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Sabrina Ehmke Sergeant
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, sabrinaehmke@hotmail.com

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MOBILIZING SENTIMENT:

POPULAR AMERICAN WOMEN'S FICTION OF THE GREAT WAR; 1914 – 1922

by

Sabrina Ehmke Sergeant

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

Under the Supervision of Professor Melissa J. Homestead

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2011

MOBILIZING SENTIMENT:

POPULAR AMERICAN WOMEN'S FICTION OF THE GREAT WAR; 1914 – 1922

Sabrina Ehmke Sergeant, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2011

Adviser: Melissa J. Homestead

This dissertation examines American women's popular novels about the Great War published between 1914 and 1922, and offers a perspective that complicates our understanding of the American experience of WWI. Drawing on a historical framework that illuminates the subtleties of the nation's the ever-shifting political stance in response to the European War, this study demonstrates how American response to the war was neither monolithic nor static. This study contributes to current efforts to recover women's voices in the male-dominated terrain of war writing, and promotes the value of studying noncanonical texts. Rarely considered in scholarship of American war literature, women's popular war fiction allows for a reassessment of the significance the war had to the Americans who lived through it.

The fiction examined in this dissertation approaches the war as a positive endeavor for Americans and the nation. The stories recounted in these novels encourage Americans to consider involvement in the war as part of an American history of patriotic service, and that through that service, Americans could achieve their fullest potential as individuals. As stories written by women and deeply invested in women's roles in shaping national sentiment, these novels interpret the war within the framework of women's (especially mothers) relationship to their country.

The five chapters correspond to five distinct historical periods of American engagement with the Great War, and the accompanying novels speak to the history of each timeframe. Beginning with literature produced during American neutrality and limited preparedness, the study continues with an examination of the works prompted by mobilization, belligerency, demobilization, and finally, with the conflict over, memoralization and commemoration. The writers considered are Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, Sylvia Chatfield Bates, Willa Cather, Alice French (Octave Thanet), Ethel May Kelley, Grace Sartwell Mason, Margaret Prescott Montague, Irene Nylen, Hetty Lawrence Hemenway, and Edith Wharton. Through close readings of these authors' works, this project explores how American women writers participated in the ongoing debate to define the appropriate role for the nation and its women in the Great War.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am incalculably indebted to my parents, Gerhard and Gerarda Ehmke. Although America is not their homeland, nor English their native language, they encouraged an early love of reading and writing in their young daughter, and later enthusiastically supported my study of American literature. I would never have begun a doctoral program had it not been for their endless faith in my abilities and unwavering support. Thanks also go to my sister, Vanessa, and her husband Matthew Kitchen. The email announcing the birth of their son—my godson—Mason Regis Kitchen on September 19, 2010, arrived in the midst of Chapter Four, and was the most welcome and joyous of interruptions. Vani was my most dauntless cheerleader, and I am thankful for her fortitude, especially during the difficult first few months of writing.

Thanks to my extended family—the Belgian, German, and English branches—for their encouragement throughout a long process. Special thanks to my maternal grandmother, Oma, who reminded me to keep smiling, to look forward, and to appreciate any small opportunity for fun along the way. Also to my aunt and uncle, Linda and Theo Leysens, who responded to my proclamations that things were going from bad to worse by sending chocolate. I am very fortunate to have had the support of my husband's family, as well. I am thankful for Don and Barbara Sergeant in particular, who sent countless frozen casseroles and soups our way.

Though I knew her only briefly, I am indebted to Susan J. Rosowski for her kindness, knowledge, and enthusiasm, and for getting me started. I am grateful to all the members of my supervisory committee: Melissa Homestead, Andrew Jewell, Guy

Reynolds, Maureen Honey, and Margaret Jacobs. Special thanks must go to my chair, Melissa Homestead, especially for her sound advice at a critical moment, and to Andy Jewell who offered invaluable feedback on my dissertation throughout the writing process and whose mentorship and friendship have been indispensible throughout my doctoral program.

I thank my friends and colleagues who have helped preserve my sanity and strengthened my resolve over the years. In particular, I would like to thank my Writing Center cohort, Mevi Hova, and my writing group partners Amber Harris Leightener, Tamy Burnett, and Kris Gandara; their feedback was a lifesaver in the final stages of my dissertation writing process. I am immensely grateful for the friendship of Kristen Elias Rowley and for her generous assistance at the last hour. Though I am indebted to many for helping my dissertation reach completion, without both the intellectual support and the sanity-preserving friendship of Elizabeth Lorang, I am quite certain that my dissertation would never even have gotten started. Her kindness over the years made the most stressful moments of my graduate program manageable, and the less stressful times fun.

My greatest debt is to my husband, Eric Sergeant, who has been an endless source of support and love from the start of our relationship. He has sacrificed much to see me through to my goal and I am inexpressibly grateful for our lives together. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

"It comes as a surprise to reasonable people to observe that in the last analysis it is not reason which makes history. A vital question involving peace or war came up in the American Congress at Washington the other day; the pros and cons were debated exhaustively; but when the day of the vote arrived hundreds of responsible lawmakers were seen swayed by a power not born of argument, a passion not known since the Spanish war. It was not pros and cons which turned the scales; a cry of 'Stand by the President' swept the representatives into line with an unashamed whirlwind of loyalty to country and the country's leader. Logic is the careful hewing of steps up a mountain; emotion sums years of hewing. It is attainment, whether reached by steps or by a flight of inspiration. … One must, indeed, look to it that the rudder is made of the oak of the brain, yet the breeze which fills the sails and drives the ship is forever the rushing, mighty wind of the spirit."

—From Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' short story, "The Colors," published in *Scribner's Magazine*, 1916

Sentiment was a powerful instrument in debates over America's role in the Great War. The above opening paragraph of Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' short story unabashedly celebrates the legitimacy—even inevitability—of passionate patriotic spirit in determining (even for the nation's Congressmen) matters as weighty as war and peace. In 1914, American women met the news of the onset of hostilities in Europe with confidence in their ability to influence the nation's response to the conflict. This determination to shape Americans' understanding of the war continued throughout American neutrality and limited preparedness, through belligerency, and extended into the post-war period. President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Carrie Chapman Catt, for instance, urged women to participate in war efforts, remarking that "there was evidence on every side of ignorance and apathy on the part of the people. Women…are the greatest sentiment makers of any community. They have time to talk, time to read, and time to go to meetings" (qtd. in Clarke 103-4). Some also had the time

to write. The role of woman-authored fiction in mobilizing sentiment during the Great War is at the heart of this study.

Women's popular fiction has been largely excluded by the parameters of conventional scholarship on World War I literature. No doubt contributing to the neglect of women's war writing is that the Great War was itself ultimately overshadowed by the war that followed it. Furthermore, as a latecomer to the conflict, America's military involvement in the war pales in comparison to the combat experiences of other belligerent nations. Literary scholarship of the First World War was influenced by Paul Fussell's 1975 publication, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, a seminal study of the poetry of British soldiers which reinforced this evaluative stance. In the afterword to the 25th-aniversary edition Fussell declares that had he chosen to examine American literary output instead, he would have faced a "much slimmer body of materials" (336-7). Fussell defines war literature and war experience as the domain of the combatants in the trenches. The United States' mere 19 months at war, only six of which were at the front, and the nearly one million British casualties compared to America's modest 48,000, then, stand as evidence of the relative paucity of American war experience (337).

Yet a focus on military engagement obscures the fact that on a political and social level, Americans were highly attuned to and engaged with the European conflict from its outbreak in August of 1914. Hutchins Hapgood, a muckraking journalist, aptly summarized the effect of the war on his fellow vacationing Bohemians in Provincetown in the summer of 1914: "People felt the War as social upheaval rather than as war. … It was personal and impersonal, a turmoil from within as well as from without. Where was our Socialist propaganda now? What part had our ideas held with reality? Where were

we? What were we?" (385). The response of the Bohemian community reveals the confusion the European war prompted, and the subsequent impulse to define the war in terms of what it might mean to America regardless of the country's geographic distance from the conflict and the absence of territorial stakes in its outcome. Additionally, the war prompted the nation's extraordinary shift from a long-held isolationist worldview to one of global engagement.

Fussell's focus on British soldier-poets was also an implicit argument that the male experience and representation of the war was more legitimate than the female. This stance was perpetuated in scholarship on American war writing which focused almost exclusively on representations of the war authored by the quintessentially disillusioned expatriate intellectuals of the Lost Generation. The works of Hemingway, Dos Passos, Faulkner, and Cummings are celebrated for their famous sense of woundedness, diminishment, and their interpretation of the Great War as evidence of a failure of civilization. These sentiments have become the accepted cultural legacy of America's participation in the conflict. They have also reinforced a representation of the war as masculine experience, the rightful domain of the combatant (or near-combatant). Since Fussell's landmark publication, scholars have looked for definitions of war experience beyond that of the iconic foot soldier. Scholars have broadened the scope to include non-combatants and have devoted considerable interest to exploring women's war experiences (though still primarily from British and/or cross-cultural perspectives).[1] Yet, particularly for American literature, the works encompassed by this more inclusive approach to the experience of war have not yet been fully explored. In this dissertation, I reassess an overlooked segment of literary history—American women's war fiction—

examined through its immediate engagement with the political history of the Great War as it unfolded.

