NARRATIVE TRIAGE:

VETERANS, DISABILITY, RACE,

AND THE POPULAR FICTION OF THE COLD WAR

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Abstract: This dissertation argues that there are a series of disability narratives embedded James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens' novels that undermine the cultural myths revolving around soldiers' bodies. Following the Attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called on Hollywood to keep the public abreast of the nation's war efforts. The Office of War Information was established in 1942 to assist with this task. What was intended to be an objective office that reported honestly on the complex issues of the war, however, became something more controversial. Under military and government pressure, the OWI implemented a series of stipulations that ensured the U.S. Armed Forces and its operations were favorably portrayed in motion pictures. As a result, the public consumed curated representations of the war that mythologized their understanding of soldiers' experiences, including what happens to their bodies in combat. In what I term narrative triage, Hollywood films aesthetically rehabilitated representations of war wounds for the sake of mobilizing support. In some cases, these representations symbolized heroism, appealing to the audience's patriotism. Other times, they reinforced the racial stratification of a pre-civil rights America, as Black Gis' injuries signified their inferiority. Elsewhere, they were restored through medical treatments, easing viewers' anxieties over the long-term effects of war wounds. And, above all, they were rewarded with medals, women, and job promotions, leading audiences to believe that wounded soldiers may struggle as a result of their injuries, but would nevertheless find optimistic endings.

The war fiction by James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens, as the chapters of this dissertation examine, undermine such Hollywood myths. As I will show, the writers' representations of service-related disabilities serve as embodied experiences that impact the characters' social, gendered, racial, and military identities. They accomplish these portraits for two reasons. First, each served in the U.S. Army during the SWW, witnessing firsthand—and in some cases experiencing—the somatic and traumatic damage that occurred during the political conflict. Second, the writers were not held to the same OWI stipulations as the film industry. By resisting narrative triage and relying on their ethos, then, the veterans portray war wounds in ways that draw attention to the military's complex relationship with the body, uncover the self-serving aspects of military medicine, question the efficacy of postwar remasculinization, and expose the physical ramifications of a segregated Jim Crow Army. Framed with recent disability scholarship and historical accounts, my dissertation suggests their novels challenge cultural memories of the war and its material effects on the men who served, and do so at a critical moment in the nation's history. While the U.S. increasingly relied on cultural productions to fortify its image during the Cold War, the veteran writers' work collectively posits the nation was not as inviolable as it seemed.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

The American fiction of the Second World War charts a robust terrain of ideas, perspectives, and stories, which frequently revolve around one key narrative element: the soldier's wounded body. Entire narratives, significant subplots, and even brief but crucial scenes focusing on combat-related injuries and impairments reveal a vast discourse on topics including political violence, class disparity, gender dynamics, and race relations. My dissertation examines such representations of war wounds by three veteran writers in particular: James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens. Through a series of close readings grounded in historical context and framed in disability theory, I argue that Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels collectively posit a set of countervailing narratives that undermine the myths revolving around war wounds that were perpetuated by popular Hollywood films during the conflict as well as the postwar years. In conducting these readings, I suggest the veteran writers resist glamorization, hero worship, and even pity in favor of encouraging more complex and nuanced views of such injuries and impairments that, as a result, challenge cultural assumptions of what it meant to be seriously hurt in the course of the political conflict.

To begin, my dissertation is guided by a central question: What are the myths of the Second World War, and how do they influence societal perceptions of military wounds? This question clears the way for a series of inquiries that inform my readings of the selected texts, which include: How do the novels address the relationship between the military institution and

war wounds? In what ways does the medical treatment of injuries and impairments affect the soldier characters' understanding of their service? What role do the invisible wounds of war play within these novels and how does this square with the cultural consensus on psychological and internal injuries? How do these novels complicate the popular motif of postwar remasculinization among wounded veterans? How do the representations of racialized war wounds in these novels challenge the cultural assumption that injuries among Black GIs were indicative their social inferiority? In working through these questions, my research will arrive at three final, overarching questions: Collectively, what do these novels impart about war wounds and how does that differ from cultural myths? Considering the publication dates, which range from 1948 to 1978, what are the Cold War implications of the disability narratives embedded within these WWII novels? And finally, what does reading these novels from a disability studies perspective mean for writers who have, in the decades following the war, lost critical favor and apparent relevance? Before exploring these inquires and the complex answers they yield, it is first necessary to historicize these writers, the critical significance of their work in the pantheon of war fiction, and how their novels square with--or square against--the Hollywood productions of the SWW.

Writing the Second World War

In the aftermath of the SWW, many soldiers returned stateside where they took to literature, fictionalizing their experiences in military training, serving overseas, and fighting in combat zones. This group included writers ranging from the more famous James Jones, Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut, J.D. Salinger, and Joseph Heller to lesser recognized but prolific writers such as John Oliver Killens, Irwin Shaw, Herman Wouk, Richard Matheson, and Edward L. Beach Jr. Notably, their decision to write fiction is curious. Of all the possible avenues and

media, why would these men choose to confront and illustrate their wartime memories and lingering traumas in the form of novels? Although every veteran writer has their personal reasons, Jennifer Haytock surmises that there is a "need to understand and share their lives through writing and the conviction that writing about war can offer something to others" (9). Regarding this offering, WWII combat veteran turned literary critic Samuel Hynes suggests that the "soldiers' tale, in its infinite variety, tells the whole story," "keeping alive a sense of what war is really like, when you're in it" (*The Soldiers' Tale* xiii, *On War and Writing* 11). Combined with their ethos, fictional genres equipped these veteran writers with a set of tools that helped them draw civilian attention to complex ideas about the war, especially in terms of violence and politics, that were not frequently nor easily conveyed elsewhere. Omniscient narrators could build tension, illuminating how a character's thoughts were in conflict with their actions. Figurative language like metaphors and objective correlatives were vehicles to make sense of the senseless horror. And narrative aesthetics such as imagery attuned readers to the unsightly visuals of the battlefield that reverberated within the writers' psyches. Through literature, veteran writers of the SWW were able to forward an unparalleled artistic examination of the conflict that, while "unimaginable" to those who did not witness it firsthand, provided a jarring and detailed close encounter with the utterly mundane days sitting around the bivouac to the palpable fear that seized a character's body as they moved over a ridge under enemy fire (Hynes 11).

When the bulk of these novels were released during the postwar years, critics lionized the veteran writers for the integrity they brought to fictional accounts of the SWW. Paul Fussell, long regarded as a leading scholar on war and culture, cautions that the "actualities of the war are more clearly knowable from some books than others" (290). Although he argues that "the real

war is unlikely to be found in novels," Fussell cites the most "honorable" and worthwhile attempts as those written by the men who served in the military.[1] And while John W. Aldridge saw an "absence of genuine technical innovation" among such attempts, he maintains that the novels demonstrate "an exceedingly workmanlike job of recording in minute detail the progression of event after event, violence after violence" of a "war even more disturbing than the first" (128, 97, 87). This level of precision, according to Peter Aichinger, provides the "basis for an understanding of the point of view of the enlisted man as a person rather than as the symbol of national outlook" as was the often case in the literature of World War I (45). These points of view, Aichinger continues, go beyond merely recounting the events of the war to fashion political discourses that "represent a summing up and response to the problem of warfare and the military establishment in the modern age" (84). While no singular claim nor critic can accurately distill the cultural significance of the veteran writers' works, Fussell, Aldridge, and Aichinger nonetheless attest to the ways in which the veterans' novels shed light on the depravity, inhumanity, and even absurdity underscoring the SWW in a way and to an extent that only they could.

Among this small but remarkable cadre, James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens stand out for their exceptionally mimetic novels. Whereas J.D. Salinger imbued his Glass family stories with the highbrow aesthetics typical of literary modernism, and Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller later deployed trademark postmodern techniques such as time travel and meta-narratives, Jones, Mailer, and Killens drew from the late 19th century movement of Realism. Regarding the importance of the genre to the WWII novel, Jennifer Haytock explains that their works "represent the ordinary soldier in the material and psychological fullness of his world" (109). Eschewing popular literary trends, the three writers, all of whom served in some capacity

in the Pacific Theatre, relied on the principles of Realism to create sobering portraits of combat and postwar experiences. Their works draw from historically concrete details and illustrate how the social conditions produced in the war influenced human character. As James Dawes explains, the precision of subject matter in Realist war novels, especially the introspective revelations, makes for meaningful engagements among readers. While their work offers a noteworthy "anthropological commitment to preserving for posterity the small details of subcultures" such as military jargon and slang, Dawes argues that its greater significance lies with the illustrations of the horrors of war: "the heart sickening content demands at least some speculation about the meaning of recklessly shattered lives," and as I will suggest, recklessly shattered bodies (57). Rendering such tense ideas is what distinguishes Jones, Mailer, and Killens from other veteran writers, including those similarly working along the lines of Realism. Whereas Harry Brown, Leon Uris, and Herman Wouk, to borrow Fussell's language, "melodramatized" their narratives to invoke patriotic themes about discipline, determination, and democracy, Jones, Mailer, and Killens take a different approach (291). Through their mimetic novels, the veteran writers unflinchingly question the disturbing nature of political violence and the spurious intentions of the belligerents on either side of the conflict.

As grim as their novels are, and despite their intimidating page counts, the writers' efforts paid off in dividends. In the postwar years, Jones and Mailer were widely regarded as the most important war writers. Throughout the 50s, 60s, and 70s Jones rode a massive wave of success off of *From Here to Eternity* (1951), *The Thin Red Line* (1962), and *Whistle* (1978), winning the National Book Award, appearing on talk shows, radio interviews, consulting on other cultural productions of the war, and enjoying the financial rewards of having his best-selling novels adapted into motion pictures. Although Mailer struggled with bouts of personal and financial

trouble, his 1948 war novel *The Naked and the Dead* propelled him into cultural stardom, a position he relished as he also appeared on talk shows and won literary accolades such as the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for his subsequent work. To a lesser extent, Killens enjoyed popularity and success as well. In a pre-civil rights era, the Black veteran's *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1962) was viewed as on par with that of Jones' *The Thin Red Line*. He was associated with the most revered African American writers of the period, appeared on television, and actively campaigned for social justice reform. In addition to resonating with an American public that had just gone through the war, the veteran writers' fiction was also venerated by critics upon their publication and for decades to come. In his 1970s study of war fiction, for instance, Peter Aichinger upholds Jones' loosely defined trilogy as close-encounter with the soldiers' emotional responses, arguing that it "helps the reader understand the depressions which follow the artificial stimulus of danger" (105). Jeffrey Walsh, writing in the 1980s, considers Jones' work "exceptional for its protracted investigation of the abuses of military power" (142). Turning his attention to Mailer, Walsh similarly praises the veteran writers' interrogation of war's consequences, describing *The Naked and the Dead* as a "moral fable designed to exhibit the regressive tendencies of men at war" (118). Anticipating this idea in the late 1960s, Barry Leeds also extolls the ways in which Mailer's characters crumble under the stress of the combat zone, arguing that the novel strikes at the "futility of the human condition" (50). And while George Norford points to thematic parallels in Killens' novel in his 1963 review of *And Then We Heard the Thunder*, he emphasizes the central conflict of "a black soldier's search for dignity in a white dominated army" as necessarily dynamizing war fiction of the period (152). For all of their differences and similarities, the novels coalesce to portray the war from a particular angle. With a "lack of a crusading spirit," Jones, Mailer, and Killens forgo

saccharine depictions in favor of encouraging, if not forcing, their readership to reckon with the disturbing ironies, inconvenient truths, and battered bodies of the SWW (Aichinger 37).

Curating the Second World War

As much as Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels shaped perceptions of the war, they were among a swell of other institutions, organizations, and artists telling the story. From films and news stories to radio broadcasts and op-eds, from comic books and pulp-serials to paintings and photographs, narratives about the SWW were ubiquitous. In fact, the proliferation of these cultural productions marks the apogee of the American war narrative. During no other political conflict nor time in American history were there more war stories produced, released, and circulated. During the war years alone, several hundred combat films were made. And after Japan formally surrendered to the United States on September 2nd, 1945, a steady stream of hundreds more war narratives across a variety of mediums were consumed by the American public. This robust surplus was in no way excessive, either. For citizens gripped by the uncertainty of the war taking place overseas, incensed by the attack on Pearl Harbor, and eventually elated over the allied victory, SWW narratives were welcomed for decades. Yet, much like Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels, these representations were never neutral. From the most successful to the utter failures, they influenced how civilians viewed the conflict and the experiences of the soldiers who served. In some cases, this was simply the nature of storytelling; by showcasing different perspectives, the narrative prioritized particular values. However, for the U.S. Government, the Good war narrative was an exceptional instrument in controlling cultural responses to, and later the memory of, the global conflict.

From its entry in December of 1941 through the conclusion of the war, the federal government carried out a political campaign through Hollywood films. Relying on its money,

resources, and most of all, authority, U.S agencies endeavored to manipulate the messaging of war films, ensuring pictures favorably depicted the country, its military, and the war effort. This set of regulations officially took form shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, recognizing that the "motion picture was the most effective medium to inform the nation," established the Office of War Information (OWI) (Fyne 9).[2] With domestic and overseas departments, the OWI operated as an information liaison between battlefields and civilians. While they fulfilled this role through a variety of media including newspapers, posters, and, most popularly, radio, one of their most widespread vehicles for disseminating information domestically was the silver screen. In theory, the OWI's mission was to keep the public informed on matters related to the war by way of motion pictures. In practice, however, the agency pressured Hollywood to release films that mobilized support among the public and furthered the federal government's objectives. Describing the OWI as the "official watchdog of the film industry," Robert Fyne explains the agency "issued elaborate guidelines" for film studios to "insure conformity in every photoplay" (Fyne 9). "Hollywood moguls," Fyne continues, "had to sift through hundreds of pages of official instructions to insure compliance with the federal directives" (9). Every line of dialogue, scene, and character was subject to revision if it failed to meet the expectations imposed by the government agency. For some Hollywood industry types, adhering to the OWI's central question of "will this picture help win the war?" was not an issue. Moved by Roosevelt's appeal for national unity amidst the threat of fascism, many filmmakers and actors alike made movies with overt patriotic themes. Conversely, anyone trying to raise questions about the political conflict, or the nation's motives--or who happened to depict even the slightest ambiguity about either--faced scrutiny from the OWI.[3] This is not to say every Hollywood war film posited a reductive take on battlefield combat or the hardships of soldiering.

To the contrary, on-screen deaths of allied soldiers were shown and somber endings frequently occurred; however, as George H. Roeder Jr. contests, these cinematic elements were framed to suggest that "whatever the war's cost, all was for the best" (73).

By the end of the SWW, Hollywood's contributions were wildly successful. The wealth of films released during the war years boosted recruitment among the armed forces and, more importantly, "provided the doses of morale necessary to sustain a nation enmeshed in a global war" (Fyne 12). This success, though, was predicated on the OWI's mandates, which crossed an ethical boundary. Although government officials, including the President, assured the public that they would never censor American media—a move no doubt intended to position themselves against Nazi practices—the agency molded such cultural representations in the nation's favor through what David L. Robb views as a calculated "process of manipulation and negotiation," and what Fyne more emphatically cites as an "effective combination of information, patriotism, hero-worship, and propaganda" (21, 10). Moreover, they were screened to audiences that were, according to James E. Combs and Sara T. Combs, "receptive to reinforcing messages that sustained their morale and the conviction that the war was worth fighting for and being won" (56). In the span of four years, Hollywood released a staggering number of films that necessarily bolstered U.S. war efforts against the axis while favorably portraying the nation and its military defeating ever-malevolent forces.

Although President Harry S. Truman terminated the OWI following the allied victory in September 1945, the government regulations imposed on Hollywood persisted into the postwar years. In fact, as David L. Robb explains, "the collaboration between Hollywood and the military reached its zenith in the 1950s, when Hollywood was churning out hundreds of movies set against the backdrop of World War II" (286). This ongoing "collaboration" was sustained by

Pentagon officials, who served as Hollywood liaisons and continued monitoring Tinseltown's representations. Their influence at this historical juncture seems unnecessary. The U.S. was celebrating the allied victory and experiencing a period of unprecedented economic growth. Politically, however, the nation was in a precarious position. Events of the war had triggered a series of consequences—both international and domestic—that demanded attention. The attack on Pearl Harbor, notably, rattled President Roosevelt and, as Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall explain, "led him to conclude that the United States was truly...insecure," which was a feeling that carried over to the Truman administration as tensions brewed with one-time U.S. ally, the Soviet Union (56). Despite previous cooperation, the U.S. "began to regard the Soviet Union as an adversary because its army stood astride much of eastern Europe, and because it was refusing to go along with Washington's global plans" (58). Public cooperation, however, remained an obstacle. As Craig and Logevall explain, "the American public, eager for peace after four years of sacrifice, would never support a harrowing major war on the other side of the world just to overthrow its former ally" (60). Public fatigue threatened to undercut support for militarism amid the brewing conflict with the USSR. Thus, following their successful wartime program, the government again turned to America's most popular form of entertainment. Hollywood war films—a "soft power" deployed throughout the Cold War—continued bolstering the patriotism of its civilians, instilling faith in their Armed Forces and government (Craig and Logevall 355). To this end, these films served a dual purpose, not only shaping how the public remembered the SWW but also how they responded to the present geopolitical conflict—one that would last for over forty years.

Additionally, there was the veteran issue. Over half a million demobilized soldiers, many with some form of service-related disability and nearly all experiencing some form of what

would later be identified as post-traumatic stress disorder, returned to a country that had evolved while they were away. Gender dynamics had shifted. With men taking a leave of absence from their jobs to serve, there was a labor shortage. Responding to this need, many women, some of whom wanted to do their part and others needing to make ends meet in their husband's absence, entered the workforce and assumed more independence in their social lives. Race relations, too, had changed. Although Jim Crow Laws were still in place, many BIPOC citizens took jobs during the war years that had been historically reserved for white men. Recognizing this dilemma, David Gerber writes, the public, community leaders, and state officials feared a "demobilization crisis" was imminent (72). In addition to the advice literature that was circulated among military families, Gerber argues that public strategy and response to veterans was "learned by watching Hollywood movies" (75). Similar to the combat films that mobilized American support during the war years, postwar films about veteran reintegration and rehabilitation carefully established "formulaic happy endings for the interpersonal and social confusions that seemed to attend demobilization" (Gerber 75). By staying their course, the government and Hollywood continued relying on movies as a "guide to behavior," tutoring the American public in how they should handle the war's consequences while simultaneously rallying the nation in the face of the Red Scare (Combs and Combs 65).

Promoting war films as both a source of entertainment and, more problematically, information, the OWI and Hollywood crossed an ethical boundary. Cultural productions refracted the SWW into more digestible, inspiring, and "unambiguous terms" (Roeder 69). Rather than process the war in all of its complexity and unpleasantness, filmgoers bought into curated takes on battlefield combat, soldiering, and veteran experiences, accepting the cinematic portrayals as truth rather than fictionalized accounts. As a result, the characters, the storylines,

the scenes, the dialogue, the symbols, and the themes all converged to mythologize the SWW into what has been culturally embraced as the *Good War*. Undergirding this myth, according to Samuel Hynes, is the central notion that "Good confronted Evil, and Good won" (38). Consistently framing the war as a "struggle between light and darkness," Hollywood films posited a sweeping generalization about the U.S. Armed Forces (Koppes and Black 169).[4] The public came to see their military in absolute terms—a paragon of political righteousness made up of selfless and heroic men. This myth, moreover, engendered a series of supporting sub-myths. Commenting on the precision of American weapons in filmic depictions, for example, Roeder Jr. observes that "in wartime imagery the United States destroyed only bad things" (70). The targets of these attacks, as James E. Combs and Sara T. Combs explain, were also the targets of such myth making. "Reconfigured as both subhuman and superhuman, barbarian and ultrasophisticate, an enemy of God and civilization, the demonic agent of death and rapine, the antithesis of 'us,'" portraits of German and Japanese soldiers—even civilians—reinforced racial stereotypes (56). In total, the myths that prop up the good war comprise an extensive list that, in Fyne's analysis of Hollywood propaganda encompasses "military strength, Home Front sacrifices, ethnic harmony, underground resistance, [and] individual heroism" (10). While these films garnered public support, increased recruitment, and guided the nation to the war's conclusion and beyond, they skewed the actualities of what took place in the European and Pacific theatres as well as at home, leading the public to believe in "a bare moral fable" (Hynes 38).

Narrative Triage

Ensnared in this myth making is the soldier's body. As a tangible entity—the embodiment of the state—the characters' physical integrity and soundness of mind was a

symbolic goldmine for the motion picture industry. Abstract concepts such as national strength, political power, and bravery could easily be represented through stoic and brawny soldiers imbued with physical prowess and intrinsic determination. Something needed to be done, however, to address the unavoidable reality of war wounds. With over 600,000 soldiers injured or severely disabled in the course of the conflict, there simply was no way around the staggering number. Wounds and injuries had to appear on screen, and more importantly, they had to appear in ways that further contributed to the film's mobilization efforts. Just as creative license was taken to favorably represent weapons and enemies, similar efforts were made to portray service-related injuries and impairments.

In a process that I term *narrative triage*, Hollywood war films intentionally included a gamut of wounds to perform what can be described as an aesthetic rehabilitation. In the course of the film's plot, representations of such injuries are framed in ways that pull bodily variation away from historically pejorative views and remediate them as material confirmations of a character's patriotism and personal sacrifice. By the film's denouement, those same wounds are literally cured through medicine and miracles, or figuratively healed through gestures such as awards, social acceptance, and, above all, winning the war. I draw this theory from David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder influential work on disability studies. As these scholars have shown, cultural productions throughout the American 20th century relied on representations of human variation as a central function of a narrative. In their theory of narrative prosthesis, which "refers to the pervasiveness of disability as a device of characterization," Snyder and Mitchell argue that one of the primary motives of a narrative that features alterity is to "bring the body's unruliness under control" (9, 6). Elaborating on this point, they explain that the "variability of bodies serves literary narratives as a metonym for that which refuses to conform to the mind's

desire for order and rationality" (48). Such instances demand redress—the narrative must restore the order compromised by the presence of alterity. In short, then, Mitchell and Snyder's theory of narrative prosthesis maintains that disability has been historically deployed within art to inaugurate the central conflict of the narrative, signify a character's corrupt attributes and morals, or allegorize social chaos. This approach, as the duo argues, has consequences that go beyond the text. In appropriating disability for the needs of a plot, narrative prosthesis "abandons a serious contemplation of the difference that disability makes as a socially negotiated identity" (10).

Situated in the context of my theory of narrative triage, war films depicted combat injuries to serve the plot as well as the government's underlying political agenda. However, the process of restoring order to combat-related disability begins well before it appears on screen due to the fissure between the grisly wounds of the SWW and Hollywood's effort to mobilize support. Mutilated stumps, gushing head wounds, and obliterated genitals, if depicted, could be interpreted by viewers as signifying chaos, frailty, loss, and emasculation. Such bodily disorder could unravel the film's primary goal of boosting morale and showcasing American grit and superiority. Therefore, to maintain control and serve their purpose, war films were particularly careful while representing the moments when soldier characters were wounded. In these scenes, the characters' injuries, which most often occur in one of their limbs rather than the face or groin, are frequently clean, bloodless, painless, and the definite result of enemy fire. Framed in this way, the films not only justify the wound's incurrence as an inevitable hazard of wartime service, but also as a bodily experience that could be endured by the characters and deserved celebration. In withstanding the political violence brought on by foreign agents, filmic representations of war wounds were tantamount to patriotic ideals such as bravery, heroism, and honor.

Take for example, *To Hell and Back* (1955), starring the decorated WWII veteran Audie Murphy playing a fictional version of himself. During the movie's climatic battle scene, Murphy fends off dozens of German soldiers with a .50 caliber machine gun on top of an M-4 Sherman tank, allowing his company to retreat to safety. Although he is injured during the melee, the bloody specifics of his wound—gunfire to the leg—are nonexistent. In fact, he hardly flinches, overcoming any pain to focus on defeating the enemy. His injury is, in the context of the film, purely symbolic—a material confirmation of his valor. *In Harm's Way* (1965) similarly downplays the gory details of its protagonist's injury. Avenging his son's death, John Wayne's Captain Torrey defies protocol and attacks the Yomato in the Pacific Ocean, sustaining a serious leg injury when he is struck by shrapnel (364). While he does lose consciousness, the film resists highlighting the extent of what is likely a gruesome wound. In doing so, it frames the maimed leg as a testament to the character's bravery. In the face of a dangerous enemy and an uncertain future, Captain Torrey is willing to sacrifice life and, quite literally, limb to honor the fallen soldiers and protect his country. Even films that do not shy away from portraying the agony from injuries such as *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1944), which was notably released during the height of the conflict, find ways to make sense of their character's suffering. After crash landing in Japanese occupied territory, U.S. pilot Ted Lawson desperately needs surgery for a compound fracture in his leg that is eventually infected. Medical treatment, however, is not readily possible due to the increasing presence of the Imperial Japanese army. His pain, then, serves the narrative's political aims. Emblematic of the enemy's lack of humanity and the suffering that it causes, Lawson's wound prompts audiences to see the character as gutsy while simultaneously amplifying their perception of axis soldiers as evil.

Yet the films never let the material aberrations sustained by their characters give way to personal anguish or doubts about their service. Rather, in a cinematic moment of healing, they routinely commit narrative triage during their closing scenes. As Lennard J. Davis has shown, the conclusion of a disability narrative has been, historically, a critical point in the story. In terms that are apt to my discussion, Davis succinctly explains that if the narrative "must have a wound," then that "wound must be healed" (98). With no space left to address the sense of disorder brought on by alterity, a narrative must carry out a final and, theoretically, definitive gesture that resolves the variation that has troubled the plot. The underlying reason for this narrative cure, according to Davis, is to ensure that "normality or some variant on it is restored" (98). Normality, in the context of Hollywood war films and American culture at the time, primarily consists of restoring bodily integrity and autonomy—of fixing the character's physical differences. Thus the narrative triage that takes place in a film's closing scene medically or miraculously returns the soldier character to the corporeal state prior to their wounding. In cases such as lost limbs, characters receive prosthetics, concealing their impairment and giving the visual appearance of normality. In either case, such developments support the notion that wounded soldiers could be made whole again, which fortifies viewers' belief in the resiliency of the American soldier while downplaying how a "sudden impairment may be unfamiliar and devastating" (Shakespeare 107). To reinforce such assurances, especially if total restoration is not possible, films also conduct narrative triage through social means. As Davis writes, characters can "undergo a kind of moral or perceptual transformation that cures them" (98). Wounded characters of the Hollywood films are often rewarded with medal ceremonies, professional promotion, romantic relationships, or the promise of fatherhood. In these pivotal and final moments, the films provide characters and, as I suggest, the viewers with what film

critic Martin F. Norden describes as an "aura of acceptability," further celebrating the wounds under the belief their lives will only improve in the wake of their impairments, and the nation will be better for it (156).

Such moments unfold in our previous examples. After showing Murphy making a full recovery in the hospital and happily rejoining his company, *To Hell and Back* closes with a ceremony, celebrating the character's heroics. The overdubbed narrator lists his awards, which include three purple hearts, as the frame pans to the hero who is clearly proud of his service. Likewise, in *In Harm's Way*, not only does Captain Torrey recover from his coma and receives a prosthetic leg-- disguising his impairment--he is promoted for his maverick decisions that thwarted the Yomato from attacking more American forces, and confirms his romance with the Navy Nurse looking after him. Ted Lawson experiences similar good luck in the final scenes of *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*. In what Fyne sees as a "concluding propaganda statement," Lawson's ranking officer explains that his "handicap was not an impediment to the hard work that will follow," offering him a job on base (62, *Thirty Seconds*). Lawson's relief is doubled when his pregnant wife enters his hospital room and embraces him in a "saccharine conclusion" (Fyne 62). As these examples evince, the conclusion plays perhaps the most critical role in the process of narrative triage. In the final scenes, the films offer closure about the injured soldier's personal and professional life while also healing, whether literally or figuratively, their wounds.

While this aesthetic rehabilitation primarily treats physical wounds, its reach also encompasses the invisible injuries of war as well, but to a much lesser extent. This unevenness between the filmic representations of the material and immaterial bodily consequences of the SWW correlates to their on-screen potential as well as the cultural stigmas surrounding cognitive disability. Simply put, corporeal wounds better served the medium of the movies, visually

symbolizing a character's heroic attributes. These notions did not translate to afflictions such as battle neurosis, trauma, internal sickness, nor disease. Moreover, John M. Kinder explains that, during WWI the public was "reluctant to view [invisible] injuries as 'real' wounds," going so far as to associate "shameful" psychological injuries with "weakness, malingering, and pathological insanity" (71). As a holdover from the Great War, these perceptions continued to influence public opinion of the "million more men [who] suffered debilitating psychiatric symptoms" as well as the "countless others [that] were haunted by traumatic memories for the rest of their lives" (Kinder 263). Because such wounds were perceived as the antithesis to the "idealized type of masculinity" and could thereby threaten to undermine the nation's war effort, Hollywood did its part to instill the belief that these shameful injuries were not permanent (Jarvis 60). To the contrary, the films suggested these characters could rid themselves of their symptoms and demonstrably rediscover their identities as macho soldiers, or at least socially functioning men. This form of narrative triage entailed creating distance between the soldier and the traumatizing interlocutor; granting the soldier time to properly adjust; and providing the soldier with necessary medical support. Such scenes illustrated soldiers that were once rendered hysterical, mad, or incapacitated overcoming their afflictions and reestablishing themselves as whole again. In effect, these scenes assuaged the public's anxieties that war emasculated American men and left the nation—predominantly its women—not only to care for these enfeebled soldiers, but also in a weakened state. Without men that were of sound body *and* mind, the U.S. was vulnerable to an adept Russian enemy in the postwar years that would continue demonstrating its intellectual prowess in the realms of space, weaponry, and politics.

Viewers can recognize this form of narrative triage taking place in Hollywood combat films such as *12 O' Clock High* (1949). In the film, Air Force Officer Harvey Stovall recounts

his memory of General Brigadier Frank Savage's influence on the 918th Bombing Group. Initially unruly, the Bombing Group's sense of discipline and morale is quickly restored through Savage's rigid and bullish leadership, transforming them into an elite squadron. However, after losing most of his men to deadly missions deep in German territory, Savage becomes catatonic while preparing for the Group's next assignment. Notably, the physical symptoms of the character's trauma are a tame representation of the mental conditions that could affect soldiers. Avoiding some of the more unsettling behaviors such as nervous tics, unusual gaits, hysterical laughter, or other violent bodily manifestations, the film opts to portray the character in an almost meditative like trance. By controlling the symptoms, the film implies that the invisible wounds of war, like their physical counterparts, are not painful nor torturous. Of course, the real narrative triage is how the *12 O' Clock High* cures Savage. His condition improves only when his men return from their missions and then transfer him back to base. As they get closer to their destination, the character regains control over himself before peacefully drifting off to sleep. Time and distance, then, serve as the aesthetic treatments that resolve the character's impairment, giving the impressions that when the mission ends and soldiers leave those haunting sights and settings, so too might they leave behind their war neuroses.

The combat films of the SWW and their treatment of wounds, according to Norden, "formed the basis for a trend that would flourish during the first few years of the postwar era" (156). Thus, as Hollywood adapted to the interests of the public, releasing an abundance of movies centered on veteran experiences, the process of narrative triage likewise adapted to heal the wounds associated with demobilization, reintegration, and rehabilitation. Compared to combat pictures, though, these narratives more gracefully explored the body politics associated with service-related injuries. The change in space and time within these films created a new set

of circumstances for their injured characters. Now occupying the identity between soldier and civilian, these filmic veterans had to assimilate into a society that had evolved in their absence, and do so with their new bodies. Physical obstacles illuminated the accessibility issues that paraplegic characters or those with amputations faced, yet Hollywood veteran narratives particularly focused on the social tensions that arose from their war wounds. Characters often struggled to find gainful employment, manage substance abuse, and resume family life. The latter of these conflicts was especially true for characters that had lost multiple appendages, or more devastatingly, suffered injuries to their genitals, casting doubt about their ability to reproduce let alone maintain sexual relationships with their wives and girlfriends. Film and media scholars Leonard Quart and Albert Auster contend that more successful veteran narratives like *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) "contained more truth and insight about the readjustment of veterans...to peacetime than any other forties film" (151). Norden similarly praises *The Men* (1950) as a "powerful, unromanticized account of newly disabled people" that "[reflects] the victimization that occurs when a person's life is shattered by a disabling accident" (179, 168). Yet, the intention behind these films was not to solely depict the challenges that wounded veterans faced but, according to Kinder, to maintain the "legitimacy of the Good War" (270). In his words: "World War II could not be the Good War unless the Problem of the Disabled Veteran disappeared from culture at large" (270, 271). Thus the Hollywood veteran narrative continued to aesthetically rehabilitate war wounds. By remedying the character's alterities and showcasing their successful reintegration, the films curtailed skepticism about the material costs and lasting legacy of the war, which was especially important to the government throughout the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. With its relationship with the Soviet Union growing increasingly strained, the United States did not want their citizens under the belief that the nation was littered with

fragmented and debilitated men, but rather restored and, more importantly, re-masculated for what was ostensibly their next conflict.

Like their wartime counterparts, veteran films largely undergo narrative triage during the closing scenes, signaling to audiences that the somatic and social issues stemming from the wound are no longer problematic. Yet, because of the change in context with the films taking place stateside during the postwar years, the service-related injuries assumed a greater significance. In combat films, wounds often serve a secondary function as a device that supplement the drama and tensions of warfare. As more of a background detail—one that usually presents itself near the film's end—they were easily cured and framed as heroic symbols. In postwar veteran films, conversely, the characters' wounds are the central conflict. With no enemy to engage and located among civilians, the veteran characters' primary task frequently entailed making sense of their injuries and sorting out the corresponding issues. As the focal point, then, war wounds were introduced much earlier in the film, often within the opening scenes. As Mitchell and Snyder note, foregrounding a narrative with a bodily impairment sometimes functions as the "impetus that calls a story into being" (55). They explain that "narrative interest solidifies only in the identification and pursuit of an anomaly that inaugurates the exceptional tale" (54). For a postwar audience gripped by anxieties over the pending veteran crisis afoot, the film's introduction of the wound lures them in with the promise of triaging the bodily conditions that threatened to rupture the booming American economy and way of life. Before realizing those aesthetic rehabilitations, though, the impairments give way to any number of social disturbances or personal vices that might afflict the veteran character. They struggle with substance abuse, lash out in rage and violence, fail to secure jobs, are unable to complete routine tasks, and experience maladjustment to family life. Such scenes explore—and sometimes

quite accurately—many of the lived experiences that returning soldiers faced upon their demobilization.[5] However, some of these explorations also served the narrative's larger political aims, building tension among the characters and ramping up anxiety among viewers eager for a cure, which played out in several ways.

One of the primary ways in which narrative triage unfolds in postwar veteran films is through gender dynamics. If the combat wound were perceived as damaging the soldier character's social identity as a man, then gender specific performances could testify to—and therefore resolve—the dilemma surrounding their masculinity. In the course of the films, characters might form stoic demeanors after moments of emotional instability caused by their alterity; they resume their positions as members of the workforce and breadwinners of their household; and, especially important during the postwar years, they demonstrated their machismo through romantic relationships, sexual intimacy, and reproduction. Thus, the women characters in these films were equally if not more important in completing the aesthetic treatment of the wounded veteran. Regarding the gender politics of the postwar era, David Gerber explains that there existed a "traditional assumption that women bore the singular responsibility in the family and in caring for men" (74). Veteran films reinforced this idea by depicting "traditional female strategies" such as maternal care, emotional empathy, and sexuality as the means to help the soldier characters recover (74). This formula is evident in the Oscar winning picture, *The Best years of Our Lives*. Bilateral amputee Homer Parish eventually eases into civilian life through the unwavering support of his sweetheart, Wilma Cameron. The film emphasizes her tender touch while helping Homer button his pajamas as well as her ability to overlook Homer's alterity as key ingredients in the rehabilitation of the wounded character. The closing scene that depicts their marriage, furthermore, offers a final confirmation that Homer has indeed resumed

his status as a man through the symbolic promise of a lasting romantic partnership and, more critically, the physical consummation of their union. This example sketches how veteran films turned to gender dynamics to settle the uneasy social confusions and frustrations of wounded veterans, attempting to restore them to an almost pre-war state of masculinity.

The attitude of the wounded character was another paramount form of narrative triage. In the course of the veteran films, the difficulty in reckoning their war-torn bodies with civilian life often led characters to wallow in self-pity and endure depressive episodes. Their downward spirals served as a microcosm of national health. Rather than revere the freedoms they fought to defend in the war, the wounded veterans invoked cynical and hostile views of traditional American values and institutions, which threatened to undermine society from the inside out. In the postwar years, this notion was particularly disturbing for viewers, as the nation was already on edge with its overseas enemy in the Soviet Union. To curtail such viewpoints and soothe public anxiety in the process, the films showcased the characters adopting more upbeat, positive, and motivated outlooks on their bodies, their lives, and their futures just before the credits rolled. These narrative developments, however, were hardly easy or egalitarian. To the contrary, characters strained to stave off their own internalized ableism. Although picturesque happy endings rarely occurred, with the films alluding to the possibility of the wounded characters relapsing in their rehabilitation journeys, they nevertheless reinforced the idea that with the proper attitude, the veteran can overcome the emotional and physical hurdles that obstruct their demobilized lives.

This form of narrative takes place in the motion picture *The Men*. After Ken Wilocek, played by Marlon Brando, is paralyzed from the waist down as the result of sniper fire, he believes any shroud of happiness in life is unattainable for himself and his wife, which is alluded

to during what Beth Linker and Whitney E. Laemmli see as a "catastrophic attempt to enact domestic heteronormativity" on their wedding night (132). Dejected, Wilocek retreats to the local VA hospital where he experiences a major change in attitude. Encouraged by a fellow paraplegic and motivated by his inner desire to please his wife, the character begins "his campaign of self-improvement and remasculinization" through rigorous physical training and organized sports (Linker and Laemmli 131). While these scenes illustrate Wilocek physically overcoming his disability, it is his attitude that ultimately cures his social dilemma. Heeding the advice of his Dr. Brock to "accept the truth" and to "behave," the physically conditioned and clear thinking Wilocek returns to his wife, who remarks that he has "come a long way" (*The Men*). Her comment refers to the geographic distance that he has traveled, but as Linker and Laemmli argue, it also attests to the "emotional distance" that Wilocek has sojourned (133). The character's attitude guides him from a state of helplessness to a more determined outlook, arriving at the threshold of domesticity with his wife, ready to continue defying not only the obstacles that impede his impairment, but the impairment itself. Healing the characters in this manner, postwar veteran films such as *The Men* and *Best Years of Our Lives* presented what Quart and Auster consider a "manipulated tribute to the American way of life," prescribing pre-war ideals upon postwar bodies (151). Above all, though, in David Gerber words, the narrative triage that took place within these films assured U.S. audiences that "a normal civilian existence would be within the grasp of all veterans"—that the wounds of war were nothing more than a temporary fissure on the road to national recovery and the next inevitable war (76).

From combat zones to stateside settings, from the good war to the Cold War, narrative triage served multiple purposes and, consequently, impacted the nation's cultural memories and perceptions of war wounds. The aesthetic process directly contributed to what Cristina S. Jarvis

sees as a national project centered on the male body. She argues that "during World War II the American military, government, and other institutions shaped the male body both figuratively and physically in an effort to communicate impressions of national strength to U.S. citizens and to other nations" (4, 5). Among these other institutions, as this introduction maintains, is Hollywood. The film industry's representation of soldier character's bodies played a significant role in mobilizing public support. Through scenes of recovery, healing, and overcompensation, narrative triage reinforced ideas of "national strength," and complemented the slew of "hypermasculinized male bodies in public images to reflect the United States' rising status as a world power" (Jarvis 5). While effective in this regard, inflating patriotic sentiment for decades, their prevalence during the war and postwar years had massive cultural ramifications. On their Cold War implications, Stephen J. Whitfield avers that the "geopolitical contest between two superpowers haunted public life, pervading it so thoroughly that the national identity itself seemed to become disfigured" (231). Whitfield's use of the term "disfigured" is an interesting choice of words in light of Hollywood war films and their representations of the soldier's wounded body. It clearly strikes at the idea that, through cultural productions, the national identity was distorted in the service of a political agenda. When we consider this idea in the context of the body, though, the national identity—how the public perceived itself—was not so much disfigured as it was rehabilitated. Narrative triage gave the impression of a national healing, recovery, and, most of all, inviolability—that no matter what the U.S. could withstand any wound through grit, social support, and medical attention to affirm its position as a global superpower. In the shadow of the West, the Soviet Union might have been strong and resilient, but it was not nearly as strong and resilient as the United States of America. In supporting this ideal, narrative triage mythologized the service-related injuries and impairments of the Second

World War. The aesthetic treatment led viewers to believe that: wounds were almost certainly caused by evil agents looking to maim or kill American soldiers; these same wounds signified bravery and sacrifice, and did not negatively influence how soldiers viewed their service; wounds were a source of bonding, bringing together soldiers of different classes, creeds, and races; and no matter how severe, these same wounds could be cured, restored, or overlooked, so the soldier could feel like a hero and "reclaim his dominance" as a man within American society (Gerber 75).

Intervention

What is lost among these aesthetically rehabilitated representations is a more critical and nuanced engagement with the physical, social, and political complexities that arise at the moment of the soldier character's wounding and then pervade their lives henceforth. While Hollywood films tend to glamorize these moments as the transformation of the character into the selfless hero, Samuel Hynes contends they are something far uncannier. In his study on the journals, memoirs, and letters penned by active-duty soldiers during both World Wars as well as the Vietnam War, Hynes describes this life altering instance as a sudden entry point into a bizarre realm where logic and comfort are shattered. "To be wounded," Hynes writes, "is a sudden explosive strangeness, more like a natural disaster or a visitation of the wrath of God than a human act" (20). War wounds are more than material or psychic aberrations that signify bravery or need of medical intervention. Rather, they are "astonishing accidents" that "hurls a man into a different existence in which his feet don't belong to him, or a strange hot liquid runs into his eyes, and he can no longer perform an ordinary act like raising his arm" (Hynes 21). In their rush to triage characters' injuries to preserve the myth of the good war, as I have explained, Hollywood films dilute and gloss over how this murky, disconcerting, and unresolvable

experience envelops soldier characters and, notably, has extensive recourse on their identities with regard to their military affiliation, class, sexuality, and even race.

