalls during his service receiving only one month's wage, in specie, "the first that could be called money...since the year '76, or that we ever did receive till the close of the war, or indeed, ever after" (191).²¹ Throughout the 1770s and early 1780s, many soldiers resigned or deserted as a result of not being paid. Shortly after Benedict Arnold's treason in 1780, Congress had promised officers half-pension for life, but the government commuted its contract in March of 1783 to half-pay for only five years. General Henry Knox, a "soldier-bookseller" from Boston who would eventually serve as the nation's first Secretary of War, conceived of a lobbying organization to protest delinquent payments as early as 1776.

Along with General Jedediah Huntington, Knox founded the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 as a fraternal organization open to everyone who had served in the

officer corps; infantrymen notably were uninvited.²² The Society came into being at the same time financial promises were being broken and the collective bargaining position of the military was weakening; it would be devoted as much to shoring up the officer bonds of friendship and fraternity in a postwar America as it would be to creating a “pressure group” on Congress to support its veteran officers.²³ Thomas Jefferson wrote to George Washington in 1784 that the “institution of the Cincinnati,” and in particular Washington’s involvement in it (he was selected the first President-General of the Society in 1783, and would remain in the position until his death in 1799), “has been [a] mater of anxiety to me.” Jefferson’s protests spoke to a larger distrust of the ruling classes.

The objections of those opposed to the institution shall be briefly sketched....They urge that it is against the Confederation; against the letter of some of our constitutions; against the spirit of them all, that the foundation, on which all these are built, is the natural equality of man, the denial of every preeminence but that annexed to legal office, and particularly the denial of a preeminence by birth.²⁴

In its charter, the Society of the Cincinnati limited membership to those officers who had served in the Revolutionary War and their male descendants. Jefferson and citizens like him worried about the precedent such a closed system of primogeniture and class would establish. Too much heroism and the officer class would gain an unfair political advantage. Keenly aware of the unease surrounding a perceived consolidation of military privilege and power, the Society deployed a rhetoric of deference to civil authority.²⁵

Congressman and Revolutionary historian David Ramsay tried to settle the matter of trust by downplaying the extent of sacrifice and therefore the credit the “average” soldier deserved. In a speech before the South Carolina Society of the Cincinnati in 1794, he dismissed the notion that a separate military class was even necessary.

In these states there is a vigorous execution of the laws....these blessings are secured to us without the intervention of a standing army. Our government resting on the affections of the people, needs no other support than that of citizen soldiers. How unlike this to foreign countries, where enormous taxes are necessary to pay standing armies, and where standing armies are necessary to secure the payment of enormous taxes.²⁶

That they might ward off allegations of elitism, wartime officers of the Society chose an image of themselves as a band of citizen-soldiers rather than as a standing army of professional soldiers. “Every citizen, is perfectly free of the will of every other citizen, while all are equally subject to the laws,” Ramsay continued. “Among us no one can exercise any authority by virtue of birth. All start equal in the race of life. No man is born a legislator. We are not bound by any laws but those to which we have consented” (7). Such talk of civil-military parity by the officers did no favor to the Revolutionary infantrymen, who quite strongly believed they actually were a different type of citizen crippled by a chronic inability to represent themselves accurately.

So frustrated, one soldier memoirist in 1839 lamented “. . .the pen of the writer cannot describe [the full truth]; for the *truth* of such disasters and sufferings are not to be depicted by the pen of any man, so as to give the reader an idea of the same kind of feeling the sufferer endured.”²⁷ With officers portraying themselves as the common

citizen-soldier, there was no rhetorical room for the more typical Continental soldier such as Martin to justify his suffering. In the race to the populist bottom, soldiers like Martin could not compete with officers in the national memory of the war. The same General Knox of the Cincinnati controlled the Waldo Patent territory in Maine where Martin lived following the war. Knox ran his lands there as a virtual fiefdom, caring little for the former soldiers he had formerly led in battle and who were now living under his care.²⁸ There was no public outcry over the general's exploitation of veterans. Praising the "hard and fatiguing" work of his fellow infantrymen in the *Narrative*, Martin rhetorically shakes his head at "the apathy of our people at this time" (78). He reflects on one nameless but nonetheless hard-fought skirmish that receives no notice back on the home front, "the reason of which is, there was no Washington, Putnam, or Wayne there.... Great men get great praise, little men, nothing" (82-83).

Joseph Plumb Martin and other soldier memoirists in part wrote a counter-narrative against the Revolutionary memory of Cincinnati. Martin saw little virtue in the general and his class. In an episode early in the war, Martin and his company are scavenging for food and come across a cellar full of Madeira wine. As the soldiers feast on their good fortune, the owner of the cellar goes in protest to find General Putnam. "The General immediately repaired in person to the field of action; the soldiers getting wind of his approach hurried out into the street, when he, mounting himself upon the doorsteps of my quarters, began 'haranguing [sic] the multitude,' threatening to hang every mother's son of them" (20). In response to Putnam's scolding, Martin waits patiently for him to finish speaking, and then returns back inside to finish his wine. "I never heard any thing further about the wine or being hanged about it; he doubtless forgot

it” (21). The general does not understand the needs of the men under him, and furthermore, his protests are only a temporary ceremony for the sake of the owner. As soon as Putnam leaves, a new paragraph populated with the plural pronoun takes over Martin’s voice.

We were soon ordered to our regimental parade, from which, as soon as the regiment formed, we were marched off for the ferry....We soon landed at Brooklyn, upon the Island, marched up the ascent from the ferry, to the plain. We now began to meet the wounded men, another sight I was unacquainted with, some with broken arms, some with broken legs, and some with broken heads. (21-22)

The switch in pronoun number points to a recurring problem: whose life is the *Narrative* writing? Is it one soldier’s autobiography, or is it the representative autobiography for all Revolutionary soldiers? Martin often struggles to make distinctions between overlapping categories of soldier communities—officer, militia, Continental—because he wants to keep each separate in his reader’s memory of the war.

III.

By Jefferson’s second administration, the country had begun to shift its modes of commemoration of the war from the “extraordinary” heroism exemplified by Putnam to a more nationalized and populist martyrdom of the regular soldier. Continental soldiers soon became “an integral part of the nation’s celebratory rites of self-affirmation and renewal” in which the republic could recognize its own capacity for sympathy and

compassion. Largely influenced by the “cult of sentiment” inaugurated by David Hume’s *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) and Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), many looked for their own moral advancement by way of the “fellow feeling” and empathetic identification the suffering of soldiers provoked for the broad populace.²⁹ The nation’s compassion was a ideal rather than a practice. The Society of the Cincinnati had imagined itself in part as a charitable pension fund for those truly in need, though ordinary soldiers like Martin were never eligible.³⁰ Regular Continental soldiers did not receive formal recognition until 1818 when Congress passed the first War Pension Act. The Act represents an important if unconscious shift in the memory of the Revolution as a people’s war fought by separate classes of citizen-soldiers. The original 1818 bill provided better terms for officers than for infantrymen, and militia soldiers were expressly excluded from receiving funds in the Act’s 1820 Amendment that stipulated pensions were reserved only for those Continental soldiers who were in “such reduced circumstances of life as to need the assistance of their country for support.”³¹ Only the suffering of a select group of soldiers therefore would be institutionalized, and only then if the soldier could prove his poverty and disability were tied to the war.

Martin wrote the *Narrative* in 1830 in large part to do just that. In 1832, Congress would pass a new act removing the poverty test and opening up eligibility to all veterans regardless of need. By then it was too late for Martin. The last page to the *Narrative* underscores how the government was just waiting for soldiers like him to die. “But if the old Revolutionary Pensioners are really an eyesore, a grief of mind, to any man, or set of men, (and I know they are,) let me tell them that if they will exercise a very little

patience, a few years longer will put all of them beyond the power of troubling them; for they will soon be ‘where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest’” (252).³² Martin had applied for a federal pension before a judge in Hancock County, Maine in July 1820. Years before he wrote the *Narrative*, he had testified there, “I have no real nor personal estate nor any income whatever [,] my necessary bedding and wearing apparel excepted—except two cows, six sheep, [and] one pig;” that he was “by reason of age and infirmity...unable to work;” and that his wife was “sickly and rheumatic.”³³

Martin was most likely overstating his case, but then again, most applicants embellished their suffering lest they risk having their pension denied.³⁴ In his petition, Martin requested 96 dollars a month and was only awarded one-twelfth that amount. He would publish his *Narrative* almost a decade after the court had decided his case, and his memoir reads (as many would) as an appeal of the court’s decision.³⁵ The text is “less a conventional war memoir than it is a bill—figurative and literal—for services rendered.”³⁶ Martin had endured war for seven years. As subsequent years passed, Martin felt he soldiers like him were increasingly unrewarded for their service and sacrifice. When Congress passed the original 1818 bill, they did not fund it, and the groundswell of needy veterans met empty coffers. By the end of 1818, some 20,000 soldiers had already applied. Subsequent amendments in 1820 and 1823 created harsher standards that were more discriminating. Over the course of the various pension programs, the government would receive more than 80,000 applications.³⁷ Considering that at least 200,000 men had served in the Revolutionary military, and “some fifty

thousand of them were still alive in the 1820s and 1830s,” the percentage of soldiers demanding recognition and reparation was extremely high.³⁸

The Pension Acts directly contributed to the literary occasion of Martin’s appeal. And yet even more than restitution, Martin wrote in an effort to expose and correct the cultural misperceptions of what a soldier was—both the self-sacrificing officer as well as the volunteer infantrymen who asked for nothing in return. Neither image was an accurate reflection of the average fighting man. Throughout the early days of the war, volunteer minutemen and local militias were quick to organize, but for many, revolutionary zeal quickly ran up against the reality of responsibilities back home. Plain farmers felt compelled to return to their harvests. Slave owners in the South protested they could not stay at the front lines because they were needed on the plantation to prevent potential slave insurrections. Social historian Raphael Ray has pointed out that by the fall of 1775, the first wave of what Thomas Paine in *The Crisis* called “summer soldiers and sunshine patriots” had “packed up to go home” (62). Faced with a rising tide of desertion and the need for a reliable source of replacements, Washington proposed a system of incentives to attract a more trustworthy corps. A reluctant Continental Congress authorized modest bounties of ten and then twenty dollars for all soldiers who enlisted in the newly created Continental Army. Recruitment, however, continued to suffer, and in 1777, Washington ordered “all young men of suitable age to be drafted, except those with conscientious scruples against war.”³⁹ The newfound conscription system imposed quotas on each state. States in turn ordered towns to raise set numbers of companies. These companies formed the Continental Army, composed mostly of poor, young, and unmarried boys eager to make some money. Former militiamen paid

apprentices and drifters to be their substitutes. Military recruiters widely targeted the indigent.

In contrast to the militia soldier who typically owned property and benefited from the extensive social and political networks of marriage and commerce, the Continental soldier represented an underclass amalgamation of already marginalized peoples. Some estimates suggest Irish immigrants and African-Americans were respectively 30% and 15% of the Continental Army by 1780.⁴⁰ What united the various backgrounds initially was the promise of employment. Martin enrolled for the first time in the Continental Army at fifteen because there was a one dollar bounty, not because he felt a patriotic calling (8). As one historian phrases his sentiment, “in Martin’s portrayal of the Revolution, self-sacrifice becomes self-sale.”⁴¹ Martin reenlists after six months once “the men gave me what they agreed to, I forget the sum” (54), and then again in 1783 only after another man offers a substitution fee of sixteen dollars (242). Martin takes exception to the militia as he would to the officers because both types of men exploited his labor while taking all the credit.

It has been said by some that ought to have been better employed; that the Revolutionary army was needless; that the Militia were competent for all that the crisis required...I hope the citizen soldiers will be as ready to allow, who are not so good as regulars; and I affirm that the Militia would not have answered so well as standing troops, for the following reason, among many others. They would not have endured the sufferings the army did. (249)

Martin imagined the difference between his personal knowledge of the regular army and the popular impression “said by some” of a grassroots militia to be the differing qualities of their suffering. Prone as they were to early retreats and shaky resolve, militia soldiers did not experience suffering in the same manner as Martin. Not unlike officers and Martin’s readers, militia soldiers lacked the full period of indenture in anguish that had defined Martin’s military experience. For him, the designation “soldier” was not an honorific given to anyone who picked up a rifle at some point during the course of the war but a privileged mark of the psychological condition Martin still feels decades after the war was over.

That the Militia did good and great service in that war, as well as in the last, on particular occasions, I well know, for I have fought by their side; but still I insist that they would not have answered the end so well as regular soldiers....The regulars were there, and there obliged to be. (249-

50)

That the regulars were there was a result of a contractual oath, widely regretted but freely given, that compelled them to stay until the war’s end. But when did the war end?

Written several decades after the events recorded, Martin’s text remembers those who entered into this murky covenant and took on “the bewitching name of a soldier” only to never be released from its spell (10). A permanent change took place for a segment of Continental soldiers who shared in extreme suffering. They became bonded to their infinite and oftentimes inscrutable pain, and symptoms of Martin’s wound continued throughout his life. Traumatic repetition is inscribed in the narrative by the constant

company of his past sufferings, sufferings which neither officers nor the militia nor an imaginary noncombatant audience could understand.

Martin cultivates a trope of the soldier's suffering that is its own universe of literary representation, completely incongruous with the sufferings of "great men" and civilian readers alike. Soldier suffering most often takes the form of hunger. One of the more famous passages from the *Narrative* details a Thanksgiving meal in 1777 while Martin is stationed in defense outside Philadelphia.

While we lay here there was a Continental thanksgiving ordered by Congress; and as the army had all the cause in the world to be particularly thankful, if not for being well off, at least, that it was no worse, we were ordered to participate in it. We had nothing to eat for two or three days previous, except what the trees of the fields and forests afforded us. But we must now have what Congress said—a sumptuous thanksgiving to close the year of high living, we had now nearly seen brought to a close. Well—to add something extraordinary to our present stock of provisions, our country, ever mindful of its suffering army, opened her sympathizing heart so wide, upon this occasion, as to give us something to make the world stare. And what do you think it was, reader?—Guess.—You cannot guess, be you as much a Yankee as you will. I will tell you: it gave each and every man *half a gill* of rice, and a *table spoon full* of vinegar!! After we had made sure of this extraordinary superabundant donation, we were ordered to attend a meeting, and hear a sermon delivered upon the happy occasion. (87) [emphasis original]

Martin's sarcasm is contemptuous not only of the paltry meal he received but also of his reader's expectations. As he builds the passage, anticipation grows over what this "extraordinary superabundant" meal could possibly be, but just as Martin's hunger was not satisfied with his half a gill of rice, so the reader is left unsatisfied. Martin quite carefully "recreates in miniature the experience of privation" by denying the reader's aroused appetite.⁴² Less satirical than disdainful, the tone connects Martin's memory of disappointment with his current attitude toward his readers in 1830 who believed the country's "sympathizing heart" actually was "so wide" that starving soldiers were lavished with food and drink. Martin is at once testifying to the Continental soldier's alternate history of the war at the same time he is reliving it. He is still hungry after all these years.

The longevity of his famine and sense of deprivation separates Martin from any would-be civilian readers because he understood without having the words to say what Elaine Scarry articulated in a different context, that "to have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt."⁴³ The body's pain manifests itself at times psychologically, for instance, following Martin's indecisiveness over whether or not to enlist. Martin fears his readers will consider his dithering to be cowardly, or worse, unrepresentative of how typical soldiers joined the army. He turns on the reader quickly. "One thing I am certain of, and that is, reader, if you had been me you would have done just as I did. What reason have you then to cavil?" (14) But more frequently, Martin's anguish manifests itself in his relentless need to eat. Passages detailing his extreme hunger and thirst dominate the book, occurring no less than twenty-five times. He is "literally starved" (148) during much of his military service, reduced at

times to scavenge for dead cats and livestock (72).⁴⁴ When “the worm of hunger” was so bad it “kept us from being entirely quiet, we therefore still kept upon the parade in groups, venting our spleen at our country and government, then at our officers, and then at ourselves for our imbecility, in staying there and starving in detail for an ungrateful people, who did not care what became of us, so they could enjoy themselves while we were keeping a cruel enemy from them” (160). Memories of hunger like this one are rhetorical opportunities to snipe at his fellow countrymen who display their ungraciousness whenever they eat well.

In contrast to full civilian bellies, substandard nutrition often triggers violent disease and disorder in Martin’s body.⁴⁵ Severe indigestion follows from a meal of “an old ox’s liver” he comes upon, and the regimental doctor gives Martin “a large dose of tartar-emetic, the usual remedy in the army for all disorders.”

I had not strolled a half or three fourths a mile from camp, when it took hold of my gizzard; I then sat down upon a log, or stone, or something else, and discharged the hard junks of liver like grapeshot from a fieldpiece. I had no water of any other thing to ease my retchings. O, I thought I *must* die in good earnest. The liver still kept coming, and I looked at every heave for my own liver to come next, but that happened to be too well fastened to part from its moorings. (164-5)

The unpleasantness of this scene could perhaps be but a moment for the reader, but Martin refuses to let it pass. As he often will, Martin lingers in his discomfort in order to categorize the difference of his suffering from his readers’.

Perhaps the reader will think this a trifling matter, happening in the ordinary course of things, but I think it a ‘suffering,’ and not a small one neither, ‘of a revolutionary soldier.’ (165)

Martin’s voice demands that the vomiting be recognized as a “suffering,” an existential category that has special weight for him. Later a bunch of rotten apples “caused me to discharge the contents of my stomach....I never before thought myself so near death, and it was all occasioned by eating a few apples....This was one ‘suffering’ of a Revolutionary Soldier” (174-75). Near starvation at the end of the war, Martin jokes with a fellow soldier that he would eat his friend if only he had the proper tools. “But, truly, this was one among the ‘sufferings’ I had to undergo, for I was hungry and impatient enough to have eaten the fellow had he been well cooked and peppered” (196).

While moments of bodily suffering constitute most of the book’s attention, Martin also focuses on generic differences he constructs between suffering, danger, and adventure. It is a conversation largely with himself. Foraging for chestnuts near a waterfall, Martin climbs a treacherous embankment and soon finds himself trapped between an overhang and the water. “I think it an ‘adventure,’ and a ‘suffering,’ though a foolish one” (230), he concludes. Subsequent to that close scrape, he and some fellow soldiers successfully traverse a sleigh full of rum across a thin patch of ice. The activity takes three pages to describe. “If the reader says there was no ‘suffering of a Revolutionary Soldier’ in this affair; *I say*, perhaps there was not; but there was an ‘adventure’” (239). What does the text gain by calling attention to all this genre splicing? Martin partitions his inner life into discrete literary genres of extreme experience so as to

separate his own self-consciousness from the “*Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings*” of his imagined readers.

From the beginning, the text clearly locates its authority in the varieties of Martin’s military experience, and remembers that experience not as the prison of the captivity narrative but as a Cassandra whose prophecy will forever be unheard. Is Martin discouraged? “The critical grammarian may find enough to feed his spleen upon, if he peruses the following pages; but I can inform him beforehand, I do not regard his sneers; if I cannot write grammatically, I can think, talk and feel like other men” (2). This persona of mock self-doubt affronts a civilian audience by asserting its final authority on matters of war. Whenever Martin evokes similar self-reflexive defenses of himself, an address to his imagined civilian reader is soon to follow. When Martin is promoted to non-commissioned officer, he welcomes the reader’s judgment *of his writing* as proof of his ability as an NCO. “How far [the Major who promoted him] was to be justified in his choice the reader may, perhaps, be enabled to judge by the construction of this present work; I give him my free consent to exercise his judgment upon it” (167-68). When it appears as though Martin is congratulating himself, “[t]he reader may take my word if he pleases” (129). The degree depends upon the context, but such deference is always in some measure feigned if not avoided entirely. “All things considered, the army was not to be blamed [for deserters]. Reader, suffer what we did and you will say so too” (157).

Martin’s contemptuous mask only falls when he writes about the suffering and death of fellow soldiers. “No one who has never been upon such duty as those advanced [scouting] parties have to perform, can form any adequate idea of the trouble, fatigue and

dangers which they have to encounter” (59). Describing soldiers like himself is the only time when words seem to fail him.

I leave to my reader to judge. It is fatiguing, almost beyond belief, to those that never experienced it, to be obliged to march twenty-four or forty-eight hours (as very many times I had to)...Fighting the enemy is the great scarecrow to people unacquainted with the duties of an army. To see the fire and smoke, to hear the din of cannon and musketry, and the whistling of shot; they cannot bear the sight or hearing of this...I never was killed in the army; I never was wounded but once; I never was a prisoner with the enemy; but I have seen many that have undergone all these; and I have many times run the risk of all of them myself; but, reader, believe me, for I tell a solemn truth, that I have felt more anxiety, undergone more fatigue and hardships, suffered more every way, in performing one of those tedious marches, than ever I did in fighting the hottest battle I was ever engaged in, with the anticipation of all the other calamities I have mentioned added to it. (248-9)

The reader’s deficit of suffering, not his deficit of combat, was the limit point of the narrative’s ability to represent the soldier’s story. Only so much could be understood by reading and writing.

For those soldiers unlike Martin who were fatalities of combat, even less could be communicated. One soldier obsessed with foretelling his own death soon falls lifeless on the battlefield. “‘Now I am going out to the field to be killed;’ and he said more than once afterwards, that he should be killed; and he was—he was shot dead on the field. I

never saw a man so prepossessed with the idea of any mishap as he was” (47). An anonymous sergeant “was cut in two by a cannon shot” (79). Martin has no more to say about him. Of all the faceless men, “I saw Artillerists belonging to one gun, cut down by a single shot, and I saw men who were stooping to be protected by the works, but not stooping low enough, split like fish to be broiled” (80). Descriptions of violence seem to reassure Martin rather than traumatize him insofar as they confirmed his own self-divided feelings.

At that instant a shot from the enemy...passed just by [a sergeant's] face without touching him at all; he fell dead into the trench; I put my hand on his forehead and found his skull was shattered all in pieces, and the blood flowing from his nose and mouth, but not a particle of skin was broken. I never saw an instance like this among all the men I saw killed during the whole war. (206)

Appearances (“not a particle of skin was broken” because the bullet “passed just by his face”) did not describe reality (“his skull was shattered all in pieces” because a bullet had, in fact, entered his body).

Earlier soldier-authors likewise were numbed by the physical effects of violence. John Blatchford felt nothing in his 1788 captivity after being wounded by a British guard's bayonet, “it came near my navel; but the wound was not very deep.”⁴⁶ He does not have much else to say, even after enduring eight hundred lashes for trying to escape. David Perry, who fought in the French and Indian War as well as the Revolution, described a similar remoteness in the witnessing of violence.

While a squad of regulars sat eating their breakfast in a tent, a cannon ball passed through it, and killed one man instantly; and another by the name of David Foster, belonging to Capt. Cain's company, was struck on the temple bone by a grape shot, which passed under his forehead, rolled his eyes out, and left a little piece of the lower part of his nose standing....⁴⁷

There is little consideration for these victims because soldiers were themselves victims of chronic injuries that the memories of wartime suffering oftentimes induced. Soldier memoirs offer no comfort to the soldier's sufferings, dangers and deaths, because in the end their writings suspected there were none. Suffering organized soldier community at the same time it called it into question, for what exactly constituted authentic suffering and therefore an authentic soldier were once again very open questions.

IV.

What remains largely unexplored in the scholarship is how the *Narrative's* political protest is partnered with Martin's repeated acts of narratological protest. He has a personal story to tell, and yet at the same time he disinvites most of his readers from listening in. The relatively scant treatment Martin has received in recent decades has mainly come from social historians in the tradition of Jesse Lemisch and Howard Zinn, all of whom bypass this political and expressive crisis.⁴⁸ Instead, Martin serves as the spokesman for the "common man" in Alfred Fabian Young's introduction to *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution* (2006), in large part because Martin was for Young exactly the type of neglected figure whose present-day recovery

represented “‘history from the bottom up’.”⁴⁹ For Young as for Lemisch, Ray Raphael, and Charles Royster, Revolutionary soldiers have been imagined as a dispossessed group in similar ways to African-Americans, women, and Native Americans, each of whose influence in early national society they would argue has not been studied enough.⁵⁰ Charles Patrick Neimeyer takes the matter one step further in *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (1996), wherein he carves his soldier study into respective chapters on Irish, German, African-American, and Native American troops. Neimeyer cites Martin as the marginalized heroic everyman—the “‘G.I. Joe’ of the American Revolution.”⁵¹ Each of these previous studies has insisted on a new historical calculus that includes “outsiders” and those on the “bottom” of social and political hierarchies. To that end, Martin has been read as an index of the “common man” to the detriment of how he actually saw himself. He looked for commonalities with other soldiers as well as with the nation, but found very few. Martin and his fellow soldier memoirists were not simply silenced victims whose injustices were interchangeable, but rather wry and inventive literary practitioners whose craft was both an appeal for, and disavowal of, the collective memory of military experience in the United States.

Few literary historians have taken Martin into account. As recently as 2006, the paucity of textual analysis caused Catharine Kaplan to remark that “Martin’s *Narrative* has gone entirely unnoticed by literary scholars.”⁵² Kaplan argues Martin self-consciously fashioned a model of picaresque satire borrowed from early American criminal narratives such as Stephen Burroughs and William Tufts. She points out that it is no accident Martin’s story begins with his exile from family and friends. Only once he is an isolate devoid of any affective ties can he effectively criticize society from below.

Kaplan reads Martin as if he wore a tough exterior that he wants the reader to dismantle. The text places a great “demand for sympathetic identification” onto its readers, and “Martin seeks to move his readers’ hearts with accounts of his and his fellows’ own tender feelings” (519). Yet Martin’s appeal does not truly seek compassion. In truth, Martin’s rhetorical distance comforts his soldierly persona, whose disappointment was so entrenched it would never have permitted the disinfectant of sympathy. An early republic of sentiment after all had lauded the “common” officer corps and the nobility of the militia. Rather than participate in the strains of sentimentality and compassion that scholars have generally accepted shaped post-Revolutionary attitudes about soldiers, Martin’s *Narrative* in fact is fantastically ambivalent about the sympathetic links between then and now, soldier and citizen, and author and reader.

One should read Martin’s version of the life of the soldier as “a kind of brief in an imagined lawsuit over a broken social contract,” and to wit, Martin retaliates with his own broken narrative contract.⁵³ Most representations of war up through the late 1820s when Martin was writing rendered military experience at the service of nationalist myth-making. William Hunting Howell reads Martin’s *Narrative* as “offering a corrective to the endlessly circulating stories of soldering that center on elite virtue,” in particular David Ramsay’s *History of the American Revolution* (1789), Mason Locke Weems’s *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington* (1800), and Mercy Otis Warren’s *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805).⁵⁴ Another round of histories would surface in the 1820s with such figures as Salma Hale, Charles Goodrich, Emma Willard, and Noah Webster, the same decade that Lafayette would return to the United States (1824) and the

cornerstone of the Bunker Hill monument would be laid (1825). Such normative works were prone to remembering the Revolution as a coherent narrative with pitch-perfect development and led by extraordinary men. There was a clear beginning to the war with the “Shot Heard ‘Round the World” at the Battle of Lexington, then the requisite setbacks as at Bunker Hill, only to be followed by increasing successes like Saratoga, and ultimately an unambiguous ending at Yorktown when Cornwallis surrendered.

In contrast, Martin’s *Narrative* is relentlessly episodic, and Hunting Howell suggests the author’s writing scheme is a careful attempt to urge “his readers to think of war as a state absolutely incommensurable with coherent storytelling.”⁵⁵ That Martin is experimenting with his craft is apparent from the opening lines that dryly disavow the autobiographical conventions of the time.

The heroes of all Histories, Narratives, Adventures, Novels and Romances, have, or are supposed to have ancestors, or some root from which they sprang. I conclude, then, that it is not altogether inconsistent to suppose that I had parents too. (5)

From captivity narratives to Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*, the tradition of life writing at the time (those *Histories and Narratives* Martin declares he is not writing) often compelled the text to justify its authorial voice by foregrounding the writer’s heritage. Thus established, the writer could go on to extricate himself from his forebears (be they Franklin’s “obscure family” of scribes, dyers, and priests, or Frederick Douglass’s mixed race parentage) to become a self-made success story.⁵⁶ But war for Martin was not a success story, and he feels as little allegiance to autobiographical

narrative schemes as he does his civilian parents whom he only subversively acknowledges and quickly disavows.