Though American women produced ample war-related fiction, because of its popular as opposed to literary nature, this body of writing has suffered from the same dismissal as has the popular fiction generated by America's Civil War. As recent scholarship redressing the Civil War's reputation as "America's unwritten war" has demonstrated, the distinctions between the "popular" versus the "literary" are contestable. Furthermore, to exclude works of one category and focus exclusively on the other is to minimize the diversity of war's political and social meanings.[2] In this study, I disregard the impulse to disqualify works which exhibit propagandist overtones and have focused on deliberately "pro-war" novels. I define "pro-war" as a position which encouraged American intervention in the European conflict even during a period of neutrality, actively endorsed American war efforts during the period of military engagement, and ultimately advocated a positive legacy of the war in its aftermath. Because these novels employed sentiment to praise rather than condemn what was ultimately an unpopular war, they have been readily dismissed from formal consideration of America's literary record of the First World War. However, while the novels clearly celebrate American intervention, how they generate pro-war sentiment is often more complex than what we expect of propaganda. Novels inherently allow for a greater degree of ambiguity than shorter works, which is useful when approaching these texts as significant insights into complicated questions of American sensibilities during the war.

The writers I consider are Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, Sylvia Chatfield Bates, Willa Cather, Alice French (Octave Thanet), Ethel May Kelley, Grace Sartwell

Mason, Margaret Prescott Montague, Irene Nylen, Hetty Lawrence Hemenway, and Edith Wharton. With the notable exceptions of Cather and Wharton (and possibly French), they are largely obscure figures; in many cases, little of their individual biographies can be ascertained. Some were successful career writers in their day with long publication histories that included frequent contributions to literary magazines; others wrote very little, if anything, beyond the texts considered here. All works that are part of this study share a deliberate use of the war as subject matter, are works of fiction, and though several are quite short, all were published in book form. Taken as a whole, these narratives are concerned with the experiences of expressly middle- to upper-class Anglo-Americans. In these novels, Americans from lower socio-economic backgrounds, differing racial backgrounds, and/or of recent immigrant parentage are—if represented at all—employed merely to showcase the superiority of the Anglo-American protagonists. White middle-class authors had the necessary access to the literary market and the readership to explore the impact of the war in the immediacy of the historical moment. While other groups, such as African Americans, were equally invested in the war's significance for their own community and for the country as a whole, they lacked the privileges enjoyed by white American writers. As such, the works considered here speak to the experience of one specific group of Americans. The unique circumstances facing other communities of Americans during the Great War are therefore beyond the scope of this project.

I rely on several critical interpretations of both the war and the writing it generated. First, I invoke a history of the United States and its relationship to the Great War that foregrounds the nation's distinctness from those of its European counterparts

and demonstrates how these novels participated in the ongoing cultural concerns of the moment. These historical contexts allow for the consideration of the texts addressed in terms of their political and social relevance at the time of publication rather than their aesthetic palatability nearly a hundred years later. Second, I draw from recent scholarship that emphasizes a broader definition of "war literature;" specifically that which incorporates the perspectives of noncombatants, primarily women.

By understanding the First World War as a "total war," that is, one which depended on civilians and soldiers in equal, or near equal, turn, scholars have recovered women's war experiences alongside those of male combatants. Gender was a major factor in determining how the conflict was experienced and understood; many American women believed that, as mothers (or potential mothers), they had a "special relationship to war" (Steinson 384). While women relied heavily on their gendered identities in articulating the rationale for the political positions they occupied, gender can be a problematic basis for categorization as is evidenced by fact that women joined as disparate an assortment of groups as peace, preparedness, relief, and suffrage organizations in response to the First World War. Couched in a rhetoric of motherhood, the debate over American intervention in the European war continually reinvented the inherent impulses of the maternal in support of various agendas. Maternal instincts were evoked to justify pacifism (no mother wishes for the death of her own, or another mother's, son), preparedness (all mothers naturally wish to protect the safety of their homes), and patriotism (all mothers had an instinctive impulse to sacrifice on behalf of her country).

Given America's unique entry into the war, and its social, political, and cultural aims, American war literature should be examined within the context of its own literary and political history rather than solely in comparison to British and European war literature. Cross-cultural study has its merits, particularly in a global context of a world war, but the long tradition of overlooking or oversimplifying American literary responses to the Great War means that a distinct record of American response is still lacking in our cultural memory. To address this absence, each chapter begins with an extended historical overview of events pertaining to the military, political, and social circumstances of the time period. Subsequently, each chapter considers a selection of women's popular fiction written and published during this historical timeframe. I examine how American women's popular fiction mobilized sentiment in support of the war before, during, and after American intervention. Beginning in 1914 when the war broke out while an apprehensive America watched from across the Atlantic, and continuing through to 1922, by which time the major memorials of the war were completed, women writers published novels centered on the war and enlisting support for the cause. How that cause was understood varied according to the historical moment. Tracing the events of the war alongside literary output provides a trajectory of how perception of the war evolved year by year. In his study of American poetry during the Great War, Mark Van Wienen argues that a chronological approach to considering American war poetry "highlights the ebb and flow of politics, history, and authors' responses to contemporary events" (*Rendezvous* 24). At times, these women authors occupied positions in conflict with official political policy (as in the period of neutrality); in others, their positions coincided with political policy (as during the period of

belligerency). Identifying the nuances of the United States' shifting political stance informs our reading of popular fiction as invested in and shaped by the historical context in which it was written and published.

Additionally, because American policy shifted so radically during a short period of time, the historical focus on specific time periods allows for a more nuanced reading of the texts, one that takes into account the historical specificity that prompted creative works. Many of the novels considered in this study appeared first in magazines, underscoring their relevance in the immediacy of the moment. Finally, the historical framework provided at the start of each chapter addresses the official role of women in relationship to the war. Like the nation as a whole, women's relationship to the European war underwent significant reinvention. Initially embracing an identity as natural pacifists, many women first met the war as staunch advocates of neutrality and mediation. By the time of American intervention, many had reinvented their gender to signify not pacifism but patriotic militarism and sacrifice. The novels considered here reflect this shift.

In five chapters, this dissertation covers the years 1914-1922, and explores the shifting political and ideological stances over the course of those eight years. Chapter One, "The War 'Over There': American Neutrality to Limited Preparedness; 1914-1916," covers America's initial response to the conflict. Chapter Two, "Mobilizing for War: Crafting American Belligerency; 1917," focuses on the process of mobilization after America's declaration of war in the spring of 1917. The third chapter, "Waging an American War; 1917-1918," spans the brief period of time during which Americans were actively at war from April 1917 through November of 1918. Chapter Four, "Return to Normalcy: Demobilization and Post-Armistice America; 1919-1920," considers the

process of demobilization and post-Armistice America. The final chapter, "Remembering the Great War; 1921-1922," examines the period of memorialization and commemoration during which the major war monuments were erected and memorial ceremonies performed. To explore some of the complexities that result from the confluence of literature and propaganda, I have engaged in close readings of the texts that look to moments of ambiguity, uncertainty, and mixed messages to reveal how American women were grappling with the challenges of the war while trying to enlist support for the cause.

This is a reclamation project that examines the kind of war writing directly at odds with the conventional cultural legacy of the Great War as a failure of civilization. In part, the sentiment conveyed in these works results from the fact that they were written as the war unfolded and with its final outcome still unclear. By including representations of the war caught in the moment as part of the cultural legacy of the Great War, we acknowledge that for many Americans, the conflict was understood in terms of its potential, not its ultimate failure. This study of American women's popular war fiction provides an opportunity to examine how America's road to, through, and out of the Great War was full of the complexities of a nation about to leave the security of an isolationist foreign policy and adopt a new role in the Western world.

[1] See for instance: Goldman, Dorothy, Jane Gledhill, and Judith Hattaway. *Women Writers and the Great War*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995. Print.; Grayzel, Susan R. *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War*. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. Print.; Higonnet, Margaret R. *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*. New

Haven: Yale UP, 1987. Print.; Potter, Jane. *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women's Literary Responses to the Great War, 1914-1918*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005. Print.; Raitt, Suzanne, and Trudi Tate. *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Print.

[2] See for example: Diffley, Kathleen E. *Where My Heart Is Turning Ever: Civil War Stories and Constitutional Reform, 1861-1876*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. Print.; Fahs, Alice. *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North & South, 1861-1865*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Print.; Masur, Louis P. *The Real War Will Never Get in the Books: Selections from Writers During the Civil War*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.