This dilemma is at the core of my dissertation. In the following chapters, I argue that there are a series of surprising counter narratives embedded within novels by James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens that undermine the cultural myths revolving around the wounded soldier's body that were perpetuated by popular Hollywood films. Throughout their work, the veteran writers represent service-related injuries and impairments in ways that lead their characters across the threshold of the wounded into that perplexing and "strange" terrain where the certainty they had in their physical and cognitive autonomy, the confidence in their masculinity, and the belief in their service are thrown into flux. Nowhere is this transition more vividly rendered than in an early scene from Jones' 1962 combat novel, *The Thin Red Line*. As the men of C-for-Charlie Company witness a string of injured soldiers trudging toward their bivouac after returning from the battlefield, the narrator describes the ontological shift that they are experiencing in the same terms that Hynes employs while theorizing war injuries: "They had crossed a strange line; they had become wounded men...they had been initiated into a strange, insane, twilight fraternity where explanation would forever be impossible" (45). Here, the inexplicable state that the injured characters find themselves in—this "different existence"—anticipates the immediate minutes and long years ahead when they will reckon with the pain, stigmatization, internalized ableism, and physical obstacles associated with their war wounds. Jones, and as I will show, Mailer and Killens, too, then explore these subsequent moments at length and to varying ends in their fiction, prompting a reassessment of war wounds and their cultural significance among readers.

The question, then, is how does this trio of writers capture and explore the strangeness of service-related injuries in their work? What do these writers do that distinguishes their representations from that of their Hollywood counterparts? Is it their ethos as veterans who endured or witnessed firsthand how war and military service could wreak havoc on the body? Is it the fact that, as novelists, they had a creative license not afforded to filmmakers working under the OWI's watch? Or is it their decision to work in the style of Realism that, according to Mitchell and Snyder "promotes a more direct depiction of the reality of disabled characters" than, say, modernism or postmodernism (21)? These factors indeed impact how Jones, Mailer, and Killens approach literary illustrations of wartime injuries and their lasting implications. Yet, as I see it, the veteran writers enact a specific and uncanny narrative tactic that allows for a more complex engagement with their characters' bodies and the injuries afflicting them: they leave their wounds *untreated*. In other words, they resist narrative triage. Rather than perform an aesthetic rehabilitation of the body through symbolic devices, miraculous cures, or convenient plot developments, Jones, Mailer, and Killens, figuratively speaking, let their representations of wounds fester on the page. Without the intent to cure, the writers turn to the bodies of their characters as a vehicle to explore the socio-political tensions that derive from war wounds. In doing so, they forward sustained illustrations of how the strangeness of service-related injury is a lived experience that forever infiltrates one's professional, political, and personal life.

This narrative tactic has implications that range in scope. More immediately, the veteran writers' works destabilize the myths perpetuated by Hollywood war films. With their characters' wounds left untreated, Jones, Mailer, and Killens novels suggest war injuries did not affirm patriotism but questioned it. They submit that the medical treatments and the social expectations that restored the body, the mind, and the masculinity of the soldier were less cures than they

were curses. This is to say that, collectively, their fiction challenges cultural memories of the war and its material effects on the men who served, urging readers to think more critically about the far reaching implications of war wounds—as inconvenient as those implications may be to the American polity's agenda. Moreover, they do so at a critical moment in the nation's history. Published during the 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s, a time span in which the political and cultural tensions between the U.S. and the USSR were palpable, Jones, Mailer and Killens' narrative discourse on the soldier's body during the SWW spoke to the international conflict that the nation was embroiled in. While the U.S. increasingly relied on cultural productions to fortify national support and boost its international image during the Cold War, the veteran writers' work collectively posits the nation was not as inviolable as it seemed. To the contrary, their representations of war wounds obfuscate ideas of a definite and foreign enemy, question the health of the nation, cast doubt on American masculinity, and expose the ironies of racial pluralism.

Methodology

While each chapter of this dissertation draws from theories germane to the specific wound and its relationship to the novel's plot, it adheres to the central idea that Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels take up the embodied experiences of wounded soldiers and veterans. After all, as Hynes tells us, "war narratives are experience books; they are about what happened and how it felt" (The Soldier's Tale 11). In their respective works, the veteran writers' characters not only navigate social discrimination and issues with access to their physical environments, they also navigate the lived sensations of pain, anxiety, and embarrassment that can accompany disability. I find it important to make this distinction clear from the outset in light of how literary representations of physical, cognitive, and internal variations among characters have been

historically interpreted. As Rosemarie Garland Thomson explains, "when literary critics look at disabled characters, they often interpret them metaphorically or aesthetically, reading them without political awareness as conventional elements of the sentimental, romantic, Gothic, or grotesque traditions" (10). As a result, according to Mitchell and Snyder, stories of impairment "rarely take up disability as an experience of social or political dimensions" (48). In the context of war fiction, to forgo considering both the lived and political "dimensions" of the characters' wounds would, ironically, result in narrative triage—a literary analysis that interprets the service-related injuries on a purely symbolic level. Taking cues from Maren Tova Lineett, then, I treat the illustrations of the wounded body as "launching pads" (4). While such depictions help us contextualize the immediate connotations of a scene, the more worthwhile task, as Linett elaborates, is considering "how that depiction affects the overall workings of a text and what it tells us about how embodiment was understood in particular times and places" (5). With this in mind, I read war wounds in Jones, Mailer, and Killens' work not as a moment or image divorced from the overarching plot but a paramount feature of the character that plays out to the novels' respective conclusions.

To maintain the overarching idea throughout the dissertation that Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels are "experience books," I frame my readings with Snyder and Mitchell's cultural model of disability. Unlike the medical model, which pathologizes bodily impairments, and the social model, which critiques systemic barriers that deny people with impairments access to their communities and resources, the cultural model of disability is an interdisciplinary approach that accounts for time, space, and experience: "the cultural model has an understanding that impairment is both human variation encountering environmental obstacles and socially mediated difference that lends group identity and phenomenological perspective" (10). The latter portion

of the writers' definition is particularly noteworthy as it draws attention to the "ways disabled people experience their environments and their bodies" (6). Thus, in the context of the war fiction I analyze, the cultural model helps me hone in on how these characters think about, respond to, and negotiate their war-derived alterities while also maneuvering their socio-political American terrains in a specifically mid 20th century context. In this way, the "cultural model does not jettison embodiment but views it as a potentially meaningful materiality," which is an idea that Emily Russell considers paramount in understanding the range of implications stemming from one's alterity (10). "When a citizen with an embodied difference enters the public sphere," she writes, "that body becomes the determining force of their belonging" (16). From Mailer's *The Naked in the Dead* published shortly after the war's end to Jones' *Whistle* posthumously published thirty years later in 1978, characters' wounds force them to reckon with their allegiance to the military, wrestle with their fragile sense of masculinity in the shadow of rigid gender expectations, and cultivate their racial identities against the white supremacist assumptions governing the Jim Crow Army. If, as Russell states, "by their difference, anomalous figures call out the naturalized assumptions that legitimate their exclusion," I suggest something similar can be said of Jones, Mailer, and Killens' war fiction. Through my analyses of their works, I will show how the veteran writers call out the myths--what became "naturalized assumptions"--revolving around war wounds, and do so at a time when the body, masculinity, and race relations were paramount concerns during the Cold War.

At a more local level, I also rely on Ato Quayson's theory of aesthetic nervousness as a guide for my close readings. Quayson's theory, as I will explain, is particularly helpful as it locates disability within a text and observes it as a central factor that mingles with the text's various elements. Such an approach is important while reading war fiction as the presence of

injuries and impairments broadly defined occupy an unusual role compared with nonwar fiction. In some cases, such as Jones' *The Thin Red Line* or Killens' *And Then We Heard The Thunder*, war wounds are ubiquitous. Part of their purpose is to authenticate the novel's context, helping facilitate the mimetic process of creating a fictional world of war that is believable. Because these illustrations are so commonplace, their critical thrust and significance can be overlooked or taken for granted. Elsewhere in novels such as Mailer's *Barbary Shore*, war wounds function similar to the modernist texts of the period, piquing the readers' interest in the opening pages before receding into the background of the plot if not disappearing altogether. As Lennard J. Davis clarifies, though, "even in texts that do not appear to be about disability...One can find in almost any novel...a kind of surveying of the terrain of the body" (48). Thus to harness the significance of what might seem to be background details or vanishing narrative threads, I treat these representations as moments of aesthetic nervousness, which Quayson explains as occurring when "the dominant protocols of representation within a literary text are shortcircuited in relation to disability" (15). While this process takes place "in the interaction between disabled and nondisabled characters, where a variety of tensions may be identified," Quayson explains this short circuiting also pervades the entire narrative, "augmented by tensions refracted across other levels of the text such as the disposition of symbols and motifs, the overall narrative dramatic perspective, the constitution and reversal of plot structure, and so on" (15). By his theory, then, literary representations of disability have reverberating implications that, even when not explicitly present, pervade elements of the text, ranging from characters' behavior to their dialogue to the omniscient narrator's perspective to the novel's central motifs. When examined, these moments of "shortcircuting" illuminate how a character's alterity informs both how they see their world and how their world sees them. It is worth noting that the ambiguity surrounding

Quayson's term "shortcircuit" has raised questions from other prominent disability scholars such as Michael Berube, who encourages "scrutiny" over the semantic issue (56). To be clear, I parallel Quayson's concept of "shortcircuiting" with Hynes theory of wounded soldiers entering a "strange" realm. That is, the shortcircuting that takes place within Jones, Mailer, and Killens' war fiction is the process of characters crossing over that threshold into a "different existence"--a literary transition that is manifest in the formal properties of the text from character's thoughts to the narrator's language.

While the chapters follow a similar structure throughout the dissertation, introducing a novel and the myths it is engaging with before mapping out the necessary critical and theoretical terrain and moving into a series of close readings, they each address different wounds in different contexts and to different ends. Chapter 2 explores the army's relationship with the soldier character's bodies in Jones' war trilogy. As I will show, Jones represents service-related injuries as a necessary condition by which his armies achieve their goals, whether it be fortifying their public image during peacetime, securing victory during wartime, or profiting in a postcombat setting. As the collateral damage, his wounded characters feel exploited for their materiality, question their service, and navigate the institution with bodies that do not conform to corporeal expectations. Such storylines offset popular ideas about who the enemy was during the good war as well as public faith in the armed forces during the Cold War.

As complexly as Jones' novels engage with war wounds, they predominantly gravitate toward corporeal alterities. Chapter 3 addresses this gap by focusing on combat trauma and internal illnesses in Norman Mailer's *The Naked and The Dead*. Working against the cinematic myths that suggest medical intervention could cure the invisible wounds of war, I argue that Mailer recasts military medicine and care as a narrative paradox. Suspicious doctors and their

antagonizing assistants lead the sick characters through a labyrinth of questionable treatments that leave them sicker than before their visit. Such moments explore how the stigmas associated with invisible wounds impact the ethics of care afforded to them. Published at the precipice of the Cold War, Mailer's representations of his soldiers' wellness lends to the cultural moment. As American politicians pressured the nation to embrace conservative values in response to the Soviet threat, Mailer worried that their failure to recognize individual freedoms was creating a sick society.

In the fourth chapter, I continue examining Mailer's work, reading his subsequent novels in the context of postwar veteran narratives. I suggest that *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* are anti-remasculinization stories. Both novels subvert the postwar hegemonic expectations of white wounded veterans such as heterosexuality, marriage, and the nuclear family that Hollywood films such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Men* championed as a pathway to restored manhood. Intensely paranoid that their wounds are imbued with emasculating implications that will compromise their status atop the nation's social hierarchy, Mailer's wounded veterans attempt to pass as men through a series of violent, hypersexual, homophobic, and racist performances. Through conclusions that are ironic—albeit fraught with contradictions—both novels critique the myopic state of postwar masculinity and attempt to destabilize the integrity that belies Cold War representations of American men.

And in the fifth chapter, I analyze racialized war wounds in John Oliver Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder*. I argue that the writer represents pain as a complex embodied experience that is bound up in his protagonist's evolving political views under the strong arm of the Jim Crow army. The felt-experience has a transformative effect on the protagonist, awakening him to the discriminatory practices undergirding the institution he serves. Not only

then does Killens' novel upset myths about racial integration within the army or that wounds confirmed Black soldiers' inferiority, but it does so on the cusp of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. When the United States was strategically adopting civil rights legislation to improve its global image in the face of Soviet criticism, Killens' representations of Black war wounds impart to his readers that meaningful social change, as painful as it might be, was necessary for a better future.

The dissertation's epilogue provides a summation of the broader significance of the individual chapters in terms of their influence on the cultural memory of war wounds and the cultural moment in which they were published. Collectively, Jones, Mailer, and Killens' varying representations of service-related injuries and impairments challenge myths put forth by Hollywood films, encouraging a more critical and sobering reflection on the material costs of war and their reverberating impact on the people who paid those costs. In the historical context of their release, as I will discuss, the veteran writers' work brings a certain awareness to an American public mystified by the nation's prosperity and ostensible rise to a global superpower. "To be an average citizen of the United States during the Cold War," according to Craig and Logevall, "was to enjoy abundant material comforts and be only dimly aware of the hardship that a major war would bring" (352). As my dissertation suggests, however, Jones, Mailer, and Killens' war fiction highlight such hardships, especially those unbeknownst to the civilian public, through the disability narratives embedded in their novels. The epilogue then closes meditating on the importance of this project in the twenty-first century. Why is reading a set of war novels that decades old and lack the same staying power as other postwar writers important now? With the conclusion of the War in Afghanistan and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we find ourselves in yet another cycle of mobilization, combat, and demobilization. Reading Jones, Mailer, and Killens' work from a disability studies angle at this moment in time might contribute

to a more ethical consideration of the lived social and physical complexities experienced by our wounded servicemen and women. Rather than offer platitudes of "Thank you for your service" or continue perceiving war wounds as symbols of patriotism, we might more carefully consider the complex relationship between military service and bodily impairment, and how that relationship—if at all—can be improved.

Contributions and Hopes

This dissertation makes a necessary contribution to the small but steadfast field of American war literature, particularly as it pertains to the analyses of SWW narratives. Although the discourse has dwindled since the 1970s, scholars such as Marina Mackay and Jennifer Haytock have nevertheless continued in a vein similar to the groundbreaking analyses levied by scholars such as Paul Fussell, John W. Aldridge, Peter Aichinger, and Jeffrey Walsh, examining the veteran writers' "unwillingness to submit to the uncritical, exclusionary, and blinkered forms of patriotism" (Mackay 5). Elsewhere, James Dawes has found methods to read WWII fiction anew, arguing that moments of silence within novels such as *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Catch-22* are linguistic portrayals of traumatic experience. And in her study, Jennifer James turns to critical race theory to explore how "citizenship rights" are at the core of African American representations of war (33). Even scholarship focused on specific veteran writers has evolved to account for modern trends. Maggie McKinley, for example, accounts for the gendered implications in Mailer's critique of the military in *The Naked and The Dead*, exhuming what she sees as the "undeniable undercurrent of criticism with regard to the 'machismo' on display in the army" (15). In his readings of Jones' oeuvre, Tony Williams similarly draws attention to the veteran write's' "integration of gender and homosexuality" into the character's military service and how it effects their experiences (94).

Disability readings of WWII fiction, however, have remained scarce. Only recently has this avenue been established as a worthwhile pursuit by scholars such as Cristina S. Jarvis and John M. Kinder. In a chapter entitled "Representing Wounded Bodies," Jarvis surveys illustrations of injured soldiers, surmising that the fiction of WWII tends to "complicate interpretations of the wounded veteran as a damaged model of manhood healed only or primarily through feminine powers" (102). And in his study, Kinder explains that a disability studies approach to war fiction is apt considering that "the violent transformation of bodies is an inextricable part of armed conflict, and ideas about body normalcy and difference pervade all aspects of military culture" (287). His subsequent readings, which stretch from representations of the Civil War to the Vietnam War, account for the ways in which disability has been used to "champion ideals of martial masculinity, criticize US foreign policy, and ask questions about the bodily 'price' of American warfare" (287, 286). My dissertation, as I see it, furthers this conversation to the next logical step. Whereas they offer surveys of the war—if not wars—accounting for the implications of wounds in broad strokes, I hone in on these novels, many of which are outside of their purview, and work more granularly through the formal process of close reading in order to trace the disability narratives that run throughout Jones, Mailer, and Killens' work. What my dissertation potentially loses in comprehensiveness, it makes up for in nuance, showing how the veteran writers' representations of war injuries are not static, but evolve, regress, and change over the course of their novels. As such, my dissertation not only broadens the conversation through the inclusion of more writers—whom it can be argued are at the center of WWII fiction—but also posits a series of readings that explicate how their representations of wounds work against salient tropes and presumptions about soldiers' bodies.

Needless to say, this dissertation does not exhaust the discourse on literary representations of wounds among WII literature. Rather, I view this work as paving the way for further discussions. Broadly speculating, such future projects may account for interpretations of war wounds by veteran writers such as J.D. Salinger and Sloan Wilson as well as postmodernists Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller. The scope can also be expanded by not only accounting for poetry and drama in addition to fiction, but also the voices of women writers such as H.D. whose work explores what the process of healing might look like for a nation ravaged in the war. All of this is to say, the marriage between disability studies and SWW literature is a worthwhile pursuit that deserves continued examination. Additionally, I hope my dissertation accomplishes two things. First, I hope this work adds to the robust scholarship of literary disability studies, which has produced insightful readings of human variation across all periods of literary history, genre, and cultures. To date, such work has engaged with representations of alterity in the contexts of gender, race, and class. This dissertation adds another layer to the fold, accounting for service-related disabilities and their socio-political dimensions. I also hope this work revitalizes some interest in writers who, in recent decades, have lost critical favor or have been neglected altogether. Examining their works with the tools of literary disability, this dissertation provides bold and fresh approaches to James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens that engages current scholarship while also building off of the criticism produced during their heydays. In doing so, I hope to show their critical and enduring importance. While the men behind the works are flawed and some of their personal philosophies have aged terribly, their works belong among the pantheon of war fiction for one important reason. If their novels were to peter out of production, disappear into the clearance dustbins of bookstores, and succumb to the extinction that threatens literature outside of the canon—if we were to lose the voices of these veteran

writers entirely—who would be left to tell the stories of the supposed good war and its bodily consequences? Hollywood movies? Let us hope not.

Chapter 2:

"'We Can Break Any Man'": The Army as a Disabling Institution in James Jones' War Trilogy

The most appropriate veteran writer by which to begin the literary analyses of this dissertation is James Jones, and the reason being is twofold. Unlike Mailer and Killens, Jones's bibliography overwhelmingly consists of war fiction. Having dedicated most of his professional life to the genre, Jones offers a sustained and nuanced exploration of soldering during the SWW, especially in his war trilogy, as this chapter will demonstrate. The second reason, moreover, is due to Jones' noteworthy relationship with war films. Although two of his novels were adapted for the screen, Jones loathed Hollywood representations. In a 1963 article for the Saturday Evening Post, Jones outlines his anger for the "phony heroics" of Hollywood war films, which he argues present "absolutely nothing" of the truth of modern warfare (64). In trying to show readers something of the truth, then, Jones' novels engage with the good war myths delineated in the introduction to this dissertation. Particularly, the novels illustrate how war and military service, in Jones' words, "destroys human character," which is a devolution that occurs by way of his soldiers' bodies and the damage done to them (65, 66).

In a later scene from James Jones' 1951 novel *From Here to Eternity*, the first installment of his WWII trilogy, Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt is stupefied after witnessing the brutal treatment of American soldiers inside the stockade of the Schofield Barracks in Honolulu, Hawaii. During the initial moments of his own incarceration, Prew felt the "butt of the grub hoe handle whacked into the small of his back in the same spot making his testicles ache" every time he failed to answer questions to the liking of the major (524). He notices similar punishments covering the bodies of fellow inmates such as his friend Maggio, who had "lost three upper teeth" and was marked with "scars, all new and still red yet with youth" (534). This string of wounds leads Prew to a revelation: "he remembered suddenly, with a strange sense of disbelief, that there were people living on the Outside who did not even know this other world really did

exist, except in the movies" (538). The character's thought points to a gap between soldier and civilian knowledge. For Prew, this "other world" is a place where enlisted men are subjected to torturous physical treatments and unethical abuses. The characters' bodies become instruments of the army, often used against them, sacrificed, or exploited. Anything but symbols of heroism or bravery, their wounds thrust the wartime characters into an additional battle with an unlikely enemy: the institution they serve.

By the novel's publication date in 1951, though, the movies that Prew's remark calls to mind do little to expose this "other world" so much as maintain it. In filmic depictions, the Armed Forces were hardly portrayed as the antagonizing agent that damaged soldiers' bodies. That role was reserved for the nation's political adversaries. Injuries and impairments, according to the movies, were solely afflicted by Axis combatants, specifically Imperial Japanese forces. As Christina S. Jarvis explains, framing Japanese soldiers as perpetrators of war wounds was a calculated measure in the government's larger effort to mobilize support: the nation "had to reinvent the Japanese enemy after Pearl Harbor and throughout the war to explain early U.S. losses in the Pacific and provide an appropriate foe for America's fighting manhood" (124). Thus, conceptions of strong, moral, and brawny U.S. soldiers were built on the backs of what were caricatures of their enemy, men who were "frequently portrayed in a variety of subhuman or animalist forms" (Jarvis 128). Such beastly representations inclined soldiers and civilians to see combat more like hunting a pest than killing another human. The feral qualities prescribed to Japanese soldiers, moreover, framed them as deeply violent, which was a quality confirmed by their intent to injure, maim, and kill American characters. During the conflict and postwar years, films such as *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), *Flying Leathernecks* (1951), *Battlecry* (1955), and *In Harm's Way* (1965) deployed a similar convention in which their soldier characters, often

protagonists, are explicitly injured by Japan's military. Not only did such scenes of wounding reinforce the idea that the Imperial Army was malevolent, but the wounds that the American soldiers incurred also functioned as symbols of bravery and patriotism. As a result of their injuries, characters were motivated to squash their adversaries in the name of democracy, and were later recompensed by the military for their material sacrifices. Consequently, these films minted war wounds in the public's imagination as the byproduct of an encounter with an "unpredictable, animalistic enemy" and an experience that fortified one's patriotism (Jarvis 129). In doing so, these films erased culpability on the part of the Armed Forces, suggesting the U.S. aided injury, rewarded injury, respected injury, but never depended on, caused, or exploited injury.

Jones' war trilogy, alternatively, reorients readers' perspective. In the novels, wounds engender the feeling among soldiers that they have been used for their materiality and then discarded--as "dispensable," in Jones's own words, "as the ships and guns and tanks and ammo he himself serves and dispenses" (*WWII* 41). With this in mind, the following chapter examines how Jones augments early modernist experimentation and deploys service-related injuries as a narrative vehicle to explore the army's exploitation of the soldier's body. His fictionalized militaries rely on damaging or already damaged soldiers to secure larger institutional objectives. In *From Here to Eternity*, physical punishments ensure conformity; in *The Thin Red Line*, wounds are the individual sacrifices necessary to secure collective victory; and in *Whistle*, those same wounds are an emotional appeal to the public, generating sympathy and capital gains. For the characters, however, these wounds create a crisis of autonomy. Casualties of the army's political agenda, wounded characters clamor to reclaim a sense of control over their bodies. To make this case, I will first historicize representations of war wounds in 20th century American

literature before explaining how and why Jones deviated from its conventional narrative function. From there, I will outline the theory of able-bodiedness that informs Jones's trilogy, and then carefully work through close readings of each novel, illuminating how the illustrations of war wounds complicate rather than fortify the characters' relationships with the army. In doing so, I will show how Jones splinters what Paul Fussell describes as "public innocence about the bizarre damage suffered by the human body in modern war," and depicts wounds not as testaments of honor or bravery as WWII films suggested, but complex embodied experiences that ruptured idealistic views of service and war (270). Situated in the Cold War decades of the 50s, 60s, and 70s—a period in which an "rumors of an enemy plagued the United States," urging politicians and the public alike to eradicate any hint of Soviet sympathy–the veteran writer's representations redirect the accusatory finger of American anxiety inward, suggesting one of the antagonists in the nation's midst was none other than its own martial force (Robin 3).

The Evolution of the Body and Disability in Literature

Jones' preoccupation with the damaged soldier's body evolves from early transatlantic modernists' engagement with the body as a site of literary experimentation. At the turn of the 20th century, illustrations of the body underwent a renewal in response to the aesthetic conventions that pervaded the 1800s. During that period, scientific discoveries influenced literature, leading writers such as Matthew Arnold, Edgar Allan Poe, and Henry James to liken the body to an engine or a machine. The rapid rise of industrialization by the century's end, however, gave rise to what Patricia Waugh describes as a "profound anxiety about the status of the sensory, affective and visceral body, of the vulnerabilities of the flesh and blood in an era of machines" (136). Literary modernists sought to "incorporate the body into a writing that might resist the instrumental reductionisms of science and technology" (136). Their characters

harnessed information and ideas through bodily experiences such as touch and pain. As Tim Armstrong shows, though, the modernists did not eschew technology. Rather, it helped contour the modernist project, teasing out the "limits of the body-machine relation" (Armstrong 84). By way of such limits, Armstrong explains, "modernity...brings forth a fragmentation and augmentation of the body...it offers the body as lack" (3). Characters, unlike machines, could become fatigued; their bodies could be injured, impaired, or decompose. While Armstrong explains that some writers turned to technology to resolve these limitations, and thereby soothe anxieties about the body's lack, Maren Tova Linnet argues that others, such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf– one of Jones' favorite writers–pursued such corporeal anomalies for literary purposes. These somatic alterities offered writers a narrative vehicle to grapple with "broad speculations about sexuality, intimacy, subjectivity, communication, knowledge, and artistic production" (Linett 11). As Waugh, Armstrong, and Linnet demonstrate, the body, in all of disparate somatic conditions, was a central motif within transatlantic literature during the 20th century, providing the means to address the complexities, frustrations, and anxieties associated with modernity.

As the advent of literary modernism coincided with the First World War, aesthetic experimentations with the body proved apt for the writers fictionalizing the global conflict. From firing machine guns and navigating the cramped spaces of the trench to wincing at the ominous sound of artillery fire, soldiers' bodies, in terms of both what they had to do and what they endured, were central to warfare. Recognizing this relationship, writers seized the soldiers' bodily experiences to materialize ideas about the war's legacy.[6] As Peter Aichinger explains, the "war provided a metaphor, not only to express the reaction against postwar conditions but also to embody the spirit of the 'lost generation'" (17). The critical idea underscoring Aichinger's

assertion is the idea of embodiment. Metaphysical concepts associated with the lost generation–what Jennifer Haytock succinctly describes as "ideological loss"—were manifest through the soldier's corporeal figure (87). A characters' posture, how their body was managed by the military, and most of all how their bodily integrity was marred in combat assumed symbolic meaning, staking claims about what writers saw as the social depravity and barbarity of modernity. Not only, then, were representations of the body a defining characteristic of literary modernism, they were also a "hallmark" of early 20th century war fiction (Haytock 87).

Among the American writers of the First World War to utilize the body were John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway. In his 1921 novel, *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos relies on the conscripted body to critique modernity. In the section titled "Rust," for example, the healing of protagonist John Andrews' wounds expose how the rapidity of modern life, which was brought about by mass communication and media, interrupted one's cognition. "The torn ligaments" in Andrews' thighs disrupt the hurried pace of military service (206). As they were "slowly knitting themselves together," Andrews finally had a moment to "piece together the frayed ends of the thoughts that kept flickering to the surface of his mind" (207). And when military police arrest Andrews for going AWOL, the imprisonment of his body, as Haytock argues, signifies the loss of "individuality and freedom" to the bureaucratic systems that proliferated during the 20th century (80). Long considered an exemplar of modernism and lionized for his WWI fiction, Ernest Hemingway also rendered the soldier's body, particularly its wartime damage, as a symbol for social malaise. In his assessment of Hemingway's early collection of stories, *In Our Time* (1924), Thomas Strychacz argues that the writer viewed war as the "common denominator of human experience," and thus found the soldier's materiality useful in metaphorizing such experiences (71) In *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), the follow-up to his story collection, veteran Jake

Barnes' wounded genitals convey the "sterility" of the postwar society (Aichinger 19). Similarly, in *A Farewell to Arms*, one the most celebrated novels of the FWW, the gruesome leg injury that Frederick Henry sustains is a connotation for social chaos, which as Haytock notes, inaugurates Henry's "personal quest for meaning" in a world devoid of it (83). Drawing from their overseas experiences, Dos Passos and Hemingway effectively extended modernist experimentation with the body within the genre of war fiction, manipulating the body within their work to meditate on the FWW's cultural legacy.[7]

In turn, Dos Passos and Hemingway set a precedent for the writers of the SWW war. Veterans such as Norman Mailer, Herman Wouk, and Kurt Vonnegut take up the human figure to forward political messages. Yet several changes in aesthetics, politics, and historical events distinguished the literature of the SWW from its literary forbearer. For one, the writers were not solely modernists, but worked in a variety of literary traditions and movements that also included realism and postmodernism. Additionally, with an unequivocal enemy in the Nazi party and the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States' reason for entering the war was overtly clear. And with the advancement of weapons technology and medical aid, the war impacted the body in new—and disturbing—ways. These factors influenced how and why the writers illustrated the soldier's body in their war fiction. In The *Naked and the Dead* (1948), for example, Mailer takes cues from Dos Passos, and illustrates the dehumanizing effects of military service through the soldier's skin tone. In an early scene, the soldiers prepare to enter the combat zone in the Pacific Theatre: "the flesh color of their faces unreal against the gray paint of the landing craft" (22). On the opposite end of the political spectrum, Wouk utilized the body to convey patriotic platitudes. In *The Caine Mutiny* (1951), Willie Keith begins as poor quality "'Army meat'" that leaves the medical doctor "dissatisfied" (5). His military training transforms him into a competent and

disciplined soldier. After achieving the rank of captain, Willie walks his ship where "power seemed to flow out of the plates and into his body" (482). And decades later, Kurt Vonnegut explored the traumatizing effects of warfare via the body of Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). As the narrator explains, Pilgrim is "unstuck in time," traveling nonlinearly to and fro events in his life , which include the bombing at Dresden and his capture by the Tralfamadorians, a race of extraterrestrial beings (29). As Christopher Coker argues, Vonnegut's depiction of time travel "offers an insight into the way war overwhelms the memory" and forces one to "remember the horrors they have witnessed at times not of their own choosing" (287, 294). Pilgrim's body helps manifest this idea, physically reliving these memories as they abruptly occur. The soldiers' bodies that appear in Mailer, Wouk, and Vonnegut's works do not embody the broader social conditions of the postwar world in the same way as Dos Passos and Hemingway's characters, but rather more narrowly critique, compliment, or expose the military and the effects of combat during the SWW. To this end, their work exemplifies what became a literary convention of war fiction, relying on the body to draw readers' attention to thematic ideas about the politics, merits, and violence of the good war.[8]

Jones' Reimagining of Literary War Wounds

Jones, however, approaches the body differently in his work. Whereas the other veterans' novels often deploy the soldier's body to forward a message, the soldier's body throughout his trilogy is the message. That is, rather than function as a symbol, his representations of injured men elucidate what happens to bodies in service, at war, and in recovery. The "shattered" characters that populate *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle* are forced to reconcile how their corporeal differences impact their status in the military, their views of the war, and what their futures as disabled men in the mid 20th century might look like (*Whistle* 37).

In taking up these experiences, Jones' novels develop what Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell describe as a "complex disability subjectivity," which entails a "contemplation of the difference that disability makes as a socially negotiated identity" (10). In his trilogy, war wounds are less frequently narrative devices as they are narrative experiences that draw attention to the complexities, both physical and social, that stem from bodily alterity. The reason for his divergence from literary trends within the genre has to do, on one level, with Jones' disdain for the forefather of modern war fiction: Hemingway.

While other veteran writers such as Mailer considered Hemingway a hero, Jones had a more complicated relationship with the man known as Papa.[9] Although he respected his talents as a writer, Jones took issue with Hemingway's portrayal of combat and war. In the introduction to the uncensored version of *From Here to Eternity*, fellow veteran writer and close friend William Styron sheds light on the impetus behind Jones' position: "Hemingway had been to war too, and had been wounded, but despite the gloss of misery and disenchantment that overload his work, Jim maintained, he was a war lover, a macho contriver of romantic effects, and to all but the gullible and wishful the lie showed glaringly through the fabric of his books…he therefore had committed the artist's chief sin in betraying the truth" (x). One aspect of this betrayal, as I see it, lies in Hemingway's representations of war wounds. When deploying the wound as a narrative device, Hemingway's novels lose sight of the lived experiences of the injured soldiers. Jake Barnes' and Frederick Henry's injuries only surface when the plot calls for their symbolic potential. Thus, rather than evoke Papa as so many of his contemporary veterans had done, Jones rejected his aesthetic technique. As a result, his characters' injuries never, in Styron's terms, dissolve into a "social or political blur," but instead remain sharply in focus (xiv).

The root cause behind Jones' repudiation of Hemingway's work also stems from his own military experience and the philosophies he developed while serving in the SWW. Having earned a Purple Heart, the veteran writer was intimately familiar with the material consequences brought on by combat and, more significantly, how those consequences could trouble a soldier's experience. In his memoir, *WWII: A Chronicle of Soldiering* (1975), he recalls his battlefield engagements as part of the 25th Infantry Division in the Pacific Theatre, a combat zone where he sustained and was treated for two separate wounds. The first, for which he was awarded the military decoration, occurred during a firefight for control over "The Galloping Horse" region of Guadalcanal. Jones notes that he was "wounded in the head" by a "random mortar shell," which required about a "week in the hospital" before he rejoined his Division (37). His second injury occurred when he accidentally twisted his ankle while walking in his bivouac (102). Although clumsy, the injury proved pivotal for Jones, who explained that it created "a serious moral problem" (103). Whereas he feared disclosing the twisted ankle might be construed as an act of malingering, tainting his reputation as a soldier, his sergeant held a different opinion. He warned Jones that "'if you don't [report it], you're crazy,'" as it would certainly procure a discharge (103). The underlying implication of the sergeant's remark struck a chord with Jones. If he did not disclose his injury—if he did not lay claim to his body—he would relinquish it to the army, which in the jungles of the Pacific Theatre likely meant further damage if not death. Faced with this ultimatum, Jones reported his wound and was sent back to the U.S. for recovery.

From his experience, Jones developed an overarching theory. He recognized that the soldier's body was a valuable material commodity, one that the institution was eager to use to its advantage. As such, he viewed the army's dominion over the soldier's body as standard protocol, which is a concept he discusses throughout his memoir. Since its publication, his memoir has

been read for its biographical details as well as its meditations on soldiering. Pamela Dunbar interprets the text as theorizing the transformative process that soldiers underwent. Summarizing Jones' thesis, she writes that "men enter the army and are immediately subject to the beginning of successive stages and conditioning whose end result is complete self-abnegation" (6). Stripping men of their identity was an essential step in acclimating them to the "radical violence of the Army's programme" (Dunbar 6). As Jones observes, the most effective way to carry out this process was through the rigid and sustained management of their bodies. While discussing his training, Jones recounts that "we jumped off some antique barges...We crawled on our bellies through mud under machine gun fire...We practiced throwing hand grenades" (31). These repetitive drills reshaped men in the army's image: strong, capable, fit, and ready to serve. And as a result of this physical evolution, according to Jones, the army endeavored to keep men for as long as possible: "they wouldn't let you go home...You yourself—that is, your body and its recently acquired skills—were at least ten times as valuable as when you were a green hand" (54). Here, the explicit reference to the soldier in material terms underscores the loss of bodily autonomy. In transforming the civilian into a good soldier, the army exerted complete control over his body. A "serious wound," as Jones muses, was "about the only hope" a soldier had for upsetting this dynamic (54). Service-related injuries could impair or immobilize the soldier to the point of being removed from action, as Jones had learned. This perception had a profound impression on the veteran writer, who made it a key to the entirety of his war trilogy. If Jones was, as William Styron avers, trying to "exploit the military world he knew so well," the most palpable way he realizes this objective is through illustrations of the military exploiting his characters' bodies (xiii). His representations of wounds and the complications they engender hold the army responsible for the bodily damage, which was an idea that few civilians

recognized least of all from Hollywood war films, and a bold move during the Cold War. With the threat of a nuclear conflict with the Eastern Bloc all but assured, the nation's patriotic sentiments and confidence in the military were palpable. Jones's war trilogy, however, urged readers to question the ethics of the U.S. Armed forces and the ramifications of war.[10]

The Army's Need for War Wounds in Jones' Trilogy

Before conducting readings of each novel, it will be helpful to sketch the manner by which Jones takes up war wounds as an embodied experience rather than a figurative device. Doing so will frame the overarching dilemma of bodily autonomy with which his injured characters struggle. This conflict, as I suggest, is premised on a theory of the body that threads together *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle*. Throughout the novels, there is an overwhelming preference for what disability scholars refer to as able-bodiedness. The sergeants, majors, and disembodied voices of central command—what are the ranking authorities—favor men who subscribe to particular expectations of the body. As Robert McRuer explains, though, this concept amounts to more than solely possessing all extremities and complete mobility. Instead, "being able-bodied means being capable of the normal physical exertions required in a particular system of labor" (8). In the case of Jones' armies, this is a matter of the soldier characters successfully carrying out tasks common to the armed forces such as operating weapons, carrying equipment, and fighting in hand-to-hand combat. More immediately, this desire for such skills and abilities is contingent on the war effort. The army upholds these physical expectations of its soldiers to prepare them for, and ideally dominate, its political enemies. In *The Thin Red Line*, for instance, when the narrator reveals that "every morning there was an hour of intensified calisthenics" to keep the soldiers in fighting shape, the

novel emphasizes the importance of the soldiers' ability to perform military labor essential to the war effort (89).

On a more complex level, the army desires able-bodiedness among its soldiers for its optic value. Military labor broadcasts ideas about the institution to the public, which, as Jones' novels illustrate, is a process that is vital to its continued operation. This idea is staked on the body's representational power. Tobin Siebers explains that the "body is a vehicle, the means by which we convey who we are from place to place" (7). The sight of soldiers carrying out military labor, for example, projects ideas of strength and competency. Yet as Rosemarie Garland Thomson explains, this presentation especially favors those whose bodies fit and work within their given environments. Because of their "bodily configurations," able-bodied individuals "can step into a position of authority and wield the power that it grants them" (8). Part of this power, as Thomson notes, includes how individuals "represent" themselves (8). Thus, soldiers who meet the desirable condition of able-bodiedness within the context of the military—fit, strong, and handsome—embody highly desirable social qualities. Situated in terms of Jones's novels, this representational power serves the military at large. The soldiers are representatives of the institution; the shape of their bodies shapes the military's image. This dynamic, as Gloria Origgi explains, is crucial in establishing a respectable reputation: "credible self-images...will conform to a series of values endorsed by society" (19). This to say, the able-bodied army communicates ideas of strength, power, masculinity, and most of all, the potential to win the war, to a U.S. public eager to see and support those values in its martial forces. Thus for Jones' armies, being in control of the war—both physically and socially—is a matter of being in control of the body. Evidence of this idea plays out in different ways in his novels. In *The Thin Red Line*, for example, Train's physical appearance is a problem for a Press Officer shooting promotional

footage. Worrying that the Train's appearance will not boost confidence among civilians, he laments, '"I never saw a more damned un-soldierly-looking face in my whole life'" (348). And in *Whistle*, Major Kurntz tells the wounded and near-immobilized Prell that he should "get up out of that wheelchair and walk bravely to the lectern," a powerful gesture that he believes will encourage the public to buy war bonds (465). As both of these scenes attest, the army's preference for able-bodiedness is a matter of public reputation. The soldier's body is a vital tool in assuring the public that their Armed Forces are strong, handsome, brawny, capable, and above all, in control.

Yet those two scenes illustrate a critical idea that, as I am arguing, is fundamental to Jones' trilogy. The kind of able-bodiedness that his army desires only exists in relation to what it is not. Put differently, Jones' armies throughout *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle* need a point of reference by which they construct their idealized conception of the soldier. Theorizing the rhetorical importance of disability to able-bodiedness, McRuer draws attention to this relationship: "able-bodiedness repeatedly demands that people with disabilities embody for others an affirmative answer to the unspoken question, 'Yes, but in the end, wouldn't you rather be more like me?'" (9). Thomson frames disability similarly, arguing that the "disabled figure delineates the corresponding abstract cultural figure on the self-governing, standardized individual," and without such a figure "taxonomies of bodily value" would "collapse" (41). Framed from this angle, Jones' armies depend on service-related disability, which is a dependence that goes beyond simply carving out their conception of able-bodiedness. Because disability inherently exists within their institution in the form of service-related injuries and war wounds, the army repurposes it to support the institution's needs and objectives. Debilitating punishments are the means to enforce discipline among unruly soldiers; combat

victories come at the expense of blown off legs; and crippled veterans are objects of charity that boost military funds. War wounds, as Jones' trilogy conveys, benefit institutional goals.

While wounds that result from these circumstances serve the army's larger efforts, what do they mean for the wounded characters—for those who can no longer meet the institution's idealized soldier? This is the central question that Jones explores. As Emily Russell notes, "just as war prompts a very material challenge to bodily coherence in the form of wounding and death, the ideological coherence of the body as a representation of military might and national well-being is similarly disrupted" (130). For Jones' characters, war wounds transform them into the collateral damage of the institution's political aims. As their injured and impaired bodies make them aware of this, they do not see themselves in a heroic or selfless manner, but as something else entirely. In response to the army's excruciating punishments, *From Here to Eternity's* Prew felt "bottomlessly sick inside"; the wounds that impact the soldiers in *The Thin Red Line* "darkled in their already darkling mood": and *Whistle's* Prell feels like an "entertainer" forced to complete the army's "assignment" (284, 356, 453, 465). Because of their wounds, the characters see themselves as exploited material objects, which is a revelation that drives them, in varying capacities, to reclaim a sense of bodily autonomy from the army. To this end, Jones' representations of service-related injuries do not signal the end of a conflict, but the start of another one which, when read through the lens of the Cold War, raises speculations and anxieties not about Eastern antagonists, but one of the central apparati of the nation's government.