Only in the first chapter does Martin represent his life as a civilian, and this episode is replete with first person singular pronouns—"I had parents too" (5), he writes. "I, the redoubtable hero of this Narrative" (6). When he enrolls in the Continental army in the second chapter, the process of conversion moves from civilian to soldier as well as from the self-assured "I" to an ambivalent "we." In this transformation to the plural, the soldier's sense of self that the prisoner-of-war narrative frequently called into question was further fragmented. This conversion narrative of the soldier inverted the Puritan model, moving not from sinner to saint but from innocence to incoherence.⁵⁷ Initially, Martin's narrator feels no calling to enter the war. He respects his grandfather who sensibly wants him to stay home, and as the "smell of war" is spreading over the land in 1774, Martin is downright resistant to the idea of turning soldier. "I thought then, nothing should induce me to get caught in the toils of an army—'I am well, so I'll keep,' was my motto then, and it would have been well for me if I had ever retained it" (7). Martin undergoes a change of heart when he sees actual soldiers for the first time. After some troops from New York and Boston are billeted at his grandfather's house, Martin suddenly finds himself "resolved at all events to 'go a sogering'," even though he feels somehow that his change of heart has defrauded his former self: "for I was as earnest now to call myself, and be called a soldier, as I had been a year before *not* to be called one" (9).

Similar to *The Contrast's* vexed examination of "real" family versus "soldier" family, Martin must repudiate his ties with his civilian family and enter into a new bond

with the army which will foreclose on his former life. Constantly pestering his grandfather for permission, “[a]t length, one day, I pushed the matter so hard upon him, he was compelled to give me a direct answer, which was, that he should never give his consent for me to go into the army unless I had the previous consent of my parents” (9). Martin’s parents were too far away from him to secure their approval in time for the current campaign, and so finally Martin must decide for himself. “Soldiers were at this time enlisting for a year’s service; I did not like that, it was too long a time for me at the first trial; I wished only to take a priming before I took upon me the whole coat of paint for a soldier” (16). In the course of his vacillation, he comes to realize the agreement he would enter into to become a soldier would actually be fixed and immutable—“If I once undertake, thought I, I must stick to it, there will be no receding” (16)—and when at last he arrives at the recruiting station, the scene is written as an uncanny and out-of-body assent.

So seating myself at the table, enlisting orders were immediately presented to me; I took up the pen, loaded it with the fatal charge, made several mimic imitations of writing my name, but took especial care not to touch the paper with the pen until an unlucky wight who was leaning over my shoulder gave my hand a stroke, which caused the pen to make a woful [sic] scratch on the paper. “O, he has enlisted,” said he, “he has made his mark, he is fast enough now.” (16-17)

Martin’s first oaths are mere simulation. The pen does not meet the paper until “an unlucky wight” takes control of his hand, and the unsure transaction of the signature occurs concomitant with a transformation in his character. Both are described as

irresistible spiritual changes. “And now I was a *soldier*, in name at least, if not in practice” (17). The soldier’s life begins for Martin with the giving up and giving over of his name. Immediately the “I” disappears and the problematic “we” that will take control of the narrative speaks for the first time. For the remainder of the chapter, paragraphs begin with this new identity—“We continued here some days to guard the flour” (28); “We went on a little distance, when we overtook another man belonging to our company” (36); “We now returned to camp, if camp it was;—Our tent held the whole regiment and might have held ten millions more” (38); “We had eight or ten of our regiment killed in the action, and a number wounded, but none of them belonged to our company” (39). And so on.

We were marching on as usual, when, about ten or eleven o’clock, we were ordered to halt and then to face to the right about. As this order was given by the officers in rather a different way than usual, we began to think something was out of joint somewhere, but what or where, our united wisdom could not explain; the general opinion of the soldiers was, that some part of the enemy had by some means got into our rear. (109)

Making sense of the variety of voices and identities of the early American soldier was a task that few canonical authors before the Civil War would take on, yet Martin tried, despite the fact that the community he entered into was “out of joint somewhere.” Alternatively self-assured and alienated, proud then broken, the *Narrative* stands as one of the earliest and most unsettling testimonials of military experience in the United States.

V.

Revolutionary veteran memoir was political protest that challenged the democratic fantasy of a national “we” forged through open and inclusive citizenship. The presidential election of 1824 was the first in which all free white men regardless of property could vote, yet Revolutionary veteran memoir was quick to expose the imbalances of power that still held many former soldiers as political prisoners even decades after the war had ended. Similar in his delay to Martin, ex-prisoner-of-war Captain Dring waited until 1824 to begin writing about his experiences. The swarming multitude he describes on board the *Jersey* was as much a record of 1780 as it was a reflection of 1824. Fellow countrymen who should be his equals and his brothers were no better than the actual enemy, personified for Dring in the figure of “the notorious *David Sproat*, the Commissary of Prisoners.”⁵⁸ Sproat is the only overseer whom Dring names, and like John Dodge and Ethan Allen’s ambivalent vilifications of their own captors, Dring is suspicious of Sproat because the man represents a crossing over of national and ethnic borders. “This man was an American Refugee, universally detested for the cruelty of his conduct and the insolence of his manners” (25). As with the traitorous Nurses and the turncoat officers who composed the Working Party, Dring internalized the barbarity of his fellow countrymen more acutely than he did the others.

We always preferred the Hessians, from who we received better treatment than from the others. As to the English, we did not complain; being aware that they merely obeyed their orders in regard to us; but the Refugees or

Royalists, as they termed themselves, were viewed by us with scorn and hatred. (89)

Dring tolerates being held captive by other ethnicities and even by other nations—the Hessians as well as the British—but not by the mercenary American refugee whose behavior was unpredictable, his motives unrecognizable. Such men were double agents in the American cause and a symbol for Dring of his own alternate fate.

Dring expected his proto-democratic ideals would prevent him and other like-minded prisoners from turning into Sproat. They tried to live a civilian life as best they could by mimicking civilian society and its hierarchies. Captives organized themselves into messes that regulated and administered rations of food. All officers, Dring included, lived in the Gun Room above deck where men of civility “who humanely tendered us such little services as were in their power to offer” (25) were a contrast to the common seamen living in much worse conditions in the lower decks. Sproat had eliminated distinctions among men, and part of Dring wanted to bring them back. “I was never under the necessity of descending to the lower dungeon,” he notes, since “[i]ts occupants appeared to be mostly foreigners” (40). The prisoners consented to a rudimentary system of law and order, establishing “a code of By-Laws” which were “chiefly directed to the preservation of personal cleanliness, and the prevention of immorality” (102). Prohibitions included foul language, drinking alcohol (if they could get it), stealing, smoking, and shaving on the Sabbath. “There were many foreigners among our number, over whom we had no control, except so far as they chose voluntarily to comply with our regulations; which they cheerfully did, in almost every instance....” (103). On Sunday mornings, “Our Orator,” a common sailor by the name of Cooper, would stand and

deliver the equivalent of a sermon; he would “read us our By-Laws.... [and preach] That these laws had been framed in wisdom, and were well fitted to preserve order and decorum in a community like ours: that his present object was to impress upon our minds, the absolute necessity of a strict adherence to those wholesome regulations” (110). “This republic of misery,” Dring writes, kept him connected to his Revolutionary ideals despite the fact that post-Revolutionary memory had eroded them.

During the Revolutionary war, the people of New York could plainly see the prison ships from the coastline of Wallabout Bay. A poem by a former prisoner was published in the *New Hampshire Gazette* on January 19th, 1779, and Philip Freneau published “The British Prison-Ship” (which Dring cites as epigraphs to almost every chapter) in 1780. Several letters attributed to the “Prison Ship, New York” were also published in the *Pennsylvania Packet* from 1781-82.⁵⁹ The prominence and visibility of the soldier’s plight, however, quickly vanished after the war once the British were defeated and the prisoners were freed. No one much thought about the *Jersey* until 1803 when Wallabout Bay was dredged to build the city’s Navy Yards and workers came across an unexpected large cache of bones. The bodily remains of thousands of men who had silently lost their lives during the war while on board the *Jersey* prompted the city to seek appropriations from Congress to build a memorial, but the federal government denied the application for funding. In 1808, the Tammany Society privately paid to have the soldiers’ bones entombed in Fort Greene Park (then called Washington Park). When the cornerstone was laid on April 13, more than two thousand civil and military figures paraded the streets of New York with a pageantry “unprecedented for splendor and impressiveness, and which was witnessed, as then estimated, by upward of thirty

thousand persons.”⁶⁰ The grand festivities “proved, as grand in promise as it was empty in result,” for soon “the bubble burst—the tide of popular enthusiasm...was well nigh forgotten” (15). Money to complete construction dried up until 1855 when the Martyr’s Monument Association was formed; even then, no construction began until 1908—the one hundredth anniversary of the soldiers’ initial interment. A New York historian speaking before the Daughters of the Revolution in 1895 noted the long history of these soldiers’ neglect.

No monument marks the spot where they rest. No inscription informs the visitor where they repose on that lovely hill. All efforts have failed.

Congress has failed. The Legislature of New York has failed. Military and civic organizations have failed. Man has failed. (19)

“Man” here stands in for the institutions of the nation, which the speaker implies included Congress, state legislatures, and local societies. Moreover, “Man” stands in for the civilian onlookers, in the 1780s and throughout the nineteenth century, who failed to remember the suffering of American soldiers.

Is it fair to indict the civilian public of the nineteenth century? Increasingly civilian authors controlled and colored the American soldier’s voice, and Dring was no exception. Albert G. Greene, the civilian editor who happened to “discover” Dring’s journal after the captain’s death, originally claims in his introduction that his hope was to recover the Revolutionary soldier’s lost experience. Most of the men who had endured the prison ships were now gone; “hence, so little that is authentic, has ever been published upon the subject, and so scanty are the materials for information respecting it, which have as yet been given to the rising generations of our country, that it has already

become a matter of doubt, even among many of the intelligent and well informed of our young citizens, whether the tales of the Prison-Ships, such as they have been told, have not been exaggerated beyond the reality.” Greene assures his readers, “They have not been exaggerated....And so few of those who suffered in these terrific abodes remain alive, that as a matter of precaution, it seems to be required that some one possessing actual knowledge of the facts, should embody them in a form more permanent than the tales of tradition, and more detailed than can appear on the page of the general historian” (18-19). Indeed, “[i]n a very short time, there will be not one being on the face of the earth, who can, from his own knowledge, relate this tale; though many still live, who although not among the sufferers, yet well know the truth of the circumstances which I have written” (20).

At the same time that Greene extols the value of Dring’s lost and “authentic” account, he also questions whether the veteran should be the one to tell his own story. Do soldiers create authentic war stories, or do editors? The original text Greene found was, in his words, “thrown together, without much regard to style, or to chronological order. Not being intended for publication, at least in the form in which he left it, he appears to have bestowed but little regard on the language in which his facts were described....” In light of the original author’s countless and “useless redundancies,” Greene maintains it was “necessary, that the work should not merely be revised, but re-written, before its publication” (v-vi). And so, in 1828, Green published what he presented as Dring’s slightly retouched manuscript, the *Recollections of the Jersey Prison-Ship*. Not surprisingly, some have questioned the reliability of the text’s voice. Edwin Burrows claims that Greene did not know Dring at all and merely came upon his

disorganized journal and personal effects near his death, only to then “borrow” certain features from Andrew Sherburne’s narrative (1828) while fabricating Dring’s narrative. When sailor Ebenezer Fox wrote his memoir later in 1838, he copied Dring and Greene’s details of the *Jersey* in his own account.⁶¹ Burrows cites as evidence for his claim the following description from Sherburne of the English Old Mill prison: prisoners “adventured to form themselves into a republic, framed a constitution, and enacted wholesome laws, with suitable penalties” (Sherburne 83). Such a passage seems remarkably similar to the makeshift democracy on board the *Jersey*.

This argument is an old one, that soldiers could not possibly have had the time, the intelligence, or the inclination to organize themselves into a proto-democratic alternate society “of suffering.” Because these soldiers sound so alike, Sherburne must be quoting Greene, who must himself be embellishing the “Dring” text by injecting his own sense of “outside” civilian republicanism. Like slave narratives during the same period, the mid-nineteenth century soldier’s appeal was often said to be spurious. This speculation is too dismissive since it overlooks the aggregate patterns of suffering soldier authorship during the early republic. No one could accuse Joseph Plumb Martin of having written a hoax. Riddled with relentless affective injuries and political powerlessness, early American soldier-authors constructed their contradictory identity through their testimony. When small pox was ravaging the *Jersey* and Dring finds he must depend on the disease of his fellow prisoners to order to inoculate himself, he pricks the webbing “between the thumb and fore-finger” with a needle contaminated by “a man in the proper stage of the disease” (20). The wound festers, settles, and then scars, and Dring is protected from small pox for the rest of his life. Lemuel Roberts likewise

describes fellow captives who “privately inoculated” themselves from small pox (29).

Abner Stocking also talks about how while confined to sick bay the prisoners were left to regulate themselves.⁶²

Dring, Roberts, and Stocking all describe a similar society of disease, and rather than defraud soldier literature, such patterns of representation suggest a common experience and a common reaction in the literature of the early republic’s soldiers. Unavoidable questions still remain: are these Dring’s words, or are they Greene’s? Would the impact be any less if the memories of Revolutionary soldiers were not, in fact, written by Revolutionary soldiers? Would contemporary authors and readers even care? As the country moved the Revolutionary War into memory, and then endured the Mexican-American and later the Civil War, such questions became increasingly less important for many. Civilian representations of the American soldier throughout the nineteenth century would comfort the nation by dismissing altogether the unpleasant voices of its suffering soldiers.

¹ Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Broadway, 1990) 245, Segar, *A Brief Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Lt. Nathan'l Segar, Who Was Taken Prisoner by the Indians and Carried to Canada During the Revolutionary War, Written by Himself* 30.

² Thomas Dring and Albert Greene, *Recollections of the Jersey Prison-Ship: Taken, and Prepared for Publication, from the Original Manuscript of the Late Captain Thomas Dring* (New York: P.M. Davis, 1831) 22.

³ Joseph Plumb Martin and Thomas Fleming, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin* (New York: Signet, 2001) 6.

⁴ Though initially published in 1830 as *Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*, few original copies exist today. The work was published as *Private Yankee Doodle* by George F. Scheer in a 1962 edition. More recent editions have modified the title further. All textual citations are taken from Martin and Fleming, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin*. For a thorough accounting of Martin's early life as well as the memoir's publishing history and context, see Joseph Plumb Martin and James Kirby Martin, *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008) viii-xix.

⁵ The duration of Martin's service is worth remark. Kirby Martin notes that the "long-term Continental enlistee" was incredibly rare, "probably no more than 1 out of every 250 persons in the Revolutionary populace" (x).

⁶ Martin and Martin, *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* xiii. Glazier, Masters & Co. were the original publishers, and while Martin did publish anonymously, Hallowell was such a small town there was no secret regarding its authorship.

⁷ Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* 134.

⁸ Quoted in Eakin, ed., *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* 40.

⁹ At the time he should have been at Yale like his father, Martin was a soldier. Martin is very much aware of his lack of formal schooling. "I never studied grammar an hour in my life, when I ought to have been doing that, I was forced to be studying the rules and articles of war" (2). No dullard, Martin was by necessity self-educated. One of his Prospect acquaintances remarked on his incredible "taste for drawing, for poetry, and for composition." Indeed his "intellectual pursuits contributed largely to the comfort of his old age," during which time he was known to write church hymns and sketch nature scenes (Martin and Martin xiii).

¹⁰ Martin and Martin, *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* xiv. Kirby Martin makes his conclusion after reviewing the most complete bibliography to date of Revolutionary soldier writing, White and Lesser, *Fighters for Independence: A Guide to Sources of Biographical Information on Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution*. Sarah Purcell likewise relies on White and Lesser when she counts twelve soldier memoirs published between 1776-1800 and twenty-two between 1801-1819. See Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* 150. Alfred Young also puts the number between 1801-1819 at twenty-two. Alfred Fabian Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999) 135. My own archival accounting of published soldier writing does not differ drastically. Some commentators such as Fleming propose Martin wrote from a wartime journal or diary, though such a suggestion is nothing more than speculation.

¹¹ Dorson, *America Rebels: Narratives of the Patriots* 3. By Dorson's count, most soldier memoirs were published between 1820-1840, and indeed many were. As a general rule, the later the memoir the less reliable its authorship. Some were written "as told to" family members and not published until as late as the twentieth century. The same happened with the Mexican-American War. A representative example is Samuel E. Chamberlain, *My Confession* (New York: Harper, 1956). Chamberlain sketched the outline of his military memoir during his service between 1846 and 1848, then edited and illustrated the final text between 1855 and 1861, after which he left to fight in the Civil War. He wanted the memoir kept private, and indeed his family kept it that way until the 1940s "when it turned up in an antique shop in Connecticut" (2) and subsequently was published (partially) in *Life*. The following year Harper's released the book version cited here.

¹² Dorson, *America Rebels: Narratives of the Patriots* 4.

¹³ Eakin, ed., *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* 6, 48.

¹⁴ Christopher Hawkins and Charles Ira Bushnell, *The Adventures of Christopher Hawkins, Containing Details of His Captivity, a First and Second Time on the High Seas, in the Revolutionary War, by the British, and His Consequent Sufferings, and Escape from the Jersey Prison Ship* (New York: Privately Printed, 1864) ix-x.

¹⁵ Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* 144-60.

¹⁶ Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* 132-42. Quotation appears on 133.

¹⁷ Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* x.

¹⁸ David Humphreys, *An Essay on the Life of the Honorable Major-General Israel Putnam: Addressed to the State Society of the Cincinnati in Connecticut* (Hartford: Barzillai Hudson and George Goodwin, 1788).

¹⁹ James Fenimore Cooper, *Lionel Lincoln* (London: John Miller, 1825) 37-38, Dann, *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* 65-68. Dann's study is the most extensive accounting of Revolutionary pension applications. Both these points were brought to my attention by Catherine Kaplan, "Theft and Counter-Theft: Joseph Plumb Martin's Revolutionary War," *Early American Literature* 41.3 (2006): 521.

²⁰ It took the calming presence of George Washington near the end of the war to counteract the Newburgh Conspiracy whose plot was motivated by widespread unrest over back-pay. The Continental Army did not completely disband, but rather drastically reduced its forces and sent most of its soldiers to garrison frontier outposts such as Fort Pitt and West Point. In 1784 under the command of Major General Henry Knox, the American Army numbered approximately 700 men. That number dwindled down to less than 100 later that year. Congress subsequently requested the states to raise militia in order to patrol the western frontiers. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985) 143-48.

²¹ Martin returns to the matter of his "promised six dollars and two thirds a month" in the final chapter, arguing "had I been paid as I was promised to be at my engaging in the service, I needed not to have suffered as I did, nor would I have done it" (247).

²² See Minor Myers, *Liberty without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983) 1-19. Washington marked the occasion of the army's dissolution with a speech exhorting his now former soldiers to move past "the extremes of hunger and nakedness," because no longer "is it necessary to dwell on the dark side of our past affairs," qtd. in Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir of*

Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, Prepared by Himself, at the Request of His Children (New York: Thomas Holman, 1858) 57. Washington's model for a transition back into civilian life was Cincinnatus, whose example promised "the pursuits of commerce and the cultivation of the soil will unfold to industry the certain road to competence" (58). Furthermore, "the Commander-in-Chief conceives little now wanting to enable the soldier to change the military character into that of a citizen, but that steady, decent tenor of behavior, which has generally distinguished not only the army under his immediate command, but the different detachments and separate armies, through the course of the war" (59-60).

²³ Myers, *Liberty without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* 17.

²⁴ Thomas Jefferson, Julian P. Boyd and L. H. Butterfield, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 7 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) 105-06.

²⁵ Myers, *Liberty without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* 40-41.

²⁶ David Ramsay, *An Oration, Delivered in St. Michael's Church, before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South-Carolina, on the Fourth of July, 1794, in Commemoration of American Independence, by the Appointment of the American Revolution Society, and Published at the Request of That Society, and Also of the South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati* (Charleston: Printed by W.P. Young, 1794) 12-13.

²⁷ Josiah Priest, *The Low Dutch Prisoner: Being an Account of the Capture of Frederick Schermerhorn* (Albany: [unknown], 1839) 5.

²⁸ Martin and Martin, *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* xiii.

²⁹ Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* 5-7. Quotation appears on 5.

³⁰ See for instance the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, "Act of Incorporation, Passed March 13, 1806," reprinted in James M. Bugbee and Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, *Memorials of the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati* (Boston: Printed for the Society, 1890).

Whereas, Upon the dissolution of the American Revolutionary Army, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three, Benjamin Lincoln and others, officers in the Massachusetts line of said army, did associate for the purpose of forming a fund to be forever thereafter appropriated for the relief of the indigent members of said association, and the widows and orphans of said members; and in order to secure the said fund, and fulfill the charitable designs of the said institution, have petitioned to be incorporated... (544)

³¹ United States War Department, John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay, *Letter from the Secretary of War: Transmitting a Report of the Names, Rank, and Line, of Every Person Placed on the Pension List, in Pursuance to the Act of the 18th March, 1818, & C. January 20, 1820. Read and Ordered to Lie on the Table* (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1820) 3. This document includes the names of all soldiers receiving pensions and comprises over 600 pages. Calhoun's brief preface, co-signed by Henry Clay, makes note that the updated list excludes "those who served in corps which, at first, were considered continental, but which, on full inquiry, proved not to be so" (3).

³² Other soldiers lodged similar complaints. For example, Nathan Segar notes how after leaving the service, "I received no pay nor provisions to bear my expenses on my long and tedious journey home" (9). Like Martin, he returns to the issue of missing compensation as the text concludes, insisting that the failure to be paid was the rule and not the exception. "Indeed, the country was not able at that time to properly satisfy the soldiers for their labors in that service. And furthermore, I have had no compensation for the time I was in captivity" (31). During much of his captivity, Segar was housed with almost two hundred American soldiers in a large Canadian camp. He was freed alongside them in a massive prisoner exchange following Cornwallis' surrender in 1782. The last lines to the narrative:

The loss of time, and the hardships I then underwent, were felt as in the service of my country; and were so considered, as I was *exchanged* as a soldier, taken in actual service, or in time of battle; and, therefore, I always thought, and still think, that I, in *justice*, ought to have received some compensation from my country; but as I have received nothing, it still adds to my calamity, and which has been sensibly felt through life. (31-32).

³³ Quoted in Martin and Martin, *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* xii.

³⁴ Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* 10.

³⁵ Some such as Captain Samuel Dewees and Israel Potter were quite clear about their financial motives for writing. Dewees' memoir (assembled by John Smith Hanna) concludes with a call for contributions: "Shall I state, reader I have done my part—*do thine*.... Who are they that are prepared to deny him the free boon of a patriotic and generous nature, patronage to the amount of ONE DOLLAR?" See John Smith Hanna, *A History of the Life and Services of Captain Samuel Dewees, a Native of Pennsylvania, and Soldier of the Revolutionary and Last Wars* (Baltimore: Printed by Robert Neilson, 1844) 28-29.

³⁶ Kaplan, "Theft and Counter-Theft: Joseph Plumb Martin's Revolutionary War," 515.

³⁷ Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* 8.

³⁸ Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* 133.

³⁹ See "George Washington to Continental Congress Conference Committee, January 29, 1778" available on-line at <<http://memory.loc.gov>>.

⁴⁰ Martin and Fleming, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin* x. For African American participation, see William Wells Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1867), Herbert Aptheker, *The American Revolution, 1763-1783* (New York: International Publishers, 1960), Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

⁴¹ Kaplan, "Theft and Counter-Theft: Joseph Plumb Martin's Revolutionary War," 524.

⁴² William Hunting Howell, *Starving Memory: Joseph Plumb Martin Un-Tells the Story of the American Revolution*, January 2010, Available: <http://www.common-place.org/vol-10/no-02/howell/>.

⁴³ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 7.

⁴⁴ Descriptions of Martin's hunger appear no less than twenty times: 26, 50, 58, 59, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70, 72, 86, 89, 148, 157, 160, 164, 174, 196, 197, 212, and *passim*. Descriptions of extreme thirst occur no less than five times: 48, 64, 89, 164, 205, and *passim*.

⁴⁵ What appears to be the only life-threatening affliction is a bout with yellow fever near the end of his service (219). Martin also suffered a hospital stay after contracting small pox, during which time he also contracted dysentery (57-58).

⁴⁶ Citations are from John Blatchford, *The Narrative of John Blatchford, Detailing His Sufferings in the Revolutionary War, While a Prisoner with the British, as Related by Himself*, ed. Charles Ira Bushnell

(New York: Privately Printed, 1865) 16. See also the original printing, Blatchford, *Narrative, of the Life & Captivity, of John Blatchford, of Cape Ann in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Containing a Particular Account of His Treatment and Sufferings, While He Was a Prisoner of War in the Late American Revolution, in Novascotia, the West-Indies, Great-Britain, France, the East-Indies, &C.--with His Overland Travel from Fort Marlboro' to Croy, a Dutch Port in the East-Indies: As It Was Taken from His Own Mouth. ...*

⁴⁷ Perry, *Recollections of an Old Soldier. The Life of Captain David Perry, a Soldier of the French and Revolutionary Wars* 36-37.

⁴⁸ Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980) is one of the best known histories of "common" Americans, although the custom of recovery dates at least as early as Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968) 3-45.

⁴⁹ Alfred Fabian Young, *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2006) 4. See also Alfred Fabian Young, *The American Revolution* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), Alfred Fabian Young, *Beyond the American Revolution* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ See Raphael, *A People's History of the American Revolution: How Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence* 50-103, Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783*.

⁵¹ Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 25-26. The G.I. Joe reference to Martin appears in Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *The Revolutionary War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007) xi.

⁵² Kaplan, "Theft and Counter-Theft: Joseph Plumb Martin's Revolutionary War," 515. See also Daniel E. Williams, "The Common Transactions of a Private Soldier: Joseph Plumb Martin's View of the Issues and the Battles of the American Revolution," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 263 (1989). Williams likewise is interested in how "Martin related his experiences from the viewpoint of a common man" (274).

⁵³ Quotation appears in Kaplan, "Theft and Counter-Theft: Joseph Plumb Martin's Revolutionary War," 520. Paraphrasing Fred Anderson's "Why Did Colonial New Englanders Make Bad Soldiers?" *Contractual Principles and Military Conduct during the Seven Years War* (*William and Mary Quarterly* 38 (1981): 395-417), Kaplan notes that "by the time of the French and Indian War, New Englanders had begun to think of military service as a 'contractual agreement' between soldier and government, and they protested when they felt their labor was not begin properly compensated" (526).

⁵⁴ Howell, [Starving Memory: Joseph Plumb Martin Un-Tells the Story of the American Revolution](#).

⁵⁵ Howell, [Starving Memory: Joseph Plumb Martin Un-Tells the Story of the American Revolution](#).

⁵⁶ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Mineola: Dover, 1996) 5, Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," 340.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of Puritan conversion narratives, see Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression*.

⁵⁸ Andrew Sherburne corroborates the account of the horrible conditions and the number of satellite hospital ships (107-8). He had worse things to say about the American "Nurses" than did Dring,

insinuating they were compensated and “could indulge in playing cards, and drinking, while their fellows were thirsting for water, and some dying” (110-11).

⁵⁹ Henry Reed Stiles, ed., *Letters from the Prisons and Prison-Ships of the Revolution* (New York: J.M. Bradstreet & Son, 1865) 27-33.

⁶⁰ Charles Edwin West, *Horrors of the Prison Ships* (Brooklyn: Eagle Book Printing Department, 1895) 11.

⁶¹ Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* 223-25.

⁶² Abner Stocking, *Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking of Chatham, Connecticut Detailing the Distressing Events of the Expedition against Quebec, under the Command of Col. Arnold in the Year 1775 Published by the Relatives of Abner Stocking, Now Deceased* (Catskill: Eagle Office, 1810) 32.

COOPER, MELVILLE, AND THE CIVILIAN NOVEL BETWEEN THE WARS

Major Major signed Washington Irving's name to one of the documents instead of his own, just to see how it would feel. He liked it so much that for the rest of that afternoon he did the same with all the official documents. It was an act of impulsive frivolity and rebellion for which he knew afterward he would be punished severely. The next morning he entered his office in trepidation and waited to see what would happen. Nothing happened.

Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1955)

Civilian:— Under the fashionable, and most childish, use of this word now current (viz., to indicate simply a non-military person)—a use which has disturbed and perplexed all our past literature for six centuries—it becomes necessary to explain that, by *civilian* is meant in English—1. one who professes and practices the *civil law*, as opposed to the *common*, or municipal law of England; 2. one who teaches or expounds this civil law; 3. one who studies it.

Thomas De Quincey, *Blackwood's Magazine* (1830)¹

I.

Concomitant with the mid-century rise of American expansionism was a parallel rise in military professionalism. Samuel P. Huntington has termed the period between Andrew Jackson's presidency and the Mexican-American War the "American Military Enlightenment" because of the diverse tactical and theoretical writings by academics such as Dennis Hart Mahan and Matthew Fontaine Maury. Interest in the military arts led to a number of upstart journals and newspapers, most notably the *Southern Literary Messenger*.² West Point and the Naval Academy also flourished at the same time because they treated and taught warfare as a respectable science. During this period of relative peace, officers were trained more as gentleman engineers than as managers of combat. Paul Foos has noted how in distinction to the professional officer class, common

soldiers of the regular army were “a mobile and restless laboring class,” many of them European immigrants who quickly deserted if better paying manufacturing or farm work came their way. Forced into harsh contracts of indenture and subject to a number of severe disciplinary mechanisms, regular soldiers were “increasingly isolated from native, middling society” and placed in far-off outposts near the frontier where they built roads and canals, the type of work that did not bring “honor to the individual nor bound him to the community.”³ Most people imagined any real fighting that needed to be done was performed by volunteer citizen-soldiers and state militias, a prevalent antebellum belief that Foos calls into question throughout his study of military organization during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The corresponding war literature of the first half of the century marks a submerging of the common soldier’s voice from the antebellum imaginary. Instead, civilian authors from James Fenimore Cooper through Herman Melville acted as custodians of military experience. To varying degrees, both Cooper and Melville appropriated earlier texts written by common soldiers detailing their private military experience. This ventriloquism of military representation before the Civil War was a literary tendency for “recovery” that actually worked to silence the traumatic written record of Revolutionary and Mexican-American War soldiers alike, from Joseph Plumb Martin (1830) through George Ballantine (1853).⁴ Cooper’s tragic example of Major John André in *The Spy* outshouts Enoch Crosby, the other soldier-author lurking in the novel whose Revolutionary War story Cooper allegedly cribbed. Similarly, the eponymous soldier responsible for *The Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* (1824) is silenced in Melville’s *Israel Potter* (1855), much like the “heedless

boys...nipped like blossoms” Melville depicts in *Battle-Pieces* (1866). Cooper and Melville were symptomatic of a larger civilian oblivion of the soldier’s voice before the Civil War, and both writers contributed to the national amnesia at the same time they grew to be unnerved by it.

James Fenimore Cooper published *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* in 1821, the same year “the remains of Major André were disinterred, and transported [back] to England,” where they have resided in Westminster Abbey ever since.⁵ *The Spy* launched Cooper’s popularity, largely because the novel resonated with readers’ romantic memory of the war. That memory often returned to John André, who quickly became the most famous and tragic martyr of the Revolution in the United States even several decades after his death. Many would come to speak for André during this period, but only at his military trial in Tappan, New York could the condemned spy be said to have spoken for himself. According to his court testimony, André had been tapped by British General Henry Clinton to be the secret emissary for negotiations with Benedict Arnold in his defection at West Point, but much to André’s misfortune, on the night of September 29, 1780 he was captured behind enemy lines in upstate New York dressed in civilian clothes and possessing incriminating papers in Arnold’s hand.⁶

...I agreed to meet upon ground not within posts of either army, a person [Arnold] who was to give me intelligence....Against my stipulation, my intention and without my knowledge before hand, I was conducted within one of your posts....I quitted my uniform and was passed another way in the night without the American posts to neutral ground, and informed I was beyond all armed parties and left to press for New-York. (12)

Furthermore, "...I am branded with nothing dishonourable, as no motive could be mine but the service of my king and as I was involuntarily an imposter" (13). André's attempt to dismiss *mens rea* was significant because he never denied the evidence of the tribunal's case, only the occupation of his mental state when the supposed crimes took place. "Without my knowledge" and consent, André had become a symbol of the wartime republic's worst fears; he had become a spy devoid of clear national loyalties and stable personal motives. The court transcript exposed his duplicity: "A pass from general Arnold to *John Anderson*, which name Major André acknowledged he assumed. Artillery orders, September 5, 1780. Estimate of the force at West Point and its dependencies, September 1780...Return of ordnance at West Point, September 1780. Remarks on works at West Point. Copy of a state of matters laid before a council of war, by his Excellency general Washington, held the 6th of September 1780" (15).⁷ Fearing the repercussions of appearing lenient toward spies, the court ordered André to hang.

The quick dispatch of André suggests how uneasy his unknowable motives and moral nature made his judges. After the sentence André implored Washington by letter to give him his due as a gentleman. "Sympathy towards a Soldier will surely induce your Excellency and a military Tribunal to adopt the mode of my death to the feelings of a man of honor." Honor here meant death by firing squad, and André would have suffered his penalty gladly if he could be "informed that I am not to die on a gibbet," and also if Washington could assure him he was a "victim of policy and not of resentment" (35). Washington, however, refused to sympathize and intervene, and André hung from the noose like a common criminal on October 3 before a large crowd. André's argument had rested on the sympathies of class and the mercies of his peers, but the suspicions

surrounding who he really was and what he was there to do proved decisive. The judgment did not come without a cost. Robert Ferguson has noted that “the military trial of André offered a substitution of type (André for Arnold) and of offense (espionage for treason) rather than a more slippery comparison of degree for the same crime....André filled the role of a useful sacrifice....” (131). It was a conscious choice on Washington’s part, first, to meet André with silence, and second, to take no notice of Arnold who submitted letters of support for André *in absentia*.⁸ Indeed it was Arnold, the greatest criminal and most infamous soldier in all the land, who not only escaped the whole affair unpunished, but whose persona in the trial was noticeably suppressed. Despite the court’s judgment, André’s stoic rhetoric and soft personal manner swayed public opinion to his side.

Alexander Hamilton recalled how André’s composure during his trial and execution “melted the hearts of the beholders.... Among the extraordinary circumstances that attended him, in the midst of his enemies, he died universally esteemed and universally regretted.” “My feelings were never put to so severe a trial,” he went on, “Never, perhaps, did any man suffer death with more justice, or deserve it less.”⁹ Even those who were not there personally identified with André. Amateur historian Hanna Adams remarked in 1807 how André was a man

in whom were united an elegant taste and cultivated mind, with the amiable qualities of candour, fidelity, and a delicate sense of honour...he was condemned and executed as a spy. His behaviour, during his trial, was calm and dignified, exciting the esteem and compassion even of his

enemies, who deeply regretted the cruel necessity of sacrificing his life to policy and the usages of war.¹⁰

Ironically enough, even Washington's chief spy Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge recounted how in the days leading up to André's execution, "I became so deeply attached to Major André, that I can remember no instance where my affections were so fully absorbed in any man. When I saw him swinging under the gibbet, it seemed for a time as if I could not support it. All the spectators seemed to be overwhelmed by the affecting spectacle, and many were suffused in tears. There did not appear to be one hardened or indifferent spectators in all the multitude."¹¹ Contemporary artists were likewise sympathetic in their work. William Dunlap in his play *André* (1798) contended "Thou didst no more than was a soldier's duty, / To serve the part on which he drew his sword."¹² There was never any malice in André's heart, only duty, and for Anna Seward, there was also song. In *Monody on Major André* (1781), she rendered André into a "firmer Lover" (8) and poet, a gentleman momentarily forced to "quit the Song, the Pencil, and the Lyre / ... / To Seize the Sword."¹³ To be sure, other writers passed more severe judgment. General Nathanael Greene, for example, condemned André for his "supposed want of self-possession in so brave a man."¹⁴

Was André a criminal? Was he a victim? The ambivalent legacy of his death underscored the persistence of a larger remorse for the human cost of the Revolutionary War. André's afterlife still haunted Washington Irving four decades after the spy's death. Ichabod Crane's Sleepy Hollow is a place to which the ghosts of soldiers return. The legend of the headless horseman is "said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the

revolutionary war....”¹⁵ What was more, the soldier’s specter returned each night to commune with the notorious spy: “mournful cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major André was taken...” (962). Caleb Crane has read Irving’s affection for André as the signaling cry of an era of American sympathy that would endure until the Civil War.¹⁶ During this time, the figure of the spy martyr such as André and Nathan Hale was expressed in civilian literary imaginations as a sympathetic but necessary evil of the war for which the nation’s writers felt compassion and guilt but not any sense of injustice. When Cooper sat down to write *The Spy*, he in part followed the tradition of André representation by remembering the war as a titillating drama of double identities and double-cross in which individual and collective responsibilities for the war were still uncertain and unresolved even decades after hostilities had ended.

Recently Joseph Letter has positioned the novel at the intersection of what he calls “vernacular memories” of the war—represented by the personal accounts and testimonies of soldiers such as Joseph Plumb Martin—and the larger “historical discourse of the new nation.”¹⁷ The result of these forces was the first historical novel written in and about the United States. The novel’s intersections of competing memories created a third affective category situated between military and civilian, between, in effect, the soldier’s crimes of war and the nation’s moral accountability for those crimes. As previous chapters have argued, most prisoners-of-war, André included, did not characterize themselves as covert players in an elaborate system of espionage, but rather as pariahs and outcasts excluded from the nation’s larger moral communities. Revolutionary soldier memoirs published up to the eve of the Civil War similarly attest to this pattern. Yet between 1820 and 1867, soldiers were, like André before them, victims

of a fictional system of war intrigue and sensationalized narrative that glorified the isolating image of their military experience (André hanging from the gallows) rather than attending to it. The novelization of nineteenth-century war in the United States left soldier voices out. Contradicting the suffering of soldier-authors who were contemporary with Cooper, *The Spy* remembers the Revolutionary War without any of the soldier's war in it. *The Spy* inaugurated a period of *Pax Americana* in the nation's war fiction that would last until John William De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* in 1867.

Cooper left the United States in 1826 only to watch his reputation and popularity stateside dwindle. From the vantage point of self-imposed exile in Europe, he would note in *Notions of the Americans* (1828) that the historical "Major André was the servant of a powerful and liberal government," which had waged war in order "to aggrandize its power, and not to assert any of the natural rights of man" (218). André was a very "accomplished young soldier" who nonetheless unfortunately chose to "condescend to prostitute his high acquirements, and to tamper with treason" (218). André was guilty not of moral cowardice, but of being on the wrong side of freedom. Unlike Hamilton and other's wrenched empathy for the pain and injustice suffered by the poor man on the gallows, Cooper focused instead on how André's moral and political choices reflected a similar plight for the revolutionaries and for their legacy in 1820. In some sense, even American Patriots were spies, just spies who had chosen the winning side.

It cannot be denied that the office of a spy may be made double honourable by its motives, since he who discharges the dangerous duty may have to conquer a deep moral reluctance to its service, no less than

the fear of death. I think it must be allowed that the case of Major André was one that can plead no such extraordinary exemption from the common and creditable feeling of mankind.... It was necessary to show the world that he who dared to assail the rights of the infant and struggling republics, incurred a penalty as fearful as he who worked his treason against the majesty of a king.¹⁸

Though André deserved his penalty because he “dared to assail the rights” of American independence, Cooper admits some spies could work for good. As such, it should not be surprising that *The Spy* is not a site of punishment, suffering, or violence. André’s case was not clear at all, and his death legitimized the regrettable legal and social precedent for American judgment “that inflicted punishment without the actual existence of crime” (*The Spy* 312). For Cooper, a man who had no memories of the war and whose family really did not play any substantial role in the Revolution, the figure of André and the questions he raised about civil-military relations weighed heavily.¹⁹

The Spy rewrites the Revolutionary War through the sympathetic legacy of André on two related fronts. It works on one level to decriminalize any lingering national guilt by equating the character of the spy with the picaresque nature of American identity. By so doing, the novel effectively demilitarizes the trope by broadening the spy’s sphere of influence to include domestic and non-violent spaces. The soldier and his wartime realities were excluded in the process. Huntington observed in *The Soldier and the State* that “Jacksonian Democracy began the period of liberal indifference to military affairs” in the United States. Such apathy arose since “after 1815 there were, aside from the Indians, no significant threats to American security” (203). At the time Cooper was

writing, both militia and regular army soldiers were largely perceived not only as unnecessary to national security, but also as a drain on national resources. With no barbarians at the gate, the nation's attitude toward its soldiers alternated between apathy and distrust.²⁰ Cooper participated in these misgivings at the same time he called them into question; first, through his meditation on the uneven treatment soldiers had withstood in public opinion and the law (terms understood in their most general sense as the rules of social conduct and moral accountability); and second, through his own artistic attention to how it was spies and common soldiers, at different moments and under different conditions, were similarly isolated, made invisible, and quickly forgotten by the publics and governments they served.²¹

Wayne Fields has noted "there is no single critical road to Cooper...because our responses to his work—both positive and negative—are too complicated for any one explanation." Instead, Fields outlines three large camps of critical response to Cooper: D.H. Lawrence saw an entertainer in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923); V.L. Parrington saw a moralist in *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927); Robert Spiller saw a social critic in *Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times* (1931).²² *The Spy* was Cooper's first novel, before he had the *bona fides* to censure his country too severely as he would in *The Bravo* (1831) and the Littlepage novels (1845-46). By virtue of its primacy, *The Spy* is certainly on its surface more entertainment than morals or critique (though these tendencies do find some outlet). The novel more often than not insists on the placating civilian memory of the war that celebrated individual adventure and national triumph rather than the soldier's individual suffering.²³

II.

As *The Spy* begins, two mysterious travelers find themselves, like André, adrift in the Neutral Ground of Westchester County, New York, a no-man's-land situated between the British-occupied Bronx and the American line further north along the Hudson River. It is the same neighborhood of "The Legend of Sleep Hollow," described by Irving as "one of those highly favoured places which abound with chronicle and great men. The British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding, and been infested with refugees, cow boys, and all kind of border chivalry." For Irving as for Cooper, writing from the vantage point of the 1820s had made it so that "just sufficient time had elapsed to enable each story teller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and in the indistinctness of his recollection, to make himself the hero of every exploit."²⁴ The entirety of *The Spy*'s action will be contained in this lawless and precarious terrain, patrolled by heroes "of every exploit" and roving bands of irregular soldiers who continually will assault the schemes and properties of the novel's main characters. These bands include the Skinners—guerillas mostly who maraud for profit—and the Cow-Boys—opportunists in their own right, albeit with marginal claims to the Loyalist side. The Skinners and the Cow-Boys constantly work to undermine one another, and as the plot allows, British and Patriot troops will vie against these loosely organized militias. They will also skirmish with one another, all in an effort to control the novel's geography. "Who do you call the enemy?" (40) is a life and death refrain, its paranoia justified by the novel's frequent turns of fortune.²⁵ The anxiety over how to identify personal allegiance and secure a stable community make every would-be

soldier in Cooper's world into a spy-in-waiting. Into this zone of confused hostilities our two mysterious travelers appear, both travelling *incognito*. On the last page of the novel, Cooper will reveal that the first of them, a detached and austere observer going by the *nom de guerre* of Harper, is none other than George Washington.

Cooper often capitalizes on upending expectations and emotions, for while the introduction of Washington at the end is meant to bring a solemn authority and resolution to what hitherto had been a fatherless free-for-all, upon further reflection, we come to realize that Washington whilst operating as Harper all along has been no better than a common spy. W.H. Gardiner in his review of the novel for *The North American Review* noted the irony which surely had made other readers similarly smirk. Washington was in historical fact but not collective memory a master spy: "It is a matter of notoriety, that no military commander ever availed himself of a judicious system of *espionage* with more consummate address, or greater advantage to his cause, than General Washington."²⁶ Washington's target in the beginning is the prominent Wharton family, whose home, The Locusts, is an important interchange of communities in the Neutral Ground. Throughout the war, the patriarchal Mr. Wharton has tried to remain impartial to both sides, yet his children do not share his neutrality. The youngest daughter, Frances, sympathizes with the Patriots, no doubt due to her love affair with the American officer and primary warden of the spies, Captain Dunwoodie. The older daughter, Sarah, remains a Loyalist, in large measure the result of her love affair with Dunwoodie's military rival, Colonel Wellmere. The family's only son, Henry, is a captain of dragoons in the regular British army who has been away from his family for more than a year. Wishing to refresh his family's affections, Captain Henry Wharton returns home. He is the second traveler from

the novel's beginning, and knowing the journey to be dangerous, he is garbed like Washington in an elaborate disguise.

The sartorial precedent from André's trial and execution dictated that either Washington or Wharton if caught out of uniform would be tried and executed as a spy. As was true in the case of André, Captain Wharton's plainclothes will be the seal to his death sentence (but not his death) once he is discovered out of uniform by the Patriot Captain Lawton. The parallels with André are no accident, and they further complicate the nature of the soldier's disloyalty and guilt. George Washington was now complicit, at least for a time, with the enemy. The postwar confusion between friend and foe is reminiscent of Irving's Rip Van Winkle who comes upon an old hotel he used to frequent but which now was hard to make out.

He recognized on the sign...the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe, but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was stuck in the hand instead of a scepter, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters,
GENERAL WASHINGTON. (944)

George Washington superimposed on King George would have been sacrilegious during Washington's lifetime, but Irving like Cooper was exploring how the general's character and fate were closely intertwined with the enemy and with André. Washington and Wharton were no different in the eyes of the law, and by making the illustrious George Washington into a spy, Cooper briefly acknowledges the ambivalent texture of military experience. Any one of these "spies" could have been prosecuted and executed. Cooper

had the benefit of thirty years reflection on André's well-publicized trial (over which Washington had effectively presided and passed the final judgment). The ghost of André is thus split in the novel between the unlucky Wharton, who gets caught, and Washington, who never does.²⁷

Importantly the last page of the novel reveals not only the true identity of George Washington, but also that of Harvey Birch, *the spy of the title*.²⁸ We come to learn at the end that Birch has been working as a double-agent for Washington all along, and this revelation is almost as unsettling as our discovery of Washington's double life, since for the bulk of the story Birch has been portrayed as the main villain and traitor to the Americans by allegedly providing supplies and information to the British army. With all this back-and-forth, what were readers supposed to think about their most cherished soldiers such as Washington? What were they to think about their most pilloried spies, men such as André?²⁹ Wharton's defense in the novel rested like André's on his claims to the indeterminate nature of the soldier's duty and his accountability to the larger communities he served. Like the country at the time, the legal and moral status of the soldier was in flux. Wharton at his own trial appealed to the uncertain legal standing of the land. "Its name, as a neutral ground, is unauthorized by law; it is an appellation that originates with the condition of the country'" (302). As did André's, the novel's court took a more literal line, rejecting Wharton's quibbling with the spirit of the law. Cooper was not satisfied by either verdict, and gives André a posthumous pardon when he saves Wharton from death at the last moment.

To help smooth out the contours of national memory, *The Spy* responded by diluting and demilitarizing the figure of the spy altogether, in effect rendering the trope a

broader index of American character. The novel is populated with a whole cast of conspiratorial types. When the narrator compares Wharton's trial to André's, the reference is only valid insofar as both cases were "stamped with greater notoriety than the ordinary events of the war. But spies were frequently arrested; and the instances that occurred of summary punishment for this crime were numerous" (299). André was one unlucky spy in a world full of spies, just as Wharton was but one spy in a novel full of them. The unimpeachable George Washington was, once again, acting no different than Wharton. For that matter, neither were the novel's domestic spies. Caesar, the Wharton's house slave, keeps himself and his staff in the information loop through a "regular system of espionage" (49). Isabella Singleton confesses on her death bed that a woman's "life is one of concealed emotions" and inscribed with multiple hypocrisies (285). Near the end of the novel when Captain Wharton is on the run, his sister Frances directly disobeys her military order of house arrest and comes to his aid. Treachery and disobedience are also afoot in Captain Wellmere, who courts Sarah Wharton all the while keeping an English wife back home. Even the upright Captain Lawton becomes an accidental spy when he startles the parlor embrace of Wellmere and "the blushing Sarah." Like the other characters in the novel who survive, Lawton is a careful reader of spies and not to be fooled. "Certain significant signs, which were embraced at a glance by the prying gaze of the trooper, at once made him a master of their secret" (236).

Even though the title suggests there is only one spy, the work is in fact replete with double agents. It was the *de facto* requirement for life in the Neutral Ground, a place where Wharton could well attest, "the law was momentarily extinct."

Great numbers...wore masks, *which even to this day have not been thrown aside*; and many an individual has gone down to the tomb, stigmatized as a foe to the rights of his countrymen, while, in secret, he has been the useful agent of the leaders of the revolution; and, on the other hand, could the hidden repositories of divers flaming Patriots have been opened to the light of day, royal protections would have been discovered concealed under piles of British gold. (10) [emphasis added]

We all wore the mask during the rebellion, and continued to wear it into the 1820s. Realizing that every American had inherited the war's stains of disloyalty, the novel worked to expose all manner of clandestine cover, from Washington and Wharton to Caesar and Sarah. The misunderstood and isolated Harvey Birch was the rule, not the exception; moreover, he was the projection of the revolutionary crisis the country was still having with itself in 1821. Captain Lawton preaches that "the time must arrive when America will learn to distinguish between a Patriot and a robber" (277), yet Cooper and other novelists of the war who followed had trouble stabilizing the distinction.³⁰ In the early decades of the young republic, one's love for family and country implied being able to lie, cheat, and steal in order to prevail, and Cooper ultimately condones such behind-the-scenes acts of duplicity since it kept his memory of the successful revolutionaries safe from the real suffering and violence of the war.

Cooper transferred the spy from the military to the people, and in the migration he made the trope harmless—that is, he quite literally and very carefully did not document harm, hurt, or violence among his spies. Soldier texts, their captivity narratives and memoirs in particular, took on that ordeal, but for Cooper, the relevance of military life to

his civilian readership was more immediate if the spy could supplant the common soldier as the authoritative and controlling voice of war. This was because in his retelling, spies survived and soldiers died (Wharton after all manages to escape his death sentence in the end only to be killed by a band of Cow-Boys in a tragic case of mistaken identity). The masquerade of the spy as the “military” figure in the novel did away with the unpleasantness of war that the common soldier had suffered. Moreover, as an attempt to imagine a way out of the brutal activities of war, *The Spy* satisfied Cooper’s professional as well as his civilian anxieties. Looking back more than twenty years later, Cooper remarked, “Having accidentally produced an English book [his first novel *Precaution*, published in 1820], I determined to write one purely American, by way of atonement. In this humour, *The Spy* was commenced.”³¹

The Spy, categorized by Cooper as a long exercise of atonement for not being American enough before, insists that the character of early Anglo America was embodied in the image of the sympathetic spy on whom nothing stuck.³² To be “purely American” required in part that characters such as Harvey Birch’s jailer rationalize their own amnesty during the war. “As to killing a man in lawful battle, that is no more than doing one’s duty. If the cause is wrong, the sin of such a deed, you know, falls on the nation, and a man receives his punishment here with the rest of the people; but murdering in cold blood stands next to desertion as a crime in the eye of God” (202). Soldiers murder, whereas spies like him and Birch advance a cause. Birch agrees. “I never was a soldier, therefore never could desert” (203). Birch’s true nature is always a question, especially for Captain Lawton: “He may be a spy—he must be one,” said Lawton, musing, “but he has a heart above enmity, and a soul that would honour a soldier” (233). Who was he?

The identity game mattered since in the world of the novel, soldiers were subject to violence and spies were not.³³

Though combat rarely creeps into the novel, when it does the difference between being an actual soldier and a civilized spy is life and death. In one of the rare scenes of depicted fighting, Lawton and the doctor in charge of attending to war casualties, Sitgreaves, watch as a British trooper flees the battlefield for the safety of a nearby wood. Lawton orders the doctor to “murder the villain as he flies,” but Sitgreaves does not have it in him to shoot. Instead he reasons with the enemy, ““Stop, my friend—stop until Captain Lawton comes up, if you please”” (233). The trooper turns, “discharged his musket towards the surgeon,” and runs away. The exchange is more eerie than funny, since the Doctor’s denial is aligned with a similar cognitive distance that would have pressed upon Cooper’s 1821 readers. Neither the novel’s characters nor the citizens of the Era of Good Feelings, were, properly speaking, military targets.

“Which way has he fled?” cried [Captain Lawton].

“John,” said the surgeon, “am I not a non-combatant?”

“Whither has the rascal fled?” cried Lawton, impatiently.

“Where you cannot follow—into that wood. But I repeat, John, am I not a non-combatant?” (233)

As Lawton continues to scold him for his insubordination, Sitgreaves calmly explains, ““I am not the riding-master of the regiment—nor a drill sergeant—nor a crazy cornet; no, sir...I am only, sir, a poor humble man of letters, a mere Doctor of Medicine, an unworthy graduate of Edinburgh, and a surgeon of dragoons; nothing more, I assure you, Captain John Lawton.”” (234-35). The non-combatant’s tone is more defiant than one

would expect: *you* are a soldier, *Captain* John Lawton, but I am a Doctor of Medicine. The protests of civilian respectability do not end there. Subsequently ambushed at The Locusts by a party of Skinners, Sitgreaves again refuses to act the part when violence nears. ““Why and wherefore should I yield?—I am a non-combatant”” (259). Sitgreaves presses the point most heavily, and for this reason among others, he emerges as one of the most complex and representative characters in the novel.

Cooper never describes the unnamed soldiers wounded and dying off-stage, but Sitgreaves nonetheless is treating them all the while. His reaction to their traumatized bodies is a crucial suppression of the soldier’s reality of war. As Sitgreaves saw it, the real problem with war was that it killed people, when really “[death-blows] are useless in a battle, for disabling your foe is all that is required” (102). War was bad for his everyday business as a healer, and as Sitgreaves explains to Miss Peyton, “[a]ll trades, madam, ought to be allowed to live; but what is to become of a surgeon, if his patients are dead before he sees them!”” (118).³⁴ It would be too quick to dismiss Sitgreaves as mere caricature as some critics have.³⁵ He is, in fact, revealingly representative of the civilian desire for a bloodless war devoid of casualties, pain, and suffering.

Everyone knows a soldier’s body cut in two is dead. The corpse cannot be reunited. Yet Sitgreaves refuses to admit the soldier’s mortality. ““Occasionally a body must have been left in two pieces, to puzzle the ingenuity of [ancient medical researchers such as Galen] to unite. Yet, venerable and learned as they were, I doubt not they did it”” (235). Biological fact gives ground in noncombatant desire to forlorn hope. Was it truly possible to “unite two parts of the human body, that have been severed by an edged

instrument”)? The doctor truly believes it is, and even internalizes the fantasy on his own body.

I once broke my little finger intentionally, in order that I might reduce the fracture and watch the cure: it was only on a small scale, you know, dear John; still the thrilling sensation excited by the knitting of the bone, aided by the contemplation of the art of man thus acting in unison with nature, exceeded any other enjoyment that I have ever experienced. Now, had it been one of the more important members, such as the leg or arm, how much greater must the pleasure have been! (236)

The greater the likelihood of pain and death, “how much greater” the pleasure grew for the doctor who, like Cooper, saw his intervention in the war as a healer rather than a mourner.³⁶ Like Cooper and his audience, Sitgreaves reshaped Revolutionary memory in order to meet his inner needs. The doctor’s response to the unseen traces of war was a bizarre distortion of the fragility of the soldier’s life. Sitgreaves’ fantasy is at once earnest yet also plainly aware of itself as a delusion.

“When it is only a bullet, I have always some hopes; there is a chance that it hits nothing vital; but, bless me, Captain Lawton’s men cut so at random—generally sever the jugular or the carotid artery, or let out the brains, and all are so difficult to remedy—the patient mostly dying before one can get at him. I never had success but once in replacing a man’s brains, although I have tried three this very day.” (101)

This is the enduring image from *The Spy*: somewhere on a battlefield wasteland, a doctor is hunched over a soldier’s corpse, frantically cupping, pushing, and kneading a young

man's brains into his open head. It is an uncanny reminder of the novel's mute soldiers, "mostly dying," whom Cooper did not, perhaps could not, describe.³⁷

III.