CHAPTER ONE

The War "Over There": American Neutrality to Limited Preparedness; 1914-1916

European-authored war stories often recount the initial excitement that greeted the outbreak of the Great War, describing a naïve populace eagerly anticipating danger devoid of its consequence and heroism without its prerequisite peril. Emotionally, socially, culturally, and politically, Europe of 1914 thought itself ready for this war. The conflict had been fermenting for years in an environment of distrust and resentment between neighboring nations. As the events of the Great War unfurled on a distant horizon, Americans too participated in this act of meaning-making. Not steeped in Europe's cultural and political imbroglio, and with the battlefields at an ocean's length from their shores, however, Americans approached the war's meaning in a different way than their European counterparts, imbuing it with their own American point of view. Whereas the "discourse of national necessity" had already been invoked in Austria-Hungary, Serbia, Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, and Belgium at the time of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination, Americans had no such framework in place (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 18). Instead, they relied on perceptions of an inherently flawed Europe, rationalizing the war as "confirming the general degradation of Europe's political and social systems" (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 19). Consider, for instance, the message to the American people William Howard Taft published in the *Independent* only days after the domino-effect declarations of war were made across Europe's major political powers. In his message, Taft attempted to provide his former constituency with an explanation for the baffling overseas outburst of martial fervor. First citing the mysterious ways of God,

Taft continued, “The armaments of Europe had been growing heavier and heavier, bankruptcy has stared many of the nations in the face, conflict between races had begun to develop” (Taft 199). Thus, Taft invited Americans to understand the European war as an inevitable reaction to the unsustainable European political, economic and social climate, one that was ripe for upheaval. He further encouraged readers to understand the war as an opportunity for Europe to vanquish these corrupt systems and allow a newly-formed modern Europe to rise from its ashes. Taft was the first American political figurehead to suggest that the war had the potential to be “the last great war,” a sentiment that would evolve into the popular and ultimately tragically deluded slogan “the war to end all wars” (199).

A week later, President Woodrow Wilson was setting the course of American neutrality, one that extended beyond dictating the terms of civilian action to regulating how civilians allowed themselves to think of the conflict. “The United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name during these days that are to try men’s souls,” Wilson remarked in his message to the United States Congress on August 18, 1914. “We must be impartial in thought as well as in action…” (Harper 96). Compelled to articulate just what the conflict engulfing Europe meant—or might mean—to the country, Wilson proposed that “the effect of the war upon the United States will depend upon what American citizens say and do. Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned” (Harper 95). Wilson’s address is significant in several ways. First, it downplayed the impact external forces were likely to have on the country, instead locating the ramifications of the war as entirely dependent on the response of the

American people. The assertion of self-determination posited Americans as deciders of their own fate regardless of the situation around them and this sense of imperturbable insularity was essential to minimizing any threat the war may have presented which would compromise a position of neutrality. Second, Wilson's advocacy for neutrality was rooted in the belief that doing so was the only way to maintain control over the situation. Not only was America unthreatened by the events abroad, but the country, by virtue of its neutrality, was also in a position of power.

It is tempting to consider war, defined in feminist scholarship as a "gendering activity," as a particular context in which the two sexes are artificially divided into the (conventionally male) battlefront and the (conventionally female) homefront.[1] Even while maintaining a political position of neutrality, however, American society already faced a distinct separation between the sexes. Women exploded into the public sphere during the years of the First World War, in the form of campaigns for and against women's suffrage, war relief work, campaigns for peace and for preparedness, and in the newly created female workforce. In some capacity, the war provided the impetus and the justification for their engagement in the public sphere. But this surge in public activity by women was often distinct from similar male endeavors. The Women's Peace Party (WPP), for example, deliberately settled on an all-female membership. Rationalizing the establishment of a separate woman's peace organization in 1915 despite a preexisting but male-dominated peace movement, one leader cited the "unwillingness of established peace societies to serve as vehicles for the expression of women's attitudes towards war" (Steinson 41). Warfare may have been considered a predominantly male endeavor, but women saw their role as integral in determining the value and appropriateness of war;

"many women justified their wartime endeavors by declaring that they had a special relationship to war—an argument based on the traditional view of women as the nurturing, mothering, and protective sex" (Steinson i). Thus, even before the nation was split into battlefront and homefront, gender had already been established as a vital component to understanding American citizens' responses to war.

Conventionally construed, this ideology of nurture suggests that for women, the only appropriate reaction to impending war was pacifism, and in fact, at first, pacifism was American women's immediate and widely-held response to the conflict. According to Van Wienen, the first wartime demonstration in the U.S., a peace march in New York City comprised of fifteen hundred women and children marching down Fifth Avenue on August 29, 1914, represented a "nationwide pacifism" that greeted the opening months of the European war (*Rendezvous* 52). But as the war progressed women would revisit and recreate the traditional ideology regarding woman's natural role to support a multitude of positions, whether pacifism, preparedness, or intervention. While scholars have often pointed to the Woman's Peace Parade as a significant moment of women's engagement with the war, the coalition of women's groups that comprised the parade, which included leaders from suffragist groups, settlement house workers, society ladies, women's club officers, and leaders of the Woman's Trade Union League, would dissolve shortly after the march, as individual female activists turned to diverse and often conflicting wartime activities. As Trudi Tate and Suzanne Raitt discuss in the introduction to their own study of women's writings of the Great War, no definition of a "woman" or "woman's view" even in a fixed moment in history is universally applicable; "women, like men, occupy a range of political, philosophical, and aesthetic positions" (2). Thus, rather than proving

that women were univocal when it came to their response to the war, the Woman's Peace Parade demonstrates instead that as early as 1914, "women's sentiments were going to be expressed regardless of the nature of their wartime commitment" (Steinson 13).

War sentiments, especially in geographically-removed America where the war had a more figurative than literal presence before intervention, were themselves in constant flux. Wilson's call to an unprecedented kind of national action—that of a rigorous neutrality of thought and undertaking—ultimately proved untenable, however, despite the country's distance from the battlefields. In early September of 1914, a *New York Times* editorial confidently claimed that "the good sense of the American people will compel the preservation of strict neutrality to the end" ("The Press Agents War" 8). But having surveyed the American poetic output of the early war years, Mark Van Wienen concludes that Wilson's request for neutrality was a decided failure, noting that the years of 1914-16 were a time during which "American citizens and poets alike…became passionately engaged" in the European war (*Rendezvous* 11). Though the war was not so instantly a compelling subject of fiction writing for Americans as it was for their European counterparts, Americans did begin publishing war novels as early as 1914.[2] Once the war became a subject for fictional narratives, neutrality became untenable in fictional representations of the conflict. To Wilson, the Great War had the potential to reposition the nation in the global arena of the 20th century—on that much Wilson and war fiction were agreed. But the war narratives wanted to engage with the war. To do so in a compelling way involved raising the stakes beyond a cautious neutrality and choosing sides, though those sides were often not as simply defined as Central Powers versus Allies.

Just as not all women came to the same political and philosophical position, the positions women writers held regarding the conflict were often being renegotiated, revised, and reconciled, the traces of which are embedded in their narratives. Taft's notion of a redemptive rebirth of Europe through conflict was one especially influential belief that resonated powerfully through the women's war stories, though they were less concerned with Europe's waywardness as with the potential political and social upheaval war suggested for American society. Fittingly, the settings of the novels themselves suggest transition and movement; generally, they invoke a journey—whether physical or spiritual—from homefront to battlefront to homefront again in their portrayal of American war experience. In her bibliography of twentieth-century American women's fiction, Susanne Carter identifies a prevalent theme of war as an enriching experience, particularly for young men. This sense of war and combat as an instructive, formative experience extends beyond the edification of the soldiers themselves to a claim of a rebirth on a larger scale. Carter cites Dorothy Canfield Fisher's "Vignettes from Life at the Rear," in which a soldier explains "When a mother gives birth to a child, she suffers, suffers horribly. Perhaps all the world is now trying to give birth to a new idea" (qtd. in Carter 8). The framing of this argument through female terms of labor, birth and motherhood gestures toward the vitally significant role motherhood would have in shifting discussions of American women's relationship to war during the First World War, one reflected and debated in the stories women crafted.

This chapter examines three of the earliest pro-war novels by American women: *The Three Things: The Forge in Which the Soul of a Man was Tested* (1915) by Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, *Of Water and the Spirit* (1916) by Margaret Prescott

Montague, and *The Vintage* (1916) by Sylvia Chatfield Bates. As nurturers of "patriotic culture," the works of writers such as Andrews, Montague, and Bates can retrospectively be contextualized within the "social hegemony" of the era, one "characterized by a strident and expansionist nationalism abroad and an often intolerant political conservatism at home" (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 13). But as Van Wienen argues, this particular position as it emerged during the Great War was very much a "work-in-progress" over the course of the war years, and further, "hegemony is always a work in progress" (*Partisans* 13-14). In a time when pacifism was understood as the appropriately patriotic response to the European conflict, texts supporting American intervention helped establish a citizenry that, once united, could voice an alternative patriotic sentiment which favored mobilization and intervention. In these three texts, the vehicle for the group's self-definition was often motherhood. While both Andrews and Bates focused their narratives on young men, behind these protagonists are influential and wise maternal figures, like the protagonist of Montague's work. These three stories illustrate how women did not feel themselves excluded from discussions concerning the nature and consequence of war, but rather saw themselves at the heart of these shifting and often contentious debates.