The Wound as Punishment in *From Here to Eternity*

In this first close reading, I will focus on how Jones represents service-related wounds as a form of discipline in his first novel, *From Here to Eternity*. Although published in the early fifties, Jones began working on the novel shortly after his discharge in 1944. As Frank McShane

explains, the "drawn-out period" of several years that it took Jones to draft his massive manuscript was trying as the writer constantly "doubted his ability to finish" (96).[11] In an effort to maintain his focus and see the project to its end, Jones subscribed to a rigid daily schedule that included yoga, physical exercise, cutting his hair short, and a strict diet. To alleviate his restlessness, he bought an RV and traveled all over the country, stopping into cities such as Los Angeles, New York, Robinson, and Naples to work feverishly on the book. The discipline of his routine and the experiences of the road helped Jones work through the intense "strain on his imagination," culminating in what he described in uncharacteristically modest terms as a "'statement'" about the army (96, 98).

Set in the months leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, *From Here to Eternity* follows several characters, most notably Private Robert E. Lee "Prew" Prewitt, as they rebel against the daily bureaucratic processes of the institution. For their refusal to conform to the Army's expectations, Prew and the other dissenters are hazed, punished, and sentenced to hard labor in the military prison. Although *From Here to Eternity* lacked the combat backdrop common to other SWW cultural productions, it was received remarkably well among critics for its unique perspective. In a 1951 review for the *New York Times*, David Dempsey praised Jones' work for capturing "the essence of a soldier's life," and illuminating how they are "human within the subhuman anonymity of the military machine" (7). Although Leslie A. Fiedler condemned what he saw as "bad writing" in a review in *Commentary* published several months later, he nevertheless found Jones' story "redeeming for the imagination aspects of regular army life never before exploited" ("James Jones' Dead-End Young Werther"). The novel's critical success led to a National Book Award in 1952 as well as a cinematic adaptation in 1953. Directed by Fred Zinnemann and starring Burt Lancaster, Frank Sinatra, and Deborah Kerr, the film received

rave reviews and became an instant success, eventually earning eight Academy Awards including Best Motion Picture.

The film, however, deviated from the source material. Several controversial plot developments that involved prostitution and homosexuality were removed to appease the production codes of the U.S. army. Additionally, in a gesture of narrative triage, the scenes of the army physically punishing its soldiers take place offscreen, essentially shielding viewers from the violence and its bodily effects.[12] These changes rescued the image of the army while diluting what literary critics consider the work's core theme of nonconformity. As Peter Aichinger argues, Jones represents the army as a "social order based on the tidy categories of section, platoon, company, and regiment and guided by regulations and daily order" (28). This rigid structure strips the soldiers of their individuality in favor of creating like-minded agents of the state. Opposed to such conformity, Prew fights to retain his "individualism from within the military command structure" (Dunbar 4). The character's body, as I suggest, is the linchpin in this conflict. Because Prew's beliefs do not jive with the army's, the institution attempts to reform him accordingly: to break his spirit, they break his body. In scenes of physical labor and abuse, Jones casts service-related injuries as a form of military discipline, a method of forcibly controlling the soldier by controlling his body. In turn, this creates a crisis of meaning among Prew and the other rebellious characters, who attempt to reclaim their wounds as something other than material signs of the institution's authority. Read from this angle, Jones' novel raises questions not about how the army treats its political enemies but about how it treats its own servicemembers, which was a timely examination. In the early postwar years, as Truman's administration claimed to "support free peoples who were resisting attempted subjugation" and Senator Joseph McCarthy began his crusade against the supposed Red Scare, targeting

"intellectuals and policymakers considered by many to be part of a treacherous cabal that had infiltrated government, the press, and academia," the experiences of the injured characters in *From Here to Eternity* added the government's own martial force to the list of institutions of which the American public should be cautious (Robbins 34, Harper 97).

The body plays a critical role in *From Here to Eternity* well before Prew is punished. From the outset, Jones establishes the combat sport of boxing as a central element of the plot. For the regiment officers, prize fighting carries significant political implications. The visual physicality of the sport—of the able-bodied athletes demonstrating their sheer strength—lends to the army's image during peacetime. Kath Woodward notes that "boxing is all about bodies" not only in terms of what they can do but also what they signify (63). Woodward argues that the "beautiful boxing bodies" of successful fighters "comply with an ideal that equates physical beauty with health, success and strength" (64). Such fighters broadcast winning qualities, which is a concept that is imperative to Colonel Delbert and Captain Holmes, the commanding officers of Prew's Regiment. On one level, they desire great fighters for personal gain. As Col. Delbert explains to Captain Holmes, he has "taken some mighty strong ribbing" because their "Regiment's athletic reputation has suffered badly" (52). Recruiting quality fighters, then, can improve Delbert's status. More broadly, though, skilled boxers are important to the army's public image, as it is the "athletic programs that keep [them] before the public's eye" (53). Thus the same fighters who will improve Delbert's reputation will also improve the army's. To civilians, the soldier's ability to win translates to their potential on the battlefield. And because Prew is a natural talent—described as "'quite a fighter'"—Delbert and Holmes target him for this reason (23). They want to weaponize Prew's body and its capabilities in the service of the army's reputation.

Prew refuses to box, however, due to his personal experience with the bodily harm that the sport causes. Considering the character's decision sets in motion the novel's most pivotal scenes, Peter Aichinger and Tony Williams have weighed the underlying reason behind Prew's protest. According to Aichinger, Prew is guided by a "private code of conduct" that stems from a promise he made his mother (86). Shortly before she dies, she asks Prew to "'never hurt nobody unless its absolute a must'" (16). By agreeing, he develops, in Williams' words, a "moral code that neither allows him to comply with the system nor continue boxing" (15). While these readings highlight the character's conviction to his personal beliefs, we can expand them to account for the role that disability plays in his decision. In a crucial scene, Prew accidentally injures his boxing partner, Dixie Wells. He "caught Dixie wide with this no more than ordinary solid cross" that left him in "a coma for a week" and permanently blind (20). Well's impairment is problematic for the army. In contrast to "beautiful boxing bodies," Woodward explains that the "broken body in boxing...often constitutes a broken self," and is seen as an "object of pity" (65). As a "broken body," Dixie threatens the army's mission, and his body is therefore removed from sight. As the narrator explains, "they would ship him back to the States, to an old soldier's home, or to one of the Hine's VA hospitals which was even worse" (20). In this subtle nod to the conditions that await the character, Jones complicates heroic images of wounded soldiers frequently portrayed in films. Here, disability is not a cause for admiration, but an isolating experience–Wells will not be rewarded for his injury but forgotten because of it. This reality resonates with Prew. After learning of Wells' troubling fate, Prew sees boxing differently: "the whole thing of ring fighting was hurting somebody else, deliberately, and particularly when it was not necessary" (21). In this way, disability is a turning point for the character. His conviction to his personal code is affirmed after seeing how the disabled soldier is treated. As a result, Prew

determines that he cannot be an instrumental part of a system that damages other soldiers and their livelihood.

His decision, in effect, destabilizes the army's able-bodied image, which is an affront to the commanding officers. In response to Prew's sympathy for Dixie Wells, Captain Holmes quips: '"what would you have us do? Disband our fighting program because one man got hurt'" (42). More forthrightly, Sergeant Warden warns Prew that "'someday you punks will learn that good jobs dont grow on trees'" (44). In theory, the character's decision should not elicit such frustration. As a Private, Prew can easily be replaced with another skilled fighter. What makes Prew's position problematic, though, is the principle behind it. More than denying his commanding officers' desire to exploit his skills to enhance their personal image, Prew, in citing Well's injury, is drawing attention to the ethical dilemma underlying the sport: the army benefits from disabled soldiers. While winning fighters testify to the army's combat potential, those testaments come at the expense of soldiers injured in the process. For the army, Prew's way of thinking is unacceptable and must be redressed as it can potentially influence others and undermine their established system. Not only does Sergeant Warden explain that Prew "'put his own head in the noose,'" but the character's peers, including Chief Cohate, also recognize the dangerous implications of his decision, telling him that "'you bucking a big organization'" that will "'wear you down'" if it has to (46, 261). Even Prew knows his decision has serious consequences when he thinks to himself: "you cant disagree with the adopted values of a bunch of people without they get pissed off at you" (274). The body, then, is a linchpin in Jones' novel. The Regiment's system of utilizing their soldiers' materiality and their "dehumanizing indifference" for the consequences is pitted against Prew's defense of the soldiers' autonomy (Dawes 57). This ideological clash, in turn, spurs the central conflict in the second half of *From*

Here to Eternity in which Jones' representations of injured bodies continue playing a pivotal role.

When the army attempts to reform Prew's beliefs, they do so by targeting his body. This idea is posited through the term "breaking," an informal expression that alludes to the army's disciplinary procedures. As Captain Holmes informs Prew when he first joins the Regiment, for example, "'any man who fucks up gets broken'" (39). And when pressing the importance of forcing Prew to fight, General Slater similarly reminds Captain Holmes that "'you can break any man...you are an officer'" (342). Their philosophy is simple. Through unbearable physical punishment, which comes in the form of hazing, abuse, and hard labor, the soldier will hit a breaking point and conform to the Army's expectations. In this context, Jones reframes wounds not as the byproduct of engaging with a foreign enemy on a battlefield but as a form of institutionalized discipline that enacts bodily damage to force men to "learn to soldier" (39). These illustrations first appear when Prew is subjected to the "treatment"—a form of hazing intended to "'bring a man into line'" (261). Outfitted in field gear and repeatedly completing a ten mile hike, the excursion is painful for the character. The "sixty-five or seventy pounds of pack dragged at his back," "cut into the circulation of his arms," and left him limping (281). When the treatment fails to change Prew's mind, he is falsely accused of a crime and sentenced to labor in the Stockade. Here, the military prison formalizes the process of "breaking." As the warden explains, their purpose is to "re-educate men to both the manual skills and mental thinking of soldiers," which they accomplish by making "not wanting to soldier so painful that you will prefer to soldier" (523, 524). There, Prew is forced to mine rocks in the stone quarry where the "heat threatened to sizzle his brains" (534). He is also assaulted regularly. After forcing Prew to drink castor oil on a full stomach, for example, a guard punches the protagonist

until he "vomited the large part of the commingled castor oil and food onto the floor" (565). In time, the soldier's injuries strain his views of the military. Although his physical ailments make him question his protest, they also make him "pumped full of outrage" (288). In these scenes, service-related injuries drive a wedge between the character and the institution. Rather than affirm his allegiance to the army, they fracture it.

As a result, the disfigurements, injuries and impairments that Prew and his fellow dissenters incur create a crisis of meaning. Just as boxing bodies—both beautiful and damaged—signify certain qualities, so too do the incarcerated character's physical alterities. This is to say that, if physical punishment is a disciplinary tool for enforcing conformity, then the injuries that result thereafter showcase the efficacy of that tool. Or, as Williams succinctly avers, the characters' injuries are the "physical manifestation of authoritarianism" (1). By marking the soldier with scars, lacerations, bumps, bruises, among other corporeal traumas, the army co-opts their body as a testament to its dominion. Wounds tell others of the soldiers' poor character while simultaneously warning of what can happen to those who defy the institution. Prew, alternatively, views the injuries from an inverse angle. Because the character considers the army's practice of "breaking" soldiers as "philosophically pointless," he views bodily injuries as physical manifestations of soldiers' unwavering commitment to their individual beliefs (570). This idea is evinced through the language by which he discusses wounds. In the most telling example, Prew describes the "knot beginning to rise from [Maggio's] forehead at the hairline where it had been split" by guards as "one more medal" (624). Framed as a badge of honor, Prew celebrates the wound as a testament to Maggio's ongoing protest against the institution. He also views the injuries as an improvement of one's character. Noticing that Maggio's "left ear was cauliflowered," that he had "lost three upper teeth," and there was "one scar that ran up over the

point of his chin almost to his lower lip," Prew explains that he "looked competent" (534). In total, Prew believes, the wounds sustained in the stockade transform the individual into a "tough, good, dangerous soldier," stronger for having endured the army's abuse (635). The character's perception of these service-related injuries can be interpreted as a reclamation of bodily autonomy. Although they cannot control what the army does to their bodies, they can control what their bodies mean, which is an act that extends their protest.

The characters' rebellion, however, amounts to a lost cause. By the novel's conclusion, Jones stymies all of his characters' protests against the institution, including that of his determined protagonist. After his release from the stockade, Prew goes AWOL, deciding he no longer wants to serve in the army. He changes his mind when the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service attacks Pearl Harbor. Wanting to rejoin his Company amidst the chaos, Prew attempts to return to the Schofield Barracks. In a tragic twist, though, he is shot by an MP after failing to produce identification, feeling "three somethings rent their way agonizingly through his chest" (773). This moment marks, in Jennifer Haytock's reading, the conclusion in Prew's "journey of descent" (113). In a long line of abuses, death functions as the "ultimate form of punishment," a process in which the system subsumes the individual (113). Yet what does this mean in relation to the novel's representations of service-related injuries? Put simply, resistance is futile. In the end, Prew cannot escape the army's dominion over his body—he will be used as the institution sees fit, and if that is not possible, his body will be managed in a way that prevents him from disrupting their system. The other rebellious characters suffer similar fates. After intentionally breaking his arm to get out of the stockade, Francis the Indiana Farmboy's sentence is lengthened and, as the Warden tells the incarcerated soldiers, "'when he comes back from the hospital he's going to find it pretty tough around here'" (642). For aiding Francis, Berry is

tortured and dies from "'massive cerebral hemorrhage and internal injuries'" (645). And while Maggio escapes the stockade and is discharged after pretending to be insane, he receives a "yellow discharge," permanently labeling him as a coward (580). As James Dawes argues, the characters' demise speaks to the "widespread fear about the increasing power large organizations were claiming over individual lives" (58). In 1951, when the novel was published, this power was on full display in the forms of McCarthyism, the Government Operations Committee, and the House of Un-American Activities Committee, which were carrying out "Red witch-hunts" that targeted "Hollywood screenwriters and university academics and diplomats whose careers and livelihoods were deliberately disrupted" (Walker 69, 70). Jones' representations of service-related wounds position the army among these organizations, committees, and ideologues. In doing so, Jones challenges the Cold War binary that framed the political relationship between the Western and Eastern nations as a matter of good vs. evil. With the novel set in an era of peacetime before the U.S. entered the SWW, *From Here to Eternity* asks its Cold War readership to entertain a difficult question: if wounds are committed by an enemy, then who is the enemy in the novel?

Wounds, Exploitation, and Combat Victory in *The Thin Red Line*

This section of close reading will examine how representations of service-related injuries evolved in Jones' sequel, *The Thin Red Line*. The novel follows *From Here to Eternity* to the next logical step, taking place in a combat zone in the Pacific Theatre. This change in setting likewise changes the implications surrounding bodily wounds. No longer symptomatic of military discipline, injuries are the material sacrifices that inch the army closer to victory, which is a fact that Jones' soldier characters struggle to reconcile.

Realizing his sequel was no easy task. Rather, the time span between *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line* "matured [Jones] as a writer and...prepared [him] for a more realistic book than he would have written as an immediate sequel to his first book" (McShane 197). In terms of professional growth, Jones published two books in the late 1950s. The first, *Some Came Running* (1957)—a semi-autobiographical account of a WWII veteran's failed attempt at becoming a writer—was decimated by critics over its unwieldy length, repetition, and strange experimentation with spelling and punctuation. In his follow-up novella, *The Pistol* (1959), Jones began honing his trademark prose and worked more succinctly, keeping his story about a young GI's obsession over a .45 caliber pistol to a lean 158 pages. His efforts were moderately received by critics, who maintained the novella proved Jones' skill as a writer but failed to live up to expectations of his first book. The flaws of both books, however, proved pivotal. With a firmer grasp on his literary style and voice, Jones felt ready to write his sequel, which was a deeply personal and emotionally intense undertaking. As McShane explains, "the writing of *The Thin Red Line* took a lot out of Jones, for he had to relive the fears and terrors he had experienced in the army in order to get them down on paper" (200). What resulted from long nights of re-enacting his combat experiences on his office floor was a harrowing story about the men of C-for-Charlie, a company tasked with securing territories on Guadalcanal from Japanese forces. A stark departure from his last two efforts, *The Thin Red Line* was lauded by critics. In the winter issue of the *Hudson Review*, Paul Levine described Jones at his "destructive best" in his depictions of "war as a cold-blooded business operation" (604, 605). And a review in *Kirkus* praised the novel's "detached, ironic comments on army organization" and found his "accurate and sensitive description" of army life a welcome return to form ("From Here to Eternity").

The novel's critical and commercial success led to a subsequent film adaption, which was released two years later in 1964. Like the filmic version of *From Here to Eternity*, narrative triage was applied to Jones' novel in order to suit the story for the screen, and more importantly, Hollywood's political agenda. Jones' massive cast was boiled down to a handful of characters; images of bloody bullet holes and maimed appendages were left on the cutting room floor; and the grisly, muddy, and ethically ambiguous scenes of combat were transformed into suspenseful battle sequences between the Allies and the Axis.[13] While Francine Prose notes that the film has its strong points, she also maintains that it fails to do "what the novel does, which is to completely and unnervingly avoid glorifying war" (xiii). Such glorification derives from the film's emphasis on action. By making combat scenes a focal point, the film reifies the good war binary of good versus evil through the Hollywood trope of the WII enemy. The film's overt portrayal of ferocious and cunning Japanese soldiers overshadows what is, in the novel, a more complex conflict in which the soldiers find themselves.

Drawing attention to this key difference, Aichinger contends that Jones' novel portrays the military as a "big corporate operation in which the individual mechanically performs his part" (87). This operation, in turn, creates a moral dilemma for the individuals—the soldiers—who realize "they are all government-issued items or property soon to be used as pawns in a bloody chess game" (Williams 97). The injuries they sustain in the course of the Guadalcanal campaign, as I argue, are bodily experiences that awaken them to this revelation. Rather than curse their assailants, the wounded soldiers direct their attention toward the army, questioning their relationship with the institution. Through this process, Jones reframes the concept of sacrifice. Rather than making a material sacrifice, the characters feel like they are being sacrificed. Thus, the army in The *Thin Red Line* achieves victory—a concept that is underscored

by ideas of strength, power, and ability—at the expense of the individual soldier's bodily integrity. As the expendable material in this process, the wounded characters question if their bodies will ever be their own again, which was a prescient idea at the time. Published in September of 1962, Jones' novel was read by the American public through the lens of the Cuban Missile Crisis the following month. Regarding the event as the "most dangerous period of the Cold War," Martin Walker notes that a "nuclear exchange was so close that both White House and Kremlin officials frankly expected bombs to fall" (171). Backdropped by those harrowing thirteen days, Jones' representations of war wounds forward an ominous warning to the American public: another war, especially one of nuclear caliber, would bring devastating and lasting material consequences, which could, as his wounded characters show, strain rather than strengthen the nation's faith in its leadership.

Initially, the soldiers of *The Thin Red Line* find bodily damage appealing. Mess Sergeant Storm, for example, welcomes the possibility of a "'big serious delicate medical operation'" while listening to the grating sound coming from his injured hand (330). And when struck by an MG bullet, an unnamed sergeant hastily confesses: "'I hope I'm crippled a little'" (282). The reason that the characters' display a reversal of the preference for able-bodiedness is due to the implications underlying their injuries. As the narrator explains, to be wounded in the course of warfare, to endure "the moment of the explosion itself," results in the characters' "secret goal"—their "eventual discharge" (47). War wounds, then, are seen as the means to reclaim one's autonomy. By sustaining an injury that incapacitates the soldier beyond his ability to perform, he can remove himself from the horrors of combat and the grip of the institution. Here, Jones' representations evoke a narrow understanding of war wounds similar to some of the qualities depicted in Hollywood films. The soldiers are under the impression that their wounds can be

triaged and will have little impact on their futures. This is not to say they are totally oblivious to the complexities associated with bodily impairment. As the narrator notes, they hoped to "receive a minor wound which would incapacitate or cripple you slightly without crippling fully" (48). Although this observation makes clear that they recognize the gravity of more serious injuries, the soldiers do not fully realize how even "minor" wounds that are "slightly" crippling can affect them physically, socially, and emotionally well after they leave the combat zone. In this way, Jones is constructing a myth about combat injuries through his characters' perceptions, which he slowly dismantles throughout the novel.

Jones begins rupturing this perception when Charlie company encounters a group of wounded soldiers. As they stumble back to the bivouac from a rescue boat, the uncanny appearances and expressions of the injured men suggest that combat wounds are a more complex and ineffable experience than the soldiers imagined: "bloodstained, staggering, their eyeballs rolling, the little party faltered up the slope of the beach to sit or lie, dazed and indifferent, and acquiescently allow themselves to be worked on by the doctors" (45). Unlike the soldiers killed in action, these men "unexpectedly and illogically, found themselves alive again" and "had been initiated into a strange, insane, twilight fraternity where explanation would forever be impossible" (45). Bearing witness, C-for-Charlie "had been affected by the sight of the wounded" (52). In this moment, they realize that combat injuries transition the soldier from a conflict on the battlefield to another conflict within themselves. The wounded soldiers are not struggling with what happened to their bodies, but rather who they have become as a result. My argument here builds off of Cristina S. Jarvis' reading of dead bodies in the novel. As Jarvis explains, "dying men fascinate and horrify Charlie company because they occupy the liminal space of the corpse 'between here and nowhere' and call into question the boundaries of their

embodied subjectivities" (166). Service-related injuries, as I see it, complicate this process. While dying characters are progressing toward death, wounded characters, conversely, are stuck, to borrow Jarvis' language, in the "liminal space." The moment in which they sustained their injuries may have brought them close to death, but never over that threshold. Instead, they find that they are "now different"—and that embodied difference urges them to question the relationship between their bodies, their service, and the ideas of home they once had (45). While the characters previously thought war wounds were the means to lay claim to their bodies, they find the opposite to be true.

For Private First Class Marl, the memories associated with his wound impede his sense of autonomy (91). While resting, "a piece of daisycutter whistled into his hole...and cut off his right hand as neatly as a surgeon could have done" (91). Marl is shocked by the sudden and violent change to his body and immediately laments what his wound means to his future as a Nebraskan "dry-dirt farmer" (91). He repeatedly cries "'what'm I gonna do now, hey...how'm I gonna work...how'm I gonna plow'" (91). While the character's concern seemingly revolves around how his injury will impact his ability to farm, several allusions suggest Marl's distress is less about his livelihood than his well-being. When he is first introduced, for example, the narrator explains that Marl "never much liked to farm anyway" (91). Additionally, the narrator also notes that Marl "would still be able to work" after losing his hand (91). Although the men of Charlie company are under the impression that Marl "could not get [this fact] through his head," the soldier's behavior indicates otherwise. When "he refused to be placated by descriptions of what marvelous artificial hands they made nowadays," Marl is trying to find a way to express that he is upset over something beyond his job (92). His line of questioning is not about how he will work as a disabled farmer, but how he will work with the memories associated with his wound.

As the narrator explains, the maimed appendage meant Marl "could go home," yet the character "would have none of it" (91). His idea of home is now altered by the subjective implications moored to his stump. The traumatic memories of the war and the moment the daisycutter lopped off his hand will follow him stateside and, because of that, his sense of bodily autonomy is compromised. The character's departure from the company symbolically reinforces this idea. Rather than revel in the fact that he is escaping the combat zone, Marl was "led off into darkness" (90). The ominous image portends the character's future, grappling with the memories of his service, of his body being used by the army, and reckoning with the fallout.

Although just a vision, the living conditions necessitated by Sergeant Welsh's war wound frustrates his relationship with the army. His vision is predicated on Charlie-Company's mission to secure Hill 210. While the mission is dangerous as it entails the soldiers exposing themselves to enemy fire while crossing over two ridges, Colonel Tall is adamant they complete it with haste as it will enhance his personal reputation among his superiors. To Welsh, Tall's self-serving orders are emblematic of the army's willingness to exploit soldiers' bodies for personal gain. As his vision reveals, the wounds that result from such exploitation—and their correlating circumstances—stoke Welsh's resentment for the institution. While contemplating the mission, Welsh considers what his life will be like if he is "crippled, [or] maimed" (209). He pictures "himself in one of those horrible Veterans Hospitals across the country, an aged man in a wheelchair, with a pint bottle of gin hidden in his cheap flimsy robe, cackling and quacking at the weight-lifter lesbian Napoleons of nurses, at the pinheaded, pipsqueak hard-jawed Alexander-the-greats of doctors" (209, 210). Welsh's vision outlines a bleak future in which his wounded body fuels anxiety over his gendered identity and is forever subjugated to the army's authority. Dependent on the institution and its staff, the hard-nosed Welsh is emasculated at the

thought of powerful women and meek men exercising control over him. Additionally, Jones alludes to the nurses and doctors' inhumanity by comparing them to Napoleon and Alexander the Great. Framed as military generals infamous for their domineering and ruthless attitudes, the medical personnel are extensions of the army that oversee Welsh's body. His sneaking of liquor and belief that "he'd give them a hard time," then, can be interpreted as an effort–albeit small–to reclaim his autonomy (210) Although just a vision and never realized in the course of the mission, Welsh's perception of being wounded sows his disaffection for the institution. Rather than think of the Japanese army, the prospect of a combat injury leads Welsh to think of "his enemies the government," who love "authority," especially as that authority pertains to his body (209).

For Corporal Fife, the army's definition of service-related injury—an idea that fluctuates depending on combat needs—makes him feel as if damage to his body is inevitable, which enrages the young soldier. After hearing the "soft 'shu-u-u' of the mortar shell" while on patrol, Fife's vision is distorted by a "red flowing haze" of blood gushing from his head (261). Anything but scared, Fife "suddenly felt joyous," "free," and "released" (262). In the character's mind, his situation is ideal. He has complete mobility, his genitals are intact, and his body has not been significantly disfigured. He is going to return home intact. This idea, however, is dashed when the army doctor Colonel Roth explains that his head wound is superficial. At this point, a debate over the legitimacy of service-related injuries ensues between the characters. Both parties attempt to define what constitutes a dischargeable injury in order to meet their respective needs. In other words, defining the fluid concept is a struggle for control over the soldier's body. Desperate to remove himself from the war, Fife cites his poor vision as grounds for medical leave as "he could barely make out the facial features of someone ten feet away" (364). His

autonomy is usurped by the ranking officer, who rebukes that "'we've got badly wounded men dying all over the place...we need soldiers, even the worst kind'" (364, 365). Here, Colonel Roth intimates that Fife's impairment does not qualify for leave as the battle is at a critical point and manpower–even the "worst kind"—is vital to the army's effort. Fife later outlines this idea to his company, telling them "they were not letting anybody get out of anything if they could possibly help it...so the Division commander could get this fight over with and secure the island and his reputation" (356). Knowing that he must stay "until [he] had done to its satisfaction what [his] government has sent [him] there to do," Fife realizes that bodily damage is unavoidable, which in turn affects his view of the army. After discussing his body with the medical doctor, "Fife wanted to lie down on the ground of the doctor's examination tent and beat his fists in the mud" (357). His rage stems from the fact that, in losing the debate, Fife has no choice but to return to the front lines where his body will be exposed to the hazardous elements of combat.

Through the experiences of his soldier characters, Jones subverts the idea that war wounds signified heroism or affirmed one's commitment to the service. Instead, his representations contend that bodily damage could adversely influence such ideas. When injured, or facing potential injury, characters experience anger toward the army for exploiting their bodies, which is a feeling that, due to the permanence of their injuries, stays with them. Tony Williams writes that Jones' "military represents the supreme example [of authoritarian control] especially in combat situations that its victims cannot escape" (95). As the novel illustrates, war wounds prevent an escape from the institution's control even when combat has ended. Wounded characters struggle with the memories anchored to their injuries, endure the lived conditions necessitated by them, and reckon with the idea that their bodies were sacrificed not for political ideals, but for the reputation of a few ranking officers. To this end, *The Thin Red Line* urges

readers to rethink combat injuries during the postwar decades when public confidence in the military was at an all-time high. Musing on the novel's release 17 years after the war, Aichinger avers that *The Thin Red Line*, along with other veteran works such as Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Heller's *Catch-22*, suggest that "traditional American optimism has not been overwhelmed by the fears and anxieties of the cold war" (105). Jones' novel, especially in the shadow of the Cuban Missile Crisis, sullies that optimism by warning the American reader that another war would bring devastating material consequences which would, in turn, fracture the nation's confidence in its leaders and future at a precarious moment in Cold War relations.

Appropriating Wartime Injuries in *Whistle*

In this final section of close reading, I will examine the representations of war wounds in *Whistle*, the final work of Jones' life. In a fitting conclusion to his war trilogy, Jones sets the novel at the last stop in the wounded soldier's journey: the hospital. In this way, *Whistle* sets itself apart from *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line* in that service-related injuries are not experiences that characters will undergo, but rather that they have already undergone. As such, McShane explains, the novel is "about damaged people and damage itself" (290). As a focal point, war wounds serve as the conflict of *Whistle*. The medical treatment and management of the characters' injuries become a source of competing interests between what the army wants and what the soldiers need: to be in control of their bodies.

While *Whistle* marks a triumphant end to Jones' literary career, it came on the heels of professional and personal turmoil. In what seems like a pattern at this point in his life, Jones struggled mightily following *The Thin Red Line*. Writing was not his issue, though, so much as writing a novel of substance. In the sixteen years between *The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle*, Jones published three novels, all of which were savaged by critics. In *Go to the Widow Maker* (1967),

The Merry Month of May (1971), and *A Touch of Danger* (1973), Jones departs from the war stories he was celebrated for in favor of writing about, respectively, a man's obsession with deep sea diving, an American family's experience during the 1968 student revolutions in Paris, and a private eye entangled in the secrets of a local community in Greece. Regarding the respective plots of each novel, McShane contests that they were "opportunistic and a betrayal of [Jones's] inner self" (261). Yet Jones was not actively avoiding the topic of war. Truth be told, he had begun drafting *Whistle* as early as 1967. Rather, he was not sure he could muster the inspiration and courage necessary to explore the troubling aspects of his military service that continued to haunt him.[14]

Three opportunities in the early seventies "rekindled [Jones'] association with the war" (McShane 283). In 1973, Jones took an assignment from the *New York Times Magazine* to cover the final days of the Vietnam war. While in Saigon, the writer was struck by the sight of displaced civilians wandering the streets, which he saw as emblematic of the "meaningless torture of warfare" (McShane 268). Then while returning to the U.S. to meet his wife, Jones stopped in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he revisited the army base where he trained as a young soldier. And in 1975, Jones was commissioned to write the accompanying text for the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of World War II*. This project, which would later be published exclusively as his memoir *WWII*, "reminded Jones of many episodes in the Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis," which "affected his conception of *Whistle*" (McShane 290). Moved by these experiences, Jones spent the next three years–which were also the last three years of his life–working on what he knew would be his final novel. Although he succumbed to congestive heart failure with the final three chapters unwritten, his dying wishes included friend and neighbor Willie Morris completing the book on his behalf.[15] The format of the publication, with the style

of the final three chapters composed as summations of Jones's notes, did not hurt its reception, either, as it remained on the best-seller list for months and earned largely praise from critics and Vietnam veteran writers such as Phillip Caputo.

Set in the fictional Luxor Hospital in Tennessee, *Whistle* follows four wounded soldiers as they navigate the army's medical system. In shifting the novel's context from the combat zone to the stateside hospital, Jones's representations serve a narrative function particular to the characters' circumstance. In a ward of damaged bodies, wounds are a common denominator by which the recovering characters forge relationships, helping each other manage the social stigmas associated with physical alterity as well as the environmental obstacles that impede their daily routines. As the narrator explains, "shared woundings…had given [the unit] a family closeness that it wouldn't be easy to find again" (241). In one of the only critical examinations conducted, Tony Williams cites the bond developed among the wounded soldiers as one of the novel's central themes: the most effective treatment of wartime injuries is the "crucial role of compassion that expresses itself in the military group by the care each member of the unit has for each other" (207). In an ironic turn, though, their wounds also engender their demise. In later scenes, the army repurposes and recycles their wounded bodies back into their service. To their consternation, the characters are transformed into spectacles of medical advancement, objects of charity, and rebuilt combatants. Working against films such as *In Harm's Way* and *30 Seconds to Tokyo*, which posit recovery as a quick and painless process followed by respectable promotions, Jones illustrates the wounded body as a contested site through which the army continues stifling the soldier's autonomy in favor of the institution's interests and reputation. To this end, *Whistle* asks if there is an end to the good war's impact on soldiers–if the army's control over their materiality ever ceases? Such questions spoke to the nation's political climate in the late 70s. As

the period of detente thawed, ending "a cautious control of armaments, and a steady growth in trade and cultural links" between the East and the West, Keith Robbins explains that the "American nuclear arsenal continued to be well stocked" (Walker 237, 153). With the nuclear threat once again escalating, the American public wondered if there would ever be an end to the Cold War? As the tragic fate of Whistle's characters allegorize, the specter of America in a perpetual state of war was a shadow that would forever loom over the nation.

Of *Whistle's* main characters, Bobby Prell and Johnny Strange's storylines illustrate Jones' final meditation on the army's appropriation of the wounded soldiers' bodies. Their wounds impact their identity, reshaping who they are and what they value. Engaged in a fire fight, "Prell had taken a burst of heavy-machinegun fire across both thighs…sustaining multiple compound fractures, and heavy tissue damage" (25). As a result, Prell was in "constant" pain, which made it difficult to focus on anything else other than "one simpleminded, singleminded, dedicated thought": he refuses to cry out in agony for fear of being perceived as a coward (78). Yet the character's war wound creates a more significant existential crisis. As Williams notes, Prell has "deep feelings of anxiety, fear, despair, over the changes in the home front and those within themselves" (200). These changes, both social and personal, revolve around what Prell's wound means to his future. When the character is transported out of the combat zone, he realizes that "this was the end of it…he would probably never see this outfit again" (88). Although one might think Prell would be relieved to leave the combat zone, the character is distraught at the idea. With no family stateside and unable to rejoin his outfit, the injured soldier "did not really feel he belonged anywhere. And he was beginning to suspect that that was the way it was going to be, from now on" (90). In this sense, the character's injury culminates in a loss of identity. Without the function of his legs, Prell can no longer soldier. While this change is jarring for

someone expecting to be a "thirty year man," Prell's medical options provide him with something he has not had since being injured: a choice (155). Whereas the army treated him like a piece of "'living meat'" after his wounding, Prell can now make his own decision regarding the status of his body, thereby constructing his newfound identity as a wounded soldier (76).

Yet this process is not that simple. Rather, Jones portrays the medical treatment as a power struggle between the character and the institution. While Prell "did not intend to give up the only pair of legs he'd ever had," the military doctors overlook his interests in favor of what his wounds would mean for the war effort (78). Their approach to Prell's legs reflects the most dangerous aspects of what disability theorists term the medical model, which I will explore further in the second chapter. Tom Shakespeare avers this perception of alterity upholds the "dominance of medical approaches and medical experts" who are in a "position to define need…and meet needs on their terms" (15, 91). RoseMarie Garland Thomson likewise posits that the medical model views human variation as "any somatic trait that falls short of the idealized norm and must be corrected or eliminated" (79). In the context of *Whistle*, the army intends to correct Prew's wound in a manner that "involves political rather than medical consideration" (Williams 206). Amputating the leg would thwart a spreading infection that, if left untreated, could be fatal. Considering that Prell has been recommended for the Medal of Honor, the army would lose a public relations opportunity should he die. As a decorated amputee, Prell would embody the wounded war hero, a symbol that appeals to the U.S. civilians' patriotism and encourages them to financially support the war effort. Thus, the doctors and officers pressure Prell to accept their plan of treatment. As Lennard J. Davis explains, such pressure has an adverse effect: "the doctor…takes on the function of informing the patient whether she or he is or is not healthy," and as a result "the autonomy of the [patient] is

weakened" (114). After his meeting with the doctors, Prell expresses this very sentiment: "the worst thing was this awful feeling of being completely in their hands and totally helpless" (154). This sense of helplessness is a turning point for Prell, who wants to feel in control of his body. The army, as he sees it, has taken enough from him and he refuses to let them take more. Specifically, the character wants to keep his legs as he believes they are essential to his identity as a soldier and his chances of remaining in the service.[16] Therefore, with the help of the other wounded characters, Prell successfully petitions against the amputation, and with a slight change in his medicinal regiment, staves off his infection. During this turn of events, Jones' subtly illustrates the broader implications of the character's recovery. As his "leg began to heal," "Prell was mending" (183). In choosing what happens to his body, the character not only reclaims his autonomy from the army, but quells the sense of "despair" that had been haunting him since his injury (61).

The character Johnny Strange follows a similar trajectory, beginning with the idea that his wound reshapes his identity. While visiting with company men in Guadalcanal, he was "struck in the hand by a piece of mortar fragment which had not exited" (25). The injury appears superficial at first; however, "the constant clenching and unclenching of his hand had caused a dull, deep ache in his palm…[and] he would have to ask the medic for a pill to sleep at night" (72, 73). At the surface, Strange is aggravated by the discomfort, but underlying the physical ailments of his wound are the emotional implications. As the narrator explains, Strange was particularly bothered by the "momentary feeling of total helplessness" that overtook him during his wounding (69). This sense that he has lost control of his body creates "the same peculiar sense of dislocation" that Prell experiences upon his return to the U.S (28). For Strange, this sense of dislocation affects his homelife. While visiting his wife, Strange's fantasies of an erotic

homecoming are dashed. Instead, Linda's "job seemed to have become her obsession" and it was as if "he could smell another man on her" (135). And by the end of his visit, Strange "did not feel he had been home at all" (136). The character attributes this peculiar feeling with his war experience. After a botched evening of intimacy, Strange asks himself "what happened to him in the eighteen months away, out there" (135). The character feels entirely changed by his military service, no longer the same person he was prior to his service and his injury.

Strange views his medical options as the chance to distance himself from the institution and reclaim his identity as a husband. The army is less interested in his hand as Prell's legs considering it would not procure the same emotional appeal. Therefore, medical intervention is simply a matter of what Strange wants. As Dr. Curran explains, if Strange declines surgery, he will "'recommend [him] for a disability discharge,'" and if he elects surgery, "'[he'll] be fit for limited duty, or even full duty'" (220). With these options, Strange is no longer helpless, but has the autonomy to determine what happens to his body, which as a corollary, determines his identity. Adamant about saving his marriage, Strange declines the procedure. Over dinner with Linda, he explains that he can be discharged '"almost immediately'" and they can "'start working on that restaurant'" that they have always dreamed of opening together (245). At this moment, Strange views his wounded hand as the pathway out of the military and into a future with his wife, restoring their domestic relationship. This conception is shattered, however, when she reveals that she has taken a lover. With his identity as a husband no longer possible, the character's injured hand assumes a different connotation. Whereas it was described in more neutral terms when Strange first shares his plans for discharge–"the bound member in its plaster plate"--it now becomes "the claw" after Linda reveals she is leaving Strange (245, 250). Faced with the reality, Strange succumbs to the feeling of being "naked and alone and orphaned" (240).

The character subsequently spirals out of control, adopting an aggressive temperament, drinking, and womanizing. When his devolution culminates in a disturbing scene where he physically assaults a young woman, "Strange was aghast with himself" (296). Again questioning his identity–"'I don't know what is happening to me'"—he decides he "wanted the second operation" (297, 298). Strange now sees the medical procedure as a symbolic gesture, believing that repairing his hand is a way to repair himself. Moreover, as the surgery will likely render him fit for limited duty, Strange can also stymie his loneliness by remaining in the army with his wounded friends–the only family he has left.

Although Prell and Strange make decisions about their bodies based on their personal interests, the army adapts to those decisions, thereby usurping the characters' sense of autonomy and returning them to a state of helplessness. No matter how the characters address their war wounds, the army finds ways to suit their impairments to the institution's political and practical needs. Regarding the correlation with disability and an individual's livelihood, Elizabeth S. Anker explains, a "person's potential to authenticate…autonomy is constitutively predetermined by the relative limitations of–as well as opportunities afforded by–that person's embodiment" (22). The particulars of one's disability determine not only the extent to which they can participate in the institution, but *how* they will participate in that institution. Thus, Prell and Strange's senses of autonomy are an illusion as the army recycles their bodies back into the service. With his wheelchair, crutches, and limited mobility, Prell is used as a political prop, giving speeches at war bonds rallies for local organizations. And with some function regained in his hand following surgery, Strange realizes "he would be going back to duty," again serving as a cook overseas (321). Through this development, Jones stages an intervention among Hollywood war films. Unlike the painless and streamlined medical intervention for *In Harm's Way's* Captain

Torrey and the promise of a promotion that accommodates the war wounds incurred by *30 Second Over Tokyo's* Captain Lawson, Jones forwards the idea that the wounded soldiers' hospitalization was a bureaucratic process by which the army ultimately accommodates its own needs over that of the soldiers. In this way, Tony Williams' assertion that the characters are "sacrificial victims of an inhumane material system" is as true at the beginning of the novel regarding their combat experiences as it is for their postwar assignments (200). Prell and Strange find themselves once again exploited for their materiality for institutional gain.