Bruce Rosenberg and John Cawelti have already laid out a case for how *The Spy* became the ur-text for the modern spy novel tradition.³⁸ Other critics have focused on the artistic indecision of *The Spy*, caught as it is between competing ideological and nationalistic demands of the American domestic romance and the British historical adventure, each requiring different attentions to genre and form.³⁹ Cooper complained to his editor that "the task of making American Manner and American scenes interesting to an American reader is an arduous one," and yet he was nonetheless committed. "I take more pains with [*The Spy*][—]as it is to be an American novel professedly."⁴⁰ Making *The Spy* American meant, like the legend of André before and Leatherstocking ahead, a consolidation of cultured sentiment. The rise of the spy and the sacrifice of the soldier were compromises of character not unlike Natty Bumppo whose civilized savagery would make Cooper famous. Indeed, Cooper has always been primarily known for his tales of the frontier.⁴¹ The first of the Leatherstocking tales, *The Pioneers*, followed *The Spy* in 1823. Cooper would subsequently give America the adventure novel of the sea, populated with military heroes his audience could easily recognize. In the same year as *The Pioneers*, Cooper also published *The Pilot*, a work loosely based on the swashbuckling life of John Paul Jones and a conscious attempt to emulate and improve upon the popularity of Walter Scott's recent historical novel, *The Pirate* (1822). Cooper

returned to land next in *Lionel Lincoln* (1825), the story of a British major in pre-Independence Boston. Robert S. Levine concluded about Cooper's sailors and soldiers in *The Pilot* and *Lionel Lincoln* what can likewise be claimed about the double agents in *The Spy*. These men bear "little resemblance to the bold Roman profiles of America's Revolutionary heroes" (68). They were soldiers and sailors the way Cooper wanted to write them, and contemporary audiences took notice.

A reader complained in 1823 about Cooper's tendency for idealization, "'Neither poetry nor prose can ever make a spy an heroic character'."⁴² Decades later, Cooper's two-volume *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* (1846) selected the biographies of ten American officers much to the dismay of many of "heroic character" who were left out. The *History of the Navy of the United States* (1839) brought on a libel suit from Captain Jesse D. Elliott, upset over Cooper's cowardly depiction of him at the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812.⁴³ Cooper won the lawsuit, but the controversies surrounding his military representations only attest to the proprietary and partisan eye he had. In 1843, Cooper published one more military biography, *A Life Before the Mast*, detailing the maritime experiences of a former acquaintance of his from the navy named Ned Myers. Though the two had not seen each other between 1809 and 1833, Cooper insisted his biography was a facsimile of the former sailor's life. *Before the Mast* claimed to capture the "language, deportment, habits and consistency of this well-meaning tar," without any "cant or exaggeration" (xii-xiii). At the same time the text claimed to be authentic, it also came with the following disclaimer: "In this book, the writer has endeavoured to adhere as closely to the very language of his subject, as circumstances will at all allow..." (x).⁴⁴ Cooper gives himself permission as he had in

The Spy to ventriloquize military experience. The irony in authorship is significant since years earlier he had grown angry when another author had done the same thing to *The Spy*.⁴⁵

Following the success of *The Spy* in 1821, the relatively unknown H.L. Barnum came out in 1828 with his own revisionary text, *The Spy Unmasked*. Describing the piece as an expose, Barnum claimed that by virtue of his own good fortune and investigative skill he had fashioned at long last the “*Authentic Account*” of the real-life spy behind Cooper’s Revolutionary War novel. *The Spy Unmasked*, sub-titled *Memoirs of Enoch Crosby, Alias Harvey Birch, the Hero of Mr. Cooper’s Tale of the Neutral Ground*, authorizes itself as a sensationalistic addendum to Cooper’s work because “it seemed to be generally admitted, that [Cooper’s] *Spy* was not a fictitious personage, but a real character, drawn from life” (ix). Barnum breezily pens an “unauthorized dedication” to Cooper in the prefatory pages, then an introduction that begins to make a case for its authenticity and legitimacy as a useful and necessary supplement to the novel. Crucial to this task was the chain of custody of the soldier’s story, from the actual events in the Neutral Ground three decades past to the current version of the narrative now offered.

A gentleman of good standing and respectability, who has filled honourable official stations in the county of Westchester, and who has long enjoyed the friendship and confidence of Mr. Cooper, informed the writer of this article, on the authority of Mr. Cooper himself, that the *outline* of the character of Harvey Birch, was actually sketched from that of Enoch Crosby; but filled up, partly from imagination, and partly from

similar features in the lives of two or three others, who were also engaged in *secret services*, during the revolutionary war. (ix-x)

What was to be the true-to-life story of a true-to-life spy was based instead on composite, hearsay and innuendo, those very tools used by Cooper's fictional spies in the novel, "filled up, partly from imagination." Before Barnum's biography proper can even begin, a clear problem of methodology and authority presents itself. Enoch Crosby was only one of three models for the novel's Harvey Birch. The reliability of Barnum's representation therefore was only as good as the distortions of his story that were rendered through the anonymous "gentleman of good standing and respectability" (if such a man could even be said to exist). But Barnum did not see a problem. He wagered he was making Cooper's fiction better by improving the novel with his historical "correction." Whether his source and its history were any good is another matter altogether, as is whether or not Cooper did, in fact, rely on the model of Enoch Crosby as he wrote *The Spy*.⁴⁶

If we allow for the moment that there is some truth to Barnum's claims, then what is startling is even though Cooper believed the opposite—that his novel was made worse by Barnum's intervention—the impulse in both men was to mediate military memory. Underwriting both texts was the urge common to antebellum literature that modified military experience without long considering the source or the form of that experience. Enoch Crosby for one was entirely unaware a novel had been written about "his" revolutionary service. Even though Cooper's novel had been widely read and circulated for several years by the time of *The Spy Unmasked*, Crosby had never heard of, let alone read, *The Spy*, "as novels were not included in his present course of reading" (xi).

Barnum assumes soldiers did not read novels. They certainly did not write them. That was for others to do, and so there was no break in the logic of representation if Cooper had never met Crosby, or if Barnum had never met Cooper. Without a doubt, Barnum insists, “Enoch Crosby was certainly the *original* which [Cooper] had in his ‘mind’s eye’” (x). Whether or not Barnum really had his finger on what drove Cooper cannot definitively be proven. These questions of accuracy and authenticity, however, point us to more wide-ranging questions of voice and civilian modulation in military representation between the wars. One cannot help but ask in addition to whether Barnum wrote Crosby as he really was, whether he wrote Crosby as the soldier would have written himself.⁴⁷

IV.

Israel Potter was a soldier who arguably did write for himself only to have his story similarly revisited and subsequently overwritten decades later by Herman Melville. *Israel Potter* (1855) is Melville’s only self-proclaimed “biography,” and it takes as its primary source the “fugitive” memoir *The Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* (1824).⁴⁸ The term “fugitive memoir” is from Walter Bezanson, who along with others such as David Chacko and Alexander Kulcsa, have noted how Potter’s text was in many ways a “characteristic document from American popular culture of the 1820’s” (*Potter* 184).⁴⁹ Potter’s text was typical in two interrelated ways. First, its motives were representative of the well over two hundred Revolutionary soldier memoirs in print following the War of 1812, most of them dictated to family members or to smalltime

editors and almost all of them driven by the need for money. Soldier-authors such as Thomas Dring and Joseph Plumb Martin did not expect much in terms of sales, but almost all of them did expect pensions from the federal government. As outlined in the previous chapter, Congress began pension benefits for Continental Army veterans starting in 1818 and then expanded provisions in 1828 and again in 1832. Soldiers needed to prove their service as well as their hardship in order to qualify, and many memoirs such as Martin's read as backdoor affidavits for their authors' pension applications. Israel Potter was no different in this respect; the final chapter to his 1824 memoir details the inhumanity of the federal government in denying his pension petition on the grounds that he was not physically in the United States when the 1818 Pension Act was passed.

Reparation was certainly a main feature of antebellum soldier writing. Exploitation was another. The *Life* was published in Providence in 1824 and went through three editions in that year alone. The *Magazine of History* reprinted the tale in 1911, in part because the original version ““awoke so much attention as to be hawked by peddlers throughout New England”” (qtd. in Chacko 365). Street vendors in London did the same. Potter's publisher in 1824 was Henry Trumbull, a known peddler of ““obscene books and pamphlets’,” and a man whom one historian calls ““one of our early and most prolific liars.””⁵⁰ In 1841, Trumbull would publish *History of the Indian Wars*, a so-called ““history,”” which ““in addition to its narrative deficiencies, was known to contain as many as twenty-two chronological errors on a single page”” (Chacko 367). In the same year Potter's text came out, Trumbull also reissued John Filson's problematic ““autobiography”” of Daniel Boone, of which Boone wrote not one word.⁵¹ Given the swirling suspicions of

historical accuracy and biographical consistency, the only safe bet is that both Trumbull and Potter wanted to sell books, and that both were willing to compromise the authenticity of the soldier's voice (or any author's voice) in order to do so. The 108 pages of the 1824 *Life* read in part as a document of exaggerated folklore in the vein of Boone and Davy Crocket (*The Life of Davy Crockett* came out in 1834 and was most likely ghostwritten by Richard Penn Smith). Whatever Israel Potter might have said without his bending to the marketplace and the pressures of an unscrupulous editor can never be known.

How then are we to read the text?⁵² Like *The Spy Unmasked*, is Potter's original *Life* a reliable document of a soldier's sufferings written by himself? Could we call it ghostwritten, albeit in earnest? Or is it simply fabrication and exploitation? What can reliably be recounted about Israel Ralph Potter was that he was a Revolutionary minuteman born in Cranston, Rhode Island (the year is unclear, either 1744 or 1754), who left his home at a young age once a love affair forbidden by his father spoiled his chance at a family life, who fought and was injured at Bunker Hill, who subsequently was captured by the British and brought to England as a prisoner-of-war, only to escape and live on the streets of London for almost fifty years as a "chair-mender." Potter returned to the United States in 1823, destitute and without any known family, only to die soon after his memoir came out.

Melville sympathized with Potter's tragedies to the extent his imagination and worldly needs would let him. Saddled with the financial failure of *Pierre* (1852), Melville himself needed money. He had known about the poor peddler and owned a copy of the *Life* as early as the 1840s. In a journal entry from London dated December

18, 1849, Melville finds himself in a secluded bookstore. “Looked over a lot of ancient maps of London. Bought one (A.D. 1766) for 3 & 6 pence. I want to use it in case I serve up the Revolutionary narrative of the beggar.”⁵³ The “serving up” of Potter came into being after *Putnam’s* opened in 1852 as a competitor to *Harper’s*, who had passed on the initial chapters of *Israel Potter*. Melville subsequently sent the first sixty pages of the manuscript off to George Putnam with the following disclaimer:

I engage that the story shall contain nothing of any sort to shock the fastidious. There will be very little reflective writing in it; nothing weighty. It is adventure. As for its interest, I shall try to sustain that as well as I can.⁵⁴

Melville felt for Potter to the extent that Potter was an exiled soldier who “did not reap the benefits of the Revolution he helped to win” and who had “no one but himself to relate his history.”⁵⁵ At the same time, the historical distance between Potter’s tragedy and Melville’s imagination had blurred the soldier’s life into mere “adventure,” whose “interest” for mid-century readers was contingent on its possessing “very little reflective writing.”

Israel Potter ran in *Putnam’s* from July 1854 through March 1855. When the book version came out soon thereafter, Melville added a dedication, “To His Highness The Bunker-Hill Monument,” in which he asserted that his novel “preserves, almost as in a reprint, Israel Potter’s autobiographical story.”⁵⁶ Trumbull’s version was by then out-of-print, but, Melville tells us, “from a tattered copy, rescued by the merest chance from the rag-pickers,” he had saved the story. The present volume, he insists, might “be not unfitly regarded something in the light of a dilapidated old tombstone retouched” (v).

The tombstone gets more and more retouched as the narrative advances. Melville is fairly true to the language and the plot from the first half of Trumbull's *Life* in the beginning, but after Melville's chapter six (there are twenty-six chapters total), *Israel Potter* becomes a bit unhinged.⁵⁷ As way of example, the 1824 *Life* mentions only briefly how Potter met with Benjamin Franklin in Paris, but Melville capitalizes on the occasion and gives Franklin several of the more interesting chapters in the book. Celebrity of this sort runs throughout the novel. Potter also hob knobs with King George III, swashbuckles with John Paul Jones, and rubs elbows with Ethan Allen—all historical encounters unsubstantiated by any historical record, but included, Joyce Sparer Adler has argued, in order to caricaturize American excesses of character.⁵⁸ Trumbull's *Life* was Melville's primary source, but we also know he worked from *A Narrative of Ethan Allen's Captivity* (1779), Robert C. Sands' *Life and Correspondence of John Paul Jones* (1830), and James Fenimore Cooper's *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (rev. ed. 1840).⁵⁹

Israel Potter in the 1850s was like André and Crosby in the 1820s—a source and a sensational hoax rather than an appropriate biographical subject. Imprisoned by the narrative needs of others, Potter bemoans to Franklin, “So, I’ve got to stay in this room all the time. Somehow I’m bound to be a prisoner, one way or another” (52). In order to survive in the memory of the 1850s, Potter is confined, restricted, and often forced to impersonate: a gardener in King George’s court, a cloistered monk, a pirate on a ship. How else could Melville have written the exiled soldier but as a chameleon and a survivor, the confidence man before there was *The Confidence Man* (1857)? Peter Bellis has noticed how the war in Potter’s 1824 text is in the present tense—still open and

alive—whereas Melville situates the war in the past tense as a past forever gone, an object of historical regret to be petrified like the Bunker Hill memorial (the image that opens his version and ends Potter's).⁶⁰ Writing of the Battle of Bunker Hill where he was injured both in the hip and ankle, Potter suggests like Joseph Plumb Martin that his memory of the war was still a constant companion in 1824, some forty years removed from his experience: “—the conflict, which was a sharp and severe one, is still fresh in my memory, and cannot be forgotten by me while the scars of the wounds which I then received, remain to remind me of it!”⁶¹

Melville does not look long at the scars. When he gives the best scenes to Franklin, Jones, and Allen, as a consequence he must remove some element of Potter's original autobiography. Similar to Cooper's pacification of André, what gets cut is Potter's prolonged suffering, exile, and imprisonment in England. Such poverty accounts for almost half of the 1824 text but only a few pages in Melville's 1855 retelling.⁶² In Potter's version, the streets of London are filled with con men, gypsies who “kidnap little children,” and “Footpads,” men described as little more than armed robbers and murderers. Innocent and unassuming gentlemen are killed in the street for money (63-65). Melville does not examine the criminal undertones of Potter's life in exile, but Potter relates how he was sent to debtor's prison after defaulting on loans that he took out in order to feed his wife and ten children. Seven of his offspring would die in childhood, two more in their early twenties; after these devastating losses, his wife died soon thereafter (79-89). When Potter is finally able to return to the United States, he arrives with his lone surviving son and visits Bunker Hill for only one sentence (103). The narration ends with his return to his birthplace in Rhode Island in hopes of securing an

inheritance of land from his deceased father (104). Sadly, Potter's brothers had already sold his share and moved out of the state.

V.

These were injustices and tragedies Melville's memory could not internalize in *Israel Potter*. Both of Melville's grandfathers had served in the Revolutionary War. His paternal grandfather, Major Thomas Melvill, was reported to have been one of the painted Indians at the Boston Tea Party; in his later days, Melvill became a relic of his former self. He was Holmes' inspiration for "The Last Leaf" (1831), a poem alternatively tittering and penitent, in which Melvill the obsolete old soldier roams about the modern cityscape still dressed in his tattered uniform, as the elderly man was often reported to have done among the streets of Boston.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-corned hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

Ridiculing the old soldier quickly unnerves Holmes' speaker, however, for no sooner does the poem have its fun than it quickly regrets its impertinence. The speaker imagines that there was a time, in the major's youth, when "Not a better man was found":

But now he walks the streets,

And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
“They are gone!”⁶³

Amongst the coterie at Pittsfield as among the nation, the soldier was still the double image of Colonel Manly from *The Contrast*, split between the nostalgia history had bestowed him and the nervous discomfort his aging presence made for a nation no longer needing his services. “They are gone,” Major Melvill mourns in 1831 alongside Joseph Plumb Martin, presumably never to be seen or needed again. By and large, they were in fact gone, either an aged and dying population like Israel Potter and Major Melvill, or a new generation of displaced laborers stationed in far outposts on the frontier engaged in escalating skirmishes with Native American and Mexican forces. Neither the soldier of the past nor the soldier of the present were ever clearly available to Melville before the Civil War.

America’s bifurcated military legacy haunted *Pierre* (1852), Melville’s semi-autobiographical novel following *Moby-Dick* (1851). Melville’s maternal grandfather, General Peter Gansevoort, had been a hero at Saratoga and so prominent during the Revolutionary War that he had sat for a portrait by Gilbert Stuart in 1794. Stuart’s painting inspired the larger-than-life portrait in *Pierre* (1851) of the titular young writer’s grandfather, a war hero like Holmes’ “last leaf.”

Never could Pierre look upon his fine military portrait without an infinite and mournful longing to meet his living aspect in actual life...[He was] a

glorious gospel framed and hung upon the wall, and declaring to all people, as from the Mount, that man is a noble, god-like being, full of choicest juices; made up of strength and beauty.⁶⁴

In contrast to his grandfather's divine mold, Pierre, doomed to obscurity and madness, appears diminutive and clumsy in his attempts to step into the military frame. "Pierre had often tried on his [grandfather's] military vest, which still remained an heirloom at Saddle Meadows, and found the pockets below his knees, and plenty additional room for a fair-sized quarter-cask within its buttoned girth..." (29). Both author and character fail to measure up to the immensity of the grandfather's image—"the mildest hearted, and most blue-eyed gentleman in the world...[a] white-haired worshiper of all household gods; the gentlest husband, and the gentlest father...a pure, cheerful, childlike, blue-eyed, divine old man; in whose meek, majestic soul, the lion and the lamb embraced..."—because this soldier's likeness was, like Melville's Israel Potter, a mirage of character not to be trusted. For Melville as for Cooper before him, the antebellum American soldier was largely imagined as a spurious and unreliable confidence man.

Beginning as early as André's trial, military character had contributed to what David S. Reynolds termed the "likeable criminal" of American culture, a tantalizing yet finally inscrutable and incoherent opposition of moral identities.⁶⁵ In the words of Ned Buntline's confidence novel *The G'hals of New York* (1850), an American "must make up his mind whether he will cheat or be cheated, whether he will dupe or be duped, whether he will pluck or be plucked" (qtd. in Reynolds 302). Soldier narratives such as William Tufts' 1807 autobiography celebrated the soldier's cheat because deception allowed him to survive. Could unscrupulous and dishonest methods such as Tufts' be

applied for honest and just ends? The question animates Melville's last novel, *The Confidence Man* (1857). Amidst the multitude onboard the steamship *Fidèle*, "United States soldiers in full regimentals" rub elbows with "Broadway bucks in cravats of cloth and gold."⁶⁶ The Confidence Man of the novel takes on many disguises and personalities, none necessarily more telling nor more honest than the next, and yet only one character ever admits his trick. He is the "soldier" Thomas Fry, described at the beginning of chapter 19 as possessing "a grimy old regimental coat, a countenance at once grim and wizened, interwoven paralyzed legs, stiff as icicles, suspended between rude crutches...." Fry's soldierly appearance at first dupes the Confidence Man who comes upon him on the main deck—"Mexico? Molino del Rey? Resaca de la Palma?"—to which Fry responds, "Resaca de la *Tombs!*" (129). Not a soldier of the late war in Mexico as his appearance would suggest, Fry is in fact a veteran of the justice system. Manhattan's Hall of Justice, commonly referred to as "The Tombs," was a large prison (the same prison-ground where Melville's *Bartleby* would die). As Fry tells the story, his suffering started when he was wrongly imprisoned for a rich man's murder. He was left to rot in the Tombs while the rich man was released (133). During this confinement, Fry's legs atrophy and he became the crippled sight the Confidence Man encounters.

Fry's tale of suffering in prison echoes not only Joseph Plumb Martin and Revolutionary prisoners-of-war (texts which Melville most likely did not read), but also the extended London segment of suffering from Turnbull's *Israel Potter* (which Melville most certainly did read, and which, once again, he chose to exclude from his soldier novel). When Fry finishes his Tombs story, the Confidence Man responds simply, "I

cannot believe it” (135). Arguably Melville here speaks through the Confidence Man. Both men believe that soldiers’ suffering stories were more spurious than pitiful, Israel Potter among them. Was the soldier just one more con among many? Doubt proves prudent in Fry’s case since he only pretends to be a soldier. Onboard the world of the *Fidèle*, Melville represents the soldier as a simulation of the civilian con man rather than as an experience-based political identity. Fry readily admits, “Hardly anybody believes my story, and so to most I tell a different one,” namely, that he served and was crippled in the late Mexican-American War. After confessing to his soldierly deceit, Fry wanders about the deck begging the passengers, “Sir, a shilling for Happy Tom, who fought at Buena Vista. Lady, something for General Scott’s soldier, crippled in both pins at glorious Contreras.” (135). Fry’s avatar of the soldier gathers some alms from the crowd, then disappears from the novel’s surface altogether.

The confidence man was an appropriate image of the Mexican-American War veteran for Melville because the conflict was largely communicated to the reading public through propagandistic novelists and newspaper correspondents. Reynolds contextualizes the figure of the confidence man with the late 1840s and the “sensational journalism and popular fiction of radical democrats” such as John Neal (*The Down-Eaters* (1831)) and George Lippard (*The Quaker City* (1845)).⁶⁷ Such fiction exposed hypocrisies of American capitalism and political life. Lippard, for one, advocated not only for urban reform but also very strongly in support of the expansionist Mexican-American War in which Fry claimed to have fought. Lippard’s two war novels, *Legends of Mexico* (1847) and *Bel of Prairie Eden: A Romance of Mexico* (1848), figure prominently in what Shelley Streeby calls “the print revolution of the late 1830s and

1840s [that] directly preceded the war.”⁶⁸ During that period, readers came to know of the problems out West mainly through newspapers and the new and popular penny press, often in the form of “noveauettes” written in haste by hacks and professional writers.⁶⁹ Streeby has argued that “the penny press and other forms of popular culture helped to produce feelings of intimacy, immediacy, and involvement in the war as papers reported, for the first time on an almost daily basis, the details of battles in Mexico” (52-53). Newspapers formed the Associated Press to help streamline delivery routes, and the telegraph made dispatches to large population centers an almost constant stream of information that helped fuel a “war mood that approached hysteria.”⁷⁰

The regular army of the United States was still small and untested when the war on the frontier erupted in the mid-1840s. After Zachary Taylor’s unexpected victories at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma in February 1846, young men could not sign up fast enough for President Polk’s call for 50,000 volunteers. For the first time since the Revolutionary War, the Mexican-American War became a war for the young and the adventurous, primarily “a civilian war from the outset, clothed with all the romance of a conflict that touched the popular imagination.”⁷¹ The reality of camp life for the regular soldier was more dismal and less heroic than the press represented, and the incredible influx of volunteers put the militia system into a state of crisis over whether states or the federal government would fund the troops. Paul Foos has documented how the United States Army “explicitly prohibited officers from publishing their own accounts of battles,” and yet many officers and infantrymen nevertheless did publish their personal accounts in memoirs in the vein of Joseph Plumb Martin which “[a]s much as

possible...offer commentary that eschews the heroic mode so common in personal and public accounts of the 1840s.”⁷²

How was the truth of military experience reliable? Soldiers’ tales of suffering seemed specious to Melville, but so too did newspaper accounts of unbridled heroism in Mexico. In a letter from May 12, 1846 to his brother Gansevoort, Melville was amazed by the war fever enveloping the nation.

People here are all in a state of delirium about the Mexican War. A military arder [sic] pervades all ranks—Militia Colonels wax red in their coat facings—and ‘prentice boys are running off to the wars by scores.— Nothing is talked of but the ‘Halls of the Montezumas.’ And to hear folks prate about those purely figurative apartments one would suppose that they were another Versailles where our democratic rabble meant to ‘make a night of it’ ere long...But seriously something great is impending. The Mexican War (tho’ our troops have behaved right well) is nothing of itself—but a ‘little spark kindleth a great fire’ as the well known author of the Proverbs very justly remarks—and who knows what all this may lead to—“⁷³

During the Civil War, dispatches from the front lines would once again fuel the zeal of young soldiers and worry Melville about how “seriously something great is impending” in the faraway war zones he could only read about. But Melville was never quite able to trust what the newspapers told him. In the short-lived humor magazine *Yankee Doodle*, Melville anonymously satirized the reliability of both the military’s leadership and the news from the Mexican front. Through a series of fabricated dispatches from the front

lines, “Reported For Yankee Doodle By His Special Correspondent at the Seat of War,” Melville lampooned the “simplicity and unaffectedness of old Zach’s habits” in contrast to his own “authentic and reliable particulars.”⁷⁴ The imperial interests of Manifest Destiny and Polk’s war machine guaranteed that all war writing from the front lines—including soldier writing—would never near the truth. There were no “authentic and reliable particulars.” Similar to Cooper decades earlier, Melville’s antebellum novels indicate an author at times distrustful of the American soldier’s claims to suffering and of his political rights as an “authentic” and deserving member of society. For Melville as for most Americans, the legacy of the Civil War would realign the authenticity of the American soldier and his voice. One can only speculate how *Israel Potter* would have been written had Melville waited to write it until after *Battle-Pieces*.

INTERLUDE

This chapter’s title limits its scope of inquiry to “between the wars,” yet a few prefatory observations outlining civilian literary production during and immediately after the Civil War is necessary for the following chapter. Symptomatic of Melville’s crisis of confidence following the Mexican-American War was the culture’s fascination with the dispatch, a civilian technology that was never fully committed to the honest representation of the war. Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose son the future jurist was twice injured in the Civil War, was similarly nervous. Three decades after penning “The Last Leaf,” Holmes wrote in *Soundings from the Atlantic* (1864) how the physical and psychological distance from live battle made the home front unbearably skittish. “Men

cannot think, or write, or attend to their ordinary business,” he keens, for they are too out of sorts to function.⁷⁵ Non-combatants always got word of the war belatedly through newspapers and days-old dispatches publicly posted in town centers. Like Melville, the postponement inherent in these reports made Holmes feel powerless over the war. His imagination compensated for all the things he did not know by filling in the gaps of time and space with a tragic sense of foreboding.

[A] person goes through the side streets on his way for the noon *extra*,— he is so afraid somebody will meet him and *tell* the news he wishes to *read*, first on the bulletin-board, and then in the great capitals and leaded type of the newspaper....When any startling piece of war-news comes, it keeps repeating itself in our minds in spite of all we can do. The same trains of thought go tramping round in circle through the brain, like the supernumeraries that make up the grand army of a stage-show. Now, if a thought goes round through the brain a thousand times in a day, it will have worn as deep a track as one which has passed through it once a week for twenty years. (6)

Melville was one of these “supernumeraries” worn out by the traumatic distance of the Civil War. Most of what he gathered during the war was mediated through the local dispatches as well as the immense and unofficial periodical of the war, *The Rebellion Record*. When the fighting started, Melville was forty-two years old, “an onlooker,” Hennig Cohen tells us, “sensitive and compassionate, but personally remote.”⁷⁶ In 1861, Melville had joined the Pittsfield militia and even did exercises with the squad through much of 1863, but nothing close to active duty came his way. As in the case of *Israel*

Potter, all Melville knew of the experience of war was second-hand accounts, except now Melville was living through a war instead of imagining an old one.

Stanton Garner rightfully dismisses the notion that Melville was somehow inactive or cloistered during the Civil War.⁷⁷ Melville avidly followed wartime current events and had mulled over composing a cycle of memorial poems soon after the war began. Only after the fall of Richmond would he begin to write what would become *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866). The novelist-turned-poet waited until after hostilities had stopped because he needed time and distance from the events in order to smooth out the “excesses of grief, anxiety, anger, and exultation;” his purpose was to calm the nation by means of a “coherent literary entity....Studied, symbolic, and encyclopedically allusive, [*Battle-Pieces*] understands events as increments of a larger, unified experience of the nation in which the war was a product of the American past and an anticipation of the nation’s future.”⁷⁸ Varying forms and speakers within *Battle-Pieces* inaugurate the distinct rhythms and moods of different battles in the Whitmanian hope that the totality of the war could be represented. More so than the novel, verse allowed Melville to abstract the war as an epic national trauma. At the same time, the poetry was mediated by Melville’s difficulty in seeing the events of war clearly.