The Forge of War

The first American war novel written by a woman was Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' 1915 publication, *The Three Things: The Forge in Which the Soul of a Man was Tested*. Andrews' story narrates the moral education of a wealthy, twenty-three year-old American man after volunteering with the British army and fighting in Belgium.

Elitist (he refers to the working class as the "great unwashed"), bigoted (Germans are "a nation of swine" and the "race of *canaille*"), and an atheist (he declares himself a "plain unbeliever") Philip Landicutt overcomes all three failings as a result of his war experience. *The Three Things* was first published in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, suggesting that Andrews' interpretation of the Great War likely found resonance in the mainstream American readership of the moment. Fittingly, given the debates surrounding the war in 1915, *The Three Things*' enthusiasm for war is unselfconsciously muddled, at times expressing nearly contradictory impulses as the narrative struggles to encompass issues of neutrality, pacifism, interventionism, and war fervor in equal turn. Andrews' would become an established voice in American pro-war literature during and immediately following the war years. She returned to the subject of the Great War repeatedly in her fiction, and consistently expressed an unyielding conviction that the war provided an opportunity to better the American people. Yet here, in 1915, Andrews had to engage with the ideas surrounding the war, and the tension between her pro-war sentiments alongside Wilsonian advocacy of neutrality and women's agitation for continuous mediation and pacifism belies the ambivalence at the heart of the American's response to the war. In *The Three Things*, these conflicting but coexisting ideologies are portrayed through the relationship between Margaret, the mother, and Philip, her son.

The novel opens with Margaret passively playing audience to Philip's most recent tirade about the barbarianism of the Germans (the narrator's tone suggests that there have been many preceding such denunciations, though, as the story is set in August of 1914, Philip's anti-German outbursts are likely to have been a recent development). The first line of dialogue in the story is Margaret's interruption of her son's diatribe with the

reminder that "The President asked us…to be neutral" (1). As the story's opening line of dialogue, Margaret's evocation of Wilson's advocacy of American neutrality is particularly interesting, especially since the novel's plot serves as direct rejection of Wilson's neutrality of "thought" and "action." Philip's opening tirade against the Germans ends with a predictable plea that his mother grant him permission to enlist with the British. Margaret's objections to Philip's request are a direct echo of the rationale Wilson provided to his nation for remaining removed from the hostilities. The reason for staying neutral, according to Wilson's address, was that America's "duty as the one great nation at peace," is to be "the one people holding itself ready to play a part of impartial mediation and speak the counsels of peace and accommodation" (Di Nunzio 390). When Philip protests that it would be cowardly not to intervene on behalf of England, France, Russia and Belgium, Margaret responds, "It is honorable, it is right, to keep our country safe; to keep sane the only great country that is not in this madness. We must be the nucleus of a made-over world" (8). The question and the point of dispute at this moment is not whether the war in Europe is or is not "our war." Rather, it is a question of what role America should take in the conflict. As Margaret's comment reveals, Americans did not see the war as wholly unrelated to their own future; neutrality was not disinterest. Instead, some—Wilson among them—envisioned the war as an invitation to Old World Europe to upend their outdated regimes and establish a modern Europe with American democratic and capitalistic values as its model, thus positioning America as the center of a new world order.[3]

Margaret's response to her son's bellicose fervor is significant in how it reveals the gender dynamics at play in America of 1914-15. Though she is barely present beyond

the opening few pages of the novel (and returns briefly at the end for Philip's homecoming), Margaret is clearly held up as the best of American womanhood. The only daughter of a poor English valet, Margaret reaped the benefits of her father's rise first to monetary affluence as a successful oil baron in America and then to social prominence as a member of American aristocracy. Margaret's father's dreams of achieving aristocratic status are realized when Margaret marries into the wealthy "born to the purple" Landicutt family (4). Though Andrews' story ultimately functions as a didactic tale of how a young man is bettered through his experience of war and clearly advocates on behalf of American intervention as opposed to neutrality, Margaret's neutrality is never actually criticized (not by her son, or by Andrews, or presumably by the readers). This unacknowledged tension in the narrative is significant in revealing how gender shaped discussions of how men and women were thought to respond to war in 1914-15, a time when women's pacifism was deemed a natural component of their gender. Margaret serves both as the voice of Wilson's neutrality and as the moral center of the novel. Her character is drawn directly from the debates surrounding women's relationship to war in terms of their identities as mothers, which in 1914-15 were configured as essentially pacifist; a telegraphic campaign financed by Clara Jane Bryant (Henry Ford's wife) sent twelve thousand telegrams stating "We work for peace. The mothers of America pray for it," to President Wilson from women across the country (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 70). In advocating for peace, Margaret asks her son, "Who's to feed the starving, who are to be the peacemakers, if we go mad too?" (8). Her concern to "keep our country safe" and to aid those in need echo the sentiments American women celebrated in the early war years (8).

Philip's character, however, follows a second line of reasoning in regards to how Americans, drawing from Wilson's own espoused ideologies, understood the purpose and effect of the European war. Philip must experience conflict in order to overcome his failings in the same manner Americans deemed Europe's devolution into war necessary in order to make way for a new, just rule of law. Of the three personal failings Philip possesses, overcoming his bigotry is the most interesting when considering the book as a war story. While convalescing in a field hospital, Philip witnesses a wounded German soldier put his own health at risk in order to help Philip recover a letter that had fallen to the floor. When the nurse angrily reprimands the German, his whispered explanation is simply that "The boy wanted—his mother's letter" (42). The encounter, combined with his newly-restored Christian faith and the memory of his mother's gracious belief in the possibility of a "good German," forces Philip to rescind his earlier conception of the Germans as barbarians (43). After his initial cold thanks, masking his surprise and confusion, Philip offers his hand to the German baron in friendship. The handshake between the two characters was, Andrews writes, "not for time, perhaps, but for a peaceful eternity" (45). With the establishment of Germans as equally capable of heroism and compassion, and a newly instated communion between formerly "alien enem[ies]," Andrews' novel effectively unravels the spool of anti-German propaganda (43). For the purposes of Andrews' didactic plot, all that matters in this moment is that Philip moves closer to Margaret's worldview. But as a novel urging American intervention, the narrative's negation of the Germans as an external menace necessitates an identification of an enemy within, drawing readers' attention to Philip's internal struggle.

Once the negation of the Germans as enemy is established, Andrews even incorporates a pacifist response to the war. After his encounter with the German officer, Philip befriends another German soldier. This adolescent soldier admits to being proud to have served "the Fatherland" but concedes sheepishly that the "terrible noise and dirt and blood [of war] to me seem ugly. Also not useful. I hate it. It is heavenly to think that I may honorably go back to the mother and the farm and the little sister" (46). Philip makes no comment on the young German soldier's remark and the narrative quickly moves Philip from his honorable discharge in England to America where Philip intends to devote the remainder of his life to social work. Though the aborted conversation about the futile nature of war does not prompt further reflection on the subject, it provides a space for the pacifism which so largely comprised Americans' early response to the war. When reunited with his mother, Philip admits to her, "Meggy, the three things which I specified as being different forever for you and me — I've come around to you on all of them. […] I paid — fairly high for that lesson" (49). The unspoken fourth issue of contention between mother and son, that of neutrality versus belligerency, is never directly engaged, though presumably the now matured Philip shares to some extent the pacifism espoused by the young homesick German.

Though the cause for going to war itself is dubious given the honorableness of the Germans in the narrative, there is no doubt of the transformative qualities of war experience: "[Philip's] young bloom gone, [with] jaw squared, lean cheeks colorless, hollow eyes shining with a new look, intense, at peace; [his] soul had come into its own" (49). Here—as she will do repeatedly over the next few years—Andrews invites her readers to imagine the educative and morally refining impact war experience will have

for Americans. As this story demonstrates however, this knowledge is hardly new to Americans, nor is a battlefield in Europe the only place for its acquisition. After all, Philip goes to war and comes out of it with the exact same knowledge and wisdom that Margaret evidently possessed from the novel's first page. The reader is left with the impression that Philip could have saved himself a good deal of trouble had he simply been more receptive to his mother's insights.