Although the injured characters continue bonding, Prell and Strange's reassignments eventually yield deleterious effects. The inevitable implications of their service reify old feelings of dislocation and loneliness, which forces them to reckon with the army's authority over their bodies. Prell finds himself engaged in an endless cycle of promotional events. Despite his celebrity, he believes he is a fraud, referring to his body and his Medal of Honor as a "vaudeville team" as he rises from his wheelchair to the podium in front of teary eyed audiences (453). Consequently, Prell "did not want to expose himself to the ridicule he imagined he would provoke in [Strange and their friends] because of what he considered his false role as a public relations man" (504). Strange is similarly bothered by the army's management of their bodies, thinking that, despite the bond with his friends, he "was a commodity to be sold, traded off, exchanged, according to the whims of the Army in a war, an Army too big to worry about loyalties except in very large bundles" (467). With no reprieve in sight, the characters' circumstances prove too overwhelming. After another speech, a drunk and desperate Prell picks a fight in an army bar where he is struck in the head with a pool cue and killed. Strange, too, takes his own life while headed toward the European theatre. The character "faces the fact that he simply cannot go through the whole process again…and watch young men be killed and

maimed and lost" (512). He jumps overboard where he will either freeze to death or drown. Considering every main character dies, the novel's conclusion seems melodramatic. Yet McShane contests that was "Jones's point": the hyperbolic ending illustrates the idea "that whatever happens, there is no real solution for those who have survived the combat zone; there are no happy endings, because the damage has already been done" (292). If *Whistle's* tragic ending, as Williams avers, serves as a "demolition of all the myths of war promoted by corporations and Hollywood," then part of that demolition includes the myths revolving around the wounded soldiers' bodies (207). In the novel's final scenes, Jones intimates that not only was the Hollywood representation of recovery an illusion, but so too was autonomy. In the end, the soldier's wounded bodies are never their own, but exist in the shadow of the institution.

The Long Shadow of War Wounds in Cold War America

With this final scene, Jones levies his final, and most sweeping critique of the nation's geopolitical conflict with the Soviet Union. Though Prell and Strange's perpetual struggle with the military over their bodies, *Whistle* subtly suggests that there was no foreseeable end. For readers in the late 1970s, a demographic that had just witnessed the end of the Vietnam War, this idea was prescient, as it not only anticipates another thirteen years of the Cold War, but also predicts a cycle of American intervention that would span nearly four decades, consisting of the Gulf War (1991), the Iraq War (2003-2011), and the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021). What is more is *Whistle*, and the entirety of Jones's war trilogy for that matter, pressed American readers to think about the U.S. military campaigns–past, present, and future–counter to the broad consensus. As Ron Robin explains, among American civilians there was a "pervasive contempt for complexity" and an "uncritical acceptance of contemporary cultural mores" (5). Specifically discussing this "uncritical acceptance" in the context of the nation's military, Craig and Logevall

argue that "whereby a people that before 1940 had been…opposed to standing armies and suspicious of power politics now seemed tempted so often to choose the military option and revel in American power" (364). That power, as Jones' war trilogy expresses, came at the cost of soldiers' bodies. In the name of discipline, sacrifice, capital gain, and above all, the institution's reputation, soldiers' bodies were damaged and damaged soldiers' bodies were exploited. Through this dynamic, Jones unravels popular and reductive perceptions of the enemy in the SWW put forth by Hollywood films. If a defining characteristic of the enemy was the bodily harm it caused to U.S. soldiers, then Jones' armies are tinged in this light. Caught in the middle, then, are his characters, whose embodied experiences as wounded soldiers complicate their relationship with the institution they serve and, by extension, civilian perceptions of what it meant to be wounded during the war.

Chapter 3

“”That doc said it can wait till the campaign’s over’”:

Military Medicine, Invisible Wounds, and the Paradox of Cures in *The Naked and the Dead*

The most logical veteran writer to examine after James Jones is friend and rival Norman Mailer, whose 1948 novel, The Naked and the Dead, is often revered as the greatest book to come out of the war. Although to a lesser extent, Mailer also possessed a suspicious view of Hollywood war films, namely the adaption of his book. When The Naked and the Dead was optioned for a motion picture 10 years after its publication, Mailer responded with “scant enthusiasm” (Lennon 173). While he worried that it would not be as successful as the filmic treatment of Jones’ first novel–it was not–he was more skeptical of how well his characters’ dehumanizing experiences in war would translate to the big screen–they did not. For the veteran writer, his character studies–illustrations of soldiers’ minds and bodies breaking under the stress of combat–were the most critically significant element of the novel, so much so he believed that they distinguished his work from Jones’s. Whereas The Thin Red Line “could be used as a textbook at the Infantry School,” he felt that The Naked and the Dead is “concerned more with characters than military action” (181, 182). His remark likely came from a place of jealousy; however, to his credit, his character studies do offer an exploration of war wounds that Jones overlooks: the medicalization of trauma and disease. With this in mind, this chapter examines the relationship between and the effects of the army’s medical system and the invisible wounds of war in The Naked and the Dead.

During the conclusion to Mailer’s 1948 novel, *The Naked and The Dead*, we find the characters of the 112th Cavalry Regiment speculating on their futures in the army after returning from a patrol. Rather than feel a sense of victory, though, they are in a state of malaise. Beneath their nervous laughter and relief at leaving the island of Anopopei, the soldiers are grappling with the consequences of their failed mission–an operation that cost the life of one soldier and pushed the others to their mental and physical breaking points. While some like Casmir “Polack” Czienwicz are dealing with the emotional fallout–the disaffection for officers who unnecessarily put them in harm’s way–others are reeling from somatic repercussions. Steven Minetta, for

example, wishes to impair his own body so he never has to patrol again. As he relaxed, he was "dreaming about blowing off his foot. One of these days while cleaning his gun he could point the muzzle right into the middle of his ankle, and press the trigger…he was going to have to lose his foot and it was not his fault" (702, 703). For Red Valsen, conversely, the patrol has already taken its toll: "His kidneys were shot, his legs would begin to break down soon, all through his body he could feel the damage the patrol had caused. Probably it had taken things out of him he would never be able to put back again" (703). Although the characters have endured gunfire, grueling marches, and even a volatile swarm of hornets, the "fault" of their conditions lies with their own institution's medical care. In the course of the patrol, Minetta and Red seek treatment for combat trauma and disease. In the care of the military, however, they are misdiagnosed, abused, and humiliated, leaving the medic tents more troubled, sick, and desperate than before they arrived. This paradox, in turn, raises speculations about the exigency and ethics underlying military medicine. In shuffling the sick characters back to the front for the sake of completing a fraught patrol, *The Naked and the Dead* questions whether the cures prescribed to invisible wounds of war–shell shock, disease, and sickness–were a remedy for the soldier's health and wellbeing or the army's growing need for bodies to complete its campaigns.[17]

According to the Hollywood representations of the period, though, there was little to doubt about the quality, effect, and purpose of military medicine. From the moment the nation entered the global conflict, film productions, the Armed Forces, and the government touted the advancements in military medical intervention. Their emphasis on this aspect of service played a vital role in mobilizing support at home. In addition to assuring civilians that troops were thwarting the axis' quest for global domination, these institutions also wanted to reassure the public that the American GIs injured in this pursuit were given proper care and healed. Such

assurances could bolster morale and encourage support through purchasing of war bonds, volunteering for the Red Cross, and, of course, enlisting in the military. As Christina S. Jarvis writes, the circulation of this idea took on many forms: "popular American periodicals printed numerous stories about the 'miracles' of modern military medicine…medical reports and advertisements explained treatments and evacuative processes and provided readers with encouraging statistics about the army and navy's 97% success rate in saving the lives of those wounded in combat" (86). Hollywood productions likewise contributed, aesthetically rehabilitating war wounds on the silver screen. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this process of narrative triage was primarily applied to physical injuries. The materiality of the soldier's body provided a symbolic terrain in which scars were badges of honor and lost limbs metaphorized sacrifice. Furthermore, through the imagery of bandages, stitches, amputations, and prosthetics, war films could definitely repair wounds in front of moviegoers' eyes. Triaging invisible wounds, however, was more difficult. Not only did they lack the same concrete symptoms and visual possibilities, they were also perceived far less heroically. An internal breakdown–whether of the body or mind–signified a lack of fortitude or machismo. Given the sheer number of sick soldiers, though, Hollywood had no way around the matter.[18] During the combat years and subsequent decades, war films found ways to perform narrative triage on invisible wounds, so as to further reassure its audiences that, through the miracles of military medicine, even sick soldiers could be restored to a clean bill of health.

Notably, the particular method of triaging the invisible wounds of war varied from movie to movie. Some representations, for instance, depicted more unorthodox remedies. Such was the case in *I'll Be Seeing You* (1944), which suggested the pursuit of romance could improve a shell shocked soldier's wellbeing, or the closing scenes in *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949) that implied

time and distance away from the combat zone were the antidote for the catatonic symptoms stemming from traumatic experiences. More explicitly, films like *She Wouldn't Say Yes* (1945) and *Captain Newman, M.D.* (1963) maintained that more traditional methods such as psychology and prescription pharmaceuticals cured the sick soldier. Both films' comedic tone, moreover, helped transform what was otherwise a serious issue into more lighthearted fare for viewers, further encouraging them to believe all was well. Even documentary and educational films intended for military consumption promoted the efficacy of institution's medical interventions. For example, John Huston's *Let There be Light* (1946), which was commissioned by the head of the army's Neuropsychiatric Division General William Menninger, gives the impression of, in James E. Combs & Sara T. Combs' words, a "caring Army that takes care of those who fought for their country, cures them and returns them to productive civilian life" (79). When *Let There be Light* was banned shortly after its release on the grounds that it "showed too much of the underside of war, [and] omitted too much of the traditional romantic and patriotic themes," the army then tasked Joseph Henabery with making a replacement (Combs & Combs 79). His efforts culminated in *Shades of Gray* (1948), a more upbeat take that preserved the army's image while furthering the myth of the cure. In short, these films contested that the army was winning the war in the medic tents, hospitals, and physiatrist facilities in addition to winning the war on the battlefield. Invisible wounds from trauma to disease–conditions that implied cowardice and fragility–were no match for the treatments and interventions concocted by the institution.

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, however, reorients the goal behind the army's medical treatments for invisible wounds and its effects on the characters. In what follows, this chapter examines how Mailer subverts the cultural assumption that military medicine cured sick soldiers, and instead represents the army's process of diagnosis, treatment, and care as self-serving

strategies that protect its own interests to the detriment of the character's health and wellbeing. This idea is rooted in the motif of dehumanization that pervades the novel. As scholars have shown, the wartime practices of Mailer's fictional army crush the spirits of the enlisted men until they submit to the institution's authority. The scenes that depict medical intervention for invisible injuries, as I interpret them, contribute to this overarching motif. Sick characters negotiate a hostile labyrinth of unscrupulous therapies, questionable drugs, and stigmatizing perceptions of their ailments. After Minetta fakes his way into the trauma ward, he struggles to escape the regiment of sedatives the staff administer to keep the unruly patients from disturbing the combat operation. And Red's failing kidneys draw more suspicion than sympathy from the medical staff, humiliating him into rejoining the frontline. Through these portraits of sick soldiers struggling to get the help they need from the army they serve, *The Naked and the Dead* critiques the ethics underlying military cures and their recourse to the soldiers subjected to them. In doing so, these scenes address Mailer's larger concern "with the enemy located within and not outside the United States" (Leigh 7). Regarding this antagonist, Jeffrey Walsh explains that American "fascism is imaginatively apprehended at every level and dramatized as a working system of social control" throughout the novel (116). Minetta and Red's experiences are, as I will address in the conclusion, a microcosm for a postwar United States entering the Cold War. Although 1948 was a time of peace and prosperity, *The Naked and the Dead* warns that the measures the nation was taking to protect its values in the face of a looming Soviet threat came at the expense of controlling the liberal individual and creating a "sick society" (Lennon 14)

Humiliating Service

One point of entry into the novel's discourse on military medicine and invisible war wounds is Mailer's use of third-person omniscient narration. Through this perspective, he grants

readers an intimate account of the characters' wartime experiences. And that the novel follows approximately 18 main characters, all enlisted men from various middle-class backgrounds and ethnicities, it forwards a bevy of views by which readers can consider how combat, military service, foreign agents of the state, and, as I will focus on, medical treatments can affect the individual soldier. This approach point-of-view, notably, was a common narrative device among SWW fiction by veteran writers. Although the literature of the good war saw the return of late 19th century genres such as realism, Jennifer Haytock argues that some of their formal elements derive directly from their literary predecessors: "modernism helped writers convey the details of war through a more disconnected, alienated, and alienating stance, and many of them found modernism's attentiveness to point of view useful in conveying the complexity of war and the singleness of any individual experiences of it" (109). Unlike modernist writers of the FWW, though, Peter Aichinger contends that "the authors of WWII novels provide the basis for an understanding of the point of view of the enlisted man as a person rather than as a symbol of national outlook"(45). As detached observers of the global conflict, SWW characters frequently document the war through the lens of the GI–the everyman soldier.[19] From this angle, their service experiences do not metaphorize the crises of modernity as that of Dos Passos' John Andrews in *Three Soldiers* nor Ernest Hemingway's Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, but depict flawed men–heroes, criminals, and victims–picking at jungle ulcers, fantasizing about women, stealing the belongings off of fallen combatants, and doing whatever they must to survive in the face of unspeakable horror. The third-person, omniscient point of view captures these character's differing responses to such moments, revealing the strange effect that war can have on even the best of men.

Take for example, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The novel's narrator discloses protagonist Billy Pilgrim's most personal revelations pertaining to the war, some of which are repressed in his subconscious. At a critical moment for instance, the narrator reveals that because of what he "had seen in war," Pilgrim now "found life meaningless" (128). And later, the narrator explains that if Billy had the capacity to pick the "happiest moment," he would have selected "his sundrenched snooze in the back of the wagon" two days after the war ended in Europe (249). The third-person omniscient narration similarly draws attention to the undignifying responses to combat in James Jones's *The Thin Red Line*. In the face of enemy fire, Colonel Fife reckons with his "cheap cowardice" (144). He tries to make a joke about his poor soldiering to win over his company, but the narrator explains that "it still did not make him feel any better: did not alleviate his shame, did not cause to cease the misery of fear he felt right now" (149). Private Doll, as the narrator tells us, has a different reaction. The thought of proving himself on the battlefield sexually arouses him: "that great, strange stillness…came over Doll…the same feeling he used to get as a kid when something like Christmas got him excited" (220). These deeply human points of view are critical to the respective novels' anti-war messages. Their disturbed, embarrassing, and despondent perspectives prompt readers to contemplate how the war distorts one's morals and challenges their masculinity.

If these points of view can be described as diverse and dynamic–fluctuating in their emotional responses–then the angle Mailer establishes in *The Naked and the Dead* might be described as a downward slope. Surmising the novel's turning points and critical events, James Dawes views *The Naked and the Dead* as a book of "constant humiliations" (60). From the officers' arbitrary threats and miscalculated plans to characters unable to control their sphincters at the sound of mortar fire; from rainstorms that destroy the soldiers' bivouacs to the anti-tank

gun they drop in the mud and helplessly watch roll down the hill, the enlisted men are dispirited at every turn. As an effect, Mailer's novel resists romanticizing the war to present a version in which the entire experience is demoralizing. Outwardly, the characters are often tight-lipped over their grievances, opting to appear stoic or indifferent; however, the narrator evinces the soldier characters' private frustrations, as they criticize the agents that have forced them to compromise their beliefs or embrace the most toxic versions of themselves, which includes the army's medical system. This omniscient point of view illustrates how the treatments and cures applied to Minetta and Red further deteriorate their health, but also divulges how the doctors' bedside manners likewise deteriorate their views of the army. Minetta and Red's internal monologues following their medical appointments–thoughts they could never levy in the presence of commanding officers and their peers–evince an alternative and, in the greater context of war fiction, a unique portrait of the troubling ways that military medicine adversely affected sick soldiers. In a novel that encourages readers to see all facets of the war as inglorious, medical interventions are no exception.

This downward trajectory that Mailer ascribes to his characters' points-of-view was informed in part by his own experience in the Armed Forces during WWII. Mailer possessed, as biographer J. Michael Lennon notes, "serious lacks as a soldier," which made life in the army frustrating for the aspiring writer (73, 67). A recent Harvard graduate, Mailer tried to defer his service, but his request was denied. He was drafted into the Army in January 1944 before reporting to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in early April of that year. Although he could have obtained a desk job given his college education, he opted for the rank of an enlisted man. Mailer believed the duties associated with this position would give him the best opportunity to gather material for the big war novel he was planning to write when he returned home. He got more

than he bargained for. Arriving at boot camp, he was immediately exposed to the rigors and demands of army life. According to friend and fellow soldier, Clifford Maskovsky, these conditions were problematic as ‘“he wasn’t that good at physical things” (qtd. In Lennon 61). Mailer’s inadequacies often led to infractions, which made him the target of hazing and contempt. When was deployed to the Pacific Theatre in November of 1944 to join the 112th Cavalry Regiment, Mailer continued to struggle. While he did engage in a handful of skirmishes with the Imperial Japanese army during volunteer patrols, he spent most of his time toiling with administrative assignments to which he contributed “little value” (Lennon 67). After failing as a typist, he was eventually demoted to the “lowly job of building a shower for officers'” (Lennon 67). In letters home, he described his experience as undignifying. Although he did find some joy and success as a cook, eventually earning the rank of sergeant, it was short lived. After a bitter argument over a mess in the kitchen, Mailer’s captain stripped him of his stripes, and he completed his service at the rank he entered. By the time he was discharged, he was “demeaned, ignored, humiliated, busted, and tested to a fare-thee-well” (85). Yet, as Lennon elaborates, Mailer’ humiliations in the army would fundamentally shape his writing. For the young soldier intent on penning the defining novel of the SWW, his service transformed him ino a “discriminating observer of war’s pains, pangs, fears, and throes,” which Mailer believed were not exclusive to his own experience (Lennon 73). Rather, after watching the men in his regiment pick at jungle ulcers, endure grueling marches, and suffer through the pompous demands of ranking officers, he viewed wartime military service as a universally brutalizing experience, and resolved himself to exposing to the American public the institutions responsible for this experience—the U.S. army.

Literary History, Film Adaptation, and the Theme of Dehumanization

With a firm stance in his politics and a loose outline in mind, Mailer began drafting *The Naked and the Dead* in earnest after returning stateside in 1946. In the coming months, he examined letters that he sent home to his then wife, Bea Silver, that meticulously chronicled his various interactions and observations as well as sorted through the mountain of notes he took on the "hundreds of GIS he had known" to form the basis of the novel's plot and characters (Lennon 76). Unlike his future works, the writing proved fairly quick. In total, Mailer completed the novel over the course of a fifteen-month marathon of typing, revising, and obsessing. The only obstacle he faced during the process was publishers' trepidation. Mailer began searching for an editor as soon as he finished the first draft and his work immediately drew interest with some editors presciently remarking that it would be the most important novel to come out of the war; however, they viewed Mailer's incessant use of obscene language as a potential liability. In late 1940s America, material considered controversial was still subject to obscenity charges, which could prove costly to a publisher's reputation and bank account.[20] Eager to publish the book–and do so before any other war novelist–Mailer eventually struck a deal with Rinehart that entailed him cutting approximately one-fifth of the profanity, and famously changing all instances of "fuck" to the euphemism "fug." With the contract signed by the summer of 1947, Mailer completed a final manuscript of the massive 800 page book that fall. *The Naked and the Dead* was released the following spring to critical renown and commercial success. The novel sold over 200,000 copies in its first three months on the market, remained on The *New York Times* Best Seller list for 62 weeks, and gave Mailer a level of cultural status that would sustain his celebrity for decades to come–even when his future works failed to live up to his reputation.

The novel received a film treatment like many of the other combat books of the period, but it was not until ten years after its release in 1958. In the trailer, the overdubbed narrator

boasts that the delay was a matter of having to "wait until motion pictures could grow up to handle it" (*The Naked and the Dead)*. While that seems like a jab toward the industry that, when it came to war films, catered to government interests, the screen adaptation hardly fulfilled that promise. Committing narrative triage, the scenes detailing Minetta and Red's experience with invisible wounds and the army's medical response were scrubbed entirely. And more broadly, the screenplay altered Mailer's story so much that it lost what initial reviewers lionized as the most profound aspects of the novel. Although they took issue with the "sluggish" narration and the "awkward, muscle-bound prose," David Dempsey and Raymond Rosenthal revered Mailer's lucid illustrations of the war's crushing effects on the enlisted soldier ("The Dusty Answer," "Underside of the War"). Calling *The Naked and the Dead* "ruthlessly honest" in his 1948 *New York Times* review, Dempsey praised the novel's examination of how human nature is "warped by the circumstances of war and the climate of a military organization" ("The Dusty Answer"). And Rosenthal, writing for *Commentary* that same year, declared "for the first time we have a record of the dirty, hard business that the second world war was for the combat soldier" ("Underside of the War"). As the reviews suggest–and what the later movie failed to convey–the redeeming value of *The Naked and the Dead* within the larger context of American anti-war fiction derives from its presentation of how war relentlessly deteriorates soldier characters no matter their class background, ethnicity, political affiliation, or moral values.

In the decades since its release, literary scholars have argued that this premise forms the novel's core theme. If, as Randall H. Waldron explains, "the central conflict of *The Naked and the Dead* is between the mechanistic forces of 'the system' and the will to individual integrity," and if we consider the fact those forces prevail over the individual characters, then the concept of dehumanization is at the heart of the novel's critique of the WWII army (273). Mailer's

characters undergo a slow and painful loss of their humanity over the course of the narrative arc. They are forced to follow orders, kill enemy soldiers, and take part in missions that compromise their personal codes of ethics and moral compasses. In time, the characters become numb; they do not see themselves as people, but small cogs mechanically performing their function in a larger machine. Their devolution culminates in the novel's final scenes where the failed soldiers wonder if their conditions–and their lives after the war–will ever improve, or if the effects of their service–the trauma, humiliation, and sadism–are permanent. What makes this theme particularly engaging, especially compared with other war novels, is the catalyst. According to Christopher Coker, "the evil of *The Naked and the Dead* is quite different [from other WWII novels]. It is anonymous and almost impossible to combat" (160). Whereas other veteran writers such as James Jones, Kurt Vonnegut, and John Oliver Killens often materialize their antagonists in the form of enemy combatants, swaths of missiles, or racist officers, Mailer's are abstract. In recent readings, however, Jennifer Haytock and Maggie McKinely identify these unseen forces in more concrete terms. "Individuals," writes Haytock, "are doomed to be crushed within the mechanistic bureaucracy of the Army" (111). And McKinley similarly avers that it is the "cruelty and corruption of leadership" that pummels the characters' wills and spirits (17). These forces–what scholars see as constituting the "system"--dehumanize the character until the person in the uniform becomes "obsolete," and the only thing left, figuratively speaking, is the uniform–an object of the institution (McKinley 22). Through this motif, Mailer's novel confronts the overarching myth of the good war, as it "undermines the notion that there might be some sort of idealized heroism conferred in wartime combat" (McKinely). Instead, *The Naked and the Dead* illustrates how soldiers are subsumed by the system they serve in wartime, becoming automated agents of the state.

The scenes that revolve around the medical treatment of invisible wounds, as my readings will demonstrate, figure into this theme of dehumanization. Just as the army stymies the individual wills, squashes resistance, and silences questions to bring unruly soldiers in line, they apply dehumanizing medical treatments to traumatized and sick soldiers for the same practical purpose. The need to control sick soldiers derives from the ways that invisible wounds can compromise the institution's mission. For example, during a patrol, "Red's kidneys were aching again, Roth's right shoulder was rheumatic, and Wilson had a spasm of diarrhea after he ate. They all felt dull, without volition" (501). In this passage, the characters are losing their ability to soldier, and therefore losing their value. From the army's standpoint, the characters' ailments are problematic. Their symptoms and low morale could, both figuratively and literally speaking, spread and infect others in the regiment. Or worse, they could need medical attention, which would cost the army the bodies it needs to complete the patrol and overtake the island. As such, these injuries procure a sense of "disgust" among ranking officers and medical personnel (371). Medical treatments, then, are administered to remedy this potential disruption. Nurses and doctors utilize their authority over the soldiers' bodies as well as treatments and regimens to isolate and dispose of the incurable soldiers while shaming others back to the front lines. While such care cures the army of its manpower problem, it simultaneously exacerbates the soldiers' wounds, leaving them sicker than before their appointments and more indignant over the institution's lack of compassion toward their health and wellbeing. In this way, *The Naked and the Dead* denies the narrative triage evident in Hollywood films that framed medical treatments as the antidote for service-related trauma and sickness in favor of representing it as an extension of the army's corruption, treating its own needs rather than its soldiers. The lasting effects of this process also encourages readers to reconsider the timelines of recovery for invisible war wounds.

As the outcomes of Minetta and Red's misdiagnoses and maltreatment allude, such wounds did not end with a good night's rest, a pill, nor the war, but were lifelong embodied experiences.

Military Medicine and War Fiction

By following the sick soldiers from the moment they decide to seek medical attention to their later contemplation of lifelong health issues, *The Naked and the Dead* poses a critical intervention into the representations of military care in war novels. Situated in literary history, Mailer's novel is bookended by other works that, to varying degrees, also elucidate the unethical implications of army medicine and cures. One of the more popular examples is Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*. Although the novel is about a WWI soldier, it was read through the lens of the SWW as it was published in September of 1939–around the time that Germany invaded Poland. The plot revolves around Johnny, the "ultimate basketcase" (Aichinger 24). As the result of a combat injury, the character has lost all of his limbs and senses, relegating him to a ward in the military hospital where he will be permanently sequestered away from the public eye. While the symbolic connotations of the characters' war wounds are overt–Haytock explains that Johnny "represents the individual in the all-powerful, capitalistic nation-state, a body entirely subject to bureaucratic machinery"--the manner by which military doctors treat his body and wellbeing raises questions about the intent behind their interventions (92). After the army denies his request to be toured around the country for the purpose of raising public awareness about the costs of war, they administer drugs to forcibly silence him. As he frantically tapped morse code with head, pleading with the medical staff, "he felt a sudden wet coolness. The man who had tapped his answer was applying an alcoholic swab. Oh god he thought I know what that means don't do it please don't Then he felt the sharp deadly prick of the needle. They were giving him dope again" (303). In this passage, the army personnel perceive Johnny's request as a liability.

Displaying his war wounds would damage public perception of the military and, by extension, the government and country. Therefore, the machines and medications that seemingly keep him alive are, in reality, the methods by which they cure themselves of the disruption that Johnny could potentially create.[21]

Joseph Heller forwards a similar idea albeit more humorously in *Catch-22*. Published in 1961 as the nation was on the precipice of the Vietnam War, *Catch-22* details WWII Air Force Captain John Yossarian's efforts to maintain his sanity against what the novel depicts as the absurdity of war and military service. Although brief, the references to invisible wounds and scenes in military hospitals bolster the surreal atmosphere that Heller constructs. In some instances, soldiers invent cockamamie illnesses such as an "advanced case of the Wisconsin shingles" or a bout of "just being short of jaundice" to puzzle doctors and prolong their hospital stays (374, 15). While these are moments of resistance in which the characters "seek to further their own self-interests by making the absurd system work to their advantage," elsewhere that system, specifically the medical system, works against them (Haytock 16). In one passage, for example, Yossarian and his friend Dunbar spark a commotion in the hospital ward when they spot the "morbid sight of the soldier in white covered from head to toe in plaster and gauze" (375). Their panic spreads to the other patients and "all at once the ward erupted into bedlam" (375). The characters scramble about, tripping over bedpans, knocking over patients on crutches, and stampeding the nurses. The black humor underscoring the image of the mummified patient and the slapstick quality of the characters' response frames the entire medical episode as ludicrous. Yet Heller punctuates the scenes with a sobering punchline. A nurse pulls Yossarian aside and warns him that the doctors and military police are going to '"disappear'" Dunbar, a coded reference to his incarceration in a psychiatric facility (378). When Yossarian tries to warn

his friend, he was "nowhere to be found" (378). Similar to the implications of the final scenes of *Johnny Got his Gun*, Dunbar's vanishing signifies the medical personnel's authority over his body as well as their subversive use of medical interventions to remedy their problems–their sick soldiers–in their favor.

And while both Heller and Trumbo's works do indeed challenge myths of the military medicine perpetuated on the silver screen, they do so as flashpoints. That is, Trumbo's character awakens after the majority of medical procedures have already been conducted on his body while Dunbar's disappearance in Heller's novel marks the starting point of his medical experience. To this end, the novels establish two points on opposite ends of the narrative spectrum, leaving a gap as to what happens to the characters during that in-between period when doctors are assessing, diagnosing, and treating their wounds. Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, as I read it, explores a version of this liminal space. Readers follow his characters from the moment of their injury or illness through their negotiation of the stigmatizing treatments within the medic tent to their eventual dismissal back to the front lines. In doing so, *The Naked and the Dead* emphasizes the embodied experience of the sick characters, analyzing what happens to their bodies, how it affects their wellbeing, and what that means to their views of the institution they serve. As brief as the scenes are in the grand scheme of the novel, Mailer's sustained illustrations add contour to the dehumanizing medical experience of characters with invisible injuries within the genre of war fiction. Medical interventions and treatments, as the novel illustrates, go beyond a single moment. They occur as lengthy and painful processes that strategically unfold according to the army's objectives rather than the soldier's health.

The Naked and the Dead's Ethical Critique of the Cure

Mailer's method of representing the medical treatments of invisible war wounds is particularly noteworthy as it draws attention to a questionable aspect of WWII military history that Hollywood films attempted to sanitize. During the SWW, the army was not frustrated over the difficulty in diagnosing trauma or sickness. Although inconspicuous, such conditions manifest correlating physical symptoms. Jaundice, malaria, and Dengue fever, would produce skin discoloration, vomiting, and sweating among other symptoms. And traumatic injuries–shell shock–would often yield "weeping, shaking, curling up in the fetal position, or merely being numb and unresponsive" (Cowdrey 137). The institution, then, was frustrated with what Albert E. Cowdrey, a former Chief of the Special History Branch in the U.S. Army, describes as "one of the most complex [problems] presented by war" (137). Elaborating, Cowdrey writes that "once a man broke, he was damaged goods and worthless" (137). Traumas and internal illnesses were not seen as collateral damage of war, but the "surfacing of an inherent flaw" (Cowdrey). Yet simply discharging these sick soldiers would cost the army necessary manpower. Instead, as Zachary B. Friedenberg, a surgeon in the 95th Evacuation Hospital, recalls, sick patients were prescribed Atabrine to suppress symptoms and return to the battlefield while those with more severe symptoms were given "tranquilizers, sleep medication, and a clean bed with undisturbed sleep," which helped them return to their units "within forty-eight hours" (59). Those deemed unsalvageable were "evacuated to a neuropsychiatric unit," or to put it informally, they were "shipped out" (Friedenberg 59, Cowdrey 137). What is lost in the neutral tone of these accounts, though, are the ethical implications of the medical interventions. As Ben Shephard argues, "the danger was that in [the army's] enthusiasm for drugs and 'external agents,' the hierarchy tended to forget the need for individual psychiatric attention," or when it came to sickness, individual health (227). Shepherd's remark alludes to inherent contradictions of military medicine's

response to invisible wounds. Preoccupation with medical advancements and the need to replenish the fronts compromised the quality of care afforded to sick soldiers, putting them, their bodies, and their minds in painful positions, which is the dilemma that lies ahead of Mailer's characters. For the soldiers in *The Naked and the Dead* that are "unable to function" due to some internal breakdown or illness, their wellbeing is secondary to the army's campaign (35). The health of the patrol comes before the health of the soldier, which as the novel illustrates, is a dehumanizing experience with somatic and psychological consequences.

This counterintuitive approach toward medicine was, as disability scholars have theorized, common during mid 20th century America. Before transitioning into my close readings of *The Naked and the Dead*, I will first briefly survey this scholarship to help me further contextualize the sick character's embodied experiences.[22] Until roughly the 1980s, society viewed human variation through the lens of what has been dubbed the medical model of disability. In this paradigm, the ablebodied majority regards alterity as a personal failure to adhere to social norms and is therefore in need of redress. In his groundbreaking study, Michael Oliver explains that the medical model renders people with disabilities as "passive objectives of intervention, treatment and rehabilitation" (5).[23] As such, this perception, according to Tom Shakespeare, gave rise to the "dominance of medical approaches and of medical experts" (15). With their supposed mastery of body/mind functions and repertoire of cures, doctors sought to restore disability to a state of normalcy, which was assumed to be in the best interest of the patient and their greater community. As Alison Kafer argues, however, the medical profession's perception and treatments of disability are frequently "bound up in normalizing approaches" that "[ignore] the needs and experiences of disabled people in the present" (29). Such disregard can lead to pain, suffering, and embarrassment, yet the particular effects of the "normalizing"

approach are contingent upon determining factors such as time, place, and circumstance. For this discussion, I define the act of normalizing disability according to *The Naked and the Dead's* army and its combat mission. In other words, the army's treatments, rehabilitations, and cures hinge on victory–of securing the island, defeating the axis, and ultimately winning the war. The hypodermic needles injected into their bodies, the pills they swallow, and the rest cures they are prescribed are based on the military doctor's assessment of their symptoms in conjunction with the mission objectives, which is a matter of keeping men on the front lines or out of the way.

What further complicates the medical model's response to invisible wounds within the novel are the associated stigmas. In his formative study, Erving Goffman defines the process of stigmatization as the "dynamics of shameful differentness" (140). People with disabilities fall outside of "normative expectations" and are thus considered a "less desirable kind…a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak" (2, 3). These perceptions, as Lerita Brown Coleman argues, "reflect the value judgments of a dominant group," thereby informing the dominant characterizations of people with disabilities (147). Invisible disability has been historically stigmatized as symptomatic of corrupt immaterial qualities such amorality, social deviance, and a lack of fortitude. As a ramification, people with cognitive impairments or internal diseases have been labeled crazy for their supposed lack of control over their bodies; cowards for their perceived inability to participate in society; or frauds for ostensibly cheating the system to acquire welfare benefits.[24] These stigmatizing labels can subsequently affect one's daily life from their job prospects to romantic relationships to medical care and treatments. Drawing from her own experience, Margaret Price avers that "the very terms used to name persons with mental disability have explicitly foreclosed our status as persons" (298). To be labeled crazy or sick can imply one is subhuman, which, as Price elaborates, costs the patient

their agency: “that person is marked as permanently damaged, and as one whose rights may be taken away–unless, course, [they] comply with psychiatry’s requirements for care, which may include medication, incarceration, or electroshock” (301). In these scenarios, the figurative “power of the prescription pad” forces the patient into a compromising position (Price 299). They must accept their diagnosis and treatment in order to be regarded as sound of body and mind and, perhaps more importantly, remove themselves from the harmful conditions of a medical institution. This theory, as I am arguing, frames the medicalization of the characters’ bodies in *The Naked and the Dead*. Whereas Toglio’s “million-dollar wound”--a bullet to the elbow–is visually discernible, easily treatable, and definitively dischargeable, Minetta and Red’s invisible wounds elicit skepticism over their integrity, severity, and masculinity (578). At the mercy of the medical personnel, the sick soldiers endure treatments, conditions, and deportment intended to normalize them back into fighting form. And when his characters realize they have no power over the prescription pad, Mailer posits a lucid critique of military medicine, overturning the myths perpetuated by Hollywood. What was touted as a miraculous cure from the pains and sicknesses that derive from wartime service, *The Naked and the Dead* reframes as an ancillary method for the institution’s goal that comes at the expense of the soldiers’ minds, bodies, and will. If the cliché goes, “war is hell,” *The Naked and the Dead* broadens this expression, looking beyond combat to locate the army’s medical system within that hell.

Steven Minetta and the Hidden “Loonies”

By way of the character Steven Minetta, Mailer explores the dehumanizing effects of the army’s trauma care. Convinced that “all they want is to get you back where you can stop a bullet,” Minetta attempts to circumnavigate this system by posing as a shell-shocked soldier in need of long-term medical attention (354). Once admitted, though, he undergoes a series of

painful treatments intended to control the "loonies" (357). In these scenes, Mailer's representations of military medicine function as a method of suppression, containing unruly patients from the healthy soldiers and the combat zone. When Minetta decides he prefers being "cannon fodder" to a patient in the army's trauma ward, his thoughts speak to the quality and effects of the care afforded to shell-shocked soldiers (365). And while he can stop faking his symptoms and escape, the same is not true for the sick characters in his periphery who have no choice but to accept the pharmaceutical abuse and personal neglect that damages their bodies and minds in the service of the army's mission.

Initially, Minetta sees the hospital as a site of refuge. After sustaining a superficial gunshot wound to his leg, he "enjoyed himself" while in the care of the military doctors (353).[25] Whereas he had to dig and sleep in foxholes while listening to the ominous sounds of mortar fire, Minetta "had been given a cot and some blankets, and he lay in bed comfortably and read magazines" (353). He plays checkers and socializes with the other patients and for "the first night in six weeks he had been able to sleep" (354). As an effect of these favorable conditions and amenities, Minetta is determined to remain in the care of the army's medical system. When he is informed that his injury is hardly a scratch, he contemplates different scenarios to prolong his stay. He thinks about "jamming a bayonet into his wound, or falling off a truck when he went back to headquarters company," but settles on faking the symptoms of battle fatigue: "Nervous shock, that's the story, nervous shock" (356). The character's discretion here reifies the stigmatizing perception of invisible wounds. He views shell shock as a phony condition that can be feigned to cheat the system. Additionally, his remark suggests Minetta buys into the myths of military medicine. Based on his experience thus far, he believes the care for nervous shock will be pleasant, accommodating, and prioritize his wellbeing. As he commits to his "story,"

however, he discovers the dream-like conditions and treatments of the hospital are more like a nightmare.

When Minetta emulates the behavior of other patients, he unknowingly relinquishes his agency to the medical system. The nurses and doctors view his disturbing change in behavior as evidence of an internal problem that demands their supervision, as he has become a danger to himself, those around him, and the success of the military operation. This dynamic takes form when Minetta begins faking traumatic episodes. During his first display, he hollers at an imaginary enemy lurking in the medic tent and discharges his firearm before recreating the "picture of a madman he had seen once in a movie" and drooling all over himself (357). His stunt horrifies the other patients and concerns the medical staff who give him a sedative and force him into a secluded tent. Knowing that he has to "keep it up" or he will be sent back to the front, Minetta repeats his performance, only this time he mimics the catatonic state of another patient, convincing himself "that was the way a crazy man acted" (359). He lies still during the doctor's inspection, "babbling a few words from time to time" (259). After the doctor did not dismiss him, Minetta felt "cheerful" and believed that "they're gonna send me to another island soon" (359). What the character does not realize, though, is the extent to which his performances inform his medical care. His behavior may have helped him extend his stay in the medic tent, but it simultaneously garnered the stigmatizing labels associated with mental illness that subjugate him to the staff. In the course of his traumatic episodes, he is referred to as "'nuts,'" '"acting,'" and '"Jack,'" a diminutive term that conveys the medical personnel's contempt for their disturbed patient (358). No longer viewed as Minetta the soldier, he forfeits the privilege to be treated as such; he loses his personhood now that he is considered one of the resident mad men, which subsequently exposes him to the dehumanizing treatments that the medical system applies

to sick soldiers. The myth that he relied on–that the diagnosis of an invisible war wound meant "they can't do a thing to me"--is shattered (358).

In the scenes where Minetta is interned within the army's medical system, Mailer's representations of pharmaceuticals and psychotherapies subvert the idea of a cure. Rather than provide aid, these treatments control the sick soldiers who, from the army's perspective, might otherwise jeopardize their campaign. As Minetta's experience illustrates, this method occurs in three ways. The most explicit and widespread remedy are the sedatives, which are injected via hypodermic needles. A nurse or doctor sedates Minetta with each of his outbursts, sending him into a lethargic stupor. As the character notes, though, this is a common practice throughout the ward. After listening to the doctors repeatedly ask their staff to administer the drugs, he thinks to himself, "that's all they know…hypo, hypo" (362). Neglect serves as another form of treatment. Languishing for hours between his drug-induced sleeps, Minetta laments "how long they gonna keep me without even looking at me or paying any attention?" (362). And for those whose health does not normalize, they are further institutionalized in neuropsychiatric facilities. Minetta worries about this prospect, realizing that his family "aint gonna hear from me for a couple of months" (364). In their own ways, these cures maintain the army's interests. The sedatives subdue the patients, allowing the medical personnel to exercise control over them; neglect psychologically impacts the sick soldier. Hoping to be seen by a doctor, they become dependent on the medical treatments; and institutionalization offers the army the possibility of removing particularly sick patients from the combat zone altogether. And while these treatments are beneficial to the army, they are detrimental to the character's health. After several doses of the sedative, for example, Minetta "felt doped" and "had a headache, and his limbs were numb" (361). Later, he worries that he will "become a dope addict" due to repeated exposure (364). He

becomes unsettled by the lack of attention, thinking that he will "really flip [his] lid" if the doctors do not help him soon (362). And he "felt a pang" at the thought of being cut off from his family–from human interaction–if he is shipped out to another hospital (364). In this snap shot of care, Mailer depicts sick soldiers forcibly reduced to passive objects by the means of military medicine. The gravity of these dehumanizing experiences is evident in Minetta's response. Finding the treatments unbearable and unethical, he declares "I got to get out of here" (365). That the malingering character favors combat to the medic tent emphasizes the adverse effect of the cures applied to traumatic injuries.

As Minetta's transitions back to the front lines, his thoughts illuminate the ethical implications surrounding the medical response to invisible wounds. Rather than feel rehabilitated, restored, or relaxed, Minetta resents the army for the poor care it provides sick soldiers. Notably, this idea begins to fester during his stint in the medical tent. Witnessing doctors' callous treatment of the patients, Minetta discerns a lack of compassion in their bedside manner: "They're gonna lose a soldier that way, just 'cause they don't give him any care" (362). The doctors, as Minetta implies, treat the sick soldiers more like machines in need of repair rather than human beings experiencing traumas that will alter their bodies and minds. They do not care, moreover, to lose these soldiers based on the stigmatizing perception that they cannot serve due to cowardly reasons. Without the physical evidence to prove their contributions and sacrifices to the war, soldiers with invisible wounds are subjected to impersonal and dehumanizing forms of care. The doctor's final remarks to Minetta evoke this idea. Determined to return to his regiment, Minetta pretends to have no recollection of his outbursts. In response, the doctor threatens to court martial him before warning: "if you come back, you better have a hole through your belly" (367). His demand for a material wound is a tacit declaration that

quality care and medical attention are contingent upon material verification. Only those who can tangibly justify their need to be in the hospital will receive it. This subtext is not lost on Minetta, who thinks to himself: "a guy gets hurt and how do they treat him? Like a dog. They don't give a damn about us" (367). Here, the pronoun "us" connotes the soldiers' wellbeing. The military, as Minetta sees it, does not care for such conditions as they do for the body--the vehicle by which their political aims are accomplished. Framed from this angle, the cures for invisible wounds are methods of self-preservation, utilized to protect the army's objectives over the soldier's health. While this dehumanizing principle is enough to drive Minetta back to the front lines, the same is not true for the sick characters that were in his peripheral. Through the malingering character's observations, we learn about men like the "Section Eight" with "his eyes staring vacantly" or the "patient at the far end of the tent who was weeping"--soldiers that the army has concealed from others (358, 362). No longer able to serve, and lacking the gunshot wounds or maimed appendages to justify their hospitalization, these unidentified characters are lost in the system. With their names and fates unknown, the army's medical treatments render these sick soldiers, to borrow McKinley's phrase, "obsolete" (22).