The poem “Donelson,” for example, underscores Melville’s dissatisfaction with his ability to properly animate the distant battle. “Donelson” is a significantly longer poem than most in *Battle-Pieces*, its pace much slower and more deliberate. Whereas many of the verses in the collection are quick synopses of skirmishes, “Donelson” aims to mimic in real-time the actions and chronology of the decisive three-day battle at Fort Donelson in February 1862. At “Saturday morning at 3 A.M.,” the poem tells us, the

rebels stir.⁷⁹ The “STORY OF SATURDAY AFTERNOON” is broken down by “an order given” at 1 P.M. and “the work” that “begins” at 3 P.M. (60-61). At the same time combat is happening, the poem aims to recreate the reactions and anxiety of civilians at home who must read about the battle in disjointed dispatches broken up over multiple days. An unnamed town’s “bulletin-board” organizes the poem’s form. Every day “a band / Of eager, anxious people met” (52) to read news of the battle for Donelson. They learn of the battle at the same time and alongside the external readers of the poem. These temporal complexities create two speakers, representative respectively of soldier and civilian perspectives of the war. Melville alternates between the italicized speech of the frontline dispatches and the roman type of the reading crowd, and in this back and forth the distance between war participant and war observer is formally rendered.

In “Donelson” as in each of Melville’s poems, no soldier gets to be his own first-person speaker.⁸⁰ As a result there are no clear protagonists of the war, and soldiers exist mostly as metaphoric displacements. “Our heedless boys / Were nipped like blossoms,” cries one dispatch (57). “Three columns of infantry rolled on, / Vomited out of Donelson—“ compares another (59). Yet another describes the rebels’ “glare like savages” (61). Men whom “The College Colonel” (another poem) commands are “like castaway sailors” (113). In “Gettysburg,” “our lines it seemed a beach,” over which “three waves in flashed advance / Surged, but were met” (88). “The March to the Sea” focuses less on General Sherman than on the swelling sea of men. “The columns streamed like rivers / Which in their course agree, / And they streamed until their flashing / Met the flashing of the sea” (120). In *Battle-Pieces*, Melville imagined the soldiers of the Civil War no longer as antebellum confidence men but rather as an inscrutable force

of nature. Soldiers flood the landscape of “The Muster,” another poem: “The Abrahamic river— / Patriarch of floods, / Calls the roll of all his streams / And watery multitudes” (134); young men pool into a waterfall above a “Gorge so grim” in “A Canticle”: “Multitudinously thronging / The waters all converge” (128).⁸¹ *Battle-Pieces* conceives of human beings in combat as a fluid and undifferentiated mass. Like many of his contemporaries, Melville could not cognitively make sense of the unheralded volume of soldiers the Civil War had produced.

The War of 1812 mustered approximately 25,000 Americans into military service, and the Mexican-American War produced between 50,000 and 90,000 troops, though only about 40,000 were active at any one time. By the time the Civil War was over, a staggering 2.5 million Americans had exchanged blows.⁸² Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. realized while the Civil War was unfolding how the culture’s sensitivity to war was unlike any that had come before. “War is a very old story, but it is a new one to this generation of Americans,” he lamented. If Americans ever thought of war before 1861, they looked back to 1776.

As for the brush of 1812, ‘we did not think much about that’; and everybody knows that the Mexican business did not concern us much, except in its political relation....No! War is a new thing to all of us who are not in the last quarter of their century. We are learning many strange matters from our fresh experience. And besides, there are new conditions of existence which make war as it is with us very different from war as it has been.⁸³

Holmes described some of the “new conditions of existence” in an 1862 article in the *Atlantic Monthly* detailing his journey to the frontlines after hearing his son had been gravely wounded. Nearing the front line, Holmes comes upon a seemingly infinite “caravan of maimed pilgrims. The companionship of so many seemed to make a joint-stock of their suffering; it was next to impossible to individualize it, and so bring it home as one can do with a single broken limb or aching wound.”⁸⁴ Walt Whitman’s time amongst wounded soldiers in the hospitals of Washington corroborated Holmes’ account of the “impossible” task “to individualize” soldiers and their suffering. In “A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown” from *Drum-Taps* (1865), the sea of endless soldiers quickly overwhelms the wound-dresser speaker.

...I sweep my eyes o’er the scene, fain to absorb it all

Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in obscurity, some of
them dead;

Surgeons operating, attendant holding lights, the smell of ether, the odor
of blood;

The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms of soldiers—the yard outside
also fill’d;

Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers, some in the death-
spasm Sweating;⁸⁵

The dizzying crowds of the Civil War wounded likewise stunned Nathaniel Hawthorne, who for most of the war lived in New England far away from the sounds and smells of battle, but before his death in 1864 descended to the warzone for the first and final time. The travelogue of Hawthorne’s journey South, published in the April 1862 *Atlantic*

Monthly as “Chiefly About War Matters,” takes him by train near active sites of battle. In the descent, Hawthorne notices the increasing accumulation of convalescent soldiers outside his cabin window. They cluttered and impeded the roads outside Philadelphia. Between Baltimore and Washington, their numbers grew ever more concentrated. The fractured nation had unexpectedly become saturated with soldiers.

Even supposing the war should end to-morrow, and the army melt into the mass of the population within the year, what an incalculable preponderance will there be of military title and pretensions for at least half a century to come! Every country-neighborhood will have its general or two, its three or four colonels, half a dozen majors, and captains without end,—besides non-commissioned officers and privates, more than the recruiting offices ever know of,—all with their campaign-stories, which will become the staple of fireside-talk forevermore. Military merit, or rather, since that is not so readily estimated, military notoriety, will be the measure of all claims to civil distinction. One bullet-headed general will succeed another in the Presidential chair; and veterans will hold the offices at home and abroad, and sit in Congress and the state legislatures, and fill all the avenues of public life. And yet I do not speak of this deprecatingly, since, very likely, it may substitute something more real and genuine, instead of the many shams on which men have heretofore founded their claims to public regard; but it behooves civilians to consider their wretched prospects in the future, and assume the military button before it is too late.⁸⁶

Hawthorne is at once critical of “bullet-headed” soldiers at the same time that he is supportive of the “something more real and genuine” that authenticates their place within the “public regard.” He is suspicious of military “pretensions” yet prescient enough to realize that postwar American politics would be substantially affected by former soldiers.⁸⁷ Hawthorne suspected that martial experiences, that “military button” as he called it, would soon form the basis of the nation’s governance.

Not the Civil War but the memory of the Civil War ultimately would bring soldiers into the American consciousness. Independent of how the war would eventually turn out, soldiers—each “with their campaign-stories” to tell—would some day dominate the political machinery and indeed “all avenues of public life.” Hawthorne prophesized correctly. Reconstruction bore witness to substantial political tailwinds for Union officers, Ulysses S. Grant most notably. Yet during this same period when the reunified nation celebrated its Union military leaders in the immediate wake of the war, the unheralded magnitude of common soldiers and their individual experiences largely went overlooked. Decades after the fact, civilian artists such as Stephen Crane would begin to represent the Civil War as a soldier’s affair. World War I would produce Sigmund Freud’s traumatic theories of combat “shell-shock” that further advanced the prominence of the soldier’s experience in the literature and culture of the United States.⁸⁸ Unnoticed and obscured during this period of modernization was Melville and his generation’s sense of that anonymous sea of American soldiers, many of whom immediately following the end of the Civil War were writing despite the literate world’s neglect of their individual experiences.

¹ Epigraphs taken from Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (New York: Scribner, 1996) 102-03, Thomas De Quincey and David Masson, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. 4 (London: A.&C. Black, 1896) 154.

² Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* 217-21.

³ Paul Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 14-15, 24.

⁴ George B. Ballentine, *Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army* (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1853). For a bibliography of published diaries and memoirs of Mexican-American War veterans, see Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* 201-05. Foos' analysis and argument are a productive continuation of the claims from the previous chapter.

⁵ Barnum, *The Spy Unmasked; or, Memoirs of Enoch Crosby, Alias Harvey Birch, the Hero of Mr. Cooper's Tale of the Neutral Ground; Being an Authentic Account of the Secret Services Which He Rendered His Country During the Revolutionary War (Taken from His Own Lips, in Short-Hand) Comprising Many Interesting Facts and Anecdotes, Never before Published* 162.

⁶ Many editions of André's court case survive. Citations here are taken from John André, *Minutes of a Court Inquiry, Upon the Case of Major John André, with Accompanying Documents, Published in 1780 by Order of Congress. With an Additional Appendix Containing Copies of the Papers Found Upon Major André When Arrested, and Other Documents Relating to the Subject* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1865). Hereafter in my notes referred to as *Minutes*, this text was a private reprint not only of the court documents but also of contemporary reactions and correspondence, such as Alexander Hamilton's emotional letter to Henry Laurens (the only American ever held prisoner in the Tower of London). Hamilton suggests two time periods for the plot, one that begins in June 1780 (four months before André's death), and another that started as early as April 1779 (eighteen months prior). The conspiracy most likely first began in a letter between Arnold and Colonel Robinson, Clinton's subordinate, and then moved into a more open correspondence between Clinton and Arnold (48-49).

⁷ The jury was composed solely of generals, and several founding members of the Society of the Cincinnati, among them Major General Nathanael Greene (presiding), Major Generals Robert Howe, James Clinton, Henry Knox and Jediah Huntington. The official record of the trial consists almost entirely of epistolary testimony written both in accusation and defense of André (from both American and British generals).

⁸ See Robert A. Ferguson, *Reading the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 131-45. Ferguson argues that in the case of André, Washington's silence was necessary in order "to establish the separate high-mindedness of the American army" (137). Rather than recognize André directly, Washington instead denied André's requests for mercy via an exchange with his ranking counterpart in the British army, Henry Clinton. Clinton had during the trial personally requested leniency for André, yet Washington denied having any official power to grant clemency, claiming that though he was commander-in-chief of the American army, the matter was outside his jurisdiction (*Minutes* 20). André was therefore not entitled to the "summary proceedings" of a presiding General, and must be subject to an independent trial. Washington ended his letter by referring Clinton to the impartial findings of the Board of General Officers (Letter from Washington to Clinton, dated September 30, 1780, rpt. in *Minutes* 26). Benedict Arnold reinforced André's defense *in absentia* via letters sent from on-board the *Vulture*. André claimed he was merely deferring to the social chain of command in a letter dated September 26, 1780 from Arnold to Washington. "I commanded at the time at West Point, had an undoubted right to send my flag of truce

for Major André, who came to me under that protection” (*Minutes* 21). See also September 25, 1780 for another letter from Arnold testifying to the same effect, how it was that André had sailed under a flag of truce bestowed by Arnold to conduct business in New York (*Minutes* 19).

⁹ *Minutes* 55.

¹⁰ Hamilton’s sentiments are clear enough (*Minutes* 48, 53). See also Hannah Adams, *An Abridgment of the History of New England, for the Use of Young Persons* (Boston: Etheridge & Bliss, 1807). Quotation is taken from 168-69. Adams’ text originally was published in 1799, then edited as a school primer in 1801. Other historians at the time felt obliged to document their impressions of André, including the anguished James Thacher, *A Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War, from 1775 to 1783: Describing Interesting Events and Transactions of This Period; with Numerous Historical Facts and Anecdotes, from the Original Manuscript* (Boston: Cottons & Barnard, 1827) 219-25. For a useful summary of “André texts,” see Barnum, *The Spy Unmasked; or, Memoirs of Enoch Crosby, Alias Harvey Birch, the Hero of Mr. Cooper’s Tale of the Neutral Ground; Being an Authentic Account of the Secret Services Which He Rendered His Country During the Revolutionary War (Taken from His Own Lips, in Short-Hand) Comprising Many Interesting Facts and Anecdotes, Never before Published* 153-62.

¹¹ Tallmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, Prepared by Himself, at the Request of His Children* 38-39.

¹² Reprinted in William Coyle and Harvey G. Damaser, *Six Early American Plays, 1798-1890* (Columbus: C. E. Merrill Pub. Co., 1968) 20.

¹³ Anna Seward, *Monody on Major Andre* (Boston: Printed for and sold by W. Spotswood, and C.P. Wayne, 1798). Seward championed André as an instantiation of a Greek heroic, “Less cruel far than thou, on Illion’s plain / Achilles, raging for Patroclus slain!” (21). “Thy sacred Corse” (21) of the poem removes any question of his criminal liability. John Renfro Davis’ 1822 *The Ballad of John André* was similarly sympathetic. Some military historians also took sympathy on André. Henry Lee in *Observations on Jefferson’s Writings* (1832) reminisced about the American commanders’ lack of “compassion for the impending fate of Major André.” Rpt. in the introduction by Robert E. Lee in Henry Lee and Robert E. Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (New York: University Publishing Company, 1870) 22.

¹⁴ William Johnson and Nathanael Greene, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene: Major General of the Armies of the United States, in the War of the Revolution; Compiled Chiefly from Original Materials*, vol. 1 (Charleston: Printed for the Author, A.E. Miller, 1822) 205. Greene’s reaction was to André’s “slandering” of George Washington. In a letter to Washington, André had referenced a gang of American soldiers being held at Charleston, “who, being either on parole or under protection, were engaged in a conspiracy against us [the British]: though their situation is not similar, they are objects who may be sent in exchange for me, or persons whom the treatment I receive might affect” (207). Greene was astonished by the terms of André’s character assassination. “It is truly astonishing, that the ungenerous character of this paragraph has never been properly animadverted upon” (207). Greene somewhat anticipates my remarks when he differentiates between the actions of a soldier and the actions of a spy. “Let political expediency disguise it as it may, still the character of a soldier cannot be blended with that of a spy, without soiling the pure ermine of the former” (209). Notice as well the irony in John André, *Cow-Chace, in Three Cantos, Published on Occasion of the Rebel General Wayne’s Attack of the Refugees Block-House on Hudson’s River, on Friday the 21st of July, 1780*, eds. George d’ Cockings, Jonathan Odell, Daniel Batwell, Jonathan Boucher and Myles Cooper (New-York: Printed by James Rivington, 1780). Only months before his capture and execution, André portrayed in verse the Rebel troops he encountered as quite devoid of any loyalty: “Cry, SOLDIERS CHARGE! They hear, they stand, / They turn and run away” (11).

¹⁵ “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” originally appeared in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819). Citations are from Nina Baym, ed., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 5th ed., vol. 1 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998) 949.

¹⁶ See Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 1-10.

¹⁷ Joseph J. Letter, "Past Presentisms: Suffering Soldiers, Benjaminian Ruins, and the Discursive Foundations of Early U.S. Historical Novels," *American Literature* 82.1 (March 2010): 31.

¹⁸ Rpt. in James Fenimore Cooper, *The Traveling Bachelor; or, Notions of the Americans*, vol. 1 (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1852) 219.

¹⁹ Regarding Cooper’s knowledge of war, see the introduction to James Fenimore Cooper and Wayne Franklin, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (New York: Penguin, 1997). André appears in the novel by name no less than five times: 38, 48, 74, 88, 104, and passim.

²⁰ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Huntington associates the rise of Jacksonian populism with the public’s misgivings about soldiers and the military. “Prior to 1821 the Army, like the Navy, had no single professional head” (208). The resulting “lack of professional standards of judgment invited the use of popular standards...the intrusion of popular politics into the corps created a broad connection with the mainstream of American life. This connection reflected what was popular, amateur, democratic, and idealistic in American culture. It was primarily the product of Jacksonian Democracy” (203). Furthermore, “The disappearance of foreign dangers, plus the emerging imperatives of military professionalism, caused a shift from a positive emphasis upon the citizen militia and technical expertise to negative opposition to all military institutions” (203).

²¹ My claim regarding visibility complicates Bruce A. Rosenberg, "Cooper's *The Spy* and the Popular Spy Novel," *ATQ* 7.2 (June 1993). Rosenberg provides an otherwise cogent analysis of Cooper’s pioneering place in the tradition of the spy story, asserting that the spy anticipates the frontier in Cooper’s Leatherstocking tales insofar as Harvey Birch is marked by isolation and invisibility. “I am alone in the world” (402), Birch laments near the end. I take Rosenberg’s point, yet it is difficult to accept his one example as the rule, especially since, as Rosenberg himself noted, spies such as Birch should be the anti-hero *sine qua non*, yet this is a novel full of hero spies mostly out in the open.

²² Wayne Fields, *James Fenimore Cooper: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979) 9. Interestingly, Fields omits any essay on *The Spy*: “Missing...is any study of *The Spy*, the novel that first gained an audience for Cooper” (11).

²³ Letter argues that “in *The Spy* Cooper represents the suffering soldier as an unrecognized obverse to Washington and places a fragmented foundation beneath the edifice of a transcendent national mythology” (35). The basis of his argument is correct—“common Revolutionary veterans...had been generally ignored in official historical representations of the war” (33)—yet the spies in Cooper’s novels are not suffering, are not “common” in the same manner as Joseph Plumb Martin or Ebenezer Fletcher; they are not denied pensions or sustenance. The spy’s murky morality is Cooper’s fictionalization of what military suffering must be.

²⁴ Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” 962.

²⁵ For more on Cooper’s tendency toward paranoia and distrust of secret societies, see Robert S. Levine, *Conspiracy and Romance: Studies in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 58-103.

²⁶ W.H. Gardiner, "The Spy," *The North American Review* 15.36 (1822): 259. Master spy Benjamin Tallmadge corroborates the claim, writing that Washington gave him "charge of a particular part of his private correspondence" to take back and forth between Arnold (68).

²⁷ Unlike André, George Washington *qua* Harper sympathizes with Captain Wharton's situation and wants to help him. Only he and the audience are privy to the mitigating factors of Wharton's homecoming, and before he leaves the Locusts, Washington obliquely promises to protect Wharton should he be discovered behind enemy lines and out of uniform (*The Spy* 43-54). Washington knows that Captain Wharton is not guilty of treachery and is not properly speaking a spy. Nor is he a soldier. He does not fight and certainly does not kill. Neither does he plot, cheat, or engage the enemy. After a military tribunal decides later in the novel that Wharton must hang, Washington has the opportunity to make good on his promise and commute Wharton's sentence *in absentia*. Instead, Washington sends to the court a piece of paper by courier, on which "was written these simple words—'Approved—GEO. WASHINGTON'" (315). Cooper does not have Wharton die on the military scaffold as we expect he will. With the help of Harvey Birch (it is suggested as well that Washington is pulling some strings in the shadows), Wharton escapes once and for all, only to then be captured by a band of lawless Cow-Boys who kill him over a stolen horse (383). The irony here is intended to unsettle our assumptions about the arbitrariness and futility of military justice, of getting free only to lose everything in the end. See also the endings to Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*; and Tim O'Brien, *Going After Cacciato*.

²⁸ Several critics, Mark Twain most notably in "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" (1895), have criticized Cooper's tendency to exaggerate the human parameters of his characters. The spy is no different. Birch is often described in supernatural terms, as one who "glided among [soldiers on the line] unnoticed and uninjured... Many a sentinel, placed in the gorges of the mountains, spoke of a strange figure that had been seen gliding by them in the mists of the evening" (124). See also 297, as well as the following fantastic passage: "He wound among the hills and vales, now keeping the highways and now avoiding them, with a precision that seemed instinctive. There was nothing elastic in his tread, but he glided over the ground with enormous strides, and a body bent forward, without appearing to use exertion, or know weariness" (374).

²⁹ The names alone of Revolutionary spies (on both sides) often were sufficient to evoke their story: Benedict Arnold, John André, Nathan Hale, Ann Bates, Benjamin Tallmadge and the Culper Spy Ring, Robert Townsend and the Setauket Spy Ring. Commentators of the last century have often focused on the element of the clandestine, for instance John Edwin Bakeless, *Turncoats, Traitors, and Heroes* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960), Morton Pennypacker, *The Two Spies, Nathan Hale and Robert Townsend* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930). So have more recent scholars, for example Alexander Rose, *Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006).

³⁰ See Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *The Linwoods; or, 'Sixty Years since' in America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835). Similar to Cooper, Sedgwick exhumes Revolutionary heroes including George Washington so that she may fictionalize them. Sedgwick cannot distinguish between the two sides of the "patriot-soldier" (33), nor the complex admixture that creates in Washington "a gentleman and a soldier" (94).

³¹ Letter to Rufus Wilmot Griswold dated January 1843, in James Fenimore Cooper and James Franklin Beard, *Letters and Journals* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960) Vol IV, 341.

³² Interestingly in July 1820 (well over a year before *The Spy* would be published) Cooper wrote to his editor how what he was working on was not a "moral Book" at all. Cooper and Beard, *Letters and Journals* Vol I, 48.

³³ Actual spies were often reluctant to commit violence. See Tallmadge's description of his first "awful scene of a battle... I well remember my sensations on the occasion, for they were solemn beyond

description, and very hardly could I bring my mind to be willing to attempt the life of a fellow-creature” (10-11). Later while working as a spy to obtain the blueprints for Fort St. George, a battle erupted between a group of prisoners. Tallmadge “ordered the slaughter to cease” (41) because he could not stand the violence.

³⁴ This regret over having to kill is a constant topic of conversation for Sitgreaves and Cooper. See *The Spy* 102, 167, and *passim*.

³⁵ See J. Gerald Kennedy, "Anti-Intellectualism: The Comic Man of Learning," *Studies in American Humor* 3.2 (1976): 69-75.

³⁶ One is reminded of the hospital scenes from Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner, 2003). After Frederic Henry gets reconstructive knee surgery, he thinks how “It was [the surgeon’s] knee all right. The other knee was mine. Doctors did things to you and then it was not your body any more. The head was mine, and the inside of the belly....The head was mine, but not to use, not to think with, only to remember and not too much remember” (231). See also Count Greffi, who confides to Henry, ““It is the body that is old. Sometimes I am afraid I will break off a finger as one breaks a stick of chalk.”” (261).

³⁷ Compare this scene in Cooper with the scene of Snowden dying in Heller, *Catch-22*. As Yossarian works on him, Snowden lies in the back of the plane mostly silent. Yossarian can feel “Snowden’s lackluster gaze resting upon him....Snowden watched him steadily, saying nothing” (447). The two men do not speak, perhaps cannot speak, anything other than the same words and phrases over and over again. “I’m cold,” Snowden said again in a frail, childlike voice. “I’m cold.” “There, There,” Yossarian said, because he did not know what else to say. “There, there.” “I’m cold,” Snowden whimpered. “I’m cold.” “There, there. There, there” (447). And so on. It is quite difficult to tell in the end what these words are meant to accomplish—are they reassurances, or are they warnings? Yossarian cannot understand what Snowden is driving at. He notes to himself that it’s rather warm in the plane, in fact. But then Snowden pointed at last, with just the barest movement of his chin, down toward his armpit. Yossarian bent forward to peer and saw a strangely colored stain seeping through the coveralls just above the armpit of Snowden’s flak suit. Yossarian felt his heart stop, then pound so violently he found it difficult to breathe. Snowden was wounded inside his flak suit. Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden’s flak suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden’s insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out. A chunk of flak more than three inches big had shot through his other side just underneath the arm and blasted all the way through, drawing whole mottled quarts of Snowden along with it through the gigantic hole in his ribs it made as it blasted out. Yossarian screamed a second time and squeezed both hands over his eyes. (449)

The second wound discovered, Snowden dies in a matter of paragraphs. Both Yossarian and Sitgreaves demonstrate the persistence of civilian blindness when it comes to treating soldiers’ wounds. More often than not, they treat the wrong one.

³⁸ John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Spy Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 34-54.

³⁹ See in particular Dave McTiernan, "The Novel As "Neutral Ground": Genre and Ideology in Cooper's *The Spy*," *Studies in American Fiction* 25.1 (Spring 1997): 1-20.

⁴⁰ Letter to André Thompson Goodrich dated June 28, 1820, in Cooper and Beard, *Letters and Journals* Vol I, 44. Subsequent letter to Goodrich dated July 12, 1820, in Cooper and Beard, *Letters and Journals* Vol I, 49.

⁴¹ The criticism on Cooper's contribution to the west and the frontier is voluminous, but it was first begun by Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) 59-70.

⁴² Maria Edgeworth, quoted in McTiernan, "The Novel As "Neutral Ground": Genre and Ideology in Cooper's *The Spy*," 8.

⁴³ James Fenimore Cooper, *The History of the Navy of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1839). Cooper detailed the "distinguished" lives of William Bainbridge, Richard Somers, John Shaw, John Templer Shubrick, and Edward Preble in volume 1; John Paul Jones, Melancton Taylor Woolsey, Oliver Hazard Perry, and Richard Dale in volume 2. Perry was Elliott's commander, and Cooper's preference for Perry throughout his writing was a contributing factor to the earlier libel suit provoked by his *History*. For a useful summary of the case and its arguments, see Robert D. Madison, "Cooper's Place in American Naval Writing," in George A. Test, ed., *James Fenimore Cooper: His Country and His Art*, Papers from the 1982 Conference at State University College of New York, Oneonta and Cooperstown, 17-32, available on-line at the James Fenimore Cooper Society website, <http://www.oneonta.edu/external/cooper/articles/suny/1982suny-madison1.html>. As an interesting point of comparison, Washington Irving wrote biographies of naval commanders during the War of 1812, and late in his career, he would write the five volume *Life of George Washington* (1856-89).

⁴⁴ James Fenimore Cooper and Ned Myers, *Ned Myers; or, a Life before the Mast* (London: Lea and Blanchard, 1843). Cooper's tone is oftentimes more demeaning than one would expect. "Should he not be mistaken on some points, he is an exception to the great rule which governs the opinions and recollections of the rest of the human family. Still, nothing is related that the writer has any reasons for distrusting. In a few instances he has interposed his own greater knowledge of the world, between Ned's more limited experience and the narrative; but, this has been done cautiously, and only in case in which there can be little doubt that the narrator has been deceived by appearances, or misled by ignorance" (ix).

⁴⁵ Writing from Paris to his British publisher Henry Colburn in 1831, Cooper complained, "There is an impudent rogue in America, who pretends to be the original of *The Spy*, and who has even written a book to prove his claim." Cooper was cagey about his denials, however, realizing that the controversy was good for sales. "I never heard of him, until I saw his book advertised, and I should not dislike an opportunity of stating what gave rise of the character—Do the public care enough about these things? How much will you give a volume, or rather a book, for new prefaces, notes and hints explanatory" (Cooper and Beard, *Letters and Journals* Vol II, 60-61). In his introduction to the 1849 edition of *The Spy*, Cooper talks about how he only wrote the novel after a conversation with "an illustrious participant" of the war, although such a vague reference could be to anyone, not necessarily Crosby or Barnum. When a reader in 1850 asked Cooper whether any of the controversy was true, his response was similarly self-interested. "Never having seen the publication of Mr. Barnum, to which you allude, I can give no opinion of its accuracy. I know nothing of such a man as Enoch Crosby, never having heard his name, until I saw it coupled with the character of *The Spy*, after my return from Europe. The history of the book is given in the preface of Putnam's edition, where you will probably find all you desire to know" (Cooper and Beard, *Letters and Journals* Vol VI, 212).

⁴⁶ Cooper insinuated that the idea for Harvey Birch came from a casual conversation with John Jay years before. During the war Jay was the head of the New York Committee of Safety (the informal agency responsible for espionage). In 1930, Tremaine McDowell tried to account for the "century of speculation" which Harvey Birch had inspired. Noting that contemporary reviewers believed Birch was "not wholly without historical foundation," McDowell concluded that "Cooper's Harvey Birch...is not to be identified with the Enoch Crosby of history" (120). The evidence for his conclusion was reached mostly through historical analysis, during which he discovers there were no less than ten spies operating out of Westchester at the time and any one of Jay could have been referring to. For a full account of the evidence, see Tremaine McDowell, "The Identity of Harvey Birch," *American Literature* 2.2 (May 1930): 111-20.

⁴⁷ Crosby certainly enjoyed his brief celebrity. He was in the audience opening night for Charles P. Cinch's theatrical adaptation of *The Spy* at the Lafayette Theatre in New York in 1827. The dramatist William Dunlap of *André* fame produced a painting for the event. It was at this production that Barnum first "discovered" Crosby. The enthusiastic reception of *The Spy Unmasked* extended Crosby's public exposure. A second edition came out in 1831. Following the Pension Act of 1832, Crosby would cite *The Spy Unmasked* in his application for a federal pension as evidence of his hardship. The government certainly believed his story. His pension was awarded, though he only enjoyed it for a short duration. Crosby died in 1835.