This, of course, forms the crux of Andrews' pro-war sentiment as it functions in this story. Andrews suggests that neutrality is appropriate for women who have finer sensibilities of caring and nurturing, but may not be applicable to young men like Philip. The story functions as war propaganda through its urging of American mothers to take Margaret as their example. Margaret, who is "generous enough to look for good in all humanity, even in the Germans" (9), is swayed to allow her son to enlist not because she believes the war means what Philip initially believes it does—a battle between civilization and barbarianism—but because she concedes that "the boy must live his own life" (10). As Philip waits for his mother's response, Margaret muses, "What right had she to keep him? Who knew what was waiting of strength and illumination on this road which he strained at the leash to follow? Likely death was waiting; not the less it was his life" (10). Margaret accepts that Philip cannot see the world (and therefore the war) as she does, and she believes that his experience—though it may prove fatal—will also be enlightening. As a comfort to mothers like Margaret who recoiled at the thought of relinquishing their sons (described as "comrades" and "lovers") the narrator offers that Margaret's revelation was "what perhaps most women whose boys go to war must feel: a sense of the incidental quality of human life. What are a few years more or less if one

plays the game? A great thing like a son was not given for mere years; she and Phil were to go on…for eternity" (10). The reward for American mothers who permit their sons to go to war despite their own natural pacifism was that their sons, like Philip, may return to them more akin to them than they were before their soldiering experience. In Andrews' narrative, war may physically separate the sexes, but ultimately brings the two closer together in ideological sensibility.

American Spinsters on the Battlefront

As the war progressed, news of the atrocities of modern combat intruded on the populace, dispelling hopes of a swift and painless resolution to the conflict. In January 1915, the Germans orchestrated a Zeppelin air raid on England, arguably the first act which redefined the conflict in terms of "total war;" that is, war in which civilians in addition to combatants are targeted. In April, outside of Ypres, the Germans used gas for the first time, a new and brutal way to kill which, once introduced, was used by both sides. Then, in May, a German U-boat sank the Lusitania killing 1,198 civilians, including 128 Americans. Thus, by 1916, even to a politically neutral nation watching the conflict from a distance, the unparalleled brutality of the war had become clear, as had the reality that neutral or not, the country would feel the ramifications. With the burgeoning pressure of the European war confronting the nation, President Wilson secured reelection in November of that year, running on the campaign slogan "He kept us out of the war." Other scholars have effectively dismantled the phrase, noting both its implied passivity which made it an unlikely rallying cry, and even more significantly, the slogan's complete silence on the president's inclinations for future policies. Wilson's

speeches may have still maintained that the United States was "too proud to fight," and that "There is such a thing as a nation being so right it does not need to convince people by force what is right," but clearly the tenor of the national discourse was moving in another direction (Wilson, *Politics* 253).

In May of 1916, with the United States' entry into the First World War still nearly a year away, Margaret Prescott Montague published her story *Of Water and the Spirit* first in the *Atlantic Monthly* and as a book later that same year. *Of Water and the Sprit* is a curious tale about a middle-aged American spinster named Sadie Virginia Smithson. During a trip to Europe that coincides with the opening weeks of the war, Sadie is unexpectedly stranded in the remnants of a recent battleground somewhere between Brussels and Paris. She spends a day and a night single-handedly tending to wounded British soldiers, ceaselessly carrying cupfuls of water to each injured soldier from a nearby stream until a medical unit arrives on the scene at daybreak. When asked how she came to be alone in the midst of a battlefield, she replies, "'I'm Miss Smithson—Sadie Virginia Smithson—an' I've been holdin' Hell back all night" (54). On the sea voyage back to America, Sadie, now burdened and enlightened by her haunting experience, tells her story of transformation to a younger (unnamed) American listener, who serves as the story's first person narrator and as the consciousness of the American reader of 1916. Sadie explains to the narrator that her motivations for her trip to Europe were borne out of a petty desire to gain social prestige in her hometown of Johnson's Falls, West Virginia. Her experience tending to the wounded on the battlefield has wrought a spiritual and physical change upon her, however, and Sadie ultimately dismisses her previous ambitions as insignificant and unworthy compared to the lesson of spirituality and self-

sacrifice. The anonymous narrator remarks, “all the old lines of the face were set to small ambitions and sordid desires, but the look which should have accompanied these lines was clean gone—wiped into something big and still and simple” (4).

Just what kind of war-related ideology drives Montague’s story is difficult to determine. Though the Germans remain at a greater distance here than they did in Andrews’ work, they do not provide much of a menace, at least not in a personal way. Stranded in Brussels at the time of the German invasion, Sadie recalls, “It certainly was a sight to see ‘em—but I ain’t goin’ to tell about that, I’m just goin’ to skip right along to what I set out to tell” (15). The deliberate interruption of Sadie’s description suggests that Montague is purposefully turning the reader’s attention away from the notion of enemy combatants so as to avoid distraction; the heart of Sadie’s story lies elsewhere. Similarly, Montague does not appear to be concerned with drumming up an ethos of solidarity between Americans and the people of the Allied nations. In 1919, Montague would be awarded an O. Henry award for her story “England to America,” a tale which serves as a very deliberate effort of reassuring an American readership of the mutual sympathy and respect between the two allied nations. Here, however, though the soldiers Montague encounters on the battlefield are brave and grateful, their identity as British men is insignificant to the story; Sadie describes them most often as “poor soul[s]” and her connection to them has nothing to do with her or their nationality (40).

In its descriptive horrors of the needless suffering of those wounded on the battlefield, the story could be deemed pacifist. Montague’s descriptions of the soldier’s wounds are harrowing especially as told from the perspective of a sheltered “middle-aged mouse” who, back home, was afraid of thunderstorms (4). On her way to and from the

stream, Sadie steps on something "soft" only to discover that it was "just a piece of a man" (31). Later, Sadie stumbles upon a soldier, so gravely wounded he cannot take the water she has to offer. She recollects, "The man's face was all gone—eyes, mouth, everything,—an' still he was alive. He must have heard me an' known somebody was there, for he commenced to scream an' moan, tryin' to say things down in his throat, an' to reach out his hands an' flop about—O my God! It was like a chicken with its head off!" (37). There is no purpose to offset the suffering of the men around her; neither the narrative itself nor Sadie provide any cause to justify the agony and death of the men strewn across the battlefield. Their location is left unidentified—they are anonymous players in some unnamed (and insignificant) battle.[4] Sadie has witnessed Belgium invaded, but unlike Philip Landicutt who describes the country as "little, martyred Belgium" (Andrews 8), there is no emotion connected specifically to the invasion. Rather, the circumstances of the world at war as a whole are described as "mad" and "crazy," and time spent amidst all the suffering threatens to turn those exposed to "raving manic[s]" (7, 14, 24).

Despite the horrors of the battlefield, and the absence of any redeeming purpose to the sacrifice of lives and limbs and sanity of the wounded soldiers, however, the narrative trajectory of Montague's story precludes reading it as a pacifist text, or even one that espouses American neutrality. Though the young narrator to whom Sadie tells her story is yet uninitiated to the strife of the Great War, Montague's sentiments are evident from the first page: Still unconnected to the European conflict, the American passengers of 1914 "were churning through an extraordinarily blue ocean toward New York and peace, while back there, just over our shoulders, a mad world was running red"

(7). By the time of the story's initial publication in 1916, on the anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the evocation of American citizens blithely traversing the Atlantic would undoubtedly have raised the specter of that sunken ship and the heightened concern of the now imperiled seas. Furthermore, as the story demonstrates, the carefree attitude of homebound Americans of 1914 leaves them vulnerable to the same small and petty impulses that guided Sadie's life before her night on the battlefield. This vulnerability comprises the actual danger and antagonistic force of the story. For though Sadie's descriptions of the wounded soldiers elicits pity in the readers, it does not necessarily follow that the narrative's purpose is to enrage Americans at the barbarity of the Germans, nor to commiserate with the British to a degree where American intervention is the only honorable way forward. Montague's story does however attempt to spur America to intervention by showing what the nation's citizenry had to gain, and—even more promisingly—to lose by such involvement. By shedding her small-minded desires, Sadie transforms into a wise and powerful woman, an obvious metaphor for the transformation that awaited the entire nation.

The experience Sadie describes makes demands on her person on a very visceral level and exerts a physicality from her that seems jarringly out of place in her sheltered life. When the concerned driver of her traveling party attempts to cajole Sadie back into the car rather than leave her behind, Sadie tells him "if you try to put me back in that car I'll fight you like a wildcat," and admits to the listener, "I never did anything like that,—fightin' I mean…but I would have then, an' I reckon they knew it" (23). She describes her response to encountering the British soldiers as that of being "cut," and "choked" (20). Later she recalls, "When they'd scream, I felt like I'd tear my heart out to help 'em"

(47). A gravely wounded man grips her wrists so firmly that a vivid black and blue mark remained for the story's narrator to observe long after Sadie's night on the battlefield. Sadie explains, "But I was glad to be hurt—I *wanted* to be hurt. I wanted to have a share in all the sufferin'" (39-40). Sadie discovers the antidote to bearing witness to the suffering is involvement. Aside from carrying cups of water to each wounded soldier, she bandaged their wounds, tried to cushion their heads, and took dictation for letters to their families in her journal book. She explains, "Doin' things seemed to ease up a little that terrible rage of pity I felt" (36). To Sadie, being left alone on the battlefield was the moment she "touched bottom" and regained her footing. She remarks, "I reckon a woman does touch bottom when there's anything she can do—anyhow, one raised to work like I've been, does" (26-7).