Red Valsen, Disease, and the Stigmas of Malingering

Minetta's malingering has reverberating consequences for other sick characters in the novel. As Cowdrey explains in his historical study of military medicine, malingers such as Minetta affected the care afforded to soldiers with invisible wounds. In his words, soldiers who "discovered imaginary ailments, exaggerated the symptoms of real injuries, and developed psychosomatic disorders long before they came within the sounds of the enemy's guns" reified "traditional prejudices" toward mental disability and internal sickness (141, 139). Malingering, in short, heightened suspicion of invisible wounds, thereby making it increasingly difficult for

doctors to trust sick soldiers. As a result, the quality of care afforded to sick soldiers was compromised. In perhaps the most infamous example, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. physically assaulted and threatened to shoot a shell-shocked soldier while visiting hospitals on a mission to, ironically, "cheer the wounded" (Cowdrey 139). Viewing such sickness as a failure to fulfill one's duty to country, Patton believed that invisible injuries deserved Court-Martialing before medical attention (Cowdrey 139). In *The Naked and the Dead*, Mailer fictionalizes this dynamic between skeptical doctors and ill patients. By faking his traumatic injury and being exposed in the process, Minetta fortifies the stigma that invisible wounds are phony presentations carried out to cheat the system, which exposes the genuinely sick Red Valsen to humiliating forms of care that alter the course of his service and health.

While most of the novel's characters are amalgamations of men that resonated with Mailer while in the service, Red Valsen was particularly important to the young writer as he was drafting his novel. Based on Red Matthiesen, a member of the 112th Calvary, the soldier's unwavering personal convictions and hard-nosed approach to military service impressed Mailer. Having "borrowed more of his actual words than from any other soldier," Red became, in James Dawes's words, "Mailer's model of the strong-willed working class man who refuses to surrender to the coercion of the 'system'" (Lennon 75, 59). In his reading of the character, Waldron similarly describes Red as "constitutionally opposed to being controlled," and is therefore ardent in his criticism of army leadership (276). In line with the sweeping theme of dehumanization that pervades the novel, though, Red eventually succumbs to the system.[26] While Lennon, Dawes, and Waldron cite a bitter standoff with Sergeant Croft, in which Red swallows his pride and concedes to his demands, his experience within the army's medical system also pushes the stoic character to his breaking point. This narrative development is

particularly vexing given the character's integrity. Unlike Minetta, Red is genuinely sick. He has nephritis, a disease that causes inflammation in the kidneys, which under the physical demands of his service, becomes unbearable: "for weeks his kidneys had been growing more painful...he had strained himself badly in lifting a pick. A severe pain had seized him at the top of his swing, and he had ground his teeth, his fingers trembling" (368). Despite his pain, Red remains adamant about staying on the front. He "repressed the thought [of a medical discharge] with disgust," maintaining that "I never run out on anything, and I won't now" (368). By this logic, Red's medical experience should be productive; his condition is lived and he expresses a loyalty to his regiment that the military expects of its soldiers. As a result of Minetta's malingering, however, Red's invisible injury draws more suspicion than support from the medics. In these scenes where Red receives treatment, Mailer represents the stigmatizing response to invisible injuries as a strategic method of forcibly returning soldiers to the frontline through embarrassment and humiliation. For a character hellbent on preserving his dignity, the medics' doubt, personal insults, and diagnosis thrust Red into a difficult position, forced to decide between his pride and his health. Through this dilemma, Mailer again frames the medical response to invisible wounds as an ancillary process that maintains the army's mission at all costs.

Well before his character even sees a doctor, Mailer foreshadows the underlying importance of Red's fraught medical experience through two different interactions with other characters. Although brief, these scenes contextualize Red's decision to seek medical treatment for his invisible ailment as hazardous, setting up readers for the larger ethical dilemma ahead of the character. During the first interaction, Red asks friend and fellow soldier, Woodrow Wilson, to accompany him to the medic tent considering his friend's "'insides are shot plumb to hell'" (369). Wilson reluctantly agrees, but warns Red that "'if they cain't see it, you aint' got it'"

(369). His remark anticipates the stigmatization that Red will face. Given the nature of his disease, getting the medics to believe he needs treatment–that he cannot be on the front–is going to be arduous. Red begins to realize this idea during his second interaction. When prompted for his symptoms during an initial screening, he explains that his back is bothering him. The medic responds: "'Well, take off your shirt, I can't see through your clothing'" (370). Here, the medic is requesting proof of injury. He wants confirmation that Red needs–and deserves–medical attention. In this way, the medic functions as a gatekeeper, running interference for the institution's medical system; he is the first line of defense against those with suspicious war wounds. As such, he plays a strategic role. Although he cannot formally deny Red medical intervention, thereby turning him back toward the front lines, he can discourage him. After Red cites trouble with his kidneys, the medic quips, '"you guys can figure out more ways,'" which triggers an emotional reaction: Red "was tense with anger" before telling himself "I don't have to take that crap" (370). His response speaks to the effect of the medic's remark. If he can humiliate Red enough, then the soldier will return to the front where he can contribute to the army's mission rather than sit idly in the medic tent. Collectively, these interactions prime the reader for Red's fate within the medical system. Wilson's warning along with the medic's insulting remark anticipate the ways in which military medicine will exacerbate his disease, hurt him on an emotional level, and cure the army of potential malingerers.

During the subsequent medical inspection, the doctor effectively pathologizes the sick soldier until he returns to the front. This process unfolds through a series of subtle steps, which begins by establishing a power dynamic. When Red tries to explain that he has Nephritis, the doctor rebukes, "'Let me do the diagnosing if you don't mind'" (370). As a medical professional, his credentials grant him authority over unwell patients such as Red, who do not have the

credibility nor health to say otherwise. With Red subjugated to his authority, the doctor then assesses the soldier's condition in a manner that invariably favors the institution. He "listened inattentively" as the sick soldier described his symptoms before explaining "'all right, so you have nephritis, what am I supposed to do?'" (370). Here, the doctor's stigmatizing question operates as a "way to maintain order" (Brown 151). If invisible wounds pose an unruly threat to the system, the doctor's response tames that unruliness. With nothing to see, there is nothing to treat. And with nothing to treat, the doctors provides one option for the sick soldier–return to combat. As an added effect, the doctor's rhetorical question gaslights the character into doubting the legitimacy of his own disease and his reason for visiting the medic tent. After he explains that "'I just want to get fixed up,'" Red immediately wonders "was that why he was here? (371). In this moment, Mailer's omnipotent narrator reveals the outwardly stoic Red, a character once sure of himself, is suddenly uncertain of his motives. With Red disoriented, the doctor offers a cure, which he makes explicitly clear is informed by his duty to "watch out for malingers" (371). He offers a "package of wound tablets," warning that "'if you're faking the whole thing, just throw them away'" (371). Notably, Mailer is drawing from historical trends in military medicine with his doctor's remedy. As Kaia Scott explains, WWII medical staff "worked under strict military imperative to get patient's back to work, favoring strategies that provided quick and demonstrable success over ongoing custodial care" (119). The pills, then, are a quick fix that shuffles Red back to the front where he can contribute to the patrol and relieves the medical system of a potential malingerer. More than just a mimetic image, though, the doctor's final words have a dehumanizing effect on the character. Their stigmatizing implications frame Red as a potential fraud and coward, which reifies the humiliation first spurred during his initial

screening. Red "became pale" at the doctor's instructions, distraught over the lack of empathy, and not least of all, sicker due to the lack of care (371).

Red's rumination on his experience engenders the novel's most lucid critique of the military care provided to soldiers with invisible injuries. After he is dismissed, Red thinks to himself "'that's the last goddamn time I ever fool around with those fuggin medics'" (371). On a personal level, his decision levies serious side effects. He will return to the combat zone and exacerbate his infected kidneys to the point of irrevocable damage. Yet Red's choice to endure pain and suffering over revisiting the medics also speaks to the broader ethical implications underscoring military medicine. He refuses to "fool around" because the system does not help soldiers so much as it helps itself. Further critiquing this self-serving approach to medicine, he recalls a soldier who died during basic training. Although he had a case of pneumonia, the army "had a rule that no men could be taken into the hospital unless their temperature was over 102" (371). The reason for this rule, as Red explains, is to "keep ya on the line" (371). The army's approach to medical care for invisible wounds prioritizes the wellbeing of the institution over that of the soldier; it turns sick men into expendable objects to be repaired or shipped out according to the army's wartime objectives. What is lost in the proces, as Red intimates, is the humanzing element of care–the compassion, concern, and, above all, credence given to a patient. Whereas he surmises his revelation in the form of a rhetorical question–"what the hell's another guy to the army?"--in a later scene, it evolves into an articulated theory (371). While the company discusses their ailments and the army's cures, Red muses: "'All a doctor ever has is a pill and a pat on the back, and you stick him in the Army and all they got left is the pill'" (438). Here, Red's remark distills the inherent corruption within the army's medical system. The "pat on the back," in this context, is an expression of empathy, a reassuring gesture that acknowledges

the humanity in another person. On its own, then, the "pill" is a cold response toward the soldiers' sickness and ill health, dehumanizing Red and the others to the point that they felt like they "weren't men" anymore (371).[27] The disrespect and cheap cures Red is prescribed do, in fact, keep him on the "line"; however, he returns to that "line" with an untreated disease seizing his body and a growing disaffection for the institution he serves.

Sick Characters and a Sick Society

The references to Minetta and Red's lasting health effects emphasize the critique of military medicine as one of the main sticking points in *The Naked and the Dead*. Well after his characters' stints in the medic tent, Mailer revisits their somatic states following the company's failed patrol during the novel's final chapters. If each of the soldier characters' thoughts address the dehumanizing effects of military service from a different angle, then Minetta and Red take specific issue with the army's response to invisible wounds. Traumatized by his own degrading experience, for example, Minetta remains intent on finding a way out of the army. Knowing that traumatic injuries are not an escape, the narrator reveals that Minetta plans to "point the muzzle [of his gun] right into the middle of his ankle, and press the trigger. All the bones would be mashed in his foot, and whether they had to amputate or not, they certainly would have to send him home" (702). Red, on the other hand, is living through the ramifications of his medical experience. "There was no kidding himself any longer," the narrator explains, "His kidneys were shot, his legs would begin to break down soon, all through his body he could feel the damage the patrol had caused" (703). The allusions to the characters' futures as disabled veterans in failing health–what the narrator describes as "the deep cloudy dejection that overcast everything"--posits a stark counterpunch to the faith instilled in military medicine and the cures for invisible wounds perpetuated by Hollywood productions of the era (702). By ending on this note, Mailer

subverts our expectations of the efficacy of medical interventions and, more disturbingly, their purpose. While Cowdrey contends that "Word War II was fought in the full light of modern medical science, with means of prevention and cure undreamed of in any earlier conflict," *The Naked and the Dead* laments that this development was good news for the Armed Forces in need of manpower and combat victories (196). For Steven Minetta and Red Valsen, however, this was a strange development that resulted in lasting, embodied impairments. There was no quick remedy, as the novel suggests, for their invisible wounds. Instead, they require more ethical forms of care that focus on the needs of the patient in order to achieve some semblance of wellbeing and peace.

Mailer's representation of military medicine as a form of control rather than healing was rooted in a broader concern that consumed him while drafting *The Naked and the Dead* amidst the early Cold War years. "During the fifteen months that [Mailer] was writing the novel," Lennon explains, "the Soviets were seizing power in Eastern Europe" (93). Yet it was not the Russian's geopolitical position that concerned Mailer so much as his country's response: "Mailer feared there would be a 'facist backwash' in America after the war, given America's victories and enormous power" (Lennon 82). With a boosted ego in the aftermath of the allied victory, conservative U.S. politicians launched what Martin Walker describes as a "kind of intellectual and political civil war in the West" to stomp out any communist sympathizers, accusing the Democratic party of housing underground Reds (70). Wanting to avoid legal trouble, many democratic politicians and affiliates were pressured into joining rank in professing and encouraging nationalistic views. As a result, a wave of right-wing policies, values, and ideologies were presented as the American way of life in the late 1940s and 50s while any alternatives were met with suspicion, derision, and even incarceration. For example, as Stephen

Whitfield outlines in his cultural study of the Cold War, there was an "upsurge of postwar piety," as Christianity was lauded as the appropriate response to the Soviet Union's atheism; capitalism was championed as a "manifestation of American supremacy," offering economic freedom in contrast with the elimination of the free market in communism; and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI weaponized the Smith Act to "round up Americans whose loyalty was highly questionable" (83, 71, 46).

The social effects of these conditions worried Mailer. A government that curbs "any human aspiration except as that serves the system" created, as Mailer explains in a 1948 interview with Lillian Ross, a "sick society" (Glenday 53, qtd. in Conversations with Norman Mailer, 14). In this way, Minetta and Red's experience with the army's medical system is a microcosm of Mailer's fear. The cultural norms of the early Cold War period were presented as the antidote to an Eastern threat when, like the military medicine in *The Naked and the Dead*, they served as a dehumanizing method of control that stymied the personhood and freedom of American citizens. Yet Mailer opined that his literary meditation on post-war fascim in the United States was not entirely hopeless considering "even in…sickness there are yearnings for a better world" (qtd. In Conversations with Norman Mailer, 14). As we learn from the medical experiences of Mailer's sick soldiers, that better world is one where ethical care is practiced. And in early Cold War America, that practice, as Mailer believed, is a matter of honoring the civil liberties–the needs–of the individual over that of the system.

Chapter 4:

"Walking about with a chest full of hatred": Norman Mailer's Problem with White Veteran Masculinity and the Problems with Norman Mailer's White Veteran Masculinity

Representations of combat were not the only form of popular war narratives engendering myths about soldiers' bodies. Postwar veteran narratives also seized the public's imagination as they appealed to the audience's own experiences of welcoming wounded veterans back into their homes. As such, this chapter will explore how Mailer's work critiques the myths underlying Hollywood representations of wounded veterans, their masculinity and demobilization. This claim will, no doubt, raise suspicion considering such films more accurately portrayed the complex embodied experiences of wounded veterans than combat films, and those familiar with Mailer's oeuvre will be quick to suggest that The Naked and the Dead was his only war novel. However, as this chapter will argue, Hollywood films championed a narrow conception of American masculinity premised on domesticity and heterosexuality as the means to a successful veteran reintegration. And when read according to the conventions of postwar veteran narratives, Mailer's Barbary Shore and An American Dream reframe this process of remasculinization as antithetical to the wellbeing of wounded veterans, their social milieu, and their nation.

After the success of *The Naked and The Dead* (1948), Norman Mailer did not entirely move away from the genre of war fiction. Although he claimed that he could not write a veteran narrative because he did not personally experience such postwar hardships, two of his subsequent novels tell a different story.[28] *Barbary Shore* (1951) and *An American Dream* (1965) follow wounded WII veterans, tracing their struggles to readjust after being demobilized. In addition to exploring grand themes about the American polity and its class system, scholars such as Maggie McKinley have attended to the interpersonal relationships among the characters as they provide "significant insight into prevalent issues of conflicted gendered identity in American culture" (67). In many ways, the characters' military service and its recourse on their bodies critically

contributes to such conflicted gendered identities. *Barbary Shore's* Mikey Lovett laments that the Second World War "swallowed me" while questioning what kind of a man he is as a result of his service-related amnesia (217). And *An American Dream's* Stephen Rojack worries he is not man enough due to a combat injury that left him with a "trace of a distinguished limp" (6). Anxious to reclaim their masculinity as white men in mid-century America, the wounded veterans carry out projects of remasculinization, performing hypersexualized and violent acts on the bodies of women and Black characters. By the conclusion of *Barbary Shore*, Lovett believes he has discovered "man's estate" while *American Dream's* Rojack also believes he has successfully transformed into a "new breed of man" (155, 81). Yet these epiphanies are ironic. The veteran characters' reclamations of their manhood yield queer identities and bigoted dispositions, thereby subverting the ideals of Cold War masculinity to which they initially aspired.

Situated in their historical moment, *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* are responding to the abundance of war narratives that addressed the remasculinization of wounded veterans, specifically within the realm of whiteness. While numerous racial identities made up the U.S. Armed Forces during the SWW, white soldiers held a privileged position. In a pre-civil rights America, their smooth transition from the battlefield to the homefront took precedence over that of the marginalized soldiers. As such, the OWI-influenced Hollywood productions that delineated the successful process of veteran remasculinization were contextualized according to the circumstances common to white soldiers and their families. These representations of wounded veterans—men once revered as brave, strong, and capable—resuming their dominant social roles quelled civilian worry and restored their faith that society could return to a state of normal reminiscent of the prewar years. William Wyler's 1964 drama, *The Best Years of Our*

Lives, is arguably the most famous example of such veteran narratives. Homer Parish, one of the films' main characters, is a bilateral amputee who finds his reintegration difficult until Wilma Cameron, a romantic interest, accepts him for his war wound. In one of the most pivotal scenes, she initiates an intimate embrace before Homer falls asleep. As she bids him goodnight, Homer's smile suggests a renewed confidence in his manhood with the implication that he will assume the roles of husband, worker, and upstanding citizen. Historian David Gerber has pointed to the dynamic between Wilma and Homer as a hallmark of postwar veteran narratives, which also took form in films such as *The Men* (1950) and *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956).[29] As Gerber explains, "reclaiming manhood is…conceived within the framework of a melodrama in which men and women ultimately sort themselves out by conventional gendered categories in their emotional and sexual relationships" (11). In a gesture of narrative triage, these films gave the impression that veterans could overcome their injuries and disabilities and reclaim their manhood through sexual performances and domestic roles. This myth of remasculinization promised a fulfilling life for young, white veterans despite their injuries so long as they endorsed the hegemonic vision of American masculinity.

Rather than reify this process, Mailer's novels question its efficacy. In what follows, this chapter reads *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* as anti-remasculinization narratives. While Mailer's novels portray the period of readjustment as difficult, they deviate from their filmic counterparts in their illustrations of how hegemonic masculinity detrimentally affects the veteran. Through their efforts to conceal their stigmatizing injuries and pass as able-bodied, well-adjusted American white men, *Barbary Shore's* Mikey Lovett and *An American Dream's* Stephen Rojack negotiate a series of social experiences that culminate in bisexual orientations, aggressive sexuality, and hostile dispositions. In their historical context, such developments were

not only ironic, but alarming. As Jürgen Martschukat explains, following the war "American society was permeated by a manic fear of the privately and politically destructive potential of non-conform genders and sexualities outside the boundaries of married relationships" ("Men in Gray" 13). Ever the provocateur, Mailer fuels this anxiety. His veteran narratives critique the myopic state of postwar masculinity as engendering the non-conforming men it feared. In doing so, Mailer's novels stake an intervention among cultural representations of wounded veterans. Rather than present the war wound as the impetus behind veteran struggles, they attempt to hold accountable the overwhelming pressure to conform to postwar masculinity. I say attempt here because *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* remain fraught. As this chapter's conclusion will address, Mailer's efforts to undermine the efficacy of postwar remasculinization are ironic in their own right. By reinscribing homophobic, racist, and murderous ideations within his characters, Mailer's *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* anticipate the trope of the unhinged veteran that would proliferate in Vietnam War films and fiction. In this way, his novels hold a complex ethical position among war narratives. While they draw attention to one issue among representations of wounded veterans, they do so at the expense of creating another.

White Wounded Veterans, Masculinity, and the Nation's Cold War Agenda

In the context of war fiction, Mailer's novels are grappling with the widespread response to wounded white veterans and the extent to which that response figured into the nation's Cold War agenda. Outlining this history will help us more clearly frame *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* as postwar veteran narratives as well as elucidate how those storylines are connected to Mailer's broader political critique. Upon their demobilization, wounded white soldiers returned to a socio-political terrain that had evolved during their service. Not only had mass production, industrialization, and commercialization increased, but the people working

within those industries changed as well. As David Gerber explains, veterans "returned from war to find themselves without opportunities they felt they were owed" while reckoning with the reality that populations "normally barred from effective competition [in the workplace] had made good money at home" (72). In their absence, Black civilians and women took jobs building munitions, driving delivery trucks, and serving as nurses among other positions. These developments, according to K.A. Cuordileone, "altered sexual and racial relations," and as Christina S. Jarvis argues, "represented a political challenge to a social order predicated on the centrality of the male patriarch and breadwinner" (528, 102). Implicit in such cultural changes, moreover, was a racial component. The improvements in working opportunities for Black citizens and women particularly challenged white veteran's masculinity. The newfound independence, economic prosperity, and upward mobility of social groups previously considered subordinate rattled white men's' assuredness in the social advantages and power they felt entitled to since the nation's inception.

For wounded and disabled veterans, this cultural emasculation was compounded. Dating as far back as ancient Greece, human variation has been equated with traits attributed to femininity. In her study, Rosemarie Garland Thomson explains that Aristotle's description of the female as a "deformed male"—a damaged version of the "universal standard" of nature—gave credence to the perception that corporeal and cognitive aberrations were symptomatic of inferior qualities such as weakness, timidity, and delicacy (175, 28). In other words, "disability feminizes all disabled figures" (Thomson 9). Although the scope of this theory fluctuates from culture to culture, it remains particularly apt in the context of America's longstanding preference for both able-bodiedness and whiteness. For men in the United States, disability can be a jarring social experience. Considering "male, white, or able-bodied superiority appears natural," physical

deviations from such norms dramatically impact a man's negotiation of their own masculinity (Thomson 20). War wounds are no exception to this premise, either. While true that "wounds incurred while fighting bravely…could bestow honor or a sense of purpose to the wounded individual," Jarvis also contends that "nonvalorous injuries often complicated the individual's struggle to assign meaning to a wound" (94, 95). Aberrations to the face, injuries to the genitals, or the loss of limbs had emasculating effects as they impacted a veteran's physical beauty, sexual performance, and mobility. Even small wounds or those unbeknownst to others could create a fissure between the veteran and masculinity. The resulting consequence of the internalized ableism in American culture coupled with the entrenched social expectations of masculinity of the period made reconciling the gendered implications of any injury difficult. Thus, after sacrificing their bodies and minds in the war and returning to a homefront they did not recognize, wounded white veterans found themselves questioning if they were still, after all, men.

Aware of this issue, community leaders, politicians, and civilians feared a crisis was imminent. These groups believed veterans would, as a result of their injuries and the social conditions, become hardened and resentful, which would threaten the economic prosperity and collective relief of peacetime. Therefore, restoring the wounded veteran's sense of manhood was a national priority. Those at the helm, which primarily consisted of veteran affairs experts, politicians, and sociologists, promoted the idea that "the restoration of peace must lead to the restoration of the status quo antebellum in gender relations" (Gerber 74). This vision, which is explicitly underscored by gendered and racial implications, maintained that the nation must assist its white veteran population in reclaiming their manhood in order to successfully move on from the good war.[30] In support, media outlets including advertisements, literature, and of course Hollywood films championed a modern model of antebellum gender dynamics, which posited

the domestic sphere as the proving ground for white masculinity. As Beth Linker and Whitney E. Laemmli explain, "lust, sexual desire, and being able to satisfy a wife were assumed to be essential components of ablebodied, heterosexual manhood" and "any inability to perform—reproductively or romantically—became a serious threat to [one's] masculinity" (140, 128). Jürgen Martschukat similarly argues that "starting a family, it was assumed, was good for veteran's readjustment to civilian life…Everything else was considered a failure" (*American Fatherhood* 187). As a husband, a wounded veteran could assume the role of breadwinner and support his wife. As a father, his children were the embodied byproduct of his virility and maleness. Women, too, were expected to support these efforts. Whether it was symbolically in films or explicitly in advice literature, they were encouraged to utilize "traditional female strategies" such as "mothering, crying, [and] sexual playfulness" to help men feel like men again (Gerber 75, 74). Sexual performance, a stable marriage, and family life thus formed a hegemonic ideal of postwar masculinity. By way of these tenets, wounded white veterans could, in time and with effort, negotiate a pathway to their manhood and mitigate feelings of inferiority due to shifts in race and gender relations, and most of all, their own damaged bodies.

Postwar remasculinization also served a larger purpose. "The actions of the men within the domestic sphere," according to Thomas E. Bishop, "took on an important symbolic role in the survival of both families and the state" (15). With increasing anxiety over the Soviet Union's political influence, the hegemonic traits of the American man—what Kathleen Starck succinctly describes as "the masculine virtues in Cold War politics"—were endorsed as a tactic in thwarting the encroaching Red enemy (16). Although masculinity, gender dynamics, and anti-communism seem discrete, they intersected in the nation's strategic plans to sow resentment toward the Eastern-bloc while fortifying traditional American institutions. Nearly everything about

communists were framed as antithetical to the American way of life, including their sexual orientation. As K.A. Cuordileone explains, communists were seen as "politically suspect" as well as sexually suspect: "the threat of communism became entangled with the threat of unrestrained sexuality, and by extension, homosexuality" (532, 537). Considering that "homosexuality was understood as a form of psychopathology that undermined the nation's defenses against communist infiltration," combatting this threat was paramount (Corber 3). In response, the nuclear family was framed as one of the nation's strongest lines of defense against such sexual and political deviance. And at the center of the unit was the father and husband—the embodiment of American masculinity. This role served a dual purpose, acting as both the "safeguard of the American family," and, more importantly, the "guardian of Western values" (Bishop 14, Starck 18). In this way, the domestication of the American male was not an effeminizing turn, but a vital development in protecting his family from foreign threats and preserving the integrity of his nation. This idea, furthermore, was particularly pressed upon wounded white veterans. Because their war injuries and impairments could complicate their economic and romantic prospects, there existed the concern that they might be lured to Eastern philosophies out of desperation or as retribution for a nation that no longer valued them. So while the idea of pursuing heterosexual relationships and domestic partnerships strengthened "existent power structure and social stratification along the lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality," it simultaneously consolidated the nation's Cold War campaign (Martschukat, "Men in Gray" 12).

Affirming Remasculinization in Veteran Literature

For their part, writers reflected in their fiction the popular gender and racial dynamics of the postwar and Cold War period. Like the movies, fiction represented the difficulties common

to demobilization and social reintegration. Yet, in her study of such narratives, Jarvis argues that literary depictions, especially in their portrayals of remasculinization, often "complicate interpretations of the wounded veteran" (102). Rather than work with female characters, veteran characters' remasculinization is "self-generating," often "performed on female bodies" through sexual or violent acts (Jarvis 103). Providing evidence of this idea through a series of short case studies, Jarvis accounts for novels such as civilian Monte Sohn's *The Flesh and Mary Duncan* and *Broad Margin* by A.R. Beverly-Gidding, a British veteran of the FWW writing on the SWW. Yet we can broaden her claim to account for the stories penned by some of the more popular veteran writers of the period such as James Jones' "Two Legs for Two of Us" and J.D. Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Although their works call attention to the "curative effects" of conventional gender roles, they do so by inverting the formula typical of Hollywood films (Jarvis 102). By this I mean, Jones and Salinger's stories fictionalize the tragic outcomes that occur when wounded veterans or their partners failed to conform to the narrow conception of hegemonic masculinity. These conclusions, which often see female characters abandoned by veterans, also speak to Cold War anxieties. Considering "poor performance of domesticity lay at the heart of anticommunism criticism," the writers' emphasis on a healthy nuclear family likewise touted a strong unit prepared to withstand a foreign enemy (George 15). Without the "guardians of western values," readers are reminded that a fragmented home comprised of vulnerable characters is susceptible to the creeping influence of the East.

Jones and Salinger's inclination to support these ideals may derive from their own views on domestication. Described by his biographer as taking "pleasure in domesticity" and being an "attentive father" to his children, James Jones explores the complex relationship between war wounds, masculinity, and gender relations in his short story, "Two Legs for the Two of Us"

(McShane 190, 239). Published in *Esquire Magazine* in 1951, the story details a brief visit between George, an amputee veteran, and Sandy, a woman that, as the story cryptically alludes, was previously engaged to George. Stopping by Sandy's place for a drink before a night on the town, George is accompanied by fellow veteran amputee Tom, and their dates, who are identified only as "the blonde one" and "the short one"—a narrative detail that implies that the unnamed women are a casual fling (43). Although George enjoys the liquor and company of his date, several moments hint toward his longing for a domestic identity. After Tom spills his drink on Sandy's tablecloth, for example, George warns his friend to be careful, and "lurched to his feet toward the sink where the dishrag always was," wanting to maintain the cleanliness of Sandy's home (46). Later, in a gesture that conveys his desire for a traditional relationship, "under the red and white checked tablecloth George put his hand on Sandy's bare knee below her skirt" (47).

George's war wound, however, is the impasse to that lifestyle. As Tom explains, George could entertain a relationship until the woman "'found out what it was that made him limp,'" at which point she "'took off'" (45). So while George desires hegemonic masculinity, his stigmatizing experiences discourage him pursuing it. That his choice is painful for Sandy draws attention to the historical fact that some "veterans would carouse, drink, fight, refuse to keep regular hours, and resist going back to work…[and] women would have to act determinedly if not diplomatically, to break those [unhealthy] bonds" between veterans; or, as Sandy succinctly explains, "'war is hard on women, too'" (Gerber 75, Jones 44). By highlighting the burdens that women endured in the process of remasculinization, "Two Legs for the Two of Us" upholds the idea that veterans must also do their part, and seriously commit themselves to a domestic lifestyle as the means to overcome the embarrassing connotations of their injuries and restore

order within the traditional home. The story's final image of Sandy standing in her doorway watching George leave encapsulates this idea: "moisture overflowing her eyes unnoticed, looking backward into a past the world had not seen fit to let alone" (48). With Sandy at the threshold of the home longing for the past, the only element missing from Jones's portrait of domesticity is the wounded veteran. Should he return, not only would he complete that picture, but in the process, reclaim his masculinity as well.

J.D. Salinger's short story, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," posits a similar idea. Salinger, who stormed the beaches of Normandy and walked through the Kaufering IV concentration camp, deployed the rejuvenating powers of the American family throughout his oeuvre. Personally, though, his family life was strained. He was, as Kenneth Slawenski notes, an inattentive husband and an ill-equipped father. Nevertheless, "the ideals of parenthood elated him" (Slawenski 277). Salinger translated these values to his work, presenting the family bond as vital for enduring the "agonies of searching for nobility and eternal truths while striving to survive in modern society" (Slawenski 275). From *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and *Franny and Zooey* (1961) to *Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (1963), Salinger continuously revisited the idea that the most challenging of human circumstances—suicide, grief, heartbreak—could be weathered through the family unit.

He presents a variation of this theme in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Originally appearing in a 1948 issue of the *New Yorker* before it was reprinted in *Nine Stories* five years later, the story focuses on a bereft family vacationing in Florida. Husband Seymour's war wounds and his wife Muriel's competing interests in her appearance strain their marriage, which Salinger symbolizes in their empty, twin beds and the wedding ring on the bathroom counter. Given the lack of introspective details, there is little evidence to suggest Seymour feels

emasculated save for a brief scene in which he rebukes a woman for looking at his bare feet, a response that potentially hints toward a disfiguring war injury. Instead, his manhood is questioned by other characters, namely his mother-in-law. Over the phone with Muriel, she teases Seymour's love of poetry as "*'sad'*" and finds his inability to concentrate on the road while driving disturbing (3).[31] She cites his war wound as the culprit for his maladjustments: "'it was a perfect crime the Army released him from the hospital'" (5). Notably, Muriel does little to support Seymour. Throughout the story, she is distracted from her husband's whereabouts, giving herself a manicure while gossiping about the other vacationers. Depressed, Seymour returns to the hotel room, sits on his bed, and shoots himself as Muriel sleeps. In these final moments, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" stresses women's responsibility in caring for their veteran spouses. Had Muriel been awake—that is, figuratively awake to Seymour's condition—she may have prevented his suicide. The story strikes a parallel with Jones's "Two Legs for the Two of Us," as both imply that their respective situations may have resolved differently had the characters enacted the tenets of postwar remasculinization, overcoming the stigmas of their wounds in order to cultivate romantic relationships and families, which for postwar readers, also signified a strong nation.

Comparatively speaking, Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955), is an outlier, as it follows a formula similar to the films of the period. Wilson, who served as an officer in the Coast Guard for the Greenland Patrol during the war, drafted the novel while raising his family and working as a public relations man for the University of Buffalo. One of the most popular veteran narrative to come out of the SWW, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* follows Tom Rath, a veteran torn between the responsibilities of the domestic home and the demands of the corporate world. Upon its publication, the novel was an instant success, and was optioned for

a feature film the following year, starring Gregory Peck and Jennifer Jones. Slight differences aside, both the book and its cinematic treatment perpetuate the myth of white remasculinization. Like Homer Parish's experience in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, Rath's war wound troubles his masculinity. Rather than a physical wound, though, Rath is suffering from what would have been diagnosed as a case of post-traumatic stress disorder. His haunting flashbacks of combat, accidentally shooting his friend, and being unfaithful to his wife cause him to doubt his integrity as a man. His occupation as a speechwriter for a television network exacerbates his perception. As Aaron George explains, Rath "learns that climbing the corporate ladder would cost him what he values most": a quality relationship with his wife and daughter (2). The longer Rath stays in his position and the more he endures his war memories, the more he feels alienated from his family and the more he loses his sense of identity as a man.

Sloan resolves this dilemma through the conventional gender dynamics of veteran narratives. Assuming the role of dutiful wife, Betsie helps Rath transcend his personal and professional struggles. When he decides to use a halfhearted speech written by a coworker, Betsie encourages him to stand up for his own ideas, specifically chastising him in gendered terms. She warns her husband that he was "becoming a cheap cynical yes-man" and reminds him that he "never used to be like that" (186). And when Rath discloses his war child, Betsie, who was initially distraught, acknowledges how the war has affected him and agrees that "'we should do all we can'" (271). With Betsie's support, Rath commits to the domestic realm. In the novel's closing scene, he declines a promotion in order to spend more time with his family and declares his intent to support his son. This moment, argues Martschukat, signifies Rath's "coming out as father and self-directed man because he consciously decides to live for family and fatherhood" ("Men in Gray" 20). His decision exemplifies the narrative triage quintessential to the postwar

veteran narratives; by choosing a future with his family, Rath puts the war and its somatic effects in the past. The conclusion also reinforces the masculine politics of the Cold War. Regarding the novel's larger implications, George notes that *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* thematizes the anti-communist notion that "American men should focus themselves away from the alienation of the modern bureaucracy, and toward their families" (17). The collective ideology of the corporate world functioned as a stand-in for communism and, therefore, in choosing his family, Rath not only reclaimed his masculinity, but also the traditional Western values upheld by white citizens.

Mailer's Counterculture Vision of White Masculinity

Instead of encouraging this pathway, Mailer's novels treat the process of veteran remasculinization with skepticism. Although his characters subscribe to the idea of a "self-generating" masculinity evident in other veteran narratives, they deviate in their overarching message (Jarvis 103). Rather than forward the notion that "wartime damage done to American masculinity is…mendable," *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* suggest that the recuperating processes by which veterans could overcome their injuries and reclaim their masculinity adversely impacted the veteran and, by extension, the nation's Cold War project (Jarvis 112). Unlike Jones and Salinger's stories, though, Mailer's novels are not about the veteran characters' failures to uphold the masculine virtues of the Cold War, but the failures of those virtues to achieve their intended outcome. Mailer's views on the matter, much like Jones and Salinger, shaped his work. During the postwar years, Mailer joined a faction of cultural figures including Robert Linder, Hugh Hefner, Marlon Brando, and the Beats, who believed the domestication of the American male was an assault on masculinity.[32] Such views infiltrated Mailer's personal life. As J. Michael Lennon recounts, he was "unfaithful in all of his

marriages… a serial philanderer. His affairs caused him and his family much misery" (82). They also affected his professional life, as he made a career out of writing incendiary takes on American gender dynamics, which he most infamously explores in the controversial essay, "The White Negro." This essay is particularly apposite for this discussion given it was released halfway between the publication of *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream*. As historical barometer of the writer's gripe with hegemonic masculinity, whiteness, and race, then, it contextualizes some of the ideas he is working through in *Barbary Shore* and anticipates those he will wrestle with in *An American Dream*.

Published in a 1957 issue of *Dissent*, "The White Negro" is a manifesto in which Mailer outlines his disdain for the social expectations of white men. He suggests that the postwar years "have been the years of conformity and depression," resulting in a "collective failure of nerve" that made "enormous demands on the courage of men" (43, 44). In response to this failure, Mailer proposes a radical method by which those conforming to the "totalitarian society" could–and should–restore their manhood (44). His vision proved highly controversial among critics and readers alike. James Baldwin's 1961 *Esquire* essay, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," is perhaps the most well-known response. Calling Mailer his "very good friend" and a "first-rate talent," Baldwin explains that he "could not, with the best will in the world, make any sense of 'The White Negro,'" describing it as "downright impenetrable" ("The Black Boy"). Baldwin's frustration derives from the white negro's political identity. In an instance of bizarre racism, Mailer cites the social experiences of Black men as a template for living a more liberated and therefore masculine lifestyle. Because, as Mailer explains, "any Negro who wishes to live must live with danger from this first day," he "could rarely afford the sophisticated inhibitions of civilization, and "so he kept for his survival the art of the primitive" (45). Completely

overlooking the hardships facing American Black men, Mailer views their "primitive" behavior—late nights, promiscuity, jazz music, drugs, and violence—as the pathway to a pleasure, freedom, and creativity. By following the "black man's code," white men could assume the role of the white negro, or what Mailer more famously termed the "hipster" (46). This figure, which Maggie McKinley cites as "decidedly" masculine and Robert J. Corder notes "refused to confine his sexuality to the domestic sphere," "abdicates from any conventional moral responsibility" and, in doing so, enjoys "absolute sexual freedom" (71, 45, 59, 61). The rewards of becoming the hipster were, to Mailer, only outweighed by the consequences of conformity. Should white men refuse this path, they will "pay in sickness, or depression, or anguish," and live in the "slow relentless inhumanity of the conservative power which controls him" (55, 56, 62). For all of its problems of which it has plenty, "The White Negro" illuminates the scope of Mailer's interest in the gender and racial dynamics of the Cold War. The essay both highlights his desire to disrupt the status quo and speaks to what would become his lifelong concern over the lasting consequences of cultural conformity, especially in the arena of masculinity.

In their own ways, *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* fictionalize these consequences in a specifically postwar veteran context. Both Mikey Lovett and Stephen Rojack return to the United States after being injured in the course of their service, and struggle to reacclimate to society, especially in how they perceive themselves as men. Their desire to conform to the expectations of the American white male are central to their decision making. This is to say, the masculine virtues of the Cold War are the driving force behind the characters' narrative trajectories. After all, as Graham Dawson argues in his study of the soldier hero, "masculinities are lived out in the flesh, but fashioned in the imagination" (1). These conceptions often reveal themselves through the wounded protagonists' internalized desire for heterosexual

relationships. After meeting his landlord, for example, Mikey Lovett admits that he "wanted to take Guinevere to bed" (17, 18). In a later scene, his desire extends to the domestic realm. After Guinevere suggests she could leave her husband and find a new partner with the "'lift of a finger,'" Lovett responds "'lift a finger for me'" (49). Stephen Rojack's yearning for a nuclear family is more explicit. While contemplating his future with a local nightclub singer, he confides: "'God…let me love that girl, and become a father, and try to be a good man, and do some decent work'" (162). However, considering both novels are set during "a time when notions of manhood seemed most incompatible with popular perceptions of disability," their injuries trouble their remasculinization projects (Brune 5). Possessing nonvalorous war wounds, the characters routinely doubt their maleness and are sensitive to any instance in which it is questioned. Their anxiety stems from the fact that, in Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson's words, they stand to "lose rights and privileges when labeled deviant," which is a scary prospect for the white characters (4). Framed from this angle, *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* forward two postwar veteran narratives in which their respective protagonists, out of fear of losing romantic partners, domestic unions, and the inherent privileges associated with their racial identity, endeavor to overcome their wounds and reclaim their masculinity.

Passing as Able-bodied Men and Its Consequences

Our question then becomes, how do Lovett and Rojack defy the emasculating stigmas of their service-related injuries? They do so, as I argue, through what disability scholars theorize as passing. In his work, Adam Cureton defines passing as the "systematic course of deception, pretense, and concealments so that others do not know [one] has a disability and do not think of him as disabled "(2). Brune and Wilson similarly explain that passing is the "way people conceal social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability" (1). Through this social

performance, one can evade "explicit discrimination," but more importantly prompt their social milieu to "accept" them (Cureton 7, 5). In the case of *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream*, this acceptance is a matter of being perceived as able-bodied, white men: the exemplars of Cold War masculinity. To an extent, their method occurs at the formal level of narration. In *Barbary Shore's* opening lines, Lovett reveals that his cranial scars "may be disguised by even the clumsiest barber" (3). More conveniently, the remnants of a wound to Rojack's hindquarters are easily hidden by his pants, and the "trace of a distinguished limp" is never recognized by other characters (6). Considering that Beth Linker argues that masculinity cannot be assumed but "actively defined," though, passing also takes on a performative dimension (126). Brune and Wilson share this view, noting that passing entails "[developing] strategies that suggested to others that the individual was not, after all, really disabled" (5). Thus, the texts' implicit details such as the characters' behavior, movement, and dialogue are also part of their passing. When Lovett and Rojack act on their imagined ideas of masculinity, they do so under the pretense that such performances confirm to others and themselves that they are men. Lovett "clutched various parts of [Guinevere's] body" and later "encircled [Lannie's] waist" with his hands in a display of heterosexual desire (54, 131). And in a scene that speaks to the pressure to pursue the nuclear family, Rojack intentionally removed Cherry's "corporate rubbery obstruction"—her diaphragm—during sex (128). This ruse of gendered identity sustains the characters' remasculinization projects. Through their appearance and behavior, Lovett and Rojack simultaneously overcompensate for their wounds and conform to the expectations of hegemonic masculinity.