⁴⁸ Originally published as Israel Potter, *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter, (a Native of Cranston, Rhode-Island) Who Was a Soldier in the American Revolution* (Providence: Henry Trumbull, 1824). Textual citations are taken from Israel Potter, *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter*, ed. Leonard Krieger (New York: Corinth Books, 1962).

⁴⁹ See also David Chacko and Alexander Kulcsa, "Israel Potter: Genesis of a Legend," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 41.3 (July 1984): 365-80.

⁵⁰ Chacko and Kulcsa, "Israel Potter: Genesis of a Legend," 367.

⁵¹ See Henry Trumbull, *History of the Indian Wars, to Which Is Prefixed a Short Account of the Discovery of America by Columbus, and of the Landing of Our Forefathers at Plymouth, with Their Most Remarkable Engagements with the Indians in New England...* (Boston: G. Clark, 1841), John Filson, *Life and Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone* (Providence: Henry Trumbull, 1824), Daniel Boone, *The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone, One of the First Settlers at Kentucke: Containing the Wars with the Indians on the Ohio, from 1769 to 1783, and the First Establishment and Progress of the Settlement on That River*, eds. Humphrey Marshall and John Filson (Norwich: Printed by John Trumbull, 1786).

⁵² David S. Reynolds provides a useful context in which to read Potter that situates his "sensational" text alongside other popular crime and penny press pamphlets. Turnbull's *Potter* "was a significant transitional work between the typically preachy early pamphlets and the more bleak, gory later ones." David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988) 176.

⁵³ Herman Melville, Howard C. Horsford and Lynn Horth, *Journals* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989) 43.

⁵⁴ Melville, Horsford and Horth, *Journals* 169.

⁵⁵ Joyce Adler, *War in Melville's Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 1981) 79.

⁵⁶ Herman Melville, Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, G. Thomas Tanselle and Walter E. Bezanson, *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997) v.

⁵⁷ See Bezanson's historical note in Melville, Hayford, Parker, Tanselle and Bezanson, *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile* 187.

⁵⁸ Adler, *War in Melville's Imagination* 81-86.

⁵⁹ Peter J. Bellis, "Israel Potter: Autobiography as History as Fiction," *American Literary History* 2.4 (Winter 1990): 614.

⁶⁰ Bellis, "Israel Potter: Autobiography as History as Fiction," 613.

⁶¹ Potter, *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* 16.

⁶² Potter, *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* 61-101.

⁶³ Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, ed. Horace Elisha Scudder (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923) 4-5.

⁶⁴ Herman Melville, Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, G. Thomas Tanselle and Walter E. Bezanson, *Pierre, or the Ambiguities* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999) 29-30.

⁶⁵ See Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* 300-08. The soldier's story is analogous in Melville's career to the tall tale of Caspar Hauser, who, in the words of H. Bruce Franklin, was "a mysterious founding who turned up in Nuremberg in 1828 with a letter giving his birth date as 1812. He said that he had been confined in a dark room all his life. His origin and the philosophical implications of his knowledge or lack of it became matters of great international interest." Franklin's words, as well as Hauser's reference in the novel's text, are found in Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*, ed. H. Bruce Franklin (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2006) 10. Hauser represented a story so outrageous and questionable that few believed him. See subsequent references to Hauser in Herman Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Stories* (New York: Penguin, 1986) 302, Melville, Hayford, Parker, Tanselle and Bezanson, *Pierre, or the Ambiguities* 259.

⁶⁶ Melville, *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade* 13-14.

⁶⁷ Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* 298-301.

⁶⁸ Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 39.

⁶⁹ Robert Walter Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 175-203.

⁷⁰ Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* 11.

⁷¹ Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* 25.

⁷² Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* 21, 4. See also footnote 4. For a discussion of Manifest Destiny as a contest of competing masculinities, see Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁷³ Herman Melville and Lynn Horth, *Correspondence* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993) 40-41.

⁷⁴ Herman Melville, "Authentic Anecdotes of Old Zach," *Yankee Doodle* 1847: 172 and passim, 52, 229.

⁷⁵ Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Soundings from the Atlantic* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864) 5.

⁷⁶ Herman Melville, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, ed. Hennig Cohen (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1963) 13.

⁷⁷ Stanton Garner, *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), chapter 9. Cohen argues more strongly than Garner that Melville relied heavily on the *Rebellion Record* when he "reconstructed" the war in verse, but Garner defends Melville's imagination: "He used the *Record* as a convenient source of information to jog his memory, to supply dates and detail, to avoid errors of fact,

and to impose order on an imagination bloated with impressions, but he was the creator of the poems he wrote” (390).

⁷⁸ Garner, *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* 388, 33. For more on the fraught reconciliatory strategies of *Battle-Pieces*, see Robert Milder, *Exiled Royalties: Melville and the Life We Imagine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 168-91. Melville dates composition to the fall of Richmond in his prefatory note, Melville, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* 33.

⁷⁹ Melville, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* 58.

⁸⁰ “In the Prison Pen” is the closest example of a single soldier given the rhetorical floor. In keeping with the rest of the poems, however, the prisoner is rendered in third-person, a “Listless he” trapped in verse (112).

⁸¹ For a contextualized discussion of Melville’s flood imagery, see Garner, *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* 392-93.

⁸² For Mexican-American War figures, see Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* 17. Other counts are derived from Dawes, *The Language of War: Literature and Culture in the U.S. From the Civil War through World War II* 29-68.

⁸³ Holmes, *Soundings from the Atlantic* 10.

⁸⁴ “My Hunt After the Captain” first appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1862). Reprinted in Holmes, *Soundings from the Atlantic* 46.

⁸⁵ Walt Whitman and Frederick DeWolfe Miller, *Drum-Taps (1865) and Sequel to Drum-Taps (1865-6): A Facsimile Reproduction* (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1959) 44-45.

⁸⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne and George Parsons Lathrop, *Tales, Sketches, and Other Papers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883) 303-04. Originally published *Atlantic Monthly* July 1862: 43-62.

⁸⁷ For an analysis of Hawthorne’s satirical persona in “Chiefly About War Matters,” see Randall Fuller, “Hawthorne and War,” *The New England Quarterly* 80.4 (December 2007): 655-86.

⁸⁸ Freud’s theories of combat or “traumatic” neuroses were first elaborated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). See in particular Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990) 10-17. For a discussion of the role of shell-shock and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in establishing Freud’s reputation in America, see Nathan G. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

**“PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF ONE’S SUBJECT”: FRANKLIN H. DURRAH, JOHN
WILLIAM DE FOREST, AND THE VARIETIES OF MILITARY EXPERIENCE**

The actual soldier of 1862-65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.

Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days in America* (1882)

Try our best, we never shall realize completely that the dead are dead, or that the living are to die.

Union Captain John William De Forest, in a letter to his brother
(August 17, 1863)¹

I.

In late July 1865, *Harper’s Weekly* announced an open call for essay submissions from veterans of the recent war. The soldiers’ first-hand accounts of wartime experience were to be the materials for “Left-Handed Penmanship,” a writing competition thought up by William Oland Bourne. Himself a New Yorker of moderate literary note, Bourne began publishing a short monthly newspaper in the last years of the war while serving as chaplain of Central Park Hospital.² “Left-Handed Penmanship” was advertised in that paper, *The Soldier’s Friend*, as well as in *Harper’s*, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, and several regional newspapers in the Northeast and Midwest.³ And though he was himself no soldier, Bourne was “always devising some fresh pleasure or benefit for the soldiers,” and sought to award five hundred dollars to “the best four specimens of penmanship by ‘left-armed soldiers of the Union’.” The phrasing was vague and crude,

but then so was the condition of the audience *Harper's* was seeking—those walking wounded who had lost their right hand to combat and were now forced to write with their left.

Any man who has lost his right arm in the service may compete. He may write an original or selected article upon a patriotic theme, and he must write not less than two nor more than seven pages upon fine letter paper of ordinary size, leaving an inch margin at the sides, top and bottom of the paper. The writer must also give his name in full; his regiment, company, and rank; the list of battles in which he was engaged; the place where he lost his arm, and his post-office address.⁴

Little more than three months after Appomattox and the end of the war, “Left-Handed Penmanship” was one of the first public spaces that made literate and gave validation to the stories Civil War soldiers had to tell. Not just soldiers, but specifically mutilated soldiers, were directed to apply. While this restriction might in part stem from a morbid and kitschy curiosity about amputees and how they functioned with their disabilities, it seems more likely that for Bourne, *Harper's*, and the general passers-by on the street, the visible effects of war demanded some form of immediate public expression.⁵ Indeed the ubiquity of soldiers was unlike anything the nation had seen before.⁶ Their presence was the real and undeniable reminder of how human experience was in fact irreversible—that men are born with two arms, and that some thing, some event, had happened during the war that took away those arms forever. Absent limbs were unsettling not merely because they deformed bodies, but also because there was an experiential finality inherent in their loss with which the culture was uncomfortable.⁷ Arms, legs, and lives could never be

replaced, and yet Americans at the war's end were not entirely willing to concede the fact. "Left-Handed Penmanship" can be seen as symptomatic of a larger cultural tendency immediately following the war that symbolically wanted to undo the trauma of the conflict through a mnemonic sleight-of-hand. If the almost infinitely various experiences of individual soldiers could be quickly condensed and normalized into the collective memory of an uninjured nationalism—if a right arm actually *could* be replaced by a left arm as the contest suggested—then it was the larger, healthier narrative of marching forward together that mattered, not the acutely personal and painful circumstances of the individual's past. As had been true in the Revolutionary and Mexican-American Wars, the emotional property of the individual soldier was taken from him and made anonymous and interchangeable. This was a transaction oftentimes willingly made since Bourne's contest provided much-needed hope for both the soldier-contestants and their civilian readers that nothing had in fact changed.

Initially, Bourne was skeptical if any soldiers would even bother to reply. He was soon overwhelmed by the response. Eventually, "there were some two hundred and seventy manuscripts collected from nearly every State in the Union."⁸ Submissions kept coming in over an entire year even after the contest was over, and public updates were made in *Harper's* every three months. Announcements in *The Soldier's Friend* were almost monthly. By November of 1865, Bourne had read the first round of nearly illegible entries and pronounced them "back-handed," and yet he was nonetheless encouraged by the effort. "It is really astonishing," he notes, "how rapidly a man may learn to write admirably with his left hand."⁹ The soldier's process of learning how to express himself again was as difficult as it was relentless. "The loss of two arms, indeed,

did not daunt one competitor, who sent a specimen of writing with the mouth, which was remarkable and honorably mentioned.”¹⁰ The contest ended on April 7, 1866 with an elaborate description of the awards ceremony held at the *Harper's* offices in New York.¹¹ The panel of judges included then-Governor of New York Reuben Fenton, President of the Sanitary Commission Henry Bellows, William Cullen Bryant, and Theodore Roosevelt, among others.¹² Ulysses S. Grant and the head of the Freedmen's Bureau, General Oliver O. Howard, himself an amputee from the war, were in the crowd. Standing in stark relief to the litany of distinguished public figures was the unknown name of the winning soldier.

The first prize of the first class was awarded to FRANKLIN H. DURRAH, private in the Thirty-first Pennsylvania Infantry. There were twenty-eight prizes altogether, and we wish we had room for the names of the recipients, who were from every part of the country, from Maine to Dacotah.¹³

These personal impressions represented, as Bourne suggested, the diverse wartime experiences of hundreds of soldiers from multiple regions all across the Union, and yet their full significance within the literary history of Civil War narrative will remain forever obscure and incomplete. It is worthwhile to ask why, after having gone to the trouble of a year-long competition, both *Harper's* and *The Soldier's Friend* thought it unnecessary in the end to publish any of the soldiers' stories.¹⁴ When the contest was first announced, the intention was clearly the opposite. “If enough specimens are forwarded they will be exhibited, and the proceeds, if sufficient, will be devoted to the publication of a memorial volume containing the essays, with a list of contributors; and a

copy will be sent to each contributor.”¹⁵ What happened in the first year after the war that caused these stories to be suppressed? These missing “brief sketch[es]” of “personal experience” strike a modern audience as peculiar, and yet their absence makes sense within the larger context of the literate Union republic’s almost unanimous and immediate suppression of soldierly personality following the war.¹⁶ Language, flair and style—those very things that distinguish us as humans—were editorially overlooked by a traumatized literary impulse eager to avoid the faces of the men who fought. The last word Bourne gives on the contest was that he had selected from the bunch a “representative left-handed soldier,” who would stand in for a public tour culminating at the “exhibition at the Great Fair in Paris.”¹⁷ That anonymous soldier’s voice, like those of the others in the competition, was never heard from publicly again.¹⁸

Modern historians such as David Blight have argued that the decades following the Civil War were characterized by a national “politics of forgetting” wherein the collective sympathy of the North for the South created a laxity in Reconstruction oversight that allowed for the establishment of Jim Crow laws and rampant lynchings, among other sociopolitical ills. Eight years before, Nina Silber in *The Romance of Reunion* (1993) paved the way for Blight’s argument when she suggested that the nation’s guilt made it quick to forgive, forget, and by consequence authorize the social errors we were soon to make by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Seemingly all commentators on Civil War memory operate under the assumption that the war was like a break in an important national bone, and that the fracture was never set quite right. Looking back on the war on its hundredth anniversary, Robert Penn Warren wrote in *The Legacy of the Civil War* (1961) that the Northerner had over the years healed himself

improperly along the lines of a self-proclaimed “Treasury of Virtue,” wherein he gave himself a free pass on all sins past and present since he had freed the slaves and saved the Union.²⁰ The Southerner had done no better in setting his cast. He settled for what Warren termed the “Great Alibi,” wherein the South displaced responsibility for its own arrested social and economic development onto Northern indifference to the Lost Cause (54-58). Neither memory of the nation struck Warren as particularly accurate, and yet he understood why both had persevered.

The Great Alibi and the Treasury of Virtue both serve deep needs of poor human nature; and if, without historical realism and self-criticism, we look back on the War, we are merely compounding the old inherited delusions which our weakness craves. We fear, in other words, to lose the comforting automatism of the Great Alibi or the Treasury of Virtue, for if we lose them we may, at last, find ourselves nakedly alone with the problems of our time and with ourselves. (76)

This final chapter wants to take seriously the perennial problem across American time of “the old inherited delusions” which by and large have constituted our collective memory of the Civil War in 1865, 1961, and into the contemporary moment. The conversations we have about Civil War memory and the urge to forget (or at least to remember selectively) largely fail to notice how memory has laid, like Bourne at the war’s end, its “comforting automatism” over the diverse written experiences of soldiers. Since there is no war without first the actual fighting, and no subsequent memory of war without first the actual experience of that fight, the personal knowledge of war, which the long tradition of nineteenth-century soldier writing argues can only be located in the men who

served, arguably is the neglected starting point for the meaning we apply to the Civil War.

Put another way, I am making a necessary critical distinction between memory and experience that looks back to the Revolutionary War as well as looks forward to memory studies of the twentieth century. To paraphrase the work of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, as soon as collective memory situates the sites of a national trauma, the clarity and significance of those sites quickly becomes unclear. Time unfolds and meaning is revised. Kirk Savage was concerned in part with this ameliorative process in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, wherein he suggested Civil War battlefields and public memorials became distorted and heroic *lieux de memoire* in the twentieth century.²¹ To cite but one example from Chapter Two, the memory of the Revolutionary War prison-ship *Jersey* fell in and out of favor throughout the nineteenth century according to nationalistic needs. Given the widespread critical consensus that nations conciliate and gloss pain and suffering over time, what remains largely undetected in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (and even in the late nineteenth century when the Civil War was much closer to the lives of Americans), is not the grand and ossified memories of nineteenth-century war which we have long suspected, but the individualized voices of veterans at war's end.

The 1880s and 1890s witnessed what David Blight termed a “burgeoning reminiscence industry” brought on by Union veterans who were publishing their personal tales in magazines such as *The Century* at a surprising rate.²² How should we consider these Reconstruction soldier autobiographies, among which must be included the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant (1885) and William Tecumseh Sherman (1875)? Like

Joseph Plumb Martin's and Thomas Dring's delayed memoirs, such writings undoubtedly have their own significance within the brotherhood of aging veterans and American life writing, and yet this outpouring some ten, twenty years after the fact is absolutely not the same type of document as the immediate impressions transcribed by Franklin H. Durrah and the 270 others directly following the end of the war. In a similar vein, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) by Stephen Crane, who was not even born until after the Civil War, lacks the *bona fides* of a novel written by someone contemporaneous with the events. Walt Whitman was already making this same distinction of retroactive recovery when he famously wrote in *Specimen Days* (1882) that "the real war will never get into the books. In the mushy influence of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten."²³ Whitman's comments make clear that though there was a distinct incubation period, it did not take long for public and private memory to start petrifying into the ideologies that Blight, Silber, Savage, and Warren among many others have described.

Experience, on the other hand, is the closest word we have to describe the absence of memory—experience is that immediate and authentic sense of the war Joseph Plumb Martin claimed to have written in 1830 and Whitman wished for in 1885 but suspected had already missed its chance. These categories are not meant to be fixed or permanent, but within the context of nineteenth-century war, official memory is more an historical debate meant to persuade us as to the collective mood and lessons of the era, whereas individual experience, specifically here the experience of the soldier, remains an understudied literary and representational problem. Unlike during the Revolutionary and Mexican-American Wars, soldiers in the Civil War were no longer an invisible

population. Commentators such as Bourne were sympathetic and interested in what soldiers had to say, but this development made civilians wrestle with questions that soldiers had been asking themselves since the Revolutionary War. Where does the soldier's story begin? Where does it end? How are soldier narratives different from civilian accounts of war (narratives that we know are always subject to suggestion and revision)? How, finally, are we to make sense now out of the mid-nineteenth century silencing of the veteran given the multiplicity of soldier voices Bourne's contest indicates existed right after the fighting stopped? One of the lasting cultural gains from the Civil War was the rise of soldier-authors who, despite difficulties in forging their stories and finding audiences, expanded on the precedent of veteran political protest to consider further the aesthetic forms of their military experience. Bourne in part recognized this shift when he solicited his nameless soldiers to tell their stories, not their historical or political commentaries. And while those solicited military accounts were once again forever withheld from contemporary audiences, one prominent and visible soldier narrative was not.

John William De Forest, who was a captain in the 12th Connecticut Regimental Volunteers and a veteran of the Louisiana campaign that withstood sieges on Port Hudson and Georgia Landing, began writing while still in the war what would become *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*. The novel was published by *Harper's* in serial installments in 1867. Unlike Bourne's contest, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* was a commercial failure. The public did not respond to it at all, which in retrospect is quite surprising given that De Forest had at his editor's insistence reluctantly ratcheted up the novel's sentimental plot in order to attract the dominant market-share of

female readers. *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* even had the critical endorsement of both William Dean Howells and Henry James. The easy explanation for the novel's disappointing reception would be to say, like many twentieth-century critics have said, that the novel simply isn't any good. Even De Forest's perennial champion Howells would later remark that women readers were turned off by his misogynistic and unflattering portrayals of female characters.²⁴ Admittedly, neither his characters nor his melodramas seem entirely well-executed, and yet for all his heavy-handed and swollen prose, De Forest's infrequent descriptions of battle stood out at the time as nothing less than revolutionary for Howells; they were for Henry James, Stephen Crane, and other writers of his generation a significant signpost of realist technique.

II.

Recent criticism of *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* can be delineated into two camps. There are those who want to imagine its domestic storyline as a metaphor of familial and national rejuvenation, and those who want to imagine its realism as a metaphor for the objective reality of the war—the “war as it actually was” to borrow De Forest's own words from his 1879 *Atlantic Monthly* article, “Our Military Past and Future.”²⁵ Wade Newhouse has argued that the novel “turns the epistemology of war into a domestic commodity” of middle-class renewal, and that within the bloody exchange of battle for peace, “individuality becomes an illusion, surrendered to an imaginary political collective in the service of postwar American nationalism.”²⁶ Following Whitman, Michael Schaefer has aligned the combat and triage scenes in the novel with what Stephen Crane

called “the real thing” of war, made more transparent for the reader by De Forest’s journalistic sense of obligation to the “real thing” of his lived wartime experience.²⁷ All these approaches have overstated the psychological function of metaphor and nationalism within De Forest’s understanding of soldiers. Rather than making individuality an illusion, or war an objective thing, *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion* suggests individuality (in the subjective sense, that war and nation existed within and for each individual, not the other way around) to be the only representational voice available for the Civil War soldier. Nineteenth-century war had always been a personal matter for veterans, but whereas Revolutionary soldiers and prisoners-of-war had often fantasized that their suffering constituted an alternate society, De Forest was less assured of the political implications of his military service.

More so than memoir, the novel suited De Forest because the form allowed him to document the individual soldier’s experience of estrangement against sentimental conventions of reunion and community. Having known the private, raw, and subtle experiences of the soldier that Bourne’s contest and the later memory industry would overlook, De Forest could not even imagine the war in terms of metaphor or nation existing somewhere outside individual consciousness and experience—though he surely tried. Gregory S. Jackson has argued convincingly that De Forest’s fiction in the 1880s was informed by an affective desire for “heartfelt” national reconciliation predicated on personal consent (277), and yet it should be noted that the sensibility and tendency of De Forest in *The Bloody Chasm* (1881) and *Kate Beaumont* (1872) to write romances of national reconciliation are quite different from the postdated sentimentality within the world of *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion*.²⁸ The novel’s rough-hewn edges of ideological and

domestic rejuvenation easily identified in Dr. Ravenel and his daughter Lillie's exile and return to the North are the remnants of a pressure to conform to genre. It was how De Forest thought he should write, and his failure to pull off the national story is one of the reasons why the novel often reads as tedious editorial report instead of compelling fiction. Military experiences do not conform well to the genre requirements of reunion romance. In *Patriotic Gore* (1962), Edmund Wilson put the basic problem of De Forest fairly. Though he is "often boring and though his novels never quite come off, he is an honest and an informative writer....He is the first of our writers of fiction to deal seriously with the events of the Civil War" (670).

That De Forest was in fact the first writer to deal seriously with the events of the war was a result of his time as a soldier. Furthermore, his wartime experiences provoked a realist aesthetic that refused the affective potential of suffering for national ends. De Forest's pragmatic insight into stark representation was largely a frustrated reaction against a civilian imagination he felt was licensing the ubiquitous mythologies of reunion and uninjured nationalism. Writings later in his career indicate how upset he was in the late 1860s with the way civilians were imagining soldiers instead of writing them as they were.²⁹ When Wilson distinguished De Forest as the first serious soldier-author of the war, he surely was not unaware of these other writers, themselves not soldiers, who were like De Forest writing about the Civil War as it was happening, albeit in different genres. Whitman published *Drum-Taps* in 1865, Melville *Battle-Pieces* in 1866. Louisa May Alcott put out *Hospital Sketches* in 1863 as a series of regular dispatches from the front lines in the magazine *Commonwealth*, and although she repeatedly insisted to her audience that this was the war as it actually was, that "these Sketches are not romance,"

the optimism of her writing is difficult to take seriously today in the sense Wilson was using the word—they are simply not realistic. One soldier:

He lay on a bed, with one leg gone, and the right arm so shattered that it must evidently follow; yet the little Sergeant was as merry as if his afflictions were not worth lamenting over, and when a drop or two of salt water mingled with my suds at the sight of his strong body, so marred and maimed, the boy looked up, with a brave smile....³⁰

Elsewhere, Alcott describes “the patient endurance of these men, under trials of the flesh, [that] was truly wonderful; their fortitude seemed contagious, and scarcely a cry escaped them, though I often longed to groan for them...” (28). One magnanimous soldier was “unsubdued by pain” and “uttered no complaint, asked no sympathy” while dying in the hospital (38). He was “earnest, brave, and faithful,” one of the exemplary “true soldiers of the Lord” the war needed more of if the Union was to win (39).

De Forest’s description of the field hospital in *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion* is markedly less grandiose, and perhaps all the more heroic in hindsight:

The place resounded with groans....One man, whose leg was amputated close to his body, uttered an inarticulate jabber of broken screams, and rolled, or rather bounced from side to side of a pile of loose cotton, with such violence that two hospital attendants were fully occupied in holding him. Another, shot through the body, lay speechless and dying, but quivering from head to foot with a prolonged though probably unconscious agony.³¹

In contrast to the problems *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* had finding an audience, *Hospital Sketches* was a bestseller back on the Union homefront. De Forest was in large part rejected by his reading public because that public wanted accounts such as Bourne's and Alcott's which put the humanity of war into the comfortable and recognizable forms of pleasant national memory—the valiant uncomplaining soldier who makes do, who gets wounded but suffers silently, who if he dies, dies stoic and confident that it was all worthwhile—as opposed to the gruesome and chaotic reality of De Forest's dying soldiers. Unlike the soldier spokesmen of the Revolutionary and Mexican-American Wars, the Civil War marked the first time soldiers of the United States immediately challenged a noncombatant audience before the war had a chance to turn into memory. De Forest showed just how alone the experience of the soldier really was, and he was the only writer who confronted that unspoken horror when the dust of the battlefield was settling in 1865. Other Union soldiers would write their own fiction, poetry, and memoirs, but not until well after a decade had passed since *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*.³²

III.

De Forest wrote the fragmented and disillusioned experience he knew, not the national memory that others quickly condensed, bought, and sold in the popular romantic fiction of national reconciliation. The anxiety De Forest feels over what exactly a soldier is, what he should look like and how he could relate to the peaceful world, only reifies the anxieties of genre that surround *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*.³³ Is it even in the final analysis a novel? Travelogue? Memoir? *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* is aware of itself as

a narrative written by an actual soldier about other, imaginary soldiers. These two realities within the narrative structure rely upon and authenticate one another. Their intermingling produces for De Forest on the one hand, the sense of an autobiographical injunction of honesty, and on the other, a license and a space for literary experimentation that tended in his writing to celebrate the plurality of wartime experiences.

De Forest had always wanted to be taken as a serious writer of fiction, and indeed modest recognition had come before the war with the publication of two travel books—*Oriental Acquaintance* (1856) and *European Acquaintance* (1858)—both of which were excerpted, reviewed, and praised by *Putnam's Monthly*, *Harper's*, and the *New York Times*.³⁴ The young persona imbedded in these pages is a self-conscious man of letters, eager and ambitious to make his mark in the world. De Forest's purpose in going to Turkey and Europe had been to rejuvenate his mind and body. At the time while living in Connecticut, he was having difficulty focusing on his writing and hoped that the experience of Italian, German, and Near East culture first-hand would shake his concentration loose. Childhood typhoid had also made him weak, too weak in fact for him to attend Yale as his father had hoped. He went abroad an empty vessel, in search of artistic enlightenment as well as physical cures. It is noteworthy for his sensibilities later in life that neither hope lasted long. A visit to the baths at Graefenberg, Austria on a cold day to treat his "monotonous invalidism" only made his condition worse. A trip to Venice left him emotionally drained:

Into Italy, therefore, I entered as into a Valley of Vision, where I should behold glories little less than unutterable. Memorable and humiliating was my disappointment. Despite of strong effort to realize the historic value of

the scenes around me, despite of dutiful pilgrimages to countless classic shrines, I remained the same being that I had been in America, the spirit equally clogged by the body, the wings of the imagination as easily wearied as ever, and the terrestrial nature which they have to upbear as ponderous.³⁵

De Forest had left America before the Civil War eager to find a release from his physical and creative infirmities. He had wanted to be transformed from an aimless dilettante into a man of definite and strong purpose, and yet he soon learned that inspiration was not so easy. In Florence, he forced himself once again. Setting out to translate Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* into Italian, he found himself once more distracted by the undisciplined rhythm of his mind. The volume never came out.

Once back in the States, De Forest's psychological pattern of shame, helplessness, and inability to produce continued. A novel of modest acclaim, *Seacliff*, was published in 1859, but the outbreak of the war quickly redefined the terms of De Forest's budding literary career and artistic insecurities. As had Europe, the military promised a transformation in his character. On January 1, 1862, he was commissioned out of his sedentary life near New Haven to recruit troops for the 12th Connecticut Volunteers. A month later, De Forest and his company were shipped to the Gulf of Mexico where he began his official life as a soldier. In a letter to his wife dated April 30, 1862, he describes the typical cadence of his routine: "We smoked and read novels; we yawned often and slept a great deal; in short, we behaved as people do in the tediums of peace; anything to kill time."³⁶ De Forest's letters to his wife often highlight how unspectacular and mundane were his experiences in the military.³⁷ As he had come to know civilian

leisure abroad, he similarly experienced his life as a soldier, which is to say in waste and anxious waiting. His first recorded letter back home while stationed offshore Ship Island underscores De Forest's familiar sense of guilt that he was not being the type of serious soldier he thought he should be.