Certainly, Montague's sense of combat and suffering as lending themselves to great insights and serving as catalysts for the enlightenment of humanity echoes the same beliefs conveyed by Andrews in *The Three Things*. Like Philip Landicutt, who overcomes his moral shortcomings as a result of his war experience, Sadie's war experience brings her to a new level of humanity. And interestingly, Montague's story does not share Andrews' complacency that American womanhood is already enlightened, suggesting instead that women are governed by other impulses less pure and caring. After all, as she confesses to her listener, Sadie was driven to Europe in the first place by her worldly desire of gaining admission to the prestigious local women's club, the Laurel Literary Society. As the granddaughter of a carpenter, and a dressmaker by trade, she was not invited to join the society despite the fact that it had been started by women with whom she had been schoolmates. As Sadie explains the society's function and

significance, Montague highlights the elitism of the club and its effect on the story's protagonist:

> The members read papers and all like that, but it's a heap more'n that. Belongin' to it kind of marks a person out in Johnson's Falls and gives 'em the—the— well, I reckon you'd call it the *entray* to all the best homes in town. … when I wasn't asked to join—well, it just seemed to knock me right out. … Anyhow the slight of it got just fixed in my mind, an' I made a kind of a vow that I'd belong to that society some day if I *died* for it. (11-12).

To achieve her goal, Sadie saves diligently for twenty years, till in the summer of 1914, she can finance a trip to Belgium accompanied by a professor and his wife, and another female traveler. She presumes that that overseas travel—something few women had done in her hometown— would provide the substance for a paper compelling enough that she would be invited to read it at one of the society's meetings.

Though the Laurel Literary Society is a fictitious club, its emergence and import to the West Virginia community had a factual basis. At the turn of the century, middle and upper class women were joining flourishing women's clubs which catered to social reform issues as well as social clubs aimed at self-improvement. Barbara J. Steinson notes that while "these clubs have been criticized for their middle class exclusiveness and pretentions…they served as real forces for reform in many communities" (7). Of *Water and the Spirit* illustrates the importance of clubs in the mind of the protagonist, as well as their considerable shortcomings. While the story is set in 1914, with the war only newly arrived, women's social clubs would play a significant role in American women's

engagement with the war leading up to U.S. intervention, assisting with various forms of relief work and advocating for political agendas in relationship to the war. The General Federation of Women's Clubs, for instance, drifted gradually from a peace agenda to preparedness advocacy over the course of the early war years (Capozzola 89). To readers in 1916, a woman's engagement with the war was likely through a social club to which she belonged. But a general sense of ineffectualness pervaded the contributions of clubwomen; Christopher Capozzola notes, "Clubwoman professed their readiness to serve, but it remained unclear what precisely they proposed to do, especially in social clubs that had good intentions but little political experience" (90). Certainly, the women of the Laurel Literary Society would not have experienced the war as Sadie does, and their sacrifice of effort and labor would pale compared to hers. Whatever form the club's contributions to the war effort may have taken, women's clubs would still have to contend with the uncertain value of their efforts; "No one could quite decipher what women's wartime voluntarism was; since it wasn't work, they feared it might merely be leisure" (Capozzola 91). Considered within this historical framework, *Of Water and the Spirit* serves as a mild critique of the worldly impulses beneath the formation of these women's social clubs and questions effectiveness of the much touted war relief work many of the clubs had undertaken by 1916. When, after hearing of Sadie's adventure, the narrator remarks, "the Laurel Literary Society will be glad enough to have you belong to it now," Sadie vehemently rejects that such a "little old thing" could matter to her now (55).

Sadie's transformation takes the form then, not of working class West Virginian into socially prominent member of the community, but a far more profound journey of

spiritual significance. “It was like bein’ torn all to pieces and put together again different,” Sadie attempts to explain, and later she remarks, “I know I broke through into something bigger than I ever had been” (7, 40). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the importance notions of motherhood had in discussions of women’s relationship to war, Montague couches this transformation explicitly in terms of motherhood, although this unfolds somewhat strangely given that Sadie is a childless spinster. Sadie often describes the childishness of the men, citing both their trustingness and their helplessness and claims that on that night all of the men—“even the biggest an’ roughest of ‘em”— were like her own children in her heart (45). She explains that though she had “never known what it was to have children…bein’ so crazy with pity had stretched me up out of bein’ a scary old maid into bein’ a mother” (45). Much of Sadie’s reformation is credited to the renewal of her spirituality; at daybreak, she is awakened to God’s presence in the suffering of the men. She remarks, “Folks always talk like He was a father ‘way off in the sky, but I got to know that night that what was really God was something big an’ close right in your own heart, that was a heap more like a big mother” (51).

The complexity of Montague’s story defies an easy categorization of it as a piece of propagandistic war writing. For though she undoubtedly shares Andrews’ assessment that war provides the impetus for great moral and spiritual transformation, just what such a belief means in practice is harder to determine. In some ways the story advocates women’s war work, especially considering the import of the Laurel Literary Society to the story and the prominence of women’s clubs during the war years as avenues for women to participate in the war through relief work and political campaigning. After all, Sadie’s example makes plain that carrying some of the burden of the horror makes it

easier to bear the agony of the war. But on a practical level, Montague cannot suggest that all middle-aged American women follow in Sadie's footsteps and pack their bags for France in search of battlefields where they might lend their assistance. In the end, Sadie asserts, "nothin' [matters] but God an' love an' doin' things for folks. That was why I had to tell you [this story]" (56). But the effect of this story on the narrator, and just what is meant by "doin' things" beyond the parameters of Sadie's particular experience, remains unarticulated. What forms the heart of the narrative is not the practical tasks women could undertake as a result of the war, but the spiritual transformation in service of war that offers the potential to remove the small, petty worldly desires and leave in its place simply the sacred commitment to serving and caring for others. An American society comprised of women (and men) like Sadie Smithson would have overcome all "small ambitions" and "sordid desires" and would instead be "big and simple and still," like the look the awestruck narrator observes on Sadie's face (4).

Instilling Patriotism in the Home

By 1916, the political climate of the still officially neutral United States was changing in ways that profoundly reflected and shaped Americans' sense of their nation's relationship to the European war. The national strategy of neutrality for coping with the impeding external political forces was giving way to the bitterly contested but widely celebrated policy of limited preparedness. In the July 16, 1916 edition of *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, Uncle Sam made his first appearance, asking readers "What Are you Doing for Preparedness?" (Capozzola 3). As the poster of Uncle Sam suggests, American preparedness involved more than bolstering the readiness of the

armed forces to engage in battle. In 1916, Congress passed legislation to increase the U.S.'s navy, state guard, and standing army, but preparedness was more broadly invoked as an ideological mindset which Americans were invited (and eventually zealously encouraged) to adopt. The "general inculcation of military virtues" included an emphasis on "moral character," here signifying a willingness to pledge the "loyalty, labor, and strength of civilians as well as soldiers" (Van Wienen, *Rendezvous* 124). Christopher Capozzola argues that Americans framed their relationship to the state in terms of ongoing "obligation," one that encompassed the "civil, social, and even psychological." These intersecting obligations "energized, mobilized, and divided Americans during World War I" (6). War writing which emerged out of the climate of preparedness engages with the moral dimension of preparedness by highlighting how the common American family interprets the obligations of citizenship.

Preparedness was an especially important moment in the history of American women's response to the Great War. For one, it divided the peace workers; some believed it "irrelevant to the international mission" of mediation while others argued that the United States should have "clean hands" (Steinson 87). More significantly however, the issue of preparedness gave rise to a clearly defined opposition to the pacifism espoused by the Women's Peace Party. Following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May of 1915 and troubled by the vociferous public presence of the WPP as the defining voice in establishing American women's response to the war, non-pacifist minded women moved rapidly to organize campaigns in support of preparedness (Steinson 175). The first national preparedness organization to emerge, and one which would spur the creation of other similar groups, was the Women's Section of the Navy League in July of 1915. One

of the purported aims of the formation of the WSNL was to arouse patriotism in American women. WSNL members signed a pledge which included the statement: "In so far as I am able, I will make my home a center of American ideals and patriotism, and endeavor to teach the children in my care to cherish and revere our country and its history and to uphold its honor and fair repute in their generation" (qtd in Steinson 177). Though war narratives of 1916 may not evoke the WSNL—or similar preparedness group—by name, they nonetheless rely on the pledge's emphasis on instilling patriotic values and traditions in the home to guide the ethos of patriotic preparedness which drive the narratives. For while Van Wienen contends that "British and American cultures were overwhelmingly patriotic" at the time of the Great War, continued avowal of this commitment to patriotism was essential (*Rendezvous* 10). Patriotic preparedness roused such fervor amongst American women in particular likely because the initial pacifism, touted as essential to womanhood at the outset of the European conflict, had been American women's most visible and vocal response to the war.