Yet the means by which they present themselves as men culminates in their demise. As disability scholars have suggested, passing can yield adverse effects. While Tobin Siebers

explains that the performance can lead to "secondary health problems" and those that pass "may feel guilty or depressed about constructing their acceptance by society on the basis of pretense," Cureton more broadly notes that "hiding one's disability can exact a significant psychological toll" (117, 118, 12). Such ramifications take hold of Mailer's wounded veteran characters over the course of the novels. In this way, Mailer's illustrations of passing and its consequences function as a narrative adjacent to social conformity. Through their relentless efforts to both perform their masculinity and adhere to hegemonic ideals, Lovett and Rojack end up distorting their gendered identities. By the novels' conclusions, they adopt queer sexualities, political ideologies of the East, and corrupt moral values. What is more, the characters do not recognize their failures. Instead, they believe they have successfully reclaimed their status as American white men. For a Cold War readership, these conclusions not only rupture the myth of veteran remasculinization posited by Hollywood films, but that strengthen their critique by stoking fears about the nation's latest conflict. To this end, the postwar veteran narratives embedded within *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* attempt to reframe hegemonic masculinity as myopic and in need of revision for the sake of both the nation's veterans and the nation's integrity.[33]

Amnesia and Ambiguous Masculinity in *Barbary Shore*

Mailer first addresses remasculinization in his 1951sophomore novel, *Barbary Shore*. Eager to pen the follow-up to his massive hit *The Naked and the Dead*, Mailer began drafting *Barbary Shore* in 1949. While frustrating, the writing proved quick and, after a short stint drafting screenplays for Hollywood, Mailer finished his manuscript in the fall of 1950. As J. Michael Lennon notes, Mailer was seriously interested in Russian history and politics during this time and was striving to be a "class-conscious, committed-to-social change writer," which is obvious in his novel (128). *Barbary Shore* follows recently returned disabled veteran Mike

Lovett, who rents a room in a Brooklyn Heights boarding house, where he quickly finds himself entangled in a web of espionage between U.S. federal agents and exiled Marxists. Each of the supporting characters embodies a political philosophy, ranging from far-left Trotskyism to far-right totalitarianism, and influences the impressionable Lovett who pledges allegiance to socialism in the novel's final pages. In the towering shadow of his first novel, Mailer failed to duplicate his success with *Barbary Shore*. The novel's overwrought political allegory was met with contempt among critics. A review in *Time*, for instance, likened it to "embalming fluid," and William Barnett, in the June 1951 issue of *Commentary*, lambasted Mailer's ideology as an "adolescent daydream," warning that the "whole substance of the book evaporates into a kind of ghostly unreality" (112, 602).[34] Yet the novel's commercial failure was also due in part to the political climate, as it was published "less than a year after the start of the Korean War, a period when anything that offered a socialist alternative was abominated" (Lennon 129). Literary scholars, on the other hand, were more receptive. Regarding *Barbary Shore's* political discourse, Stanley T. Gutman argues that the novel "goes into the specific political failure that led to the modern dilemma and suggests a political solution, although a rather unlikely one" (42). Barry Leeds similarly asserts that the novel outlines a "conscientious and fearful concern with America's cultural and political shortcomings," and muses on what hope there was, if any, for the nation's future (100).

Mikey Lovett's war wound is central to the novel's meditation on American politics. Since *Barbary Shore's* publication, scholars have interpreted the character's amnesia as a narrative device, signifying the protagonist's undetermined political identity. Regarding the impairment, Leeds argues that "because Lovett is not committed to any definite personal past, he belongs to any and all of them" and serves as a "representative figure" of a postwar society (69).

And more recently, Maggie McKinley asserts that Lovett's condition is "meant to symbolize the psychological state of modern man" (*Understanding* 26). Yet if we resist reading his disability as a symbol in favor of reading it as a lived experience within the context of his military service, the novel reveals a critical subtext on veteran remasculinization. Similar to the way Lovett's war-derived memory loss erases his political identity, his war wound likewise obfuscates his gendered identity. Under the pressure from the other characters, he attempts to reclaim his masculinity through heterosexual demonstrations expected during the Cold War. When Lovett's advances are routinely rejected and unfulfilled—when his remasculinization project fails—the wounded veteran is swayed to adopt sexual and political identities that cryptically suggest American hegemonic masculinity is not a pathway to social prosperity nor protection from Eastern influence, but contributes to the country's demise.

From the outset of the novel, Mailer establishes Lovett's impairment as a defining feature of the character. In the opening paragraphs, Lovett discloses, as best as he can, details about his war wound and the extent to which it has affected his life. Although he can cycle through a series of potential scenarios, ranging from a burning aircraft cockpit to a damaged tank he might have been trapped in, he explains that such recollections always "end with the banality of beads; grenades, shell, bombardment—I can elaborate a hundred such, and none seem correct" (3). As a result of Lovett's fragmented memory, his identity remains a mystery. Unlike his family origins and political leanings, though, he never comments specifically on his masculinity. Instead, Mailer draws attention to the character's abstruse gendered identity through a series of flashbacks that conjure competing perceptions. In one memory, for example, Lovett recalls celebrations breaking out across the summer of victory in Paris. He explains that I "can almost touch the drowsy whore who scratched herself before she began to dress. Or did I only languish in the

summer heat of Paris, my mind inert, my body in torpor" (71). These juxtaposed images depict Lovett at a crossroad. Stuck between the thought of himself enacting hegemonic masculinity and the passive image of himself alone, Lovett is unsure of which man he is. This same dilemma underscores another wartime memory. He remembers renting a seashore home with a young girl while on leave. They share an intimate week that leaves the girl with the impression that never "had a man been more ardent, more thoughtful, and more desirable" than Lovett (45). While her remarks frame the protagonist as a capable and confident lover, the same memory casts him in a cowardly light. He also recalls: "to order a meal from the waitress became a minor ordeal, and I remember I could not bear to talk to the woman who owned the tourist house," before noting he refused to fetch ice for his companion (45). Unlike his sexual performance—which he presently admits "what combination of circumstances and myself could bring it about I no longer knew"—Lovett's memory simultaneously suggests a lack of confidence with women. In this way, Leed's assertion that Lovett is "representative of returning veterans" and their disillusionment with social politics can be extended to the realm of gender politics (71). Upon his demobilization, Lovett, like so many wounded white veterans of the SWW, questions his masculinity.

Yet the uncertainty arising from his disability does compel Lovett to pursue remasculinization so much as the social pressure to conform to hegemonic masculinity. In two scenes, fellow roomers Willie Dinsmore and Leroy Hollingsworth make remarks that imply men such as Lovett should possess healthy sexual appetites. Their remarks and questions, furthermore, are contextualized in terms pertinent to white veterans. By this I mean, Mailer frames the characters' presumptions about Lovett's masculinity in the assumed correlation between soldiers and heterosexuality. As Jarvis explains, "certainly among the servicemen themselves, there was a sense that sexual activity was part of being a 'real' man and a soldier,"

which she notes elsewhere was a notion not lost on civilians (82). In an effort to curtail the spread of venereal diseases during wartime, the military along with private organizations published posters, pamphlets, and informational films that encouraged servicemen and laborers to stay away from locations prone to prostitution.[35] As a consequence, this miscellany cast women as responsible for the spread while bolstering the impression that soldiers were particularly virile and sexual beings. Both Dinsmore and Hollingsworth view Lovett in this light, teasing him to indulge in what they assume must be his fantasies and preferences on account of his military affiliation. Faced with this pressure, the impressionable Lovett buys into Dinsmore and Hollingsworth's remarks, thereby inaugurating his remasculinization project.

This process begins when Dinsmore goads Lovett about a sexual encounter with their landlord, Guinevere. He describes her as promiscuous, warning Lovett that "if she gets alone in the same room with you, you won't be safe" (11). When justifying why he has not had an affair with her yet, Dinsmore explains that "there's always the danger of disease, of going blind, having a leg fall off. I may not have been a GI, but I saw that venereal movie, too" (11). His remark profiles Lovett, lumping him in with the stereotypical expectation that veterans should pursue sexual relationships. His later comments reinforce his view. He tells Lovett on more than one occasion that "'she likes you'" before taunting that "'you'll be having your hands full with her'" (16). At this point, the Mailer draws attention to the correlation between Lovett's war wound and his masculinity: "Unwillingly, in the customary reaction to just this situation, my hand strayed up to the scar tissue behind my ear, and I was taken again with a desire to study that face Dinsmore had called good-looking" (16). The idea of a sexual encounter triggers Lovett to touch the manifestation of his unresolved masculinity, reminding readers of the character's dilemma over his gendered identity. As the image conveys, Lovett is now inclined to pursue

Guinevere in the wake of Dinsmore's comments. Whereas he first pigeonholed her as a "sexual stereotype" and refuted that "'I won't be having my hands full with her,'" Lovett adopts a determined stance (14, 16). After returning to his room, the protagonist "realized that I wanted to take Guinevere to bed" (18). Although Lovett later confesses that Dinsmore's "description had its effect long after I knew it was untrue," the pressure to conform to hegemonic masculinity takes its toll—Lovett views Guinevere as a prime target for his remasculinization project.

Hollingsworth's remarks have a similar effect. In a later scene, he asks Lovett for book recommendations akin to the material the military provided its servicemen: "'In the Army there was an awful lot of literature that I liked. You know things with the facts of life in them'"(41). Uninterested in the best sellers that Lovett suggests, Hollingsworth explains that he is looking for more explicit material: "there were you know things about American fellows and girls...You know the way we feel...lots of real things in them...*foolish* girls, and boys who are willing to...take a chance'" (42). Although Paul Fussell notes that the military never circulated pornographic books, he does assert that "literature didn't have to go very far to be thought highly provocative" (107). "Deprived" soldiers could easily interpret literature that would be considered otherwise "tediously chaste" as "intensely sexy" (Fussell 107). Hollingsworth's remarks, then, not only reify the correlation between soldiers and sexuality, but again presume that Lovett should "feel" the same way. Although Lovett is initially unfazed, several narrative clues evince the nefarious character's influence over the protagonist. After their meeting, for instance, Lovett remembers his wartime rendezvous with the girl at the resort. However, in the wake of his encounter with Hollingsworth, Lovett's masculinity is more clearly realized: "I had begun again to think about my week with that girl, but the image of Guinevere, no matter how incongruous, often accompanied her" (46). And later, Lovett explicitly points toward Hollingsworth's impact

on his gendered identity: "I find it hardly surprising that a few days after seeing Hollingsworth I felt compelled to make the trip downstairs and ring the bell of Guinevere's apartment" (46). Framed this angle, Lovett's pursuit of Guinevere occurs as a result of Dinsmore and Hollingsworth's insinuations that veterans like himself should be interested in such opportunities. And through this pursuit—what I see as a form of passing—the protagonist believes he can reclaim his postwar masculinity with certitude.

At this point, though, Mailer begins unraveling Lovett's remasculinization project though his failed sexual relationships. Rather than support him, as female characters are wont to do in postwar veteran narratives, Guinevere rejects his advances. After Lovett attempts to initiate an embrace, she admits that "you're not a bad-looking guy…but I'm not fooling around any more" (55). And later when Lovett then invites her to his room, she "did not follow" (57). Deterred, Lovett's failures have an emasculating effect, leaving him "annoyed" and "furious" (50, 57). Whereas the character felt entitled to Guinevere as white veteran in a postwar society, describing her as "obtainable," she does not reciprocate his interests (26). Of her rejections, the most devastating invokes Lovett's war wounds. After she enlists him to keep surveillance of the other tenants, he balks and accuses her of having an affair with Hollingsworth. The allegation strikes a nerve with Guinevere, who retorts that "'You hurt something in me. A woman's not a machine. Why I could no more look at you now than if you were a cripple.' She spoke the word with venom" (70). In this passage, Guinevere relies on the stigmatizing connotations of the term "cripple" to communicate how unattractive she finds Lovett, which is a damaging blow to his fragile sense of masculinity. Although Guinevere does not know the full extent of Lovett's impairment, her insult is nevertheless humiliating: "From a depth in me, fatuous and self-pitying, I heard my self say, 'I am a cripple.' Anger followed" (70). Guinevere's comments are

embarrassing and painful for the wounded veteran. That his failure is associated with his disability leads him to believe he is inherently unattractive and undesirable; he is an inferior man. This scene challenges the idyllic notion that soldiers could overcome the longstanding stigmas moored to their war wounds through romantic pursuits. Instead, in the shadow of hegemonic masculinity, *Barbary Shore's* veteran protagonist is haunted by the implications of his injury.

Mailer furthers this critique of postwar masculinity when he thwarts Lovett's project a second time. When Lovett attempts to perform his masculinity on Lannie, a mysterious tenant who moves in serendipitously as his affair with Guinevere dissolves, Mailer is not rehashing his protagonist's failures. Rather, he is rounding out his critique. As much as Guinevere's scenes illustrate how the stigmas of war wounds are not easily overcome, her character raises questions similar to the postwar veteran narratives of Jones and Salinger. That is, readers might wonder if Lovett's remasculinization would have been successful had she reciprocated his desire. Mailer lays this speculation to rest through Lovett's intimate encounter with Lannie. The consummation of their relationship does little to confirm his gendered identity so much as it prompts him to further question his manhood. Although the characters sleep together on two separate occasions, sex and love fail to yield the sense of masculinity Lovett seeks. Their first affair is framed in Cold War gender dynamics. After Lovett provides financial support to Lannie, she calls him her "'guardian'" and confesses that she "'ought to make love to you'" (135). Here, the characters assume conventional gender roles with Lovett serving as the masculine provider and Lannie the grateful and subordinate woman. While their sexual consummation should further confirm those dynamic, Lovett recounts that it was "without tenderness or desire" and "Lannie sobbed beneath me in fathomless desperation" (138). Their second encounter unfolds similarly. Before getting in bed, they cautiously express a desire for a serious relationship. Lovett tells her that "'I think I

love you,'" to which Lannie replies "'I want to love you'" (152, 153). Their consumption, though, proves just as meaningless. He describes their intercourse as a "lost cause" that Lannie "suffered through it with a smile" (154). What the veteran character has been led to believe is the defining act of masculinity, turns out to be an empty and unsatisfying experience. In a final blow to Lovett's remasculinization project, Lannie denies his capacity for a conventional romantic union: "'you can't love anybody'" (154). To the wounded veteran, her words are a damning sentence, implying that the character cannot fulfill the tenets of hegemonic masculinity.

Lovett's failed remasculinization project is a watershed for his gendered identity. After Guinevere denies his advances and his sexual relations with Lannie do not conjure the masculinity he envisions, Lovett views the process of remasculinization as an impossible task. At this realization, he undergoes a dramatic revision to his gendered identity: "We were not lovers, but father and child…*this was man's estate"* (155). Up to this point, his war memories have obfuscated the perception of his masculinity, but in this passage, we see him lay claim to his manhood for the first time. For a Cold War audience accustomed to resolution–of watching the wounded veteran characters develop or restore romantic and sexual unions with female counterparts–this scene is perplexing. If Lovett no longer views Lannie as a lover, then what does that mean for his own sexuality? We might be inclined to accept him as a father, but his description is deceiving as he admits that he had "fathered nothing" (155). While the specifics of his sexuality are vague, another war memory, which occurs shortly after he discovers man's estate, suggests the character is assuming a more fluid sexuality. He recalls setting a "machine gun to command the field" in the "enemy's country," before keeping company with a local farmer's daughter (158). He "made love from the hip" but "never really saw the girl" (159). His lack of vision signifies his break with conformist gender norms: "I would never meet that girl,

and if I did I would not remember her and she would not recognize me...that was done and dead" (159). Lovett rejects the narrow and rigid conditions of hegemonic masculinity, which he further confirms when declaring that "there would be no solutions from the past" (160). Considering that the white Cold War American man was revered as the "embodiment of a better past," Lovett's proclamation spurns this figure in favor of a conceptualizing a different future (Martschukat 9). Supporting this idea, Leeds asserts that "Lovett recognizes the limitations of the past…[which] lead him to think of the future, and finally assume the responsibility of his own role in that future" (77). In the context of a postwar veteran narrative, part of that responsibility entails developing a more fluid sexuality that allows the wounded veteran to potentially find romantic partners, regardless of their gender, which is an approach that the masculine virtues of the Cold War prohibit.

Furthermore, Lovett's decision regarding his political allegiance in the closing scenes speaks to his fluid sexuality. In the novel's final moments, Lovett realizes that he has been unknowingly mired in a political conspiracy among the tenants of the boarding house and, in a gesture that further clarifies his postwar identity, he must decide which character he will support. Rejecting the fascist and capitalist views of the covert FBI agent Hollingsworth, Lovett determines that he will aid McLeod, an incognito communist who has tutored him in the ways of Marxism during the latter half of the novel. Lovett's decision, according to Maggie McKinley, posits a "serious conversation about the instability and corruption within America" and a "call for ideological and political change." (25, 27). At the same time, Lovett's decision also carries sexual connotations pertinent to the novel's historical moment. Considering that homosexuality was considered symptomatic of one's loyalty to Eastern political philosophy, Lovett's belief in Marxism implicates him accordingly. Thus "man's estate"—his vision of masculinity—is a more

fluid and queer conception opposed to the conventional gender dynamics of the period. Mailer's remarks on his own homophobia in his 1955 essay, "The Homosexual Villain," further indicate that the character's sexual orientation serves a narrative function within the novel: "at the time I wrote those [early] novels, I was consciously sincere. I did believe…that there was an intrinsic relation between homosexuality and 'evil,' and it seemed perfectly natural to me, as well as *symbolically* just, to treat the subject in such a way" (14). Lovett's sexuality, then, transforms him into a symbolic villain; however, he is not the antagonist of the novel as he is the antagonist to Western values, what McKinley describes as "cultural totalitarianism" (27).

The irony here is that Lovett reaches this point after pursuing those very values. Desperate to reclaim his masculinity, the wounded veteran is rejected and humiliated to the point that he finds an alternative model outside the boundaries of the hegemonic norms. In a novel that "produces a distinctly unsettling effect—perhaps particularly so for readers at the time of the book's publication, who were living through the paranoia of the Red Scare," the postwar veteran narrative underscoring *Barbary Shore* contributes to this paranoia (McKinley 25). Rather than successfully reclaim his position in the nation's gendered hierarchy, Mikey Lovett's remasculinization project transforms him into the antithesis of the Cold war man. What makes this evolution especially unsettling for Cold War readers is Lovett's vow to live in secrecy among the American public, to which the narrator concludes: "so the blind will lead the blind, and the deaf shout warnings to one another until their voices are lost" (312). Here, Mailer capitalizes on "fears that gay men were virtually indistinguishable from straight men" (Corber 2). Inconspicuously, the Marxist, bisexual, wounded veteran lurks among the American public. With this image, *Barbary Shore* warns that the strict tenets of hegemonic masculinity are not only damaging to the wounded veteran, but the social, cultural, and economic values of his nation.

Emasculating Wounds, Violence, and Sex and *An American Dream*

An American Dream posits another anti-remasculinization narrative, questioning the project's efficacy in a new way. Emasculated by a war wound to his backside, Stephen Rojack performs exaggerated demonstrations of his masculinity on the bodies of both gendered and racial others to fatal ends. By the novel's conclusion, he transforms not into the safeguard of society that white veterans were wont to pursue, but a danger to it. In this way, Mailer's novel again examines hegemonic masculinity through the lens of a postwar veteran narrative, but differs from *Barbary Shore* in its emphasis on the violent consequences and racist implications underscoring the project of remasculinization.

An American Dream's publication marks a fifteen-year gap between his sophomore novel. The interim was a turbulent period for Mailer filled with personal successes and failures, both of which shaped his 1965 work. Following *Barbary Shore*, he published *The Deer Park* in 1955. Drawing from his experiences as a screenwriter, the novel, which climbed the bestseller list while receiving mostly negative reviews, explores Hollywood's incestuous and corrupt inner workings. That same year, Mailer co-founded *The Village Voice*, a counterculture newspaper based in New York City. He penned numerous articles on current affairs and politics, many of which appeared in *Advertisements for Myself*, a 1959 miscellany of his works that furthered his persona as an anti-establishment writer. When Mailer entered the 1960s, he devoted himself to journalism, covering political events such as the Democratic Party Convention, and writing what would become a foundational text of New Journalism, "Superman Comes to the Supermarket" (1960). That same year marked one of Mailer's darkest moments. At a dinner party, he nearly stabbed to death his second wife, Adele Morales. He was subsequently institutionalized at Bellevue Hospital, but was released after Morales refused to press charges. Along with his

decades' worth of cultural scrutiny as a professional writer, Mailer's personal experience served as "ore for his fiction," influencing him while drafting' *An American Dream* (Lennon 287).

Originally published as an eight-part serial in *Esquire* in 1964 and released as a novel proper in the Spring of 1965, *An American Dream* chronicles the devolution of Stephen Rojack over the course of a 36-hour period. Despite having it all—war hero status, esteemed college professor, charismatic TV personality, former congressman, social aristocrat—Rojack is disillusioned with his life, thinking himself a coward and failure. In a moment of rage, he murders his estranged wife, spurring a sex-filled violent bender in which his dubious actions make him feel manlier than ever. Critics responded to such graphic content and moral ambiguity with mixed reviews. While Joan Didion praised *An American Dream's* "refusal to sail with the prevailing winds" of conformity, others like Phillip Rhav dismissed the novel as a "programmatic statement of [Mailer's] own desires, power drives, and day-dreams" (329, 1). In the decades since its release, literary scholars such as Maggie McKinley and Justin Shaw maintain that *An American Dream*, as polarizing as it is, evinces a powerful critique of the gender norms in the postwar period. McKinley, for instance, views Rojack responding to a "world he sees as oppressive to his individual freedom and the development of his masculine identity" (76). Elsewhere, Shaw contends the novel interrogates the root cause of misogyny. The protagonist's "violence," he writes, "originates from the oppressive social practices promoted by hegemonic masculinity" (59). Whether they praise or disparage the novel, these reviews and literary examinations submit that *An American Dream* presents a complicated portrait of postwar American masculinity.

Unlike the attention directed toward Lovett's injury in *Barbary Shore*, the extent to which Rojack's war wounds figures into his gendered identity has garnered little analysis. Richard

Poirier's 1965 review in *Commentary* offers the closest disability reading of the novel. While discussing the peculiar illustration of bodily experiences, Poirier notes that the sex scenes lack the "pleasures within the capacities of ordinarily able-bodied persons" (91). What his analysis hints toward but never fully realizes is such peculiarity derives from the wounded veteran's concerted efforts to pass as able-bodied. As the result of a penetrating wound to his backside, Rojack fears his body has been imbued with queer connotations. Harboring the homophobic views commonplace among white men of the mid 20th century, Rojack's remasculinization project is matter of overcompensating for this embodied deviancy. Through this narrative arc, Mailer collapses the integrity of remasculinization. The pressures to conform to hegemonic ideals drives the wounded veteran to perform hyper-sexual and hyper-violent displays of his white manhood. In doing so, Rojack embodies an "ethos of violence, isolation, and individualism"—the antithesis of Cold War masculinity (Bishop 5).

During his opening exposition, we find Rojack already in the midst of passing. However, the wounded protagonist is not concerned with deceiving other characters, but the reader. Terming this phenomenon "discursive passing," Brune explains that writers can utilize the formal elements of literature to "repress the issue of disability" "allowing [it] to pass from the text" altogether (54, 49, 48). In *An American Dream*, though, it is the novel's main character who deploys this strategy. He does so by framing himself, alongside his friend John Fitzgerald Kennedy, as "war heroes," a title he earned after a harrowing encounter with Nazi soldiers (1). As he narrates his war memory, Rojack describes his efforts in Herculean terms. He explains that he could "feel danger withdraw" from himself as he stormed the hill "under the separate fire of each of those guns" (4). At that moment, Rojack counterattacks his enemy: "I threw my carbine away, out ten yards, to the front of me, crossed my arms to pull a grenade from each shirt pocket,

pulled the rings with my teeth," using the time after his "grenades sailed away" to "turn around, and dive back for [his] carbine" (3). Here, Rojack turns to competitive sports to further emphasize his wartime valor, likening himself to a "halfback who has caught the fifty-yard pass and run another forty-eight for the longest touchdown in the history of the school" (6). The imagery deployed throughout this passage evokes connotations stereotypical to 1960s masculinity. His association with Kennedy suggests he is charming; he depicts himself as a brave soldier a la a John Wayne character in Hollywood war films; and his football metaphor calls to mind early NFL stars such as Johnny Unitas. From the outset of *An American Dream*, the veteran narrator is intent on presenting himself as a hypermasculine war hero.

His interest in passing derives from the feminizing and queer implications of his war wound. During the bloody melee, Rojack mentions that he is not only injured by his own weapon, but in a compromising area of the body: "The grenades went off somewhere between five and ten yards over each machine gun, blast, blast, like a boxer's tattoo, one-two, and I was exploded in the butt from a piece of my own shrapnel" (4). Although Rojack's injury would seemingly amplify the legend of his soldiering given that it was received in the line of duty, Jarvis explains that certain wounds could distort a soldier's gendered identity. In a particular case, she cites Edward Wood Jr. who, like Rojack, was struck in the hindquarters. The injury led Wood to lifelong "reflections about his perceived cowardice" as well as "cultural definitions of masculinity" (95). Rojack is haunted by a similar predicament. That the injury is his own fault suggests cowardice and inefficiency. More pressing, though, that it entails penetrating his backside carries queer connotations, which was an affront to American masculinity during the Cold War years. Unlike the wounds revered by civilians as testament to one's machismo, Rojack's injury is an anathema, associating his character with deviancy, criminality, and

femininity. Paranoid about such stigmas, Rojack conforms to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity in order to portray himself as the unpenetrated veteran. In a novel often referred to as a roman a clef, Rojack's service-related injury is the key to understanding his masculinity crisis. Throughout the rest of *An American Dream*, Mailer repeatedly draws attention to the character's remasculinization project by referencing the character's wartime service, and deploying military metaphors and allusions to penetration**,** which was an image that, according to Cuordileone, was utilized as "political weapon" in anti-Communism rhetoric (537)**.** These instances portend critical moments where the character is hellbent on re-establishing himself as the brave war hero. That is, the unpenetrated white veteran superior to the gendered, racial, and sexual other.

Although Rojack never spells out his method for remasculinization—that would defeat the purpose of his discursive passing—another aspect of his war story cryptically delineates his process. While detailing his injury, Rojack muses that "still a woman's breast takes me now and then to the pigeon on that trigger" of the gun he used to kill the Nazis (4). Here, the act of physical intimacy is tethered to the act of physical violence, which culminates in the death of the enemy. This is the algorithm by which the wounded veteran expresses his manhood; the pursuit of sexual relationships and domestic partnerships coupled with the capacity for violence are the means to expunge his personal foe: the emasculating implications anchored to his war wound. Although the idea of violence seems counterintuitive to the domesticated American man, this precept is premised on defending one's family from the enemy, which in Rojack's memory, are the German soldiers. Although they are not responsible for his injury, Rojack's repeated references to queerness and rectal imagery transforms them into an embodied surrogate. For example, he describes the first German soldier's mouth as that "which only great fat sweet young faggots can have when their rectum is tuned" before shooting a "hole" in the heart of his "hole-

mate," who then covers "his new hole" before dying (4). Thus, while the German soldiers are literally Rojack's political enemy, they will also function as the symbolic enemy to his heterosexuality in later scenes. As the novel transitions to the present, this algorithm guides Rojack when his masculinity is questioned or challenged, compelling him to reclaim his position as a straight, white American man to the detriment of women and Black characters.

What triggers Rojack's remasculinization project is a bitter encounter with his estranged wife, Deborah Kelly. Not only has Rojack failed to maintain the Cold War imperative of a domestic union with Deborah, but feels subordinated to her. He likens their relationship to a "war" in which he was "losing" to a respected "enemy general" (20, 9). While this description frames Rojack as meek and incapable of enforcing the gender dynamics of the period, it also foreshadows the conflict that will inaugurate the wounded veteran's project. When Rojack visits Deborah after leaving a party, their conversation quickly turns hostile. Deborah mocks Rojack's manhood, specifically citing his military service: "'sometimes I lie here and wonder how you ever became a hero. You're such a bloody whimperer. I suppose the Germans were whimpering even worse than you'" (23). Hurt by her gibe, Rojack notes that "never had she gone quite so far before" (23). Yet, in Shaw's words, Rojack's "crisis is exacerbated" when Deborah tells him about the "marvelous ripe man" she loved prior to their marriage and, more provocatively, her recent sexual escapades in which she had done "every last little thing" with her "shocked" lovers (49, 30). Deborah's remarks are intended to unman Rojack. By explicitly citing his encounter with the German soldiers—the moment of his wounding—she validates the cowardice and impotence that he fears coincide with his injury.

To counter Deborah's portrait of him as the feeble soldier, Rojack deploys his remasculinization algorithm. In a series of macabre scenes, he murders Deborah before

engaging in a carnal affair with her maid. Since the novel's publication, scholars have pointed to this plot development as a critical juncture within the novel. In readings that predate much of feminist theory from the 1970s and 80s, Gutman explains that "murder is Rojack's road to salvation" from the "armature that was stifling his existence" (107). And Leeds contests that the character's subsequent intercourse with the maid, in which they oscillate between vaginal and anal penetration, depicts the "polarity between good and evil" that Rojack finds himself oscillating between (137). More recently, Maggie McKinley argues that Mailer utilizes violence and sex as a "literary device" to facilitate the "promulgation of his existentialist thought and his implicit analysis of social oppression and gender relationships" (75). My reading, however, breaks from this convention—and perhaps even Mailer's intention—to interpret these scenes not as literary symbols but literary experiences. That is, rather than focus on the figurative significance, we can also focus on Rojack's literal acts and what they mean to his wounded masculinity. He murders Deborah to not only establish his superiority over her as a man but also to silence her emasculating comments. His sexual intercourse with Ruta similarly posits another performance of his masculinity. During the moments of vaginal penetration, Rojack is fulfilling the hegemonic expectations of being virile sexual partner; yet the moments of anal penetration carry recourse to his project as well. In a passage that has a "sense of combat," the protagonist attempts to reposition himself in relation to the queer connotations of his wound (Leeds 137). In other words, to no longer be the penetrated veteran, Rojack must become the penetrating veteran. Mailer makes this correlation explicit when his protagonist tells Ruta "you're a Nazi" before thinking to himself that "there was a high private pleasure in *plugging a Nazi*," harkening back to the moment he was hit in the backside with shrapnel while under enemy fire (44).

Fulfilling his remasculinization project through these hyperbolic demonstrations has a profound effect on the character. While answering questions at the local police station about Deborah's death, which he staged as a suicide, Rojack reveals that "I felt as if I had crossed a chasm of time and was some new breed of man" (81). This turning point marks an explicit departure from his penetrated veteran identity, which Rojack confirms: "I felt as if I were even saying goodbye to that night on the hill in Italy with my four Germans" (80). However, this "new breed of man" is not a permanent state. As sociologists and postwar veteran films suggested, remasculinization was an ongoing process in which the veteran must constantly pursue and reclaim his manhood. As this scene with Deborah and Ruta illustrate, though, this is a dangerous commitment for Rojack, who is intent on taking excessive measures in light of his perceived inadequacies as a man. Through this idea, Mailer's novel portrays the undue social pressure applied to the wound as catalyzing white veterans to pursue a grisly and degrading path toward reclaiming their dominant social status.

Rojack continues fulfilling the sexual and domestic component of his remasculinization project on the body of Cherry, the singer from a local night club. When Rojack first sees her in the police station, he is seized by competing emotions. He is struck by her beauty, but also "had a horror of appearing feeble before that young blonde girl" (87). In that moment, he is overcome with a sense of "cowardice" that "could only rivet the cheeks of my buttocks to the chair and order me to wait" (88). Here, Mailer's reference to the character's body is crucial. The injured appendage prevents him from engaging Cherry. However, Rojack's newfound bravado stages a somatic intervention. In a turn of events, he is compelled by a "force in [his] body" to '"go to the girl,'" moving his wound away from its emasculating connotations and, quite literally, toward the object of his desire (89). As he pursues Cherry, his predacious view becomes more apparent.

While gazing at her during one of her performances in the night club, Rojack perceives her as the target of a military attack, quipping that he had an "artillery of bombs smaller than seeds of caviar but ready to be shot across the room" before envisioning that he had "shot one need of an arrow into the center of Cherry's womb" (100). The character's vision is decidedly phallic in its imagery, and as Shaw explains, "articulates his desire to violate women through *penetrative* sexual violence" (emphasis my own 52). Moreover, the images of bombs and arrows that metaphorize the process of semen fertilizing an egg reinforce the Cold War imperative that American men must father children. For Rojack, the consummation of his relationship with Cherry will not suffice; rather, he must impregnate her in the process so as to tangibly confirm his masculinity as a wounded white veteran. The timing of his decision draws attention to the questionable ethics behind postwar remasculinization. While Rojack resolves himself to realize this project, he does so without Cherry's consent nor respect for her bodily autonomy.

When Rojack achieves his goal, military images and analogies frame his experience in the context of a postwar veteran narrative. For example, on the verge of their intimate encounter, Rojack explains that "I was no more a lover than a soldier crossing enemy land" (121). From his perspective, the impending consummation is pivotal. Faced with a test of his masculinity, he must, figuratively speaking, avoid injury to prove himself a capable soldier. Before reaching climax, however, the wounded veteran encounters Cherry's last line of defense: her diaphragm. As the antithesis to his remasculinization project, he expresses his inability to continue, which he notes he had "never said before" discovering his "new breed" of masculinity (127). Then, he "found it with a finger" and removed it (127). Here, the character imposes his "will" over Cherry for the sake of his mission. Guided by his intense need to reclaim his masculinity, Rojack provides no quarter for his "corporate rubbery" enemy so as to besiege "all sweets to her womb"

(127, 128). In a line that reaffirms the character's delusion that he is achieving the masculine virtues of the Cold War—here with the regard to the nuclear family—he declares "'so that's what it's all about,'" before his "mouth like a worn-out soldier fell asleep on the heart of her breast" (128). The scene illustrates how veteran remasculinization can detrimentally influence gender dynamics. Overcoming the stigmas surrounding his wound and fulfilling the tenets of white American masculinity is a project that encourages the protagonist to develop a domineering and hostile disposition toward women, seeing them as objects by which they can forcibly carry out their masculine performances rather than equitable romantic or sexual partners.

The novel highlights the racist assumptions inherent to veteran remasculinization through Rojack's encounter with Shago Martin. One of the only Black characters, Shago storms into the apartment shortly after the couple consummate their relationship. He immediately challenges Rojack's masculinity, laying claim to Cherry as his "'wife,'" intimating that he has previously fathered a child with her, and flashing a switchblade. Rojack perceives this situation as a test of his manhood, immediately drawing a parallel to his wartime experience. Upon seeing the blade, Rojack "suddenly remembered the German with the Bayonet" (186). On the surface, Rojack's decision to accept Shago's gauntlet might seem like a defense mechanism. The character will enact the violent component of his remasculinization algorithm to rid himself of the enemy that threatens Cherry and his unborn child. As McKinley explains, though, the scene is implicated in racial overtones. Face-to-face with what he perceives as the "powerful and sexually potent Other" who undermines his "masculine force," the wounded veteran must establish his racial superiority as a white American man (84). His desire to do so traces back his military service. Although the nation's deep-seeded racism dates back centuries, U.S. military campaigns fueled white prejudice toward Black soldiers and civilians. While discussing how "the U.S. military

skillfully exploited [racial stereotypes] to reinforce notions of white superiority," Christina S. Jarvis writes that "the myth of their supposed ardent desire to rape white women…served to construct black men as more embodied beings, controlled by base passions" (152).[36] With this in mind, Shago's presence as the racial Other psychically threatens to emasculate the wounded veteran. Therefore, to prove himself the more "embodied being," Rojack must physically overpower his enemy.

The queer stigmas associated with his wound urge Rojack to act on his ingrained prejudice. On the cusp of fighting, Shago pokes Rojack in the chest and exclaims, "'up your ass'" (192). His remark invokes the image of the penetrated veteran from which Rojack is trying to dissociate. Thus to avoid being emasculated by Shago, Rojack repositions himself so he is no longer penetrated but the penetrator. As they begin to fight, Rojack explains, "I took him from behind" (192). At this point, he carries out a vicious beating, which he acknowledges is indicative of his masculinity: "I had never had an idea I was this strong" (193). The characters' final proximity to each further illustrates Rojack's masculinity as superior to Shago's. After throwing him down a flight of stairs, Rojack towers over Shago's crumpled body, at which point he concedes defeat and assumes a subjugated identity, telling the protagonist that "'you killed the woman in me'" (194). Cherry, too, acknowledges the wounded veteran's superior manhood, giving him Shago's umbrella, a token with "a phallic quality" (Leeds 142). This achievement, however, is premised on anti-Black racism. In order for the wounded veteran to reclaim his masculinity, he must account for the racial dynamics of that masculinity. In a postwar society that championed antebellum ideas as a pathway to manhood for wounded veterans, it inherently reified racial prejudice. This scene in *An American Dream* distills the element of white supremacy that underscored veteran remasculinization.

Rojack's remasculinization project is compromised when he faces his ex-wife's father, Barney Kelly. His difficulty does not derive from their personal relationship, but Kelly's status as an unwounded WWI veteran. He is, in Rojack's mind, the embodiment of his idealized white masculinity; he is an enemy he cannot outman.[37] Mailer signals the protagonist's sense of foreboding when, arriving at Kelly's apartment, he felt the same way as he had when he "began to run up the slope of the hill in Italy" (224). Not only is he intimidating with a "physically impressive" stature that belongs among "generals" and "admirals," but he also deploys language that resonates with Rojack's military identity. While imparting the story of Deborah's conception, a gesture intended to establish his dominance, he describes his semen as "'troops'" before referring to himself as the "great villain" to his daughter's suitors (240, 246). For his part, Kelly, who wants Rojack to confess to his daughter's murder, knows he must humiliate the protagonist. At one point during their conversation, Rojack excuses himself to the balcony where he balances the parapet, contemplating his courage. However, he fears Kelly witnessed him in the act and, as he laments, "*penetrated* a riddle" (emphasis my own, 225). In the context of his wound, Rojack's phrasing here is significant for two reasons. First, it suggests Kelley recognizes he can exploit the wounded veteran's fragile sense of masculinity. Additionally, Rojack's choice of words depicts him not as the dominant aggressor, but subjugated to Kelly, or rather, penetrated by him. He admits to as much when comparing the moments leading up to the novel's climax with "the final moments of a man condemned to a firing squad," which is, historically speaking, the capital punishment used by military courts for acts of cowardice (256). For the first time in the novel, Rojack is, figuratively speaking, unmanned.

To salvage his remasculinization project, the character escapes from Kelly. After confessing to Deborah's murder, the two men go to the balcony where Kelly, in a challenge to

the protagonist's masculinity, demands Rojack to walk the length of the parapet. While Tony Tanner surmises that the railing "adumbrates the subject of the whole novel," capturing Rojack "poised between" life and death and good and evil, it also lends to the protagonist's manhood (40). On one hand, as he walks forward, he inches toward proving himself not only a man, but more significantly, the unpenetrated veteran. Conversely, should he fail, whether by falling to his death or refusing the challenge, he surrenders to the emasculating connotations of his wound. In a twist of events, however, Kelly fears that Rojack may successfully walk the parapet and, in display of his own machismo, jabs him with Shago's umbrella. Countering the attack, Rojack leaps down, strikes Kelly, throws the umbrella over the railing, and leaves the scene. According to Leeds, this sequence signifies the character liberating himself from the expectations of hegemonic masculinity: "it is not until this very moment that these drives are gone" (149). While true that the Rojack's masculine drives momentarily disappear, they are not permanently resolved. Fleeing Kelly's apartment, Rojack intends to re-inhabit the space—the sexual partners, physical bodies, and social conditions—conducive to his remasculinization project, which is a disturbing premise. The wounded veteran, who Mailer scholars suggest "embodies the sickness of the American nightmare," must again enact hypersexual and violent performances to reclaim his identity as a white man in postwar America (Gutman 130).

The broader Cold War implications of Rojack's remasculinization project are embedded in the novel's final chapter and epilogue. In a case of mistaken identity, a friend of Shago, who police reveal has died after being attacked in Harlem, fatally assaults Cherry. Here, *An American Dream* disabuses readers of their belief in postwar veteran remasculinization at a local level. Cherry's death inverts the prescribed conclusions of Hollywood films, representing the disastrous consequences that can result from pressuring veterans to fulfill the narrow expectations of white

masculinity. In the epilogue, the novel expands its critique from a personal tragedy to a national concern. Following Cherry's death, Rojack embarks on a cross country trip toward Las Vegas. As he ventures into the "wild blind deserts," he enters the "most primeval area left on the whole American continent," what Tanner describes as a place "beyond" the social order and politics of civilization (269, 41). This frontier, as Mailer scholars argue, symbolizes Rojack's gender politics divorced from societal norms.[38] Whereas Shaw avers the connotations of the terrain suggest Rojack will end his "competitive masculine ethos," I contend it implies he will indulge in it (Shaw 58). The frontier is a lawless space where the wounded veteran can reclaim his masculinity unfettered. Andrew Gordon similarly argues that "*An American Dream* is a novel of initiation into manhood, an initiation that fails and must be repeated again and again" (141). Several textual details hint toward this idea. His journey, for example, is framed by an initial stop to see "an Army friend"; using the exact expression following Deborah's murder, Rojack finds himself in an environment "producing again a new breed of man"; and he later tries to call Cherry in a phone booth, conveying his desire for the masculine virtues of the Cold War (269). Similar to *Barbary Shore*, this ending poses a disturbing image for Cold War readers. Rojack is roaming the country, searching for opportunities to carry out his project on the bodies of women, racial Others, and anyone who will help him feel like a white man again. Framed from this angle, *An American Dream* posits that veteran remasculinization does not fortify the nation in its defense against Eastern agitators, but corrodes it from the inside out.