I am as indolent as passengers usually are; I cannot even study my drill book and the regulations. I smoke like a Turk; I walk the deck till the broiling sun sends me up to the breezy top of the wheelhouse; I load my revolver and shoot at gulls or floating tufts of seaweed; in my best estate I play at checkers on the quarter-deck....The general indifference to our future is curious and makes me wonder if we are beginning to be heroes. Nobody knows where we are ultimately going, and nobody appears to care.³⁸

Like many soldiers, De Forest would come to question his faith in the wisdom of his superiors at the same time he would resign himself to the dangerous and indifferent atmosphere of war that cared little about what he thought or felt. Amidst the dearth of leadership in his life as a soldier, the drill books and regulations reminded De Forest that he should be ordered and attentive, and that as a reward for following discipline, he would be granted health and heroism. It was an idealism that would become one more disappointment in his balance as a novelist and a soldier.

Military manuals of the sort De Forest referred to in his letters home were nationalistic tools similar to Bourne's essay contest, and they tended to mechanize soldiers in order to encourage their anonymity. Regulations were there to sanitize the

corrosive effects of individual personality within the group. In a representative Union manual from 1861, soldiers were subject to a litany of dietary and sumptuary restrictions.

12. Wear stout woolen drawers and shirts, winter and summer, day and night, and when too warm, or during active exercise, throw off your upper garments.... Change your underclothing frequently....

13. Keep your body dry and warm; take off damp clothing as soon as possible.³⁹

Much of what was expected from this behavioral code may simply be considered common sense, designed to protect the soldier's body from the noxious environs of camp life and combat. Be reasonable. Eat sensibly. Layer your clothing to regulate your body temperature. Even then, apparent paternalism quickly gave way to an almost paranoid restlessness. Do not even sit down, the manual warns, without adequate covering such as "thick cloths, blankets, dry straw, grass, leaves, wood, or something of the kind under you as a protection" (6). De Forest read his military manuals as he had Hawthorne in his youth, but in his life as a soldier, the twin promises of discipline and romanticism proved equally false. In a letter dated September 2, 1862 to his wife, De Forest documents how military alertness quickly transformed into physical suffering.

The never-ceasing rain streams at will through numerous rents and holes in the mouldy, rotten canvas. Nearly every night half the men are wet through while asleep unless they wake up, stack their clothing in the darkness, and sit on it with their rubber blankets over their heads, something not easy to do when they are so crowded that they can hardly move.⁴⁰

Luxuries such as assembling grass before sitting down and switching out clean socks were not a genuine possibility, especially when peace gave way to violence. As had been true in his experience in Europe, the reality wasn't like how the books described it at all. In the attack on Port Hudson in *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*, the narrator similarly notes how by all predictions the engagement should have been ordered, yet was anything but. "To keep the ranks closed and aligned in any tolerable fighting shape while struggling through that mile of tangled forest and broken ground was a task of terrible difficulty" (249), and as the terrain deteriorated around the battalion's charging line into terrible noise, "heavy guns, bursting shells, falling trees, and flying splinters" (250), the protagonist Captain Colburne inexplicably recalls his Army Regulations from basic training: "Soldiers must not be permitted to leave the ranks to strip or rob the dead, nor even to assist the wounded, unless by express permission, which is only to be given after the action is decided" (254). De Forest's learning curve in the military traced (and trained) the development of his own protagonists. In both worlds, the state-sponsored stories of authority, preparation, and discipline finally did nothing to save lives in combat. Two short paragraphs later, an anonymous soldier becomes "pierced through the lungs by a rifle-ball" and quickly dies (254).

De Forest's expectations of military life may have been illusory, but the literary gains from those disappointments were not. His truth as a soldier was both like and unlike the peaceful world he had known in which he had already experienced failure; now, of course, failure meant he could die. As a way to counteract his anxiety over the arbitrary and brutal nature of the Civil War, De Forest documented again and again the discrete uniqueness of the ordinary and commonplace events of military life. The realism

that resulted was a mode of writing that tried everything in the hopes of creating analogies between the varieties of his military experience and the civilian life he had known.⁴¹ In search of a usable truth, De Forest relentlessly documented the individual habits and constitutions of the officers and soldiers around him. In a letter dated April 6, 1862 while stationed outside New Orleans, orders come in to stand-down preparation for a skirmish, and De Forest takes the reprieve to cultivate his literary eye just as if he were in an everyday civilian setting. “You would perhaps like a sketch of General Butler....” he writes to his wife, and so, “in my character of novelist I made a study of him” (*Volunteer’s* 9). The sympathetic representation of the abolitionist General Benjamin Butler that follows in his remarks underscores a recurring concern in De Forest to celebrate the diversity of personality around him.

De Forest’s impressions of General Butler show up in *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion* as well. The narrator is quick to point out that the novel’s descriptions of soldiers are influenced by his own subjectivity and by the subjectivity of the other characters:

I wish it to be understood that I do not endorse the above criticism on the celebrated proconsul on Louisiana. I am not sketching the life of General Butler, but of Colonel Carter—I am not trying to show how things really were, but only how the Colonel looked at them. (98)

The war as it really was mattered less to De Forest than the war as one soldier, whoever that may be, saw it. Privacy and perception controlled De Forest’s craft. Daniel Aaron in *The Unwritten War* (1973) has earlier noted De Forest’s tendency for humble portraiture in his letters and diaries. What sets his account apart “from other competently written eyewitness chronicles is its conscious literary intention.”⁴² There are in his private

writings the impression of Butler, as well as “the abolitionist General John W. Phelps, grizzled, shambling, sarcastic, a splenetic disciplinarian laughed at and liked for his oddities,” and lengthy sketches on the drunkard Sergeant Weber, among many others. In Aaron’s analysis, De Forest “came to regard common soldiers with a kind of awe” (171), and indeed his admiration for his fellow combatants should be seen as a political and aesthetic statement. De Forest’s translation of military life to the broader civilian world showed that men and women at war were recognized by a peaceful world, but only to a point. Once he entered the battlefield, sympathy broke down for De Forest, and the men who were once familiar and fraternal were now strange and unknowable. This failure was at the very heart of De Forest’s understanding of realism.

The documentary impulse underlying De Forest’s letters also animates *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion*. Displaced by the impending war from his medical practice in Louisiana, the Northern-educated Dr. Ravenel relocates with his daughter Lillie to the fictional town of New Boston, whereupon they meet fellow Southern transplant, Lieutenant-Colonel Carter.⁴³ Carter turns out to be a womanizer and unscrupulous opportunist, but not before Lillie falls in love with him. Their marriage produces a child much to the dismay of our true hero, the tight-lipped and dutiful Captain Colburne. Despite rhetorical clues that warn the reader he is no good, Carter is arguably the most intriguing and sympathetic character. He was the novel’s greatest success for Henry James.⁴⁴ Colburne, on the other hand, is much more in-line with Northern expectations of the soldier. He is a proper native of New England, and though he loves Lillie dearly, he must be tested by battle and the full term of their prolonged separation before events finally will bring the two together in the end. Although De Forest spends most of his

pages detailing the elaborate storyline of their personal reunion, it cannot be said that he cares much for Colburne and Lillie. The tedium of their romance reads once again as a conciliation to convention, a long diversion, it is safe to say, from the twenty or so pages describing combat that could not be easily translated into popular literary taste. Because it was how a popular audience processed the world, De Forest had to make compromises with sentimentality, even though he recognized that “melodramatically considered, real life is frequently a failure” (*Ravenel’s* 133). In an effort to find a new way of describing “real life,” De Forest took some notable risks against sentimentality’s better judgment that modern readers frequently have overlooked. In addition to the lecherous Carter, the reader is introduced to the scandalously explicit Mrs. Larue (who rivals Kate Chopin’s Edna Pontellier in sexual immorality), the affable drunk Van Zandt, and the sympathetic ex-slave Major Scott, who, in an unusual display of interracial trust, fights and dies alongside Colburne and Dr. Ravenel at the siege on Fort Winthrop.

Is it fair to say that De Forest personally came to know personalities such as Carter, Larue and Scott in his wartime interactions? Reflecting on the novel in 1898 some thirty years after its publication, De Forest acknowledged how his life as a soldier had taken its toll on his approach to writing narrative. While it still might be fair to weigh the merits of his artistic execution, for De Forest at least, the restriction of his vision to the people and places he intimately knew was deliberate, and by design.

...[*Miss Ravenel’s Conversion* was] a book out of my own experience.

Perhaps the book was out of the ordinary in some respects at that time.

Certainly it was not of the same style as any of my previous work. In that book for the first time in my life I came to know the value of personal

knowledge of one's subject and the art of drawing upon life for one's characters. In my younger days everything was romance.⁴⁵

De Forest renounces the “romance” of his youthful writings that can be clearly found, for example, in his Hawthornesque historic novel set during the Salem Witch Trials, *Witching Times* (1856). What was required in light of the Civil War was not romance, not melodrama, but an empirical realism. De Forest reads himself somewhat obliquely as a writer of novelized memoir, yet even more precisely as a writer of “personal knowledge,” something to be garnered only through the people and actions he himself knew.

Personal knowledge of the war told De Forest that his daily experience as a soldier—that cross-section of boredom and ambition, frustration and success, dilettante and artist—was only accessible to the civilian public through analogies to their own experience. Melodrama was one parallel. Mortality was another. Yet in those brief battlefield scenes that depict various states of death and dying, it is apparent that there was no narrative method sufficient to translate fully the horror and specificity of combat trauma. No previous soldier-author in the United States had even tried. Readers could concede the varieties of at-ease military life as civilian equivalences would allow, but the varieties of death and combat were a different affair altogether. They paralyzed both the author's and the reader's imagination alike. Personal knowledge told De Forest that when the war finally did happen in the very real flashes of battles, fear, and death, it happened to discrete soldiers like himself, not to monolithic nations and not to civilian readers. The soldier's consciousness often reads in the novel as a solipsistic impasse that had no bridge, and this stalemate helps to explain why it is that as De Forest's gaze

became more perceptive and realistic, it also became more internal and emotionally detached. Following the Confederate attack on Port Hudson, the narrator describes the scene at a central army hospital behind the front lines.

It was simply an immense collection of wounded men *in every imaginable condition of mutilation*, every one stained more or less with his own blood, ... all lying in the open air on the bare ground, or on their own blankets, with no shelter except the friendly foliage of the oaks and beeches. (*Ravenel's* 260) [emphasis added]

The wounds the narrator sees importantly exist completely within the restrictions of his own imagination. They survive only in the mind of one witness, locked in for him alone to make sense. The act of reading De Forest's battle scenes was not sympathetic for a contemporary audience, but rather aggressively voyeuristic. What these images were not was the idealized soldier readers found in cultural mitigators such as Alcott and Bourne.

Instead, the novel's sequences of war subtly implied that the possibilities for representing gore and destruction were at once infinite but also short-lived. This was for De Forest the phenomenological pay-off from the soldier's personal knowledge, that the commonalities of his experience could only be read and written one soldier, and one sentence, at a time. Each particular soldier is identified biologically "with his own blood" amidst the "immense collection" of suffering bodies. The preoccupation with such fine demarcation in this scene is meant to show that no two wounds were the same, thus no two representations could be the same. Every wound, like every experience of soldiering, signaled a different need of expression.

In the centre of this mass of suffering stood several operating tables, each burdened by a grievously wounded man and surrounded by surgeons and their assistants. Underneath were great pools of clotted blood, amidst which lay amputated fingers, hands, arms, feet and legs.... (260)

Much like the photographs from the workshops of Mathew Brady and Alexander Gardner, De Forest's stagnant pile of body parts underscores the plurality of discursive sites of experience that will never get to speak for themselves. And while some soldiers do get names in the novel—Colburne, Carter, Major Gazaway, Van Zandt—most do not, and their appellative absence carries over into the hollowness we read in the main characters themselves. Echoing Whitman's sentiment, De Forest in the act of writing war is amongst "the infinite dead," those who in their obscurity speak "on monuments and gravestones, singly or in masses, to tens of thousands, the significant word, UNKNOWN."⁴⁶ When Colburne retreats at Port Hudson with his own wounds, he comes across his commanding Lieutenant-Colonel "with a bullet-wound in his thigh which the surgeon whispered was mortal" (261-62). The officer dismisses the pronouncement on the grounds that he could not find belief in his wound.

"It's a lie!" exclaimed the sufferer. "It's all nonsense, Doctor. You don't know your business. I won't die. I sha'n't die. It's all nonsense to say that a little hole in the leg like that can kill a great strong man like me. I tell you I sha'n't and won't die." (262)

What the soldier believes, and what he had experienced and come to imagine, were finally independent of how the war exacted itself. "In an hour more he was a corpse, and before night he was black with putrefaction, so rapid was that shocking change under the

heat of a Louisiana May” (262). The mortal change happens fast despite personal and symbolic protest, imagined not as a denial—I choose not to believe—but rather, to use the soldier’s own words, nonsense—I *cannot* understand that death and defeat come, because this hole does not trigger the knowledge of death.

Looming death was the limit point of personal knowledge for Civil War soldiers, and De Forest refuses to portray it as redemptive. What was that limit for those that made it through alive? Amidst the diversity of wounds, genders, races, and regions is the novel’s modest realization that what we believe depends on what we have experienced. In the aftermath of the North’s defeat at the battle of First Bull Run early in the novel, Union soldiers return dejected, much to the surprise of the Ravenels and Colburne. “Stragglers arrived, and then the regiments. People were not angry with the beaten soldiers, but treated them with tenderness...” (61). The war turns in this scene suddenly from a safe ideological debate set in the distance into the actual “beaten soldiers” who had fought and brought their loss back with them from the front lines. Inscribed in the tatters of their “ragged shoddy uniforms” is the denial of the Union narrative of quick victory. It was not at all the way the story was supposed to go, and the unexpectedness of the defeat is only made worse by the unforeseen capture of Carter by the Confederates. This moment in the novel is one of the rare instances when the disillusionment from the war feels intimately personal to the main characters. The scene is a surprising twist in a novel of mostly predictable outcomes, and it serves as a rhetorical opportunity for De Forest to ask his characters to negotiate personal and national transformation—a question that is a crucial component of the cultural problem the novel was addressing.

The response from the non-soldier is invested with the familiar confidence that national destiny and personal experience went hand-in-hand. Dr. Ravenel, a universally sympathetic figure of patriarchal wisdom throughout the novel, tries to assure his daughter and future son-in-law of the certain comfort to be found in uncertain beliefs. Ravenel cites as an example his own evolution on the question of slavery from unconcerned spectator to sworn abolitionist. "I wasn't infallible five years ago....the progress of our race from barbarism to civilization is through the medium of constant change. If the race is benefited by it, why not the individual?" (63). Ravenel imagines his "old opinions" on slavery as analogous to the snake who symbolically must shed its beliefs like "last year's skins" in order to survive. Not only is throwing off old ideas inevitable, it is an organic process of the healthy and developing body politic. Speaking with De Forest's permission, Colburne is unconvinced by the metaphor. He remarks that not every change in the nation has been desirable (think, after all, what our Puritan ancestors would say about our Sabbath habits), and so the Doctor fashions a different image that could just as easily have been written by a young William James.⁴⁷

"Weak spirits are frightened by this change, this growth, this forward impetus," said the Doctor. "I must tell you a story. I was traveling in Georgia three years ago. On the seat next in front of me sat a cracker, who was evidently making his first railroad experience, and in other respects learning to go on his hind legs. Presently the train crossed a bridge. It was narrow, uncovered and without sides, so that a passenger would not be likely to see it unless he sat near the window. I observed him give a

glare at the river and turn away his head suddenly, after which he rolled about in a queer way, and finally went to the floor in a heap. We picked him up...and presently the cracker was brought to his senses. His first words were, 'Has she lit'—He was under the impression that the train had taken the river at a running jump. Now that is very much like the judgment of timid and ill-informed people on the progress of the nation or race at such a time as this. They don't know about the bridge; they think we are flying through the air; and so they go off in general fainting fits."

(63-64)

Cleverly elided together are industrial and ideological change. The history of the nation unfolds just like the lives of its people, and there is no stopping in either "the fifth act in the grand drama of human liberty" (445).⁴⁸ The technology of the train underscores modernity's approach regardless of the personal doubts of the passengers. In mocking the poor white's discomfort, Ravenel renders personal experience and fear beside the point in a post-Civil War world. Confronted for the first time with the actual loss of soldiers before him, the Doctor speaks for the novel's sentimental readers and holds strong in the faith that the meta-narratives of progress and assured victory were the only knowledge the nation needed.

The response from the soon-to-be soldier Colburne is markedly different. His epistemology depends on getting his hands dirty, because "...on the train of human progress, we are parts of the engine and not mere passengers. I ought to be revolving somewhere. I ought to be at work. I want to do something—I am most anxious to do something—but I don't know precisely what. I suppose that the inability exists in me,

and not in my circumstances” (64). Rather than the Doctor’s blind civilian confidence, Colburne seeks that transformative experience which comes only from participation. Colburne’s indecisiveness here results in part from an incomplete personal knowledge: he has not at this point entered the war, and Colburne’s tone echoes the young De Forest abroad and in boot camp when he had assumed personal ambition and national destiny would energize his resolve. In this scene, De Forest characterizes the soldier as an agent of patriotic conviction only so he can later in the battlefields reverse the table as the table was reversed on him. There is no idealistic nation in the novel’s fox-holes. De Forest’s writings testify throughout that there was no larger meaning-making system at all, save perhaps—and only perhaps—the soldier writing his story.

The cultural aftermath of the Civil War invariably wrestled with the problem of too many soldiers still living, many of whom needed to voice their individual experiences in some way. When that expression took written form such as in the now-forgotten words of Franklin H. Durrah, the personal knowledge of the Civil War veteran was met with the public desire for silence. Bourne could acknowledge and even celebrate the patriotic sacrifices of Union veterans in elaborate tours and ceremonies, but he did not print and thereby license the soldiers’ naked words themselves. The din of variety would have been overwhelming, and De Forest knew as much. Both he and Durrah shared the same fate of being but one soldier among many soldiers. Whereas Revolutionary War captives and memoirists wrote in the hopes of establishing political dignity, soldiers in light of the Civil War were increasingly skeptical of the coherence of identity categories.⁴⁹ The soldier’s record of the Civil War would always be incomplete. There

were innumerable soldiers' stories that would go unwritten, or that would be at best read for a time and then forgotten.

De Forest saw the absence of the soldier's experience in the written record as a limitation finally of language and time, and analogous to the difficulty of writing a representative national experience. In an essay shortly after *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* entitled "The Great American Novel" (1868), De Forest weighed in on the contemporary literary concern over what was the best and most illustrative American novel. "Is there, in other works, a single tale which paints American life so broadly, truly, and sympathetically that every American of feeling and culture is forced to acknowledge the pictures as a likeness of something which he knows?"⁵⁰ After quickly dismissing Irving and Cooper ("These are ghosts, and they wrote about ghosts, and the ghosts have vanished utterly," [32]) as well as Hawthorne, De Forest briefly considers *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the honor, but then finally answers his own question, "we must answer, Not one!" (35). As was true for the "common" experience of the soldier, asking for the distinctively "American" novel was, in light of the Civil War, the wrong question. Soldiers had rendered knowledge and experience radically regional and fiercely antagonistic. De Forest accepts, as few contemporary writers would, the fragmentation that the war both reflected and produced.

When you have made your picture of petrified New England village life, left aground like a boulder near the banks of the Merrimac, does the Mississippian or the Minnesotian or the Pennsylvanian recognize it as American society? We are a nation of provinces and each province claims to be the court. (37)

IV.

In reclaiming the terrain of the personal knowledge of the soldier, I am making at the same time a claim for that experience as a contributing factor to the literary movement we have come to know as realism. Readers since 1867 have been almost unanimous in their reception of *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* as a realistic facsimile of the conditions of war. De Forest's contemporaries saw a faithful correspondence in his novel to how the things of war looked, not necessarily to how they felt, or to the psychological effects they would produce, but to the "blind ruck of event" itself (Warren 108). Henry James writing in the June 1867 *Nation* sidestepped the question of the novel's failure or success as a piece of original fiction (he had in fact found himself frequently distracted by the "characters we find not interesting and with one exception, Carter, not well drawn"⁵¹), and focused instead on the merit to be drawn from what the novel actually was—an authentic and representative example of experience in the military.

[It is the] picture of the military service in the Department of the Gulf, "a novel of the war," that we think best of the book. So considered, it deserves more praise, we think, than any of its numerous rivals for popular favor, and is so well worth reading that, though we are constrained to pronounce the work a poor novel, we are quite willing to say that it is a poor novel with a deal of good in it. (52)

William Dean Howells reviewed the novel with a similar air in *The Atlantic Monthly* one month later. Like James, Howells could only praise the "deal of good" to be found in the novel's inauguration of the soldier as a founding literary type.

Mr. De Forrest [sic] is the first *to treat the war really and artistically*. His campaigns do not try the reader's constitution, his battles are not bores. *His soldiers are the soldiers we actually know*,—the green wood of the volunteers, the warped stuff of men torn from civilization and cast suddenly into the barbarism of camps, the hard, dry, tough, true fibre of the veterans that came out of the struggle.⁵² [emphasis added]

In the 1880s when both James and Howells were setting down their mature theories of realism, the war and the soldier continued to weigh heavily on their respective approaches. In *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), Howells often refers to Ulysses S. Grant's memoirs as an example of the "simple, natural and honest" standards of the realist system. Grant's writing style is thanked for its "unliterariness" that contained a "plebeian plainness at times":

There is no more attempt at dramatic effect than there is at ceremonious pose; things happen in that tale of a mighty war as they happened in the mighty war itself, without setting, without artificial reliefs one after another, as if they were all of one quality and degree...it is always an unaffected, unpretentious man who is talking; and throughout he prefers to wear the uniform of a private....⁵³

Howells aligns Grant's status as an ordinary soldier with his success as a realist writer, noting that because Grant was no "genius," nor had any sense of calling to the war, he could write about the experience fairly: "he gives you the facts, and leaves them with you" (89). His praise of the general reads very much like his praise of De Forest. Howells had in fact thought De Forest was the first great American realist, "a realist

before realism was named,” he wrote in his “Editor’s Study” column in *Harper’s* in February 1887. He went so far as to call De Forest’s *Kate Beaumont* (1871) “as good a piece of realism as I know of...worthy of the greatest novelist living in any country,” and later, in the “Editor’s Study” of September 1887, he boldly placed De Forest on an equal footing with Tolstoy.⁵⁴ I doubt any modern critic would make such similar grandiose claims today, and yet De Forest’s contribution to how it is realist writers understood the individual in an increasingly hostile world cannot be ignored. The first-hand experience of the soldier translates into a personal knowledge for the reader that, as Dr. Ravenel himself put it, “the age of miracles is over” (51).

¹ Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days in America* (London: Walter Scott, 1887) 126, Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* 172.

² William Oland Bourne published *History of the Public School Society of the City of New York* in 1870, as well as *Poems of the Republic* in 1864 (originally written as “A contribution to the Metropolitan fair, New York”) and *Poems of Hope and Action* in 1850.

³ The foremost objective of *The Soldier's Friend* was to retrain soldiers in their transition back into civilian life. It was by all accounts a successful newspaper, reaching a peak circulation of 60,000 by late 1866. The newspaper's readership was somewhat comparable to *The Atlantic Monthly's* audience at the time. *Harper's Weekly* was the most read of the three, “exceeding 100,000” in the 1860s, according to HarpWeek Online (<http://www.harpweek.com/02About/about.asp>). The Huntington Library holds the only complete holding of *The Soldier's Friend*. The papers of William Oland Bourne reside at the Library of Congress. I want to express my ongoing gratitude to both institutions for their assistance in this project. Soldier letters to Bourne that I discovered at the Library of Congress attest to the prominence of local advertising efforts. R.A. Bain from Marshall, Michigan writes that he is responding to an advertisement in the *Detroit Tribune*. R. Watson from Pigeon, Michigan is responding to a notice he saw in the *Michigan Christian Herald*. On the front page of its September 1868 issue, *The Soldier's Friend* reprinted the advertisement they had run in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* for the contest. See William Oland Bourne, *The Soldier's Friend* (New York: John A. Gray & Green, 1864-1870), vol.

⁴ “Left-Handed Penmanship,” *Harper's Weekly* 29 July 1865: 467.

⁵ Decoration Days and other public remembrances soon started in 1865. For a more complete discussion of public expressions of soldiers, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001) 64-71, Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). My argument agrees with the work of Alan Trachtenberg who contended that the pervasive visibility of the common soldier diminished the heroic nationalism surrounding him: “The Civil War camera disclosed debris strewn about, weary men, slovenly uniforms—soldiers not as heroes but as soldiers.” Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989) 83.

⁶ As early as 1863, public figures such as the President of the U.S. Sanitation Commission, the Reverend Doctor Henry Bellows, began making public pleas for financial and religious support following the substantial Union losses at Antietam and Fredericksburg in September and December, 1862. See, for example, Henry Bellows, *Speech of the Rev. Dr. Bellows, President of the United States Sanitary Commission, Made at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, Tuesday Evening, Feb. 24, 1863* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, Son & Co., 1863). In his beseeching speech before the mayor and other local dignitaries, Bellows suggested that the private needs of wounded soldiers were challenging the public perception that everything was well in hand. The humanitarian needs were immense.

Every loyal woman in this country, every generous merchant, every noble-minded physician, every man who loves humanity, every man who loves his country and our noble cause, has got to put by a certain portion of his time, and a certain portion of his money and industry, and a large portion of his heart and affections and sensibilities, for the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers. (12)

There were wounded soldiers everywhere, crowding the streets and clamoring for food and shelter. Their demands on the nation and its charitable citizens could no longer be avoided. “For a month past,” Bellows laments, “we have had five hundred and fifty men per night to take care of [at *The Soldier's Home*, a charity residence in Washington, D.C.], and supplied eighteen hundred meals every day to these discharged

soldiers” (24). Bellows noted *The Soldier’s Home* was just one example among many. Every city faced a similar population.

⁷ Much has already been said about the unprecedented visibility of the war on the public imagination. I would add to the conversation a brief reading of Alexander Gardner’s *Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War*, originally released in 1866 as a carefully constructed nationalistic narrative. One hundred photographs were divided evenly into two parts, the first half a chronicle of major battles, and the second, a propagandistic portrayal of Union support services and early Reconstruction. The images haunted Gardner, and he tried to capture that sense of excess in the accompanying captions. The scenes we see do not always correspond with the words he wrote. Oftentimes, Gardner saw more than the viewer possibly could. He remarks in a caption Plate 44, the “Slaughter Pen” at Gettysburg, that “[u]pon conclusion of that engagement, the ground was found in many places to be almost covered with the dead and wounded....” In the accompanying photograph, it is difficult to distinguish the dead and dying from the actual terrain. It is unclear whether the eyes are playing tricks on you, or whether the land and the dead have inextricably been merged into one another. This cognitive uncertainty shakes loose Gardner’s own unease. In his remarks on the still panorama of Plate 19, “Antietam Bridge, MD., September, 1862,” Gardner does not comment on the contents of the photograph—a long shot of an otherwise unremarkable bridge—but rather what he imagined was there. His reality is a density of invisible war wounds.

Traces of the engagement are evident in the overturned stone wall, the shattered fences, and down-trodden appearance of the adjacent ground....Very little now remains to mark the adjacent fields as a battle ground. Houses and fences have been repaired, harvests have ripened over the breasts of the fallen, and the ploughshare only now and then turns up a shot, as a relic of that great struggle.

See Alexander Gardner, *Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War* (Mineola: Dover, 1959).

⁸ “Soldiers Left-Hand Writing,” *Harper’s Weekly* 7 April 1866: 211.

⁹ “Left-Hand Writing,” *Harper’s Weekly* 4 November 1865: 691.

¹⁰ “Soldiers Left-Hand Writing,” *Harper’s Weekly* 7 April 1866: 211.