Out of this climate emerged Sylvia Chatfield Bates' sole war story, *The Vintage*, first published in the July 1916 issue of the *Woman's Home Companion*. Although Bates' story features a male protagonist, it is largely concerned with how American women located themselves in terms of their obligations to their country. Significantly, Henry Colbrooke's life is profoundly shaped by the women around him—his grandmother Evelyn Colbrooke and his girlfriend, Lucy Ammerton. Disillusioned by "all sorts of modern things that Henry termed 'economic conditions' and 'customs of the country,'" Henry starts the novel denouncing American patriotism and reverence for the flag much to his grandmother's and would-be fiancée's regret (4). Henry's education, his reading of

"'deep' books," urges him to hold "aloof, in disgust, in utter condemnation, from things [Lucy] had been taught to respect" (5). The central tension of the story emerges when Lucy refuses to accept Henry's marriage proposal despite her love for him because of his lack of respect for his country. She tells a stunned Henry, "You spoil my world for me. … I—why I love this country, and the flag of this country. I — I couldn't love a person—who would say—such things!" (12). Grandmother Evelyn intervenes, giving Henry letters his grandfather, a decorated captain, wrote to his wife during the Civil War (and in fact, the book's title is a reference to *The Battle-Hymn of the Republic*). After reading those letters, Henry comes to an understanding about his patriotic duty and recants his position on the American flag as a "worn-out fetish" (9). *The Vintage* makes no direct reference to the Great War at any point, making it a WWI novel only by virtue of the circumstances surrounding its publication. Its use of the Civil War makes it a distinctly American story, and thus demonstrates how Americans sought to make sense of the Great War using their own historical context.

Bates' use of the Civil War is further significant in that it deflects the readers' impulse to identify an antagonist. Because the evocations of the Civil War are imbued with the trauma resultant of a divided nation battling against each other, on a social and cultural level, the Civil War evokes the pain of casting a brother as an enemy. Grandfather Colbrooke remarks in a letter, "I wonder how it will feel to kill. I shall kill men. And I have just remembered, dear,—over each man I kill two people have felt at least part of what we feel about him. I really don't hate them at all" (23). The absence of a malevolent enemy in Colbrooke's historical present is carried over to Henry and the readers' contemporary context. Colbrooke's final letter does gesture to future conflict,

beseeching a future grandson (enter Henry) that if "war still lives in the world, if a foreign enemy should ever come, [then] let him give his arms and his heart to these United States" (48). That foreign enemy, however, is left entirely unrealized in the novel, existing only in the mind of the contemporary readership, who were left to configure that enemy however they chose. The antagonistic forces at play in the story Bates tells are confined to internal struggle for Henry's "heart and mind," so to speak.

The need to consciously instill patriotic values in the home, as articulated in the WSNL's pledge, suggests an anticipated resistance to such values. This conflict between displays of and resistance to patriotism in fact wholly comprises the scope of Henry's internal struggle. What might spur anti-patriotic sentiment at this moment of America's relationship to the war? Despite the atrocities overseas and the increased tension at home, America was undeniably also benefiting from the European war in a manner that challenged the adoption of moral righteousness upon which preparedness policy depended. As a neutral nation, the U.S. maintained trade relations with countries on both sides of the conflict (although favoring Allied countries). Historian Robert H. Zieger offers a blunt assessment: "The war…was good for business. For three years, the blood of Europe's youth nourished American industry and commerce. The United States became almost overnight a creditor nation while laying the foundation for becoming the 'heir to empire'" (xii). Even without the benefits of retrospection, the reality of America's war profiteering was obvious to Americans of 1916. In an essay published in the *Forum*, John Hays Hammond characterized the American war experience thus far:

> While Europe is…changing, we in the United States are going more or less blissfully forward to the accumulation of vast wealth—obtained not

> by our striking efficiency but because a large portion of the world has been taken from the mill and put in the trenches. Our present prosperity has come upon us as suddenly as summer rain and we have had as much to do with its coming as we have to do with the coming of the rain. (qtd. in Trask 49)

Some objected to profiting from war, particularly in light of the enormous loss of life—both soldier and civilian—in Europe and others questioned the moral righteousness on which America's superiority to her wayward European counterparts depended. In Bates' novel, Henry brazenly declares, "Look at the suffering, and sin, and dirt, and inequality! Think of the tricks and grabbing and piling up of vulgar dollars! And the hypocrisy! Lord! And the grinding down of those who are borne to the earth already with loads! Land of the free, is it? We lie when we get off that cant" (5). Through Henry's defiance of patriotism and rejection of any sense of obligation to his country, Bates gives voice to those who questioned America's war profiteering. Henry's resistance to participating in patriotic displays is disconcerting because by obvious extension it suggests an unwillingness to participate in patriotic (and military) service. Furthermore, the opening pages make clear that Henry is to be understood as a microcosm for an entire generation, and with that generation, an entire country. As Lucy observes her potential husband at the start of the novel, she considers that Henry might "mean all the future with its potential emotions; he might mean nothing. So delicate was the balance," and that "in this handsome, clear-eyed, sunny young man lay the culmination of the past, the sum of the future, of a splendid race" (2, 3). Henry's perspective is ominous for a nation poised on the brink of war, especially if shared across a generation of fighting age Americans.

At first considering himself enlightened beyond his grandmother's simple patriotism, and unquestioningly assuming Lucy shares his truth-seeing ability, Henry tells Lucy, "we of this generation, we've just got to look at things as they are!" (8-9). While the cause of Henry's disillusionment is never clearly articulated, he allays his discomfort paining both Lucy and his grandmother by asking himself "[Why should I] honor the flag of a country that makes money out of suffering?" (15). Like *The Three Things*, *The Vintage* is a *buildungsroman*, however, and Henry is forced to revaluate his informed-by-books beliefs in light of the feelings and sentiment his grandmother and Lucy offer. Thus, through Henry's internal struggle and the redeeming influence of his grandmother and girlfriend, Bates' narrative posited that women were essential in helping their male relations overcome the discomfort some Americans faced as the nation moved from neutrality to preparedness. The world war, as it is evoked in *The Vintage*, is not in its essence about the larger external European powers, but the battle of encouraging young college-educated men past their disillusionment and disaffection to a renewed commitment to the country.

In its treatment of gender roles, Bates' story initially seems hopelessly conventional. To his grandmother, young Henry is "a dear and towering wonder, marvelously new, a beautiful miracle" (2). Lucy regards her prospective husband with "exquisite awe" (2), and though his un-American outburst makes her reluctant to oblige him, concludes that "There was this about Henry—one followed him" (11). In contrast, the women are described as "fragile," "soft," "gentle," "trembling," and Lucy, at least, responds to emotional upheaval by being weak in the knees and in need of Henry's rescuing grip (1, 7, 17). The two women, however, exert a vital influence on Henry. After

Henry's bitter tirade against the injustice of American war profiteering, Grandmother Evelyn remarks, "You don't understand, Henry…I think perhaps it is my fault that you don't" (8). Bates puts both the responsibility for and the success of Henry's redemption in the hands of his grandmother (and Lucy—by rejecting his proposal and "in her small way [putting] something else before love" (55)). Furthermore, Grandmother Evelyn and Lucy both seem inherently able to understand some truth about the world that eludes Henry. Henry initially dismisses their fervent patriotism by considering that "Lucy and Grandmother are sentimental…Women, always are, I suppose" (15). Reflecting on his botched proposal, Henry "felt that Lucy had argued nothing out! For her it was only a feeling!" (17). But the narrative suggests that the fact that Lucy and Grandmother Evelyn "felt rather than knew"—in opposition to Henry's all-knowing certainty—is the most sound method of establishing a relationship to one's country (2).

The most heroic figure in the novel, Grandfather Colbrooke, provides an idealized model for how young men can confront uncertainty in times of war and reinforces the privileging of sentiment over knowing. In his letters to a young Evelyn, Colbrooke reveals his own complicated feelings about the war he has volunteered to fight. He writes of a "half-unconscious universal experience" which he feels resonating within his soul: "Things always before smothered in many wrappings of the little matters of everyday living emerge naked. […] I just grope blindly for the meanings of things. I cannot understand much of this" (29). While the experience of war illuminates certain "things" for Colbrooke, he also concedes that much eludes his understanding. Bates provides no further detail into the nature of Colbrooke's insights, but Colbrooke's struggle for understanding is sharply contrasted to Henry's bitter certainty. *The Vintage* evokes a

fictitious heroic figure of a past war and assures the readers that Civil War heroes were just as baffled by the events of their time as the contemporary readers of the story were of their own. Bates' war rhetoric contends that war experiences offer those involved great insights of an ineffable nature, and that feeling and sentiment have an important place in the negotiation between citizen and country. *The Vintage* offers no distinct explanation to carry forward into the contemporary context. Instead, it presents women's ways of knowing—governed by sentiment and feeling rather than books—as essential, and celebrates women's role and function in preparedness advocacy on the American homefront.

The triumph of Henry's redemption at the novel's conclusion takes the form of a renewed respect for patriotic traditions, here represented by the Colbrooke Guards Day, a yearly celebration named after Henry's grandfather. Enlightened by his grandfather's words and inspired by the example of his grandmother and Lucy, Henry proudly takes part in the festivities, even assuming the most cherished role of raising the flag. When Henry shares his revelation with Lucy, saying, "you can bet I'll—I'll cherish it. I'll defend it! Why, Lucy, I believe I'd rather die than see it harmed!," his remarks are directed toward his respect for the flag (56). Obviously, the flag is representative of the nation as a whole, but Bates' emphasis on the display of patriotism suggests that the story works to restore the dignity of patriotic acts, one that the young men seems less likely to avow. By 1916, with America moving ever closer towards belligerency, Bates concluded that there was no foreign menace that is so dangerous to the country than a lack of patriotism among those of fighting age. Most significant to an understanding of *The Vintage* as a preparedness novel is that Henry's participation in the Colbrooke Guards

ceremony gestures to his potential future service in the National Guard. Bates was not alone in "call[ing] for an American renewal through a mobilized patriotism." Rather, the novel captured the essence of the public discourse surrounding the necessity of embracing the responsibilities of preparedness as a means of "making over" American society (Finnegan 3). This novel, then, represents a distinct move towards preparing for America's future belligerency.

[1] Notably, Margaret R. Higonnet's assertion: "As a first step, war must be considered a *gendering* activity, one that ritually marks the gender of all members of society, whether or not they are combatants." See *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1987. 4. Print.
[2] See Philip E. Hager, and Desmond Taylor. *The Novels of World War I: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland Pub, 1981. Print.
[3] Historian Robert H. Zieger notes, "in a profound, only partly understood, and elliptically articulated way, the Great War drove home the fact that America was Europe's offspring and successor" (2).
[4] Though it is likely that the battle was one of six fought as part of Germany's "Schlieffen Plan," in which Germany invaded Belgium and France in August of 1914, striking within 30 miles of Paris.

CHAPTER TWO

Mobilizing for War: Crafting American Belligerency; 1917

As the war raged on overseas, President Woodrow Wilson continued to espouse the virtues of neutrality and renewed his efforts to mediate the European conflict. In January of 1917 he delivered his "Peace without Victory" speech to the Senate, an appeal for a settlement of the conflict in Europe on the basis of a truce. But the physical and emotional toll of the war on the involved European powers had reached a level of hostility and bitterness that precluded the possibility of a diplomatic resolution. The Battle of Verdun, the longest of the war, left an estimated one million casualties and no clear victor when it was finally over on December 18, 1916. Death tolls were mounting off of the battlefield as well, as the civilian population on both sides of the conflict suffered homefronts with dwindling resources and crippling scarcity. The British blockade, which was in violation of traditional neutral maritime rights (Zieger 23), and Germany's depleted farming population (farm laborers having by then been pressed into military service) combined to cause widespread famines for German civilians. The estimated total of German civilian deaths attributed to starvation resultant of the Allied blockade in 1916 alone was 121,114 (Gilbert 156). In May of 1917 parts of the Western Front were paralyzed by mass mutiny among the ranks of the French Army. Then, on July 31, 1917, the Third battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) was launched in an attempt to reclaim Belgium from German occupation. The final great battle of attrition of the war, Passchendaele, resulted in half a million Allied casualties for a territorial gain of only a few miles of West Flanders. Ultimately, Wilson would prove a better prognosticator than

peacemaker. His speech to the Senate cautioned the world of the consequences of a peace established through military victory: "Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand" (qtd. in Di Nunzio 394).

Wilson's "Peace without Victory" address also articulated America's role in the mediation of the European conflict. "It is inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no part," he remarked. "To take part in such a service will be the opportunity for which they have sought to prepare themselves … ever since the days when they set up a new nation in the high and honourable hope that it might…show mankind the way to liberty" (qtd. in Di Nunzio 392). Though Wilson was still hoping to act as an impartial arbiter between the belligerent nations in the early months of 1917, his unequivocal belief in the "authority" of American intervention to dictate the result of the conflict belied the likelihood that the country would maintain its position of neutrality indefinitely. On March 1st, the infamous Zimmermann Telegram, a German proposal of an alliance with Mexico against the United States, was published, nudging the country closer to belligerency. Finally, Germany broke the "Sussex Pledge" and resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917, ultimately providing the impetus for America's subsequent declaration of war on April 6th of 1917.

As the nation had for so long attempted to retain a politically dispassionate perspective on the war in Europe, "the kind of war that the United States would wage in Europe and on the home front …seem[ed] up for grabs in 1917" (Van Wienen,

Rendezvous 148). In attempt to minimalize dissenting opinions, the Wilson administration adopted a public tone and policy that redefined the conflict so as to render continued neutrality and impartiality impossible. Though admonishing Americans to put aside their "excited feelings," upon declaring war, Wilson's speech to Congress in early April 1917 dismissed his previous position of neutrality as neither viable nor appropriate "where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its people" (qtd. in Waldman 84). Citing the circumstances of Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, Wilson defined the decision to go to war in terms of what a continued neutrality would mean: "we will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our Nation and our people to be ignored or violated" (qtd. in Di Nunzio 399). In his war speech, Wilson addressed the need to mobilize material resources and armed forces, but he also clearly saw the need to mobilize public sentiment. To that end, the President created the Committee on Public Information (CPI) which employed propaganda to redress an absence of public unity following the declaration of war. Wilson understood that unlike a war for material gain or national defense, "a war of ideals must be waged in every publication, every political demonstration, and every public utterance" (Van Wienen, *Rendezvous* 148).

Of course, Wilson's strong endorsement for belligerency was a dramatic reversal of his previously touted notions of neutrality. As the nation's political position on the conflict pivoted, the American people realigned their sentiments as well. This recasting of American citizen's relationship to the war had ramifications for women in particular, as their response to the conflict had been established on the grounds of their own inherent inclination towards pacifism. Certainly preparedness advocacy, which had been gaining

fervor during the years preceding the United States' entry into the war, and was championed by both men and women, served as a lynchpin for advancing the case of American belligerency. Consequently, the many women's groups and organizations that emerged from women's pacifism advocacy found that they had to adjust their sentiments to suit those of the times or disappear altogether. Consider, for instance, Jane Addams' fate as the nation turned to belligerency. "Arguably the best known and most widely revered woman in the United States when she agreed to head the Woman's Peace party in January 1915[,]" Van Wienen explains, "by 1917, she was jeered at during public appearances even when she consented to speak on behalf of the U.S. Food Administration" (*Rendezvous* 20). The Woman's Peace Party itself, though it survived the conflict, was silenced in large part to The Espionage Act of 1917, only to be revived in 1918 when party members rechristened the organization the Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Nonetheless, Wilson's political about-face from 1914 to 1917 was arguably more abrupt than the reversal of sentiment that characterized American women's responses to the war. Van Wienen points to the sinking of the Lusitania as a distinct turning point in American response to the war, moving from a "fairly strict U.S. neutrality" to an "open sympathy" with the Allies (*Rendezvous* 80). Preparedness advocates gained strength by pointing to the tragedy of the sinking of the Lusitania as an omen of what may lie ahead for an unsuspecting neutral nation in a time of war. Increasingly, pacifists had to realize that preparedness advocates were "formable opponents in the debate over the adequacy of the nation's military defenses" (Steinson 114). Preparedness advocates fundamentally challenged the feminist pacifists' interpretation of woman's relationship to war. While

both celebrated women as nurturers of human life broadly, the pacifists' claimed that this inherent nurturing nature was entirely irreconcilable with support for the war, which they equated with the destruction of life. In turn, the advocates of preparedness contended that "the protective functions of women made it their duty to demand strong military defenses…[for the] protection of the homes and lives for which women had principal responsibility" (Steinson180).

In November of 1915, with Wilson's public endorsement of preparatory defensive measures, and aware that opposing preparedness would cost membership, the WPP struggled to respond to the patriotic preparedness propaganda that had galvanized after the Lusitania tragedy (Steinson 122-3). Certainly, the WPP knew it would suffer for its anti-preparedness position as many women considered it unpatriotic to challenge President Wilson's program (Steinson 141). Consequently, various branches of the WPP took different stands on the issue of preparedness; the Massachusetts branch, for instance, publically endorsed a reasonable defense program, while the New York branch maintained a staunch—if contentious—position of anti-preparedness (Steinson 123, 146). The variety of responses to preparedness measures illustrates how America's relationship to the war was constantly renegotiated as the war unfolded. Women's groups and organizations grappled simultaneously with Wilson's own shifting definition of neutrality, pacifists' advocacy for mediation to end the European conflict, and concerns of the adequacy of the nation's defense program. Accordingly, by the middle of the 1915, most peace organizations formed prior to the war maintained that while they were still against warfare "in principle," they no longer opposed U.S. participation in this particular conflict nor insisted upon neutral mediation as the only reasonable course of action (Van

Wienen, *Rendezvous* 80). The League to Enforce Peace is one case in point; its leaders made plain that the organization's focus was on preventing *future* wars (Van Wienen, *Rendezvous* 80). Thus, until the declaration of war had been made, women could reasonably hold any combination of these positions without