Mailer's Flawed Cold War Vision and What to Do About It

Although *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* subvert the efficacy of postwar remasculinization depicted in Hollywood films, illustrating how the process can drive characters to desperate and grisly ends, the novels' messages are fraught with ironies and lasting effects on

cultural representations of veterans. In a more immediate sense, Mailer's portrayal of the bleak social conditions awaiting his wounded veteran characters following the war spoke to a narrow audience. Just as "The White Negro" was a call-to-arms for white men to pursue a supposedly liberated lifestyle via the "black man's code," *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* warn this same demographic, especially its veteran population, that subscribing to hegemonic masculinity would be the undoing of their manhood. Inherently, then, the novels account for a portion of American men that is equally as myopic as the idea of masculinity that it takes issue with. The implicit racial and sexual details and dynamics of the novels suggest that gendered conception must be redefined—or rejected altogether—to the benefit a select population that has, historically, benefited the most from society. The novels make this case, moreover, while vilifying and committing violence against gendered, racial, and sexual Others. Thus, in the Cold War decades of the 1950s and 1960s, *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* prompt a revision to one slice of American life while reinscribing century's old stereotypes about women, Black men, and the queer community.

The rhetorical implications of Mailer's anti-remasculinization narratives compound this issue. As Maggie McKinley explains in her formative study of *An American Dream*, the ways in which Mailer depicts sex and violence "threaten to reify many of the oppressive social structures that [he] and his protagonists find so restrictive" (67). McKinley's claim lends to an adjacent critique of Mailer's veteran characters. In his sustained illustrations of the wounded protagonists' devolution under the pressures of hegemonic masculinity, Mailer also perpetuates stereotypes of WWII veterans. Mikey Lovett and Stephen Rojack exemplify the toxic traits that many civilians feared white soldiers would adopt upon their demobilization. This shortcoming, moreover, carries pernicious historical implications. By 1965, The U.S. was embroiled in the Vietnam War,

another political conflict that would spur countless cultural representations. Anticipating such portrayals, Mailer's wounded veteran characters set the model for what would become the trope of the Vietnam veteran. These characters, who were largely white, wounded either emotionally or physically, and demonstrated violent tendencies, spanned media and decades. While there were literary depictions in Don Pendleton's *Executioner* series and Lionel Derrick's *Penetrator* series, the most popular and commercially successful examples appeared on screen in films like *Taxi Driver* (1976), *The Deer Hunter (1978)*, and *First Blood* (1982), or in the pages of comic books such as Marvel's *The Punisher* and *Nick Fury*. By the 1980s, the proliferation of this character trope drew the ire of contemporary veteran writers. While discussing the ethics of war fiction during the 1985 conference, "The Vietnam Experience in American Literature," James Chace expressed his belief that "literature can play its most constructive political role" when "effecting a reconciliation between society and its veterans" (qtd. in Lomperis 88). *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* struggle to achieve such reconciliation.

Their shortcomings, however, are not fatal. By producing an adverse reaction—as his novels had so often done among critics and readers upon their release—Mailer's anti-remasculinization narratives then challenge us to think more critically about the cultural intersection between white veterans, wounds, and masculinity. *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* urge us to question how the social assumptions of masculinity can deleteriously influence wounded veterans to act out their gendered identities' most toxic traits. By way of the discursive passing that takes place, of the Lovett and Rojack's efforts to perform their manhood while keeping their injuries to themselves, the novels also encourage us to consider the anxieties that wounded veterans silently face. These ideas, then, prompt us to do what Mailer's novels fall short of—find productive, meaningful, and safe alternatives for our veterans.

Chapter 4:

"'You're a second-class soldier'": Racialized War Wounds, Pain, and the Jim Crow Army in John Oliver Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder*

As much as the disability narratives embedded in Jones and Mailer's novels engage the cultural myths surrounding wounded soldiers' bodies, they do so exclusively from the vantage point of white characters. If this context is only implicitly apparent in their combat novels, Mailer's novels about wounded veterans discussed in Chapter 3 make this context explicit. Jones and Mailer are not alone, either, as the majority of WWII fiction by veteran writers including the likes of Joseph Heller, J.D. Salinger, Irwin Shaw, Kurt Vonnegut, Sloan Wilson, and Herman Wouk, trace the experiences of white characters during their service and after their demobilization. Inherently, then, these novels do not account for the ways in which one's racial identity can further complicate an already complicated embodied experience. This chapter seeks to address this gap by critically examining John Oliver Killens' underappreciated novel, And Then We Heard the Thunder. Unlike Jones and Mailer, Killens' work was never optioned for a motion picture, nor did he express a particular stance toward Hollywood war films. However, the details of his 1963 meeting with Lee Nichols, a Defense Department official, speaks to the Black veteran's critical view of cultural attempts to sanitize the image of the Armed Forces following the war. As Keith Gilyard recounts, Nichols heaped praise on Killens novel, which was published that same year, and asked him to do some public relations work for the army and "publicize any improvements he might perceive" since his service in WWII (178). Killens, however, "would not sign on as an apologist" (178). Doing so would, in effect, sully the gravity of his novel, which forwards a searing examination of the Jim Crow army's physical ramifications on the bodies of Black soldiers. Killens' representations of racialized war wounds, as this chapter will address, are a project of reclamation. The pain that his characters endure at the hands of the institution they serve is generative. Rather than signify their inferiority as Hollywood representations were wont to do, their wounds drive them to combat the systemic racism pervading the army in order to never feel that way again.

Underpinning John Oliver Killens' WWII novel, *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1962), is a subtext about racialized war wounds. A searing meditation on the discriminatory Jim Crow politics informing the U.S. army, the novel follows Solly Saunders, a young educated Black man drafted into service. Initially, Solly aspires to climbing the military ranks and relying on those achievements to gain a foothold in a professional world that invariably favors

whiteness. During his conscription, however, his naivete is routinely tested by his company and officers, which culminates in an evolution of his political views. Yet as much as these social exchanges influence the character's philosophy, so too do his physical experiences. The moments when the protagonist's political views undergo a radical transformation, leading him to recognize the injustices inflicted upon Black soldiers, are often accompanied by the felt-experience of pain. While waiting for a bus back to base, for example, Solly and the other Black GIs are prompted for their leave passes by two racist police officers. Working their way down the line, intimidating each soldier, Solly imagined them "with a long white-handled razor and slicing brown and black testicles one at a time...The image was so powerfully real to him he felt a painful throbbing in his groin" (126). For Solly, the palpable sensation reveals a disturbing truth: his uniform does not shield him from the excruciating ramifications of being a Black man in the army. To the contrary, instances of bodily suffering, which are enacted under the guise of discipline, medical treatment, and institutional policy are standard protocol for Solly.[39] In time, however, the felt-experience becomes a turning point for the protagonist. Pushed beyond his threshold, Solly is driven to address the pain stemming from his war wounds, which is a process that, as a corollary, addresses the racist assumptions of the U.S. army.

Published during the apogee of the civil rights movement, Killens' novel and its discourse on pain is at odds with the portrayals of Black soldiers released during the preceding decades. Shortly after the United States entered the war in 1941, representations of minority characters were portrayed more favorably. This aesthetic rehabilitation, shifting away from criminal and minstrel tropes, served the logistical and political needs of the military and government. Like popular combat and veteran narratives, the most effective and widespread medium for this project, as Elizabeth Reich argues, was cinema. Unlike literature, the silver

screen provided the unparalleled opportunity to showcase white and Black soldiers working together to defeat malevolent enemies. Describing the Black soldier as a "filmic icon," Reich notes that production companies often worked with consultants, who were rightfully eager to ameliorate public perception of Black men, in an effort to recast "the new figure...as both a revision to America's visual relationship to race *and* an exemplar of American democracy in action" (32).[40] While films such as *Bataan* (1943) and *Sahara* (1943) eased white viewers' fears over the brewing racial tensions across cities such as Detroit, Harlem, Los Angeles, and Mobile, they played a bigger role in the war effort. To fill depleted regiments, the Armed Forces encouraged and produced representations of Black soldiers that exemplified heroic qualities. These figures enticed marginalized populations to enlist under the pretense that military service was a proving ground for citizenship. In the long term, moreover, the federal government supported such representations as they fortified the image of the United States as a global ambassador of democracy during the early Cold War years. As an unsurprising consequence, though, Reich explains that they "obscured the reality of antiblack racism in the military with false representations of multiracial, multinational integration" (33).

This outcome was not accidental either. Rather, historian Stephen Tuck contends the intention behind such cultural productions was always to "lessen the tension rather than tackle white supremacy" (109). Attesting to this notion, Tuck argues that while positive portrayals of Black soldiers did exist, "negative images of cowardly black soldiers abounded" (113). Going so far as to quantify his claim, Tuck cites a group of Black researchers who discovered a disparate ratio: "of 100 black appearances in wartime films, 75 perpetuated old stereotypes, 13 were neutral, and only 12 were positive" (114). Furthermore, in those rare occasions where the character was portrayed as a hero, his heroism usually derived from the cast's collective efforts

on the battlefield. At the individual level, comparatively speaking, he was often a device that upheld racial stereotypes. In moments of distress, Black soldier characters were prone to episodes of weakness, cowardliness, and laziness, qualities of which their war wounds only confirmed. Whereas illustrations of service-related disability and injury signified valor among white characters, they functioned as material indications of the Black soldier's inferiority and ineptitude, or as Killens describes in his novel, their status as "second class soldiers" (97). Not only, then, did these representations take creative and unwarranted license to alleviate concern over racial tensions, they often did so while weaponizing Black characters' bodies against themselves.

Piecing together the illustrations of war wounds afflicting his characters exhumes Killens' counter-narrative to these commonplace misrepresentations. In what follows, this chapter explores how *And Then We Heard the Thunder* addresses the intersection of race, masculinity, and service-related injury via the motif of pain. Specifically, I argue that Killens' representations of pain are complex, layered embodied experiences that catalyze the protagonist's political response to the Jim Crow policies governing the U.S. army. To realize this idea, I will begin this discussion by outlining how Killens draws from African American literary techniques of the period to confront institutional racism within a military context. From there, I will elaborate on the ways Killens furthers Gwendolyn Brooks' discourse on Black soldier bodies in her WWII poetry by turning racialized war wounds from a visual experience to a felt-experience before transitioning to my close readings. At critical junctures, as I will show, Killens renders pain as a transformative experience that resonates with Solly in different but equally crucial ways. When his protagonist is initially wounded, Killens depicts pain as a violent tool that enforces the army's racial hierarchy. As he dwells on his throbbing injuries, though, his pain

forces him to reconsider his stance on the military's racial politics. In a process that calls to mind David B. Morris' claim that if one were to "change the mind (powerfully enough) then it may be that pain too changes," Solly's newfound philosophy soothes his bodily suffering, which then leads him to address his social suffering (4). Elsewhere in the novel, Killens also deploys the pain stemming from Solly's war wound as narrative device, symbolizing the character's emotional turmoil that leads him and the men of the 913th company to protest the army's discriminatory practices. Through these differing representations of the felt-experience, the veteran writer reorients historical representations of Black soldiers and their injuries at a moment when the nation was on the precipice of significant race reform amid the brewing Cold War. Anticipating the choral refrain to Sam Cooke's civil rights anthem, "A Change is Gonna Come" (1964), which was released two years later, *And Then We Heard The Thunder* represents pain as a generative experience that can propel such social change rather than stifle it.

African American Literature and Institutional "Horror"

Situated among the literature of the period, Killens' novel follows a trend in 20th century African American letters. Writers including Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin oft-times illustrated their characters in states of physical hurt as they traverse the socio-political landscape of a racially segregated United States. As such, their works locate Jim Crow not solely as a set of laws intent on disenfranchising Black citizens, but also as a legally upheld ideology of physical consequence. Committing the felt-experiences of racism to their prose and poetry captured the lived conditions of the law, refusing to let the nation forget the suffering of its marginalized communities. In a 1961 interview aptly titled, "That Same Pain, That Same Pleasure," Ellison briefly touches on this notion. While discussing the violence in his novel, *Invisible Man*, he remarks that his "necessity of cashing in on the pain undergone by my

people" was his "way of seeing that it not be in vain" (23). Humor aside, Ellison intimates that moments of bodily suffering in his fiction are a matter of "confronting" the discriminatory forces that routinely affect Black livelihood (23). As Laura Grattan explains, Richard Wright visited these experiences for similar reasons: "encounters with violence against black people, not only in the Jim Crow South but also the industrial North, had led Wright in his literature and activism to refuse to provide relief from what he saw as the 'horror of the Negro life in the United States'" (311). In the modern Jim Crow era, these "horrors" were frequently carried out at the institutional level--enacted with impunity by businesses, organizations, and government agencies. By emphasizing the felt-experience, the writers "allow us to examine various moments--specific historical junctures--when pain thrusts above the plane of silent, blind, unquestioned suffering" and witness the institutionalized violence damaging Black bodies (Morris 3). In Ellison's novel, for instance, pain spotlights the medical profession's maltreatment of Black patients. While in a surgery performed without his consent, the protagonist felt a "pain tearing through" him while the doctors discuss castration, and then "found nothing but pain" during an unapproved shock treatment (236, 240). And in his story, "Bright and Morning Star," Wright deploys the physical sensation to exhibit police brutality. When Sue withholds her son's whereabouts from the sheriff, he beats her to the point that "pain numbed and choked her" (197). And after finding Johnny-Boy, the sheriff and his cronies torture him in a disturbing scene, pulverizing his legs with a crowbar. In the decades leading up to the 1960s, illustrations of hurt and hurting characters were commonplace among African American literature, exposing how specific institutions and sectors imposed discriminating tactics to the detriment of Black bodies.[41]

The institution under scrutiny in *And Then We Heard the Thunder* is the United States Army, and for good reason. From Reconstruction through the conclusion of the Second World War, the Armed Forces were segregated, which Killens was quite familiar with. During his service from 1942 to 1945, he endured racial friction from basic training at Fort Dix to his overseas combat and recovery experiences in the Pacific Theatre and Australia—much of which he fictionalized in his novel. Like so many of his fellow Black GIs, the writer found the irony of racial discrimination during the war glaring. In a fight for democracy, one of the militaries at the forefront of the conflict instituted such undemocratic practices. Yet the policy was not simply a matter of partitioning troops based on skin color, but reinforcing white supremacist ideology. "The complex Jim Crow system of segregated units, blood supplies, facilities, and busses," according to Cristina S. Jarvis, "worked to lower black morale and to create racial hierarchies of white over black at every turn" (149). More viscerally, these hierarchies were often enforced through acts of violence both sanctioned and unsanctioned. White soldiers, officers, and military police were quick to deploy force to physically remind Black soldiers of their status. In his study of the 93rd Infantry Division--an all-Black WWII unit--Robert F. Jefferson avers that the marginalized soldiers' "voices were being blunted by the realities of military discipline" (120). In a particularly grisly but telling case study, Jefferson recalls service member Alfred Knox, who unknowingly "violated the sanctity of southern segregation customs" by crossing a color barrier to use a telephone in a white-only waiting room (119). He was subsequently beaten by three military police officers to the point that he "sustained considerable loss of eyesight" (119). Knox's experience was not unique, but one of many that informed the behavior of Black GIs, who "quickly learned to travel in groups, as they frequently found themselves embroiled in

skirmishes against civilian police and white soldiers" (77). Their suffering, however, did not end after the initial hate crime.

Rather, as disability scholars have shown, Black war wounds and impairments were treated as an opportunity to preserve racial stratification. Whereas acts of violence forcibly established white soldiers' dominion, prolonging the pain that Black soldiers felt from those injuries effectively made them feel like lesser soldiers, people, and men. In some cases, as Carlos Clarke Drazen notes, this was a matter of withholding medical care: "Veterans Administration had developed a means-based assessment that often found black veterans to be not disabled enough to receive treatment or medical rehabilitation" (156). Left untreated, unassisted, and often reeling from pain, these wounded veterans fell victim to the social stigmas of bodily alterity and were perceived as weak, dependent, and, above all, undeserving. As a consequence, this dilemma often left them more preoccupied with tending to their impairments or injuries rather than disputing the biased medical practice. And while Clarke Drazen recognizes that "many whites in the armed forces remained...resentful of the medical help that was given to" Black soldiers while serving, Josh Lukin clarifies that some of those medical practices were hardly beneficial, let alone ethical (157). Regarding the mismanagement of Black wounds, Lukin explains that "those with war-derived physical and mental disabilities were often denied discharge, and sometimes subjected to beatings and torture in the guise of 'therapy'" (312). For the army, pain was instrumental in upholding a Jim Crow way of life. Should any soldier try to defy the color barriers that informed military operations, the felt-experience of bodily hurt could literally paralyze their protest and force them back into subservient roles. In those moments, which take lucid form in Killen's novel, the sensation of pain dredged up questions about the Black soldier's citizenship, patriotism, service, and masculinity. Beaten and injured by the

institution they served, Black GIs incurred a particular kind of wound that their white counterparts could never know.

The Whiteness of War Fiction and Gwendolyn Brooks' Response

Despite these realities, illustrations of the deep seeded racism within the military hardly made it to the pages of WWII literature. As lucidly as the fiction of the postwar period depicted armed service, ranging from the bloody details of combat down to the demure day-to-day operations, Black wounds, let alone Black characters, were strikingly absent. To be sure, prominent literary figures such as James Baldwin recognized the gravity of the situation. In his 1963 nonfiction work, *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin cites World War II as "a turning point in the Negro's relation to America" on account that that Black infantry men were "almost always given the hardest, ugliest, most menial work to do" while watching "German prisoners of war being treated by Americans with more human dignity than he has ever received at their hands" (51). Literary accounts of the war, particularly by veteran writers, on the other hand, fell short of fictionalizing these injustices. Even the enormous and thematically far-reaching novels by James Jones and Norman Mailer—two writers that Killens describes as among a select few that "care enough about the country to criticize it fundamentally"—tertiarily address the issue ("The Black Writer" 51). In *From Here to Eternity*, Jones makes a passing reference to a racial hierarchy when his protagonist admits that a particular "Negro was a better bugler, but because he was not white had he been stationed in the hills to play the echo" (35). And in *The Naked and the Dead*, Mailer's cast of white characters routinely express racist sentiments, which at best showcases the bigotry among soldiers and, at worst, reinforces it. Aware of these shortcomings, Killens criticizes Jones and Mailer in the same passage that he praises them, writing that perhaps one day "one of them will care deeply enough" to tackle the "myriad contradictions" of white supremacy

("The Black Writer" 51). Killens' hope never materialized. Whereas Mailer abandoned the genre altogether after his debut, Jones remained committed to writing, in both fiction and nonfiction, about the war until his death in 1977. In that span, however, the veteran writer never addressed military segregation at length nor illustrated a prominent Black character in his work.

Then there were novels that had the facade of tackling the issue of military segregation such as U.S Air Force veteran James Gould-Cozzens' Pulitzer-Prize winning *Guard of Honor* (1949). After a group of African American pilots are assaulted and punished for a dangerous mid-air encounter with a group of white pilots, they protest the segregated Officers' Club on their Florida base. Seemingly, this conflict locates race relations as a focal point of the work, concentrating on the bigotry and palpable tensions among the servicemembers. Cozzens' method of narration, however, dilutes this plot. As Peter Aichinger argues, the "continuously shifting viewpoints renders the story inchoate" (63). Electing to narrate the novel primarily from the perspectives of the two white officers tasked with resolving the quarrel, Cozzens glosses over the views and experiences of his marginalized soldiers. In the end, the characters' belief that the army's Jim Crow policies are problematic is superseded by their desire to maintain order among ranks and races to secure a bigger objective: the allied victory. What begins as a literary intervention into the myth of integration eventually succumbs to the medium's formal elements. While laudable for its portrayal of the bleak conditions Black soldiers experienced, Cozzens' novel ironically pushes those characters--and their goals--to the background. Yet neither Cozzens, James, nor Mailer's books are moral failures in this regard. It is worth remembering that these writers served in segregated units within the very military that their novels criticize. As such, their work reflects their experiences, adopting ahistorical points of view, or what literary war scholar Samuel Hynes terms "the confined vision of witnesses" (25). Thus, even the most

popular and enduring WWII literature, novels historically celebrated by critics for undermining the sanitized illustrations and cultural nostalgia of the "Good War," do so from the narrow and privileged position of whiteness.

The one writer who did manage to effectively account for Black wartime experiences, and influenced Killens' work in the process, was Gwendolyn Brooks. A friend, contemporary, and political ally to Killens throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Brooks routinely negotiated the intricate relationship between Blackness, military service, and war wounds in her early work, paving the way for *And Then We Heard the Thunder*.[42] Although a civilian, the Chicago native developed an acute understanding of wartime experiences through letters she received from conscripted friends. These letters shaped her sophomore poetry collection, *Annie Allen* (1949), and her first novel, *Maud Martha* (1953), but their impact is most evident in her first collection, *A Street in Bronzeville*, published as the war was slowly winding down in August of 1945. "Gay Chaps at the Bar", the title of the 12 sonnet sequence concluding *A Street in Bronzeville* depicts a cycle of soldiering from pre-deployment days filled with anxiety to moments of excruciating pain on the battlefield to postwar memories of fallen GIs that never cease. In the course of this cycle, the soldier speakers struggle to make sense of who they are in the shadow of a morally opaque political conflict. Notably, the sonnets that illustrate the grislier aspects of warfare, according to Ann Folwell Stanford, "do more than simply posit a relationship between war and racism; they represent a collective consciousness that gropes toward a critical and reflective stance" (169, 170). Intentionally bold about the realities of combat, Brooks' poems commit to the graphic images of injured soldiers to emphatically question the ethics, or lack thereof, within the Jim Crow military.[43] In "the white troops had their orders but the Negroes looked like men," for example, the poet draws attention to the inane devaluation of Blackness. The poem tells the

story of white servicemen tasked with separating the remains of fallen soldiers based on skin color, a process aimed toward preserving the sanctity of white masculinity. When the narrator posits that it is "Congenital iniquities that cause / Disfavor of the darkness," they synonymize Blackness with disability (52). This material trait, in theory, should make the biased process of sorting that much easier. In an ironic twist, though, all of the bodies are disfigured to the point of being indistinguishable from one another, as if the "contents had been scrambled" (52). The final line, Rachel Edford argues, "voices what the white troops cannot: in war there are only men, not dark men and white men" (83). Although the poem is but one in the series, it is representative of a collection that subverts the racialized practices and prejudices of the military in order to meditate on the psychological and bodily experiences of Black soldiers.

While Brook's influence is readily apparent in terms of content, the more critical impression on Killen's novel has to do with the sensory experiences that she conjures. The figures that populate the poems in the "Gay Chaps at the Bar" sequence are often abstract composites that avoid providing forthright, fully realized images. The resulting effects thus necessitate that readers construct the figures for themselves. As Jennifer James has convincingly shown, this process "forces socially produced disability into view" (236). While her illustrations are of the body, Brooks is endeavoring to make them seen in her reader's imagination. As one scans the words of the poem, they form the image in their mind, concretizing the abstract figure. Bringing the "unhealed" Black soldier into view is to bring awareness to the roughly 1,200,000 Black soldiers who endured--or were killed by--the Jim Crow military (James 247). The "twisted, gagged" frames of soldiers, the speaker whose "power crumpled and wan" during battle, and the men that "deliver death and wounds" give way to a sobering, uncomfortable, and visual meditation of war's material consequence (47, 56, 55).[44] Not only, then, does "Gay chaps

at the bar" contribute to, as James explains, the "unmaking of the ideological assumptions that accompany those presentations of the black warring body as whole, able, and heroic" but they also expose the military's "harmful institutional practices as the objects in need of repair" rather than the disabled characters (237, 236). Similar to Jones and Mailer's nuanced representations of war wounds, Brooks resists illustrating her soldiers' injuries as the mark of valiance in order to shore up a critically under acknowledged, and painful truth--racism pervaded the Greatest Generation.

Theorizing and Historicizing Killens' Representations of Pain

If Brooks' poetry is concerned with a visual experience, then Killen's concentrates on the felt-experience of Black war wounds. As racial tensions in the U.S. mounted throughout the 1950s and boiled over in the 1960s, seeing a grisly alternative to the wholesome cultural representations of Black men was not enough for the veteran writer. Conveying the excruciating aches and pangs of his characters could elicit a particular effect, leaving his readership uncomfortable with the institutional racism of the Armed Forces if not encouraging a real response. Thus the instances in which his characters are hurt, or hurting, are more than standard occupational hazards of military training and service. The bodily agony endured by his protagonist is a powerful sensation that carries a deeply unique significance. Here, David B. Morris' theory on pain—what he views as a specifically "subjective experience"—is useful in further contextualizing the character's bodily experience (14). Pain, Morris writes, is "saturated with the visible and invisible imprint of specific culture" and is thereby "wrapped in a web of personal and social implications" (18). The bodily sensation, as Morris suggests, assumes meaning based on the context in which the injury is incurred, endured, and relieved. For Solly, pain is the byproduct of military racism. He understands and interprets the hurt he feels through

the lens of state sanctioned racialized violence inflicted by the institution he serves. His pain embodies a host of ideas ranging from discrimination and fear to rage and his longing for systemic and meaningful change. Killens renders these ideas primarily through the novels' language, temporality, and events. Each of these narrative elements imbues Solly's pain with meaning. For example, when forced to revisit the police station where an MP pulverized his lower appendages several days prior, Solly's "thighs began to throb in pain," and as he interacts with his assailants "the throbs were painful and distinct now" (151). When questioned by the police chief, Solly's "legs began to ache" so much he could not answer (152). In this scene, the rhetoric that describes the injury, time elapsed since its infliction, and its association with institutional racism distill Killens illustration of Solly's ongoing suffering created by military prejudice. Pain, as the protagonist comes to realize, is the relentless felt-experience of institutionalized bigotry. Yet, as Morris also notes, the meaning behind pain is "always reshaped by a particular time, place, culture, and individual psyche," which is true of Solly's experience as well (6). As the character evolves, so too does his pain.

Therefore, in addition to being a meaningful experience, pain is also a transformative experience. Because of the implications underscoring Solly's pain, he is compelled to respond accordingly, searching for relief. Formally speaking, Killens' representation can be interpreted as a narrative device. Scenes of violence send the character to different locations for recovery or reprimand; they inhibit his mobility which then alters the trajectory of his military career; or they place him in dialogue with other injured characters, bonding over their shared circumstances and forming new alliances. Pain, essentially, transitions the novel from one scene to the next. Yet it also provokes transitions within the characters themselves. According to Tobin Siebers, pain can serve as a formative phenomena, prompting a pivotal revision to one's personal philosophies and

beliefs. Siebers theorizes that "pain under the pressure of identity politics changes from a feeling of private suffering into a theoretical position, a political identity" (193).[45] For Solly, his moments of bodily suffering illuminate the racial injustices besieging him. The choices he makes after enduring or witnessing physical abuse are made in the interest of ameliorating if not stymying the discriminating policies that impede the quality of service for Black soldiers. While Siebers concedes that "to develop from one's physical or mental suffering a different kind of pain--a political pain, transformative of one's primary physical condition--seems incoherent," he justifies that "this is exactly what the emergence of a political identity accomplishes" (*Disability Theory* 193). As Solly embraces his marginalized status within the military, his pain shifts from a source of inhibition to motivation. This evolution is evident, for instance, after Solly recovers from his "throbbing, thumping, stabbing" injuries in the military hospital (140). The narrator explains that, as a consequence of his suffering, Solly "was so different from the man he was four months ago" (208). The difference here speaks to the character's political transformation. While agonizing, Solly's hurt awakens him to the societal ills that have infiltrated what was, in his initial view, an ostensibly neutral institution.

Notably, Killen's novel also complicates Siebers' theory on the transformative political qualities of pain. Rather than linearly, the process unfolds cyclically for Solly. His felt-experience and identity as a Black man inform each other. Moments of intense physical suffering give way to the character's meditation on his Blackness, which due to the entrenched racist views underscoring the military, transpire further moments of pain and so forth. In total, this cycle occurs three times within the novel, with every instance shaping and reshaping the protagonist's views on the military's race relations. As a result, Solly becomes increasingly vigilant when responding to his wounds, honing his expression to better effect necessary change.

In such moments, the character is not trying to remedy his body as he is attempting to remedy the system that continuously punishes him on the basis of his skin while simultaneously expecting him to serve on behalf of the American public. In this way, Killen's representations of racialized war wounds attend to a critical gap in war fiction. By appropriately complicating the literary representations of service-related injury among popular WWII novels, *And Then We Heard The Thunder* reframes the painful experiences of Black soldiers as a form of resistance and protest against the divisive policies and practitioners of the army.

The political ideology informing Killens' representations of war wounds is the result of a long period of personal growth. *And Then We Heard the Thunder* was released in 1962, but "at some point in his military stint, Killens began to sketch seriously his war experiences, a ritual that became increasingly important to him as the war unfolded" (Gilyard 57). Following his demobilization in 1945, however, Killens put the project on hold in favor of pursuing what would become his first novel, *Youngblood*, and trying his hand at writing Hollywood screenplays. Under mounting pressure to deliver a second book, and wanting to make good on a promise to write a war novel, Killens finalized *And Then We heard the Thunder* in 1961. In the time that had elapsed since he first started drafting the novel, the writer had undergone his own evolution, reprioritizing social politics over that of economics. According to his biographer, Keith Gilyard, the novel testifies to Killen's "reevaluation of certain communist positions," specifically doubting that "legions of white workers could ever transcend racism" (164). As a result, Killens "could advocate no policy that subjugated antiracist struggle to the demands of the popular front, which had been the Communist Party's line during World War II" (164). While reviews in *Amsterdam News*, *Saturday Review*, and *New York Post*, praised the novel's craftsmanship, contending that it lived up to its predecessor, George Norford's *Crisis* review

took keen interest in Killens' overarching message on military race relations. Praising the political implications, Norford remarks that the novel "reveals how cynically personal and petty regional race prejudice can penetrate an Army dedicated to the fight for democracy and corrupt its fibre, subvert its unity and make its slogans seem a mockery and fraud" (151). The subversion that Norford maintains is so vital to the novel's significance is built on the pain of the protagonist. With his wounds and suffering at the forefront of the plot, Solly Saunders endures the racial violence of the Army to emerge a hero. His heroism, however, derives not from upholding idyllic American values but challenging the legal obstacles that prevent those from becoming a reality.

In spite of the timely content and critical praise, though, *And Then We Heard the Thunder* failed to secure Killens the same popularity and commercial success enjoyed by fellow veteran writers James Jones and Norman Mailer. This shortcoming, however, was in no way Killen's fault. In the months leading up to his novel's release, Killens collected—sometimes after multiple requests and reminders—blurbs from celebrated African American artists such as Harry Belafonte, Loraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, and his personal hero, Langston Hughes. Each spoke highly and effusively of the writer's work. In an early review, John Howard Griffin declared Killens' book on par with James Jones' war novels, an impressive comparison at the time considering Jones was the pre-eminent and most accomplished writer of the Second World War. Of all his campaigning efforts, his "biggest splash" occurred immediately after its release (Gilyard 176). As Gilyard details, Killens garnered coveted screen time when he appeared on the *Today* show with Hugh Downs, discussing his novel to an estimated audience of over one million viewers. Poised for success and with his novel on the verge of being cemented in the canon of war fiction, Killens' dreams were dashed when an untimely New York City newspaper

strike halted all promotional ads for the book to the largest sales market in the country, which was only made worse when Knopf, Killens' publisher, failed to include the blurbs that the writer had so earnestly gathered for the hardcover edition. While *And Then We Heard the Thunder* was a mild hit, the lack of marketing and the mishandling of the layout affected public reception, causing the reading population to question the book's redeeming value if not overlook it entirely. In the decades since, Killens' novel has suffered from the lasting effects, coming dangerously close to disappearing. Few copies have been reprinted and even fewer scholarly engagements have been published. That the novel is still available—albeit in small quantities--is fortunate, though, as it makes a critical intervention into the fiction of WWII, accounting for the pain of racialized war wounds.

Reading Killens' Representations of Pain

For as much as the novel emphasizes the felt-experience, though, it begins painlessly. By withholding the sensation from his character, Killens not only intensifies his pain when it does occur in later scenes, but more importantly, he illustrates how easily one can misread the severity of military racism and buy into integration myths. Prior to his service, Solly is, in the literal sense of the word, untouched by the physical effects of racism in America. As a young man keenly aware of the nation's social politics, Solly has, up to this point, avoided confrontation, which he intends to continue as a soldier. Drafted into the Army, he believes that "his attitude toward the war, his idealism, his qualifications, his over-all plans for moving ahead in this world" will all serve him well as a Black man in uniform (9). His plan is simple: follow orders, conform to expectations, and support the institution's cause. At the surface, his "proper attitude" is a matter of supporting the army's primary goal of "winning the democratic war," which will, as Solly believes, secure equality and freedom for *all* American citizens (6, **?)**. Yet on a more personal

level, the character views his military service as an opportunity. Because of its merit-based promotion system, the military offers the chance to accrue professional accolades and respect. A law student with lofty aspirations, Solly believes that if he achieves the rank of officer, he can gain a foothold in the white professional world and prove himself as a man despite the color of his skin. Therefore, upsetting the established order of the military is simply out of the question. This is not to say Solly is oblivious to the military's racial politics, but rather, as Jennifer James terms, he is "corporeally divorced" from the physical realities of the Jim Crow military (270). Having never *felt* racism, Solly cannot comprehend the acute sensation nor the extent of its meaning, which is apparent in an early scene with his friend, Bookworm Taylor. After Taylor is beaten by local MPs, Solly felt like "getting a gun and blowing a few MP brains out" (61). That idea is quickly dashed, however, when he remembers his personal goals. His internal dialogue shifts from retribution to complacency, telling his battered friend that he was at fault for the incident. In doing so, the text alludes to the protagonist's personal philosophy. Racism, to Solly, is a purely social experience, an unfortunate obstacle that one must meticulously circumnavigate in order to diminish their hardships. Inevitably, though, the agony-inducing effects of the Jim Crow military quickly catch up to Solly--and his body.

The first episode of pain is a defining moment for the character as it violently overthrows his perception of the army. Before transforming it into a political motivation, Killens deploys pain to enforce the racial hierarchy structuring the institution. After refusing to show two local police officers a leave pass while off base, Solly is hauled off to the station for further interrogation. Although unsettled by the fact that he is deep in the south "where he was an alien, and never a citizen," Solly remains confident that he will evade punishment for one specific reason: his uniform (122). The standard dressing issued by the Army locates him outside of the

officers' jurisdiction. When a white MP colonel arrives to intervene, Solly is further relieved. As another uniformed service member, and one imbued with the privilege of whiteness, their mutual affiliation is to his benefit. The police officers, however, quickly debunk this theory when they remark that Solly "thinks he's a soldier cause they let him wear a soldier suit," which to Solly's horror, the colonel affirms that he must have "let that uniform go to his head" (132, 133). Here, Killens dissolves the symbolic implications of the uniform. The regalia no longer signifies a fraternal bond. Rather, the color of the characters' skin determines their alliances. With his military status rendered meaningless, Solly's body is exposed to his assailants' vitriol. The colonel's initial blows are immediately damaging, as he "slapped Solly with his open hand with all of his might...and he was temporarily deaf" (133). During their subsequent attack, Solly's language, position, and aching appendages depict the reality of his status as a Black man in the military. Whereas he was initially outspoken against the officers' attack, the protagonist is now speechless from the pain. In her influential study, Elaine Scarry views this occurrence as a common phenomena: "physical pain does not simply resist language but acutely destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (4). With no voice to protest, Solly loses a critical element of his agency, leaving him at the mercy of the colonel and the officers. That they lower him into a chair during the attack portrays his inferior social position, but what they do to him while he is in that chair has specific recourse to his masculinity. As the colonel repeatedly slams the nightstick near his groin, Solly "feared for his manhood" (134). The attack is, as James describes, "an act of embodiment and disembodiment" (271). By pulverizing the protagonist's body in the targeted region of his genitals, the assailants endeavor to not simply impair Solly, but to emasculate him. It is not enough to show him that he is less of a soldier, but they must make

him feel like he is less of a man. Eventually, the character succumbs to the racialized violence of the military as "white stabs" of pain send him into "an awful suck-hole of briny whiteness" (134). There in the police station, under the cruel hand of the MP colonel, pain reveals a truth that Solly did not want to accept: his military service will not improve his circumstances as an American Black man.

With his character now corporeally aware of military racism, Killens reclaims the narrative implications of Black war wounds. As Solly languishes in a military hospital while recovering from his injuries, his ongoing physical suffering stokes a drastic revision to his personal philosophy, urging him to adopt a more caustic rather than sympathetic stance. With nothing to do but lie in bed, Solly dwells on the "pain shooting through him as if his entire body were a rotten tooth" (136). He wonders "was he still a man? Were his testicles intact? They ached as if they were being prodded with a red-hot poker" (142). The comparison between his pain and the images of the rotten tooth and hot poker convey the disrespect Solly feels. Instead of justifying the assault as a punishment as he did with Taylor, though, the character's embodied experience causes him to see the situation differently. The more he broods over his injuries and their correlation to his service, masculinity, and minority identity, the more he is reminded of its cause. He increasingly notices his "snowy-white bed with everything around him spick-and-span and gleamingly white" and the doctors and nurses who look "snow white as the whitest dove and the whitest of the whitest angels" (135). Overwhelmed by the hue of his space and the agony from his injuries, Solly's "grand illusion" is destroyed, and his felt-experience has guided him to a new position: "He hated the Great White Democratic Army of the United States of America" (135). In an ironic twist, Solly's pain no longer upholds the racial hierarchy but illuminates the trenchant corruption of the military's racial policies. As he contemplates his aching wounds, he

is contemplating the institution's racist practices, which then urges him to assume a more critical position toward his service and the war. Alone among the white staff in their white robes in the white halls of the military hospital, Solly dwells on the felt-experience to the point he decides he must act on his new outlook.

When Solly commits to writing about the abusive treatment that Black soldiers endure, the novel explores how the expression of pain functions as a form of political activism. With the character's reformed perspective on the military gnawing at him day and night, he feels a growing urgency to share his experience. The thought of writing —of finding the language to represent what he had been through and how he feels—is a pivotal opportunity for the character: "wheels turned over in his weary mind, and flares lit up and seemed to set his brain on fire" (143). Describing this situation as a "rebirth," Scarry explains that the use of speech following significant episodes of pain signals the reclamation of an injured person's "powers of self-objectification" (172). Solly's letter is a declaration of his new political identity, both reclaiming his "lost" manhood and outlining his position in relation to the institution's practices (142). Moving from silence to speech, Solly's writing carves out an assertive stance toward the MP and any officer harboring similar prejudice, transitioning him from a position of subjugation to one of authority and recouping the sense of masculinity the MP took from him. Moreover, because his letter is intended for widespread publication rather than personal reflection, Solly's written expression carries a broader significance: his pain will be interpreted by a large audience. While Scarry contends that harnessing the vocabulary to express these sensations is near impossible—"objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language"—Martha Stoddard Holmes and Tod Chambers aver the linguistic representation of pain is not only attainable but necessary. By locating "representations around

the ineffable of pain," the writer can deploy "words offered to facilitate expression and as a lifeline to draw the sufferer out of the space of wordlessness" (162, 135). In other words, while Solly's exact sensation cannot be precisely communicated, figurative language and imagery can, at least, spur ideas that orbit around his felt-experience, giving the character the opportunity to make sense of his pain as well as make it known to others. The letter, which Killens reveals in a later chapter after it is published in *The People's Herald*, explains that Black GIs routinely "suffer all manners of indignities," are "beaten up with impunity by Ebbensville's finest and the Military Police" before closing with the author describing himself and others as "voices crying out in a wilderness of hostility" (178). Although there is no description of Solly's exact symptoms, the letter elucidates the physical abuse that takes place on base and in the surrounding community. By drawing attention to these painful experiences, Solly exposes the discriminatory practices of the military. The letter, then, is a call-to-action, putting pressure on the institution to change their practices in the face of public exposure.