¹¹ The awards ceremony was written up at some length and expense in the March 1866 issue of *The Soldier’s Friend*. The following excerpt taken from the first two pages of the issue I quote at length, as the ceremony is the best approximation of how the public consumed these soldier writings.

The hall of the Union Central Committee being generously granted for the purpose, the specimens of penmanship were placed on exhibition for examination by the public. The arrangements and decorations, which were very appropriate and beautiful, were made by the ladies of the Union Relief Committee, who addressed themselves to the work with great interest and zeal. The festooned columns and windows, around which the evergreens mingled in happy harmony with the red, white, and blue of the flag of the Union, presented a fine appearance, while mottoes and inscriptions, being the names of Grant, Sherman, Porter, Sheridan, Hooker, Thomas, Kilpatrick, Foote, Meade, and Morris, were effectively displayed over the windows.

....

On long tables, reaching the length of the hall, one on each side of the room, with ample passage on all sides, were the varied productions of nearly three hundred men who had sacrificed their right arms for the country. Coming from nearly every State of the Union, and in one case, from Canada, from men who had been, or are now, in the service, this remarkable and original display of literary and artistic work was presented in a very effective and truthful grouping of the national colors. On a ground of blue cloth the white manuscripts were laid, and were held in their places by a neat little red tape running the length of the table. At the top of the sheet the number of each manuscript, corresponding with the printed catalogue, was presented in red on a white card, with a red

border, while a small red card secured the manuscript at the lower margin. The grouping of colors was characteristic and admired by all who saw the skilful and beautiful display.

An additional feature of the exposition was the collection of photographs of the authors, each portrait being placed at the head of the manuscript contributed by the writer. These photographs were not only admired by all, but it brought the visitor into the presence of the honorable members of the Left-Armed Corps who had furnished the tables for this novel and most attractive entertainment. (1-2)

¹² “Left-Handed Penmanship,” *Harper’s Weekly* 29 July 1865: 467.

¹³ “Left-Handed Penmanship,” *Harper’s Weekly* 29 July 1865: 467.

¹⁴ See “Left-Handed Writing,” *Harper’s Weekly* 10 March 1866: 147. *Harper’s* confirmed the elaborate ceremony which *The Soldier’s Friend* detailed at length, noting that interested readers could come see “specimens of writing . . . at the hall corner of Twenty-Third Street and Broadway.” Still, as far as my research has shown, no printed and bound volume exists in circulation. Soon after the contest’s success, *The Soldier’s Friend* repeatedly advertised that there would be. The July and August 1866 issues advertised the proposed volume, “Battle Memories of the Left-Armed Corps.” William Cullen Bryant had even agreed to write the introduction. This from page two of the July 1866 issue: “It is proposed to publish a MEMORIAL VOLUME, containing the sketches, tales, poems, and war narrative of the Left-Armed Corps, in one handsome octavo volume of five hundred pages. The book will be illustrated with portraits and specimens of Left-Hand Penmanship by men who lost their right arm during the late war.” The last mention of the ornate memorial appeared in the final monthly issue of *The Soldier’s Friend* in March 1870. Bourne often emphasized the literary talents of his soldiers, beginning most issues with an original poem by a soldier on the first column of the first page. *The Soldier’s Friend* was keen to publish prominent noncombatant writers as well, among them Cullen Bryant, George William Curtis, and Charles Eliot Norton.

¹⁵ “Left-Handed Penmanship,” *Harper’s Weekly* 29 July 1865: 467.

¹⁶ “Left-Hand Writing,” *Harper’s Weekly* 4 November 1865: 691.

¹⁷ “Left-Hand Writing,” *Harper’s Weekly* 26 May 1866: 323.

¹⁸ *The Soldier’s Friend* published a list of the names of the contributors in November 1865, and even a short “sketch from a young colored man, of the Fifth U.S. C. Infantry” (1), but besides a very few of these short and anonymous snippets, no soldier stories from the contest were published. However, Bourne’s papers at the Library of Congress include the complete collection of the soldier manuscripts. In addition, the holdings include submissions from a second contest that was held the last half of 1867, and which grew out of the popularity of the first. These writings are all related in the broadest sense by their shared confusion over their compulsion to write something “original” and “literary,” which is to say something that other people valued. Soldier Henry Allen professes his humility, “I am no literary genius, and cannot write any manuscript worthy a place in the columns of the ‘Soldier’s Friend’,” at the same time that soldier William Connor refuses to be meek. His drive to write *something* becomes a compulsion: “In losing my right arm my first thought was to learn to write with the left hand. I commenced practicing with a lead pencil the next day, and in the corner where my bed was located the wall was written as high and as far as I could reach each way.” Defiance masks itself as modesty in these texts. The most striking demonstration is Robert A. Finn, an African-American soldier from Ohio, whose short contribution is a representative testimony of manufactured modesty. He writes of his childhood bereft of a formal education: “I experienced all the disadvantages peculiar to my proscribed race.” Consequently, “[i]t is hardly necessary to say that very little can be expected of me, so far a correct composition is concerned.” I take Finn to mean by “correct composition” a story acceptable and palatable to a larger public, both in style and content. These soldier texts were not always that, though Franklin H. Durrah, the winner of the contest and a

namesake to my title, writes a fairly “correct composition” and is handsomely rewarded for it by Bourne and the contest’s judges.

¹⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* 45, Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

²⁰ Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Random House, 1961) 60-64.

²¹ Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*.

²² See Blight 172ff. *The Century Magazine* published “hundreds of articles” between 1884 and 1887, “in perhaps the most ambitious attempt ever to retell a war by its leading participants” (174). Among the pieces was Mark Twain’s “The Private History of a Campaign That Failed” (Dec. 1885). The immense four-volume *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (1888) was a collection of these soldier writings.

²³ Whitman, *Specimen Days in America* 125.

²⁴ Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962) 671.

²⁵ John William De Forest, "Our Military Past and Present," *Atlantic Monthly* (Nov. 1879): 572.

²⁶ Wade Newhouse, "Reporting Triumph, Saving a Nation: "Interesting Juxtapositions" In John W. De Forest's Civil War," *Studies in American Fiction* 32.2 (Autumn 2004): 165.

²⁷ Michael W. Schaefer, *Just What War Is: The Civil War Writings of De Forest and Bierce* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

²⁸ Gregory S. Jackson, "'A Dowry of Suffering': Consent, Contract, and Political Coverture in John W. De Forest's Reconstruction Romance," *American Literary History* 15.2 (Summer 2003): 277.

²⁹ De Forest’s 1879 article “Our Military Past and Present” in the *Atlantic Monthly* (which Schaefer often quotes) is an earnest attempt by an aging veteran to reform the military system. He had learned during the Civil War that soldiers were ambitious, eager, full of vigor—in short, wholly unprepared for the actualities of combat. Expecting another war soon (he thought it would probably happen with the Indians), De Forest advocated a system of volunteer “citizen soldiers” (592) who would be educated in mandatory military science in the public schools and universities. Realistic preparation was the best antidote to all the toxic and inaccurate descriptions of soldiers he had been reading over the past decade.

But the schools should not be furnished with text-books alone. There should be military histories in their libraries,—not the trashy, misleading ones which prattle of “billows of Cavalry” and “infantry standing like rocks;” not such stuff as the world has had about war from a host of ignorant romancers calling themselves historians; but books which show just what war is, and what to do amidst its difficulties. (572)

³⁰ Louisa May Alcott, *Civil War Hospital Sketches* (Mineola: Dover, 2006) 11, 23.

³¹ John William De Forest, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (New York: Penguin, 2000) 260.

³² Many soldiers did publish their experiences in book form decades after the war. An incomplete list would include *Figs and Thistles* by Albion Tourgee (1879), *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* by Ambrose Bierce (1891), *The Captain of Company K* by Joseph Kirkland (1891), and *Campaigning with General Grant* by Horace Porter (1897). Conversely, non-soldiers were writing war novels contemporaneous with

the war, including Horatio Alger's *Frank's Campaign* (1864), William T. Adams's *Soldier Boy* (1863), and John Townsend Trowbridge's *Three Scouts* (1865). It should also be noted that the prolific novelist and Southern soldier John Esten Cooke published *Surrey of Eagle's Nest* very soon afterwards in 1866, and South Carolinian Augusta Evans' *Macaria* (1863) was the best-selling book of the war years, North or South. Their comparisons with De Forest are limited, however, as these cavalier novels lack the type of sober realism I am outlining in *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*.

³³ Recent scholarship has tended to interrogate "war literature by category," Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North & South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 8. See also Kathleen Elizabeth Diffley, *Where My Heart Is Turning Ever: Civil War Stories and Constitutional Reform, 1861-1876* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992). Diffley similarly reads literary production according to genre. Sentimental genres such as the "young boy's adventure" and the "defense of the Old Homestead" that Diffley identifies are by and large popular modes of imaginative homogeneity. De Forest, however, is at the moment of *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* serving one master (his war experience) at the expense of another (genre).

³⁴ James W. Gargano, ed., *Critical Essays on John William De Forest* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981) 6-7.

³⁵ Reprinted in Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* 673-76.

³⁶ John William De Forest and James H. Croushore, *A Volunteer's Adventures: A Union Captain's Record of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996) 15.

³⁷ These letters were not compiled until 1946 in a volume titled *A Volunteer's Adventures*. A large critical gap exists between De Forest's death in 1906 and World War II, during which time *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* was out of print. Van Wyck Brooks came across De Forest's papers at Yale during World War I, but no full-scale interest in De Forest occurred until 1937 when Bernard DeVoto published "Fiction Fights the Civil War" in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Besides a doctoral dissertation by Rebecca Smith Lee at the University of Chicago in the same year, De Forest faded again until the specter of the war's 100th anniversary produced Robert Lively's *Fiction Fights the Civil War* (1957) and the aforementioned surveys of Wilson and Aaron. I diverge from the most recent interpretations of the novel that herald De Forest's imaginative ability to "take us there." David Madden contended in *Classics of Civil War Fiction* (1991):

In the ideal Civil War novel, the author's vision and purpose emerge out of the complexities of the war experience but transcend them. The novel succeeds in *stimulating and engaging the emotions, the imagination, and the intellect to make the war agonizingly alive in the reader*. Its point of view, style, and other techniques *make the reader a collaborator* with the author in creating a conception of the Civil War that will enable the reader, long after the fiction ends, *to illuminate his or her experiences*. (8) [emphasis added]

Lively, Wilson, Aaron, and Madden all praised De Forest because, as Robert Antoni noted in "Miss Ravenel's Conversion: A Neglected American Novel," *The Southern Quarterly* 24.3 (Spring 1986), within the novel's representations of battle at Port Hudson and Fort Winthrop, the reader "enters the mind, body, and spirit of De Forest the soldier" (59). De Forest's invitation to the reader is not as welcoming as such criticism has inferred. See Rebecca Lee Smith, "The Civil War and Its Aftermath in American Fiction, 1861-1899," University of Chicago, 1937, Robert A. Lively, *Fiction Fights the Civil War: An Unfinished Chapter in the Literary History of the American People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), David Madden and Peggy Bach, eds., *Classics of Civil War Fiction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), Robert William Antoni, "Miss Ravenel's Conversion: A Neglected American Novel," *The Southern Quarterly* 24.3 (Spring 1986): 58-63.

³⁸ De Forest and Croushore, *A Volunteer's Adventures: A Union Captain's Record of the Civil War* 2.

³⁹ George J. Ziegler, *The Soldier's Friend; or, Hints for the Physical and Moral Welfare of the Soldiers of the United States* (Philadelphia: [George J. Ziegler, M.D.], 1861) 5. Ziegler was a prominent doctor who is now perhaps best known for his contribution to *Dental Cosmos*, the first professional journal of American dentistry. As his title suggests, this pamphlet is a manual for the individual enlisted man. It was designed to be a practical catalogue of behavioral restrictions—really, a private checklist of injunctions for the soldier's own welfare lest he grow sick from disease or die from battlefield wounds. While the sensible if not also altruistic motivations behind these preventive "hints" for the health of body and emotion should not be overlooked, Ziegler's anxious guidelines suggest more than a simple concern for diligent bodily hygiene.

In the first place, then, always recollect that in war a great many more men are disabled and die from disease than from injuries received in battle, and that the preservation of your health depends very much upon yourselves. As the success of the great cause, in the support of which you are now engaged, depends mainly upon your bodily strength and power of endurance, it is your bounden duty to pay a strict attention to the laws of health as well as to the rules of military discipline. Remember, then, that to keep strong and hearty, you must refrain from all excesses, and lead, so far as possible, a regular and steady life. (3)

Ziegler's first point makes it clear enough that the responsibility to avoid disease is placed solely on the soldier himself. He must "in the first place" maintain discipline over his own body because a soldier should be self-sufficient. To be clean then requires the soldier to observe vigilantly the "laws of health," to preserve, as the second point bids, vigor and perseverance in the face not only of bullets and artillery, but also against the third point's temptation of excess. Indeed, the excesses, those outlying deviations from the quiet norm of soldierly moderation and experience, point to the central problem in Ziegler's leaflet: character formation. Ziegler is suspicious of self-gratification. Soldiers are advised to consume food in moderation, to drink water by "sipping slowly," (4) and to abstain from alcohol and tobacco completely.

⁴⁰ De Forest and Croushore, *A Volunteer's Adventures: A Union Captain's Record of the Civil War* 41.

⁴¹ Both soldier and citizen shared "the tediums of peace" wherein long stretches of boredom oscillated with quick flashes of excitement. Out of the six and a half years he served in the army, De Forest reported only forty-six days of combat (Wilson 682). *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* is well over four hundred pages long, and no more than twenty of those are devoted to the battlefield itself. De Forest's aesthetic is frequently informed by his private desire for a conversion experience in order to counteract the quotidian. We see that desire in his adventures in Europe and then again when he joins the military, and once more when he is forced to reenter civilian life at the war's end. When he was finishing *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* in 1866 while working at the Freedmen's Bureau in Greensboro, North Carolina, De Forest was caught, much like Colburne at the end of the novel, in the transition from military hero to ordinary citizen. In the final pages, one cannot help but read De Forest's own conflicted set of identities in the description of Colburne, now a lawyer, whom the narrator labels a "failure as a soldier" at the same time he is heralded as a "soldier citizen" (468) ready to take on the challenges of Reconstruction.

⁴² Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* 170.

⁴³ This straddling of North and South is reflected in De Forest's own biography as well. He married in 1855 a woman from South Carolina whose father taught at the medical college in Charleston, and as mentioned before, after the war, De Forest would work for the Freedmen's Bureau in Greensboro, North Carolina for several years.

⁴⁴ Henry James, "Miss Ravenel's Conversion," *Critical Essays on John William De Forest*, ed. James W. Gargano (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981) 50. Originally published *Nation* 4 (20 June 1867): 491-92.

⁴⁵ Edwin Oviatt, "J.W. De Forest in New Haven," *Critical Essays on John William De Forest*, ed. James W. Gargano (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981) 40-41. Originally published *New York Times* 17 December 1898: 856.

⁴⁶ Whitman, *Specimen Days in America* 73.

⁴⁷ Robert Penn Warren aligns the vision of the war with pragmatic philosophy in *The Legacy of the Civil War* (New York: Random House, 1961). Warren quoted the historian Sidney Hook's assessment of Lincoln as the quintessential pragmatist: "To be principled without being fanatical, and flexible without being opportunistic, summarizes the logic and ethics of pragmatism in action" (18). Warren makes a similar argument as Louis Menand, that the experience of war for Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. influenced his juridical theories of reasonableness and the common man. See Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001). Similarly, Edmund Wilson compared De Forest's stoicism to pragmatic ideals in *Patriotic Gore*. Forest's style was emblematic of a confident "rigidity" (668) which was evident in other soldier-writers such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Ambrose Bierce: "All of these writers, then, are positive and disciplined, sometimes trenchant and always concise, as if they were sure of themselves, as if they knew exactly what to think" (654).

⁴⁸ Dr. Ravenel imagined the Civil War as the ordained culmination of history, divided like a Shakespearean comedy into five acts. "First, the Christian revelation. Second, the Protestant reformation. Third, the war of American Independence. Fourth, the French revolution. Fifth, the struggle for the freedom of all men, without distinction of race and color; this Democratic struggle which confirms the masses in an equality with the few" (445).

⁴⁹ Civil War veterans reaped many more benefits than did their Revolutionary counterparts. See Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), in particular 105-59.

⁵⁰ John William De Forest, "The Great American Novel," *Critical Essays on John William De Forest*, ed. James W. Gargano (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981) 35. Originally published *Nation* 6 (8 January 1868): 27-29.

⁵¹ James, "Miss Ravenel's Conversion," 50. Originally published *Nation* 4 (20 June 1867): 491-92.

⁵² William Dean Howells, "[A Review of *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*]," *Critical Essays on John William De Forest*, ed. James W. Gargano (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981) 54. Originally published *Atlantic Monthly* 20 (July 1867): 120-22.

⁵³ William Dean Howells, *Criticism and Fiction* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) 43-44.

⁵⁴ William Dean Howells and George Warren Arms, *Selected Letters*, vol. 3, 6 vols. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978). The first two references appear on page 170; the last regarding Tolstoy appears on 196.

EPILOGUE

I do not sleep though I sometimes dose off a little. If up I am talked to and in my efforts to answer cause pain. The fact is I think I am a verb instead of a personal pronoun. A verb is anything that signifies to be; to do; or to suffer. I signify all three.

Ulysses S. Grant, on his deathbed (1885)

There it is.

Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn* (2010)¹

I.

Civilian authors during the waning years of the nineteenth century became more sympathetic to the soldier and his suffering than writers ever had before. Realist novelists in the United States often reacted against Romanticism by relying on the sobriety of military experience. Basil Ransom walks through Harvard's Memorial Hall in Henry James' *The Bostonians* (1886) and "lingered longest in the presence of the white, ranged tablets, each of which, in its proud, sad clearness, is inscribed with the name of a student-soldier."² Civil War veteran and *nouveau riche* Silas Lapham dines with 'we non-combatants [who] were notoriously reluctant to give up fighting'" in William Dean Howell's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). The personal narrative of his wartime experience captivates the civilian crowd; "I don't want to see any more men killed in my time.' Something serious, something somber must lurk behind these words, and they waited for Lapham to say more...."³ The nation's wonder did not last. American foreign policy at the turn of the century undercut any lingering sympathy for

common soldiers. During the Spanish-American War, Secretary of War Elihu Root was the first to imagine the American military as a corporation of impersonal automata.

The American soldier today is a part of a great machine which we call military organization; a machine in which, as by electrical converters, the policy of government is transformed into the strategy of the general, into the tactics of the field and into the action of the man behind the gun.

Through that machine he is fed, clothed, transported and armed, equipped and housed....The machine today is defective; it needs improvement; it ought to be improved.⁴

Imperialism fueled Naturalism's critique of the nation's callous indifference for the individual and his will. We see the military's ideal of the efficient machine influence not only Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1896), but also Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Frank Norris' *The Octopus* (1901), and Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908).

During the same period, American soldier-authors repeated the pattern of literary division they had begun in the Revolutionary War. Prisoner-of-war captivity narratives from the Civil War surfaced as early as 1862 and continued to be published throughout the 1880s. Echoing the literary appeal of Joseph Plumb Martin, William Tecumseh Sherman penned his memoir to correct the perennial distortions of his character in the newspapers. Ulysses S. Grant was bankrupt while dying of throat cancer, and only wrote his account of the war in the hopes of supporting his family after his death.⁵ The twentieth century brought on what Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* called "the one dominating form of modern understanding... essentially ironic...it

originates largely in the application of mind and memory of the Great War.” Can the twentieth century responsibly claim such exceptionalism? There is no way to describe Ambrose Bierce’s *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891) except as irony tinged with terror.⁶ The veteran’s ironic futility in John Dos Passos’ *Three Soldiers* (1921), Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), and Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* (1955) descends as much from Bierce as Bierce descends from Thomas Dring’s horrific *Jersey* prison-ship. From the earliest republic to today, soldier literature in the United States has always informed other literary and cultural practices even while insisting on its privileged and separate status. The varieties of American military experience have remained an essentially private and unknown affair.

II.

Khe Sanh of today survives as little more than an overgrown coffee plantation. No remnants survive of the United States Marine base that withstood the siege of the North Vietnamese in the early months of 1968. No barracks. No graves. If you are with someone who knows his way around, you can find what remains of the base’s airstrip by escaping out the back of the official memorial area. The runway’s red dirt has been warped into disrepair after years of rain and neglect, though it still can be made out if you look closely. Walking the runway’s length forces you to try and imagine the combat that once colored the landscape, but this vision as well is difficult to focus. Hills 881 North and South can be seen in the distance, while indifferent trash from the plantation’s workers can be seen on the ground. For a small admission fee, you can return and enter

once again the official memorial space, a small outside square cordoned off by a makeshift fence and guarded by a lone state worker. The geography of this memorial contains a few exhibits of American aircraft shot down during the siege, as well as an aging museum that stands proudly on the former site of Charlie Med and Graves Registration. This lone building houses yet more American materiel captured during the battle, mostly weapons, radios, and uniforms. They are the trophies of the Vietnamese victory, as are the photographs lining the walls. Captions accompanying the images pay tribute to the bravery of the North Vietnamese army while downplaying the claims of American honor. A forlorn picture of Lyndon Johnson stands in the midst of the profiles of smiling North Vietnamese heroes. Below, an anonymous curator has written, “What was he thinking?”

For the visitor interested in understanding a bit of the American experience of war today, there is little ostensible reason to come to Khe Sanh. As is their right, the Vietnamese have overridden the space with their coffee as well as their patriotism, and the flavor of the site’s collective memory is certainly one good reason to dissuade Western sightseers. The logistics required in getting there are another. Most tours of the DMZ leave from Hué, Vietnam’s ancient cultural capital, or Dong Hoi, a little further north, and the driving time from these cities down Highway 9 (past the Rockpile, past Camp Carroll, past the Ho Chi Minh Trail) to Khe Sanh takes the better part of five hours. Five hours there, five hours back. Most visitors only have a few minutes to experience Khe Sanh if they even decide to embark on the journey, especially if they also want to go further down the road to see Lang Vay Special Forces Camp before turning back. It is a lot of time and work for not a lot of what they probably came there to see,

and yet despite these toils and these disappointments, Americans (and Europeans, and Vietnamese, and a whole host of other nationals) still manage to come each year. Why would anyone still come to such an invisible and remote spot of war, especially since, to quote Gertrude Stein in a different context, there is no *there* there?

I have hitherto commented on the literary history of the soldier-author and the contemporary unease surrounding the soldier-critic, but there remains the open question of the soldier who makes no claim to literary and academic concerns. Many soldiers are writers despite any official designation otherwise, and they come to places like Khe Sanh in order to watch and guide the authorship of their military experience. In the entranceway to Khe Sanh's museum, there is a large table that holds a thick red guest book. When the book becomes filled, another identical volume takes its place.⁷ Most of the civilian entries reverberate with emotion and earnestness, even if their form and message are often clichéd and conventional. "Khe Sanh is a reminder and monument.... When will we ever learn?" A Canadian writes simply, "Lest we not forget." A man from Belgium is more frustrated, "Don't let this shit ever happen again." These writers of the book are not soldiers, and they write with a sense of hope for the future as well as distance from the past. "Best wishes for the local people!" The war in civilian words is represented as a pedagogy, both a lesson and a promise, whereas the war in the soldiers' words reads as an angry angel of history, always looking back, always at face with the memory of unpleasant things. "Good afternoon," a Marine captain writes on May 5, 2009. "Those who write in this book that didn't serve have needs to be careful on what you write. You must have walked the walk before you talk the talk."

Two and a half weeks later, “two English people enjoying Vietnam” write that they “admire the Vietnamese for moving on from war but not forgetting the atrocities. The Vietnamese culture is to be loved and [policy] makers must come to see the culture and taste the cuisine. Remember war but do not glorify in it.” Below this couple’s entry, the scrawl of the same Marine from before has returned: “Atrocities were committed by both sides you dumb ass Englishmen.” This Marine has come back, one suspects, because he feels the guest book of war is being written incorrectly. Is his anger misplaced?⁸ The Englishmen have not been nasty, political, or openly partisan, and yet what they write is less important than the fact that they were writing anything at all. Five short days later, the same Marine returns yet again, his third visit to Khe Sanh in less than a month. “The same dumb asses continue to write in this book. Remember in order to talk the talk, you need to walk the walk.” A different Marine from June 12 offers a bit more balance amidst the polyphony. “I fought to assure everyone to speak freely, no matter what the opinion or view they may wish to espouse. I have no bad feelings for anything anyone else has felt here, or written here.” Even then, the soldier’s claims to the war still pulls at him. Remembering his first day at Khe Sanh in January 1968, the second Marine is left with this image that remains: “Above the command bunker was a sign which read: FOR THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR IT, FREEDOM HAS A FLAVOR THE DEFENDED NEVER KNOW. I believe that holds true no matter on which side you fought.”

The soldiers in Khe Sanh’s guest book react as if civilians were trying to speak for them—as if civilians were trying to speak for war. The implication is that non-combatants do not share the horror, and so we cannot sense the closing off being in a war provokes. Could we say otherwise? All of this is not to say that the soldier knows better

than the nation, the civilian, or the critic the infinite varieties of suffering produced by war and war's aftermath, only that the soldier represents a facet of suffering that is something altogether different from heartache on the homefront, something closer to what we actually mean when we evoke the language of war. War is that word we mobilize in order to collect the highly individualized experiences of men and women in combat and in camp, those who, oftentimes against their better nature, reason and will, are exposed to the unrelenting work of waiting and hoping and killing and dying. We cannot imagine the long history of American war critically without first returning to the neglected repositories of soldiers and their voices.

¹ Note to doctor dated July 1885 in Ulysses S. Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters* (New York: Library of America, 1990) 1120. Second epigraph is from Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2010) 23.

² Henry James, *The Bostonians* (New York: Modern Library, 2003) 235.

³ William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (New York: Penguin, 1986) 201.

⁴ Elihu Root, Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports by Elihu Root* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916) 3-4. Root's words are taken from his speech, "The American Soldier, Address by the Secretary of War at the Marquette Club in Chicago, October 7, 1899, in Response to the Toast, 'The American Soldier'."

⁵ See for example Alfred Ely, *Journal of Alfred Ely, a Prisoner of War in Richmond*, ed. Charles Lanman (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1862), William Gilchrist, *Two Months in Fort Lafayette* (New York: Printed for the author, 1862), Thomas O Lucas, *A Diary; Four Months' Prison Life of the First Maryland Regiment, at Lynchburg and Richmond* (Baltimore: Printed by Sherwood & Co., 1862), Dennis A. Mahony, *The Prisoner of State* (New York: Carleton, 1863), James Madison Drake, *Fast and Loose in Dixie: An Unprejudiced Narrative of Personal Experience as a Prisoner of War at Libby, Macon, Savannah, and Charleston* (New York: Authors' Pub. Co., 1880), Thomas H. Howe, *Adventures of an Escaped Union Prisoner from Andersonville* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker & Co., 1886). Sherman often digresses in his memoir to include letters to newspaper editors who portrayed him incorrectly. To Samuel Sawyer, editor of the *Union Appeal* in Memphis, Sherman wrote in 1862:

Personalities in a newspaper are wrong and criminal. . . .The evidence should be carefully collected, authenticated, and then placed in my hands. . . .If I find the press of Memphis actuated by high principle and a sole devotion to their country, I will be their best friend; but, if I find them personal, abusive, dealing in innuendoes and hints at a blind venture, and looking to their own selfish aggrandizement and fame, then they had better look out.

William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of W.T. Sherman* (New York: Penguin, 2000) 248-49.

⁶ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) 35.

⁷ The following reflections are the result of only one day spent at Khe Sanh in June 2009. Surely other volumes from different months, if not also separate collections from other war memorials, could support or countervail the distinctions I am making. Though my sampling is by no means exhaustive, I would note that guest books from the same month at Quãng Tri and the Vinh Moc tunnels read very similarly.

⁸ The rigor of this Marine's voice is compelling, yet it is also somewhat misplaced. Each of these entries is signed "Capt USMC 65-66-69-70." The siege at Khe Sanh happened during 1968. For that matter, the Marine identifies himself in his second inscription as a member of "2/4 (Best in the Corps)," a designation meant to signify the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, also known as the "Magnificent Bastards." The 2/4 Marines saw plenty of combat in Vietnam, but they were not at Khe Sanh. The 26th Marines were.

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