In addition to addressing the systemic racism within the military, Solly's written expression also alleviates his bodily suffering. At the prospect of writing the letter, of reclaiming his selfhood and challenging the institution, the narrator notes that Solly's "pain halted" (143). Previously, the character's thoughts lingered on the police station, the nefarious deportment of his captain, and the seeming impossibility of a successful military career as a Black man. Although memories and ideas are not pain inducing, Morris contends that the felt-experience "is reinforced--and sometimes created--by psychological and emotional states" (20). The sheer impression of these violent events, characters, and circumstances is enough to afflict the protagonist, who constantly feels as though his injuries are throbbing. The chance to pen the letter, however, offers a reprieve. Weighing how and what to express, Killens shifts the

character's attention away from his assault toward a future free of pain, which is an idyllic vision that sustains Solly's newfound outlook when his company is punished for the letter. Although his ranking officers were irate upon reading the published draft, deciding to send his company to the west coast thousands of miles away from their families, Solly "was glad the letters had brought things to a head" (197). While this confrontation paves the way for several more racial conflicts within the novel, it also recasts the tropes and stereotypes surrounding Black soldier characters. Through Solly's transformation, Killens subverts both the heroic attributes prescribed to such figures as well as the demeaning implications of their injuries. Recuperating his war wound as a political motivation rather than a confirmation of his status as a second-class soldier, Solly takes a stand for Democracy not by working with the U.S. Army but against it. These scenes mark an important turn in the representation of Black soldier characters in WWII literature. The novel's stark depiction of the character challenging the racial hierarchy of the military undermines the wholesome representations of integrated troops that circulated during the early years of the Cold War. For added effect, Killens repeats this paradigm twice more, working through an episode of pain before exploring the expression of that pain. While this pattern reinforces the novel's commentary on military segregation, Killens subtly adjusts the mode of expression each time, thereby altering how his protagonist understands the pain of racialized war wounds.[46]

In the second episode, Solly moves beyond conceptualizing his pain as a personal affliction towards accounting for the suffering among his all-Black Company. Relocated to San Francisco, the men of the 913th are infuriated with the color-lines that map their new base. One evening, Bookworm pleads with Solly to intervene in a crowd of angry white soldiers gathering around Scotty, a member of their Company who is protesting the segregated PX. Initially, Solly resists. His previous interactions with Scotty have landed him in trouble, and as much as he is

committed to fighting military racism, he is not eager to share in Scotty's punishment. Pain, however, changes his self-centered mindset. When a ranking captain demands Solly explain the situation, the protagonist is suddenly engrossed by memories of the police station: "the captain's voice was a red-hot poker digging into a flame, reminding him what his story was. He remembered painfully vividly the jail in Ebbensville and the muscles in his thighs began to dance" (225). Recalling the palpable injustices of his own experience helps Solly recognize those same injustices affecting the men in his company. He no longer perceives institutional racism as a private affront but rather understands it as a collective force of trauma and violence that pains other Black men as well. To signify his newfound state of empathy, he declares "For us!" (225). Viewing his regiment as a collective body, according to Siebers, forges a "political community" in which "the person in pain may join with others to reexamine the world, the better to fight the oppression of minority people and to create a future for them" (60, 193). Solly's commitment to the men of his company bolsters his anti-pain campaign not only in number but also expands, by way of their experiences, his perception of military segregation and its ramifications. This development, therefore, demands a different expression of pain. Because he is, informally speaking, the "'company lawyer,'" Scotty asks Solly to speak with the captain, to articulate suffering on his behalf (223). Here, Killens' narrows in scope the protagonist's expression. Whereas Solly reached a wider audience with his published letter, he now directly addresses institutional leadership, making explicit the atrocious experiences of the other Black soldiers--his community. He asks the captain "'how would you feel if you were brought into your country's Army only to be treated as something filthy and unclean and to be spat upon contemptuously?" (226). Just as with the previous expression, when Solly focuses on the issue of social reform within the military, his pain recedes and "he felt good" (226). More importantly, Solly's

expression yields real change: “the following night the supermarket Post Exchange was opened up to all American soldiers” (228). In this scene, Killens further undermines the cultural myths of Black soldiers, illustrating their pain not only as the vehicle that leads them to confront the white supremacy of the military, but also overturns such imperatives.

Their victory, though, is short lived. During Solly’s third episode, Killens deploys pain to reveal the relentless and corrosive nature of white supremacy within the army. After being deployed to the Pacific Theatre for combat, base command invites Solly and several others to attend a dance at the Red Cross Recreation Center. Although the characters are expectedly excited, their enthusiasm is dashed when the Red Cross lady and several MPs inform them that the “‘party for you boys’” is a mile down the road past “‘the gasoline dump’” (280). After fighting for, and achieving, equal rights in San Francisco, Solly and the men cannot stand for such segregation. Refusing to leave, a brawl breaks out with the MPs who quickly “grabbed them and began to shove them around and jab them in the ribs with their nightsticks and twist their arms” (281). The pain from the physical assault, which leaves Solly “hurting all over,” forces the character to hone his attention on his assailants (281). Rather than think about himself as he did in the first episode, or understand the other Black characters’ suffering in the second, the protagonist’s felt-experience awakens him to a troubling reality: the Jim Crow laws and attitudes underscoring the military are far more pervasive than he had thought. On the cusp of being incarcerated in the stockade for the night, Solly confides to himself that he “hated their goddamn unfeeling guts for pounding one more nail in the coffin of the war’s mortality” (281). As his thought alludes, the war is a colossal waste of time. Rather than account for the liberties of all Americans, it is waged on the backs of oppressed citizens and to the benefit of a select and privileged group atop the racial hierarchy. Following his brief incarceration, as his “head felt so

tight he thought it was going to burst wide open," the protagonist sets down to express his pain in the form of another letter (282). Although he begins with the salutation of "I speak to you, America," Solly is penning a personal declaration (282). The recipient--the abstract figure of America--will never read nor hear this dictation. Instead, Solly is delineating his limitations for racial abuse at which point he must answer with a more radical expression. In the opening paragraph he makes sweeping claims eulogizing the nation's potential before offering a stark warning in the final paragraph to "not take my love for granted" (282). When he closes the letter noting that his "cheeks are wearing thin with slapping," he positions himself at a threshold, no longer able to withstand further abuse (282). Unlike his previous expressions, however, the letter fails to relieve his pain. As he stops writing, "his eyes began to ache" again and his thoughts return to the melee at the Red Cross dance (282). Here, Killens intentionally deviates from the temporal pattern of pain that he had employed thus far. Whereas the previous episodes were isolated instances that were alleviated through an expression of that pain, over time they stockpile into a lasting felt-experience that is not easily remedied. Instead, Solly's pain demands a more forcible response to effectively--and permanently--address his ongoing suffering.

At this juncture, though, Killens depicts a new type of wound, thereby altering what pain means to the protagonist. Engaged in hand-to-hand combat with a Japanese soldier, Solly suffers a near fatal knife wound: "he felt the cold steel stab cleanly in a place next to his shoulder blade and too close to his heart for comfort and felt the gush of his own hot blood and felt a sharp white hot pain near his heart and spreading fast throughout his chest" (359).[47] Eventually, Solly overpowers his enemy, goring him with the same knife that nearly penetrated his heart. The jarring scene has a profound impact on the character. Having taken a man's life in a war he does not believe in, and on behalf of an army he loathes, Solly is overcome with grief. This affective

response to his actions is what Rita Nakashima and Gabriella Lettini term moral injury, which occurs when soldiers "violate their core moral beliefs" (xv). "In evaluating their behavior negatively"--which is evident as Solly repeatedly laments that he does not "'hate'" the Japanese soldier while plunging the knife into his chest--soldiers "feel they no longer live in a reliable, meaningful world and can no longer be regarded as decent human beings" (Nakashima and Lettini vx, Killens 360). This abstract concept is concretized through the character's injured body. Of the various appendages and organs to choose from, Killens manifests Solly's emotional upheaval via the heart, a body part that has, historically speaking, encapsulated a range of sentimental moods within literature. In making this switch, the writer modifies his representations of pain from a transformative felt-experience to a symbolic device that gauges the character's wellbeing. The moments when the narrator references the heart convey Solly's troubled state.Wrestling with the notion that he might be viewed as a "murderer" while recovering in the hospital, for instance, Solly felt the "scorching agony around his heart glowing with the most frightening pain of all" (366). Only the letters from his wife that "were so full of love" "soothed the burning in his chest" (371).[48] In time, Solly recovers, but the narrator notes that his wound is only "superficially" healed, implying the character remains conflicted about the political violence he enacted and how it contradicts his position towards the army (376). Although Killens' representation of the battlefield wound largely serves a symbolic function at this point, it remains an important element to the narrative thread that explores the brutality of the Jim Crow military.

During the novel's ultimate clash between the Black and white U.S. servicemen, Solly's injured heart invokes the pain that he has endured at the hands of the military, prodding him to join the fight. This moment is catalyzed when the Men of the 913th are denied entry into a local

dance club in Brisbane, Australia, where they are stationed while recovering from combat. Despite their location, American jurisdiction supersedes the laws of the land. To emphasize this idea, Killens again turns to pain to enforce the racial hierarchy. As the narrator explains, segregations laws are upheld by the Jones Street Military Police who have a "reputation of whipping more heads per night than all the others put together" and "did their very damnedest to deserve their reputation" (429). Living up to their name, they "pummel with their nightsticks" and "prodded with their guns," as they forcibly remove the Black soldiers from the club (443). Battered and bruised, the Company's pain assumes a specific meaning. While their felt-experience reminds them of the dehumanizing treatment they have suffered while in service to the country, it also marks a breaking point for the characters. Unwilling to withstand any more agony or injury at the hands of the U.S. army, they resolve themselves to protest the notorious MPs. When Solly hears of this plan, the narrator draws attention toward his heart, which "began to leap about" (447). The frantic response conveys his concern for his comrades. The heart again speaks to the character when he arrives at the destructive scene: "Solly sat there listening to the thunder of his heart and the rumbling of his guts and collisions in his head" (473, 474). The moment illustrates the stalemate between the character's emotional and logical response to the unfolding violence. While he initially follows his head, turning the vehicle around, his emotions--the "thunder of his heart"—overtake him: he realizes that "he never wanted to *hear* of war again, Nor *feel* the war, nor *smell* the war" (emphasis my own, 475). In an about face, Solly joins the protest on account of felt-experience—of how he feels about his service as well as the ways he never wants to feel again. As he battles the white soldiers, his heart's frenetic palpitations embody his nervous, stressed, and desperate state. His "heart leaped about in a wild dance without rhythm" on approach; his "heart was thumping in his forehead" after narrowly escaping

gunfire; and "he thought his heart would leap out his chest" when facing what he believes is certain death (481). For Solly, he must act or suffer the most irreparable heartbreak: losing the "profoundest battle for democracy" (450). To ensure this does not happen, Solly and the others rely on the same violence that has troubled their military careers, making it as painful as possible for the opposing white soldiers to thwart their protest.

The characters' course of action seems counterintuitive. Why would Solly and his Company employ the very tactics that they detest and work to curtail throughout the novel? Their protest is, by all accounts, risky. If unsuccessful, they will likely endure a physical punishment akin to the earlier scene in the police station, but on a more massive and severe scale. Regarding their plan, James argues that Solly "enters the racial war believing it to be the cost for asserting black manhood within a racist military embedded in a racist nation" (276). The protest is a necessary demonstration of everything the characters have been deprived of: masculinity, pride, and autonomy. However, as much as their demonstration is about themselves, it is also about how they want the white soldiers to feel. The Black characters' physical force is a transgressive act that will yield the same painful bodily sensations that they have endured throughout their service. If his novel is vague regarding this notion, Killens' thoughts on American race relations in *Black Man's Burden* (1965), a collection of essays published three years following the release of *And Then We Heard the Thunder*, clarify the closing scene of his war novel. Asserting that non-violence is in itself a white supremacist myth promoted to discourage acts of Black resistance, Killens explains therein lies a dual implication to physical force. Framing the "forces of law and order" as "perpetrators of [racial] violence," the writer begs the question of "who will defend the Negro if he refuses to defend himself" (112). In this case, acts of violence, Killens stipulates, are integral to self-preservation. At the same time,

however, the writer espouses violence as a radical confrontation with the nation's sordid past for the sake of improving its future: "The more violence perpetrated against him, with pious impunity, the more he becomes convinced that this thing cannot resolve itself non-violently, that only blood will wash away the centuries of degradation" (108, 120). In this line of thinking, physical force holds a mirror up to white society, reflecting to them the suffering that they have inflicted upon Black bodies. Such a process provides a "painful, violent road to mutual love and understanding" (116). According to Killens, then, violence can bring about the transformative experience of pain--an uncomfortable if not agonizing sensation that forges a renewed perspective on race relations. Killens succinctly alludes to as much, boiling his idea down to colloquial terms and explaining that violence "will help whip some sense into your head," which is both a line and idea that resonates explicitly within *And Then We Heard The Thunder* (116).

Prior to his essay, Killens weaves that exact line into his novel on three occasions, relying on it to frame violence and pain as instruments of social change rather than oppression. Out of ammunition and energy, the soldiers on both sides of the protest concede. Several white soldiers lament that "'the whole damn thing don't make no sonofabitching sense'" and "'we ain't got nothing against nobody'" (498). In both cases, Solly retorts "'the only way to do it is to beat some sense into your heads'" and again mumbling to himself, "beat some sense into your heads. That's the only way to do it'" (498). More than a response to the white soldiers' surrender, Solly's remarks justify what has just occurred. Where peaceful tactics such as letters and discussions have failed, the character sees violence as an essential "last resort" in driving his white counterparts to give up their racist ideations (458). This realization leads Solly to envision a future in which "whatever was left of the world would come to its senses and build something new and different and new and new and altogether different," recognizing that, to achieve this

ideal, he might have to again "beat some sense into their heads" (498). The new world that Solly is thinking of is one of desegregation, which was a sticking point for Killens in his pursuit of civil rights following his own military service. Because it was mired in bureaucracy and legislation, and therefore demanded a powerful if not violent response, Killens maintained that "desegregation must be achieved before integration can be seriously considered" ("Black Man's Burden" 167). Only when the legal mandates that dictated social liberties based on the color of one's skin have been expunged at a Constitutional level, then, and only then, as Killens believed, could a more productive and harmonious American society emerge. The final scene in *And Then We Heard the Thunder* anticipates this ideal. The characters' felt-experiences embody the growing pains of a Jim Crow military in transition. Through their demonstration, Solly and the men of the 913th champion *sensible* policy reform.

Solly Saunder's Pain, Civil Rights, and 1960s America

That the novel ends following the narrative pattern--with Solly announcing his desire to express the pain born from the protest--provides a conclusion that is both apt and, for historical reasons, exceptional. As with prior episodes, the expression is a matter of exposing the unjust treatment of Black soldiers and relieving the character's suffering, but, it is also a process of memorializing. While surveying the damage, Solly is overwhelmed by a startling realization that most of his friends were killed in action. In response, "he promised himself and promised them that the world would know their story. If he lived, he would write it" (497). His promise, however, is hypothetical. The novel abruptly ends while the remaining soldiers await their impending discipline. To an extent, this lack of closure "[prevents] the reader from celebrating the racial war as a necessary black insurgency"; it remains to be seen if the characters' efforts were successful or, tragically, in vain (James 276). Yet, if we question what Solly's story might

look like, we can infer that the protagonist does, in fact, fulfill his promise as the novel--the tangible object sitting in readers' hands--is his written expression, a vivid illustration of the racialized war wounds and palpable tensions brewing between Black and white soldiers during the Second World War. Working against the cultural myths of integration, Solly's story possesses a genuine cultural significance, which is made more remarkable by its historical noteworthiness. As Keith Gilyard explains, the Brisbane protest punctuating the novel was a real event that occurred during March of 1942 between Black soldiers of the 394th Quartermaster Battalion and the white soldiers of the 208th Coast Artillery. That Killens illustrates this event, Gilyard continues, is extraordinary considering "his account is the only published description. News reportage was censored. Trial records unavailable" (58). Although fictionalized, *And Then We Heard the Thunder* rescues this moment from complete historical erasure, exposing readers to the discriminatory, ironic, and painful experiences of Black service members in the process. In doing so, Killen's novel destabilizes the rehabilitation model of Black soldier characters that rejects "the idea that the forces *creating* marginalized groups and minorities outside the norm must be fought" (Lukin 312). Instead, it does just that, encouraging a critical reflection on the past, questioning earlier representations of Black soldiers, and rendering their racialized war wounds in a new light—and does so at a precarious moment in America's history.

In 1962, as the novel was published, the United States reached an apogee in the civil rights movement. As more Black citizens demonstrated for equal rights across the nation, they were continuously met with cruelty and intolerance. The country's social turmoil became a point of critique among Soviet diplomats, spokespersons, and press. Through a range of media, including presentations at NATO headquarters, the Soviet Union emphasized American racial discrimination as symptomatic of the western nation's corrupt nature and inhumane policies. In

response to these embarrassing attacks, Mary Dudziak argues, the U.S. was convinced it "had to protect civil rights at home to be effective" in maintaining international relations and continue establishing itself as the preeminent world power (82). Rather than implement sweeping legislative reform, though, the government addressed a few key issues, notably desegregating the military in the late 1940s and then desegregating public schools in the 1950s, both of which Dudziak contests were less about racial equality as much as they were about "safeguarding the nation's overseas image" (87). These steps—albeit important in the grand scheme of civil rights—gave the impression of a "diverse, pluralistic, and unified image" of the U.S. (Jarvis 122). *And Then We Heard the Thunder*, in small part, pulls back this veil of equity fashioned in response to such Cold War anxieties and utilizes its WWII storyline about pain, suffering, and discrimination to draw attention to ongoing racial injustices. Killens' novel certainly did not turn the tide of civil rights, but its release was timely, as two years later the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. While some may have viewed the novel's content controversial given Cold War politics as well as the issues at home, the veteran writer regarded his aesthetic engagement with such social conflicts as his duty, noting that "Artists are forever at war with society, and if the artist is a black man in the Free World he is double at war" (37). For Killens, the pain of racialized war wounds was a confrontation with the nation's sordid past and present in a fight for a more equitable and peaceful future.

Chapter 6:

Afterword

Representations of service-related disabilities and combat injuries proliferate the fiction of the SWW. Throughout this dissertation I have sought to read such illustrations within the works of veteran writers James Jones, Norman Mailer, and John Oliver Killens as embodied experiences that illuminate, explore, and grapple with the lived complexities that arose from sustaining a wound in the course of that political conflict. Contextualizing my discussions with disability theory, historical accounts, and literary criticism, I traced how particular wounds in each novel affected characters' relationships with their military service, reshaped their views of the war, impacted their long term health and wellbeing, led them to question their masculinity, or affirmed their racial identities. In carrying out these readings, I have shown how Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels engage and destabilize the cultural myths surrounding wounded soldiers' bodies that were perpetuated by Hollywood war films. Rather than commit narrative triage–the act of aesthetically rehabilitating the wound for the purpose of mobilizing support–the veteran writers' representations, as I see it, challenged readers to think about wounds less as symbols of bravery incurred by malevolent enemies and more so as the transition into a "different existence" that forever alters the assumptions they held as able-bodied soldiers and men (Hynes 21). In each novel, the sudden and particular rupture to the characters' bodies or minds takes place within a specific space, time, and context that allows the writers to investigate the different internal and external dilemmas that develop as their wounded characters negotiate social and physical environments, ranging from the combat zone to the hospital to the home front

In Chapter 2, I argued that Jones deploys service-related disabilities as a narrative vehicle to explore the army's exploitation of the soldier's body. Throughout the entirety of his war trilogy, which includes *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle*, Jones' fictional armies rely on wounds to boost their reputation among the public, secure combat victories, and generate capital gains in the form of war bonds. This process, in turn, affects the characters whose bodies are exploited, leading them to contemplate the material cost of war and question their service. In Chapter 3, I explained how Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* challenges the myth that military medicine was an ethical and effective remedy for sick soldiers. In his novel, Mailer subverts this idea by portraying the army's medical system and various interventions for invisible wounds as a self-serving strategy that cures the institution of its manpower problem at the expense of the soldiers' health and wellbeing. Continuing with Mailer's work in Chapter 4, I examined how his postwar veteran novels function as anti-remasculinization narratives. *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream* illustrate how the tenets of white hegemonic masculinity are not a pathway back to manhood for their respective wounded protagonists, but a myopic set of cultural expectations that bring out their most toxic traits. And in Chapter 5, I analyzed how John Oliver Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder* works against salient depictions of racialized war wounds as symptomatic of Black GIs' inferiority. Instead, Killens represents the pain from such injuries as a generative experience that drives his characters to protest the Jim Crow laws that overshadow their military service. Collectively, I argue that the disability narratives embedded in these novels challenge cultural memories of the wounds of the SWW. Far more complicated than the movies let on, the veteran writers' representations urge readers to critically reconsider war wounds as an uncanny political experience that can leave the soldier emascualted, disaffected, humiliated, or angry.

In addition to addressing cultural memory, these disability narratives also spoke to the cultural moment in U.S. history. As I discussed in each chapter, primarily in their respective conclusions, the veteran writers' representations of war wounds, whether implicitly or explicitly, carried Cold War implications. Throughout the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, readers engaged with these popular novels during increasing ideological conflicts and geopolitical tensions with the Soviet Union. As such, Jones, Mailer, and Killens' discourses on the soldier's body likewise offered an adjacent critique of the dangerous ramifications underscoring the nation's responses to communism, Eastern philosophies, and Russian attacks on American culture. In Chapter 1, I argued that Jones' illustrations of the exploited soldier's body in *From Here to Eternity* raised suspicions about the U.S. army at a time when other institutions were scrutinized and tried for the alleged Eastern sympathies; *The Thin Red* Line reminded the public of the material costs of war as the Cuban Missile Crisis unfolded; and *Whistle* explored the lasting legacy of that cost in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Mailer's subversive take on military medicine as a form of control, which I discussed in Chapter 2, allegorized what the writer saw as a totalitarian effort to impose conservative values among civilians as the means to stave off the influence of communism. In Chapter 3, I considered how Mailer's anti-remasculinization narratives capitalized on Cold War anxieties over American men and the nuclear family, showing readers that hegemonic masculinity turned wounded veterans into the antithesis of "guardian" of the West they were wont to become (Starck 18). And finally, in Chapter 4, I addressed the importance of Killens' novel to the civil rights movement. In the years leading up to that legislation, the nation implemented a series of amendments to Jim Crow law, including the desegregation of the military and public schools. Rather than address its own systemic racism, though, these legal changes were implemented due in part to USSR media campaigns that

framed racial tensions in America as symptomatic of the West's corruption. Killens' representations of racialized war wounds among his characters, namely Solly Saunders, explicitly suggests that pain and violence are the agents to more sweeping and meaningful racial reform and social equity, which anticipates the 1964 Civil Rights Act that came on the heels of more combative demonstrations. Read through their historical lens, the novel's disability narratives shrewdly expose and interrogate some of the United States' most pressing political and social issues at a time when the nation was fortifying its public image domestically and internationally during the Cold War.

In making these arguments, I want to be clear that I am not suggesting Jones, Mailer, nor Killens' novels and their representations are anti-American. They are anti-war, but not anti-American. To the contrary, I find them to be patriotic in the most democratic sense. As critical as the veteran writers are of the military, the government, and American politics, each believed in a better, more prosperous, and equitable future for their country. The writers' activism and social pursuits outside of literature testify to their interest in, or at least their concern over, helping America achieve its idealistic promises. For example, Frank MacShane describes Jones as a "constitutionalist" who felt "at home with American issues" (242). While living abroad in Paris, he "joined James Baldwin and a number of other actors and writers at the American embassy and registered their support of civil rights," and later "volunteered to work for Lyndon Johnson's re-election" (242). Until his death in 1987, Killens committed himself to championing African Americans rights. As Keith Gilyward explains, the writer developed a particular vision for the future of the Black community in his final years, maintaining that they "must become committed to the idea of protracted liberatory struggle characterized by intellectual, strategic, and financial self-reliance" (303). And Mailer, who ran a failed campaign for the mayoral election of New

York City in 1969, was constantly brooding over the state of the nation. In an interview with Richard Wollheim during the early 1960s, he explained that "'the thing that distresses me about America is that for all the country's done, I dont think it's done one quarter of what it should'" (qtd. in Lennon 303). Regarding his position, J. Michael Lennon recounts that "for the rest of his life he would harp on his disappointment with the United States for failing to achieve its millennial promise" (304). The writers' war and postwar novels, as I see it, reflect this level of concern within the context of WWII military service. Their stories about the oppressive, painful, frustrating, and human experiences associated with war wounds are not a condemnation of the U.S. nor its military. Rather, the sense of discomfort and unease that arises when characters are injured or experience internalized ableism, social stigmas, or racial prejudice prompt readers to question how they can better account for wounded veterans.[49] What ethical responses will serve the wounded veterans' needs over that of worried civilians and community members? In this way, Jones, Mailer, and Killens' novels have a prescient quality, predicating Alison Kafer's 2013 claim that "the military-industrial complex causes illness, disability, and death on a global scale, and there is much work to be done in theorizing how to oppose war violence and its effects without denigrating disability and disabled people in the process" (168). From the 1940s to the 1970s, this work is at the center of Jones, Mailer, and Killens' war fiction and their representations of service-related wounds.

And almost 45 years since the publication of Jones' *Whistle*—the most recent novel analyzed in this dissertation–the veteran writers' representations of war wounds resonate within our contemporary moment. In the time that I researched and wrote this dissertation, the U.S. began navigating two significant military events. In April 2021, President Joe Biden announced his administration's intent to withdraw the remaining 2,500 troops from Afghanistan by the fall

of that same year. His decision effectively ended a 20-year war–the longest in U.S history—with the Taliban. According to a study published by Linda J. Bilmes for the *Costs of War Research Series*, over 40% of veterans who served in the War in Afghanistan or the Iraq War, another conflict that spanned nearly a decade (2003-2011), will receive lifetime disability benefits (2). The cost of such benefits, she goes on to explain, is estimated to reach $2.5 trillion by the year 2050 (2). 77 years after VJ-Day, the nation is again welcoming home wounded soldiers in need of medical, social, and emotional support. Another military conflict occurred several months later. On February 24th, after weeks of demonstrations along the border and U.S. demands to desist, the Russian army invaded Ukraine under the direction of President Vladimir Putin. The operation ignited Cold War tensions not felt since the height of the conflict in the 20th century. While I found the entire event disturbing, I was particularly struck by one of Putin's comments regarding the West's response. Through a translator, he bemoaned efforts to "cancel" traditional Russian values and history. While he referenced a number of contemporary Russian artists and events in the course of his televised speech, he also cited Hollywood's erasure of the Red Army from WWII films, describing it as a political move intended to frame the United States as the sole force that defeated fascism while excising the Soviet Union 's role from cultural memory (Sauer). His remark, as I understand, embodies the lasting and deeply troubling consequences engendered by Hollywood myths of the SWW. While those myths–which boosted the idea of heroic combat experiences, malevolent enemies, and meaningful war wounds–mobilized the nation during the war years, they skewed our understanding of the political conflict over time and, as Putin's words imply, have become weaponized against the nation.

With these military developments in mind, we find ourselves in a precarious moment. Hundreds of thousands of wounded veterans have returned from the Middle East to a post-Trump

America in which the most toxic aspects of masculinity are celebrated, white supremacists are emboldened to the point of storming the Capitol, and race relations are strained; across the Atlantic, the U.S. is supplying millions of dollars of military equipment to Ukraine in efforts to combat Russia while also sending thousands of troops to NATO ally, Germany. Wounded veterans are returning as other soldiers are preparing for a situation in which they might very well be wounded. This study of war wounds in the fiction of WWII veterans James Jones, Norman Mailer, John Oliver Killens will not solve the matter of service-related disability let alone the conflict currently taking place in Europe; however, it may provide one, small avenue to help us think about our modern moment, especially as it pertains to the people in the Armed Forces whose bodies have changed, or will change, as a result of their service. Their novels– *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Whistle*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *Barbary Shore*, *An American Dream*, and *And Then We Heard the Thunder*–vividly represent and explore how the material costs of war impact one's identity in terms of their military service, health, gender, and race, which are embodied experiences that cannot be easily triaged. In drawing our attention to these nuanced and difficult terrains in which our soldiers and veterans have found, currently find, and will likely continue to find themselves, Jones, Mailer, and Killens show us the enduring importance of their work.

Notes

1. Introduction

1. In fairness, Fussell counts his own book among those that fail to capture the "real war" (290).

2. In addition to monitoring Hollywood films, the OWI also took measures to censor other media such as photographs of injuries as well.

3. To make their directives more appealing, the agency incentivized their program. Compliance led to vital resources such as military equipment or access to government sites, which helped production teams save millions of dollars, not to mention make their films appear more authentic. And for those who simply could not be bought, failure to satisfy OWI guidelines cost them those same resources, compromising the quality and success of their production if not halting it altogether.

4. Notably, there is validity to this idea considering the U.S. and its allies were fighting a Nazi party hellbent on global fascism.

5. Their accuracy was also augmented by the casting of disabled actors in such roles as was the case in *The Best Years of Our Lives* in which bilateral veteran amputee Harold Russell was cast in the role of Homer Parrish.

2. "'We Can Break Any Man'": The Army as a Disabling Institution in James Jones' War Trilogy

6. In other cases, as Armstrong writes, WWI was by some as a "prosthetic war in the sense of attempting to radically extend human capabilities, whether in terms of perception...or performance" (95).

7. Although Dos Passos and Hemingway are not military veterans, both writers experienced WWI first hand as volunteer ambulance drivers for the Red Cross in Italy. Their experiences informed much of their war fiction.

8. The WWII veteran writers' influence is apparent in works by Vietnam veteran writers, who continued experimenting with the body as a political symbol. See Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, and John Clark Pratt's *Laotian Fragments*.

9. For more on Mailer's views and relationship with Hemingway, see J. Michael Lennon's biography, *A Double Life*.

10. Conducting an explicit analysis of wounded bodies in *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle* makes a necessary intervention in the scholarship on Jones. Readings to date, including those of Christina S. Jarvis and Tony Williams, have primarily focused on dead bodies and their narrative significance. Jarvis does examine a few instances of war wounds, but discusses those in terms of masculinity. My readings expand the conversation started by these scholars, analyzing how the characters' injuries shape their perceptions of the war and military service.

11. Struggling to squeeze all of his ideas into the manuscript, Jones eventually and wisely opted to develop his story into a trilogy instead of one single work. Although each novel focuses on a new set of characters, Jones intentionally made names that sounded similar, thereby establishing a through-line throughout the trilogy.

12. Whereas Prew spends substantial time in the stockade in the novel, he remains completely free in the filmic version.

13. In the screen adaptation of *The Thin Red Line*, the ornery relationship between Welsh and Doll is the focal point. And in a gesture of narrative triage, their tension is resolved by the conclusion when Welsh sacrifices himself to save the young soldier.

14. Jones' reluctancy to write more war fiction was due to what would have likely been diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder. After the service, Jones struggled with recurring nightmares and horrifying visions from his combat experience, which included killing a Japanese soldier with his bare hands.

15. While posthumous publications have drawn suspicion over their integrity–such as Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden*–Morris maintains that the final chapters honor the veteran writer's vision: "in tape recordings and conversations with me over several months prior to his death, he left no doubt of his intentions for the concluding three chapters. As late as two days before he died, he was speaking into a tape recorder in the hospital…the ending of *Whistle* was firmly in his mind. All he lacked was time" (13).

16. This idea that the amputation of a body part is tantamount to removing part of one's identity is discussed is disability autobiography and represented elsewhere in disability fiction. For example, Andre Dubus recalls that he nor his friends bought tickets to the Boston Red Sox opening day game after his left leg was amputated. Losing their 12-year tradition of watching baseball—which Dubus describes as "real in a deeper way than much of what I do"—sent the writer into a depression (54). And John Hockenberry, who lost mobility following a car accident, could not entertain a neighbor's recommendation to amputate his legs on the grounds they are literally part of who he is: "I love my legs…because they are my legs" (48). In literary example,

Paul Rayment, the avid cyclist in J.M. Coetzee's *Slow Man*, curses, "who had the impudence to cut off my leg?" before he admits "'that part of my life is over'" while discussing bicycles (13, 14).

3. "'That doc said it can wait till the campaign's over'": Military Medicine, Invisible Wounds, and the Paradox of Cures in *The Naked and the Dead*

17. I find it necessary to acknowledge and clarify what I have termed invisible war wounds. As Margaret Price explains, "although it's common to describe psychosocial disabilities as 'invisible'…this is a misnomer… such disabilities may become vividly manifest in forms ranging from 'odd' remarks to lack of eye contact to repetitious stimming" (304). For the purpose of this discussion, and project at large, I am using the term invisible war wounds to encompass a range of disabilities that occur *within* the body and mind such as shell shock and disease and to distinguish from the physical injuries and service-related impairments discussed elsewhere, such as Chapter 1.

18. As David Gerber notes, "as many as 500,000 men were said to have been hospitalized for neuropsychiatric causes in 1945 alone" (73). If we account for the other years in which the United States was involved in WWII as well as other hospitalizations for sickness and diseases, that number is north of one million. As such, Hollywood films could not simply ignore the issue.

19. As I will more explicitly address in my 3rd and 4th chapters, this "everyman" perspective predominantly implied white characters and their experiences serving in the army.

20. While Mailer avoided lawsuits over his novel, other notable mid-twentieth Century American artists who did not include Lenny Bruce, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, and Henry Miller.

21. Notably, Dalton Trumbo is not a veteran. However, given the prominence of service-related disability and its medical treatment in his novel, I find including *Johnny Got his Gun* in this discussion appropriate and valuable.

22. For more on the medical model of disability, see Tom Shakespeare's *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, Rosemarie Garland Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies*, and David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's *Cultural Locations of Disability*.

23. In response to the medical model, Oliver developed what has become the social model of disability, which views the systemic barriers that diminish the value of disability experiences as the issue in need of redress rather than the aberration.

24. For more on the historical relationship between disability, charity, and welfare, see David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's *Cultural Locations of Disability*.

25. This perception is common in veteran fiction. From James Jones to Joseph Heller, their characters consider the medical tents and army hospitals places of welcome reprieve from the stress of combat. While Jones and Heller's novel allude to the counterintuitive medical treatments, Mailer's, in comparison, more explicitly illustrates these conditions.

26. Red's concession to the system, as scholars have argued, further emphasizes the staggering power the military system, breaking even the toughest and most convicted of soldiers.

27. Here, Red's meditation on the lack of compassion in military medicine also contributes to what Maggie McKinley argues is the novel's critique of wartime masculinity. There is, as she writes, an "undeniable undercurrent of criticism with regard to the 'machismo' on display in the army, and a more direct attempt to present certain aspects of masculinity as a guise" (15). *The Naked and the Dead's* narrator exposes Red's tough demeanor as a cover for his

underlying desire for empathy, which is something he cannot express due to the gender politics associated with being a soldier and man in min-twentieth century America.

4. "Walking about with a chest full of hatred": Norman Mailer's Problem with White Veteran Masculinity and the Problems with Norman Mailer's White Veteran Masculinity

28. Those familiar with Mailer's bibliography will recognize the absence of *The Deer Park* (1955), from this discussion. While *The Deer Park* does offer something of a veteran narrative as its main characters, Sergius O'Shaughnessy, is medically discharged for psychological reasons, the novel's setting contributes to a vastly different veteran narrative than *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream*. Whereas Lovett and Rojack reintegrate into more grounded representations of postwar American society, O'Shaughnessy navigates the bizarre, decadent, and taboo social politics of Desert D'Or, a fictionalized affluent west coast town inhabited by Hollywood stars, industry professionals, and other elite figures.

29. A short list of additional examples of Hollywood films that triage the social difficulties of wounded veterans through conventional gender dynamics include the holiday musical *White Christmas* (1954), the comedy *Buck Privates Come Home* (1947), and the drama *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955).

30. Through the educational and professional opportunities it created for white veterans, the GI Bill not only further supported, but formalized the domestication of the American man.

31. The mother-in-law's infantilizing comments about his masculinity might speak to why the character spends most of the story on the beach with Sybil, a three-year-old girl. While literary scholars argue that Seymour is drawn to Sybil's innocence, it can also be argued that the adult characters make him feel like a child rather than a man.

32. Mailer's career is marked by moments in which he doubts or questions the efficacy of the nuclear family. In a 1976 interview with presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, for example, Mailer questioned Carter's belief in the American family when it was "seen as the enemy by large fractions of Americans" (322). And years later, in a 1991 essay on *American Psycho*, Mailer again suggested that society had reached a point in which "old methods," which include the American family, "no longer suffice, if they ever did" (438).

33. Tempting as it might be to suggest that Mailer's representations of war wounds are the impetus behind the characters' dispositions, Brune and Wilson wisely ask us to think deeper: "even when passing seems to reinforce the stigma of disability, it is more productive, and more just, to challenge the ableism that compels people to pass than blame the individuals who choose to do so" (5). While it is important to hold the wounded veteran characters accountable for their actions, especially those that are criminal, it also remains important to apply pressure to the driving forces behind those actions. Doing so, as I show, yields new interpretations of Mailer's works and contributes to the scholarly discourse revolving around postwar veteran narratives, disability, and masculinity.

34. Although he was bitter over the reviews at the time, Mailer later conceded that the novel is mired in abstraction, admitting in a 1964 interview that the "focus [of Barbary Shore] is so unearthly...it was a book written without a plan" (Lennon 86).

35. The impetus behind such miscellany, in Jarvis' words, was simple: "by damaging the bodies of servicemen and war workers, venereal diseases weakened both the body politic and the bodies that made up defense and industry forces" (81).

36. Leeds recognized this anxiety as commonplace in Mailer's work, noting that the writer revisited the idea "that the white American male is jealous and afraid of the supposedly superior sexual capacity of the Negro male" throughout his life (142).

37. This is not to say, Kelly is a moral compass by which Rojack will be forced to recalibrate his own conception of postwar machismo. To the contrary, Kelly is equally as corrupt in his willingness to "violate conventional morality" to prove his manliness (Gutman 122).

38. As sociologist Michael Kimmel explains, this idea of heading West in search of a new life is another myth in itself. In his book, *Angry White Men*—a title that calls to mind *An American Dream's* protagonist—Kimmel writes that the romantic idea of "leaving home and seeking one' fortunes in the ever-expanding West" is one of the main "themes [that] have long captivated American men's imaginations" (19). To this end, my reading suggests Mailer's novel satirizes this fantasy. If we see the American frontier as an ironic trope, which if we remember the novel's title foreshadows the writer's intent to subvert our cultural assumptions, the character's grand vision of discovering a new masculine ethos is a delusion. Rojack can escape the city, but he cannot escape his ingrained view of hegemonic masculinity.

5. "'You're a second-class soldier'": Racialized War Wounds, Pain, and the Jim Crow Army in John Oliver Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder*

39. Instances of pain and suffering are routine among the characters: Worried about the army's response to his written criticism of the military, Solly felt "a sharp pain in between his buttocks;" elsewhere, Bookworm Taylor screamed "bloody murder" after a dentist unreasonably demands he open his mouth for inspection to the point that "something went click" and his jaw unhinged; and when Solly's regiment is viewed as expendable due to their skin color, they are

assigned a deadly mission, resulting in several severe disabilities such one soldier whose "right eye had been pushed all the way into his face so that it was level with his ears" (148, 207, 317).

40. While such consultants worked diligently to ensure representations were accurate, they hardly influenced the larger systemic issues. As Stephen Tuck notes, The Negro Soldier, a well-made educational film intended on dispelling the mendacious information about Black soldiers, and Black citizens by extension, struggled to make much of an impact. Theatres initially shuttered its widespread release. When large, white audiences did screen it, they looked more favorably on their Black counterparts, but held firm to their belief in segregation (112).

41. Baldwin and Hughes similarly draw attention to other institutional forces via their representations of pain. In *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Baldwin alludes to volatile implications of color lines when one of the characters is in a physical altercation in a white area of New York City. His wound, the narrator describes, looks "very ugly, very red and must...have been very painful" (46). And Hughes' poem, "Ballad of the Landlord," focuses on the housing sector that overwhelmingly took advantage of Black renters. A discrepancy between the speaker and his white landlord over the latter's neglect culminates in a painful--and wrongful--incarceration.

42. Although no explicit evidence of Brooks influence on Killens exists, there are several significant events that suggest the famed poets' presence, political theories, and work informed to some degree Killens' literary endeavors and activism. As Keith Gilyard explains, the 1950s were a "pivotal literary moment for African Americans as a consequence of Gwendolyn Brooks' receipt on May 1 of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry" (96). In addition to being a personal acquaintance of Killens, supporting his book, and throwing him promotional parties, Brooks' work set a standard not only for Killens but all Black writers. Moreover, on more than one occasion, Brooks shared a conference stage with Killens, where both writers professed their

views on literature as a worthwhile medium for promoting social activism. With this in mind, it stands to reason that, being so closely related in content and political theory, Brooks' work had an indelible impression on the novelist.

43. As Josh Lukin explains, Brooks poetry stands out among Black writers who overwhelmingly subscribed to the rehabilitation model of aesthetics, avoiding illustrating disability or severe injuries as they symbolically reinforced racial stereotypes. Lukin, as well as Jennifer James, however, do place Killens in this category, which is a notion my essay seeks to overturn through a close examination of the character's racialized injuries and suffering.

44. Compounding these illustrations is Brooks' formal experimentation. In James' words, "Brooks' disability politics have given rise to a disability poetics" (240). Treating the body of the poem as another figure subject to variation, Brooks manipulates traditionally accepted aesthetic forms. In "still do I keep my look, my identity…," for instance, the poet ruptures the Shakespearean sonnet after the first octave, jarringly switching to the Petarchan mode of verse.

45. For further discussion on the transformative qualities of pain, see Siebers' essay, "Disability and the Theory of Complex Embodiment—For Identity Politics in a New Register," in *The Disability Studies Reader*.

46. In their respective works, Gilyard and James discuss Solly's self-expression as a particularly significant motif within the novel. Rather than the written account of his pain, though, they focus on the character's growing inclination toward song. As he grows increasingly aware of the racism permeating throughout the army, Solly serendipitously recalls and begins crooning several songs such as the Black national anthem, "Lift Every Heart and Sing." The lyrics to these musical numbers, according to Gilyard, "tap into an ancestral memory he has

repressed...he will realize that he is tied to his ancestors in all ways--historically, culturally, spiritually, and bodily" (269). Also see Gilyard's *Liberation Memories*.

47. During this scene, Killens relies on his representation of pain to serve an additional narrative function. Through the various descriptions of the felt-experience, the writer crafts a rhythmic and driving pattern to aesthetically convey his protagonist's state of panic: "sharp, fast, white, hot, spreading-burning, he could not feel his poor heart beating, he only knew the beat of pain, short, fast, white, hot, spreading, burning" (359). The short, poignant bursts of adjectives simulate the frenetic sensations and thoughts overtaking Solly's body and mind. In this moment, pain is less of a transformative political experience than a life-threatening event.

48. In addition to symbolizing Solly's personal politics through the heart, Killens also relies on the injured organ to speak to the protagonist's romantic relationships. During scenes in which Solly thinks of his wife or Fannie Mae, his heart's function and movement encapsulates his emotional response to the women in his life. For instance, after learning of his wife's death during childbirth, his heart signals a return to despair as it "began to swell...and exploded in him" (373, 374). Conversely, when Solly later resolves himself to marry Fannie Mae after the war, "his heart began to leap about and his body grew warm all over," signifying the character's overwhelming sense of joy and anticipation (433).

6. Afterword

49. To a lesser extent, the novels' Cold War implications similarly prompted a postwar readership to more critically consider whether government policy and federal decisions were in the interest of American citizens or an underlying political agenda. While this was a productive effect at a time when credulous citizens expressed unwavering faith in the nation and its military,

I am not sure how productive that effect is in our age of fake news and untruths, a time when citizens question science and doubt officials to dangerous ends.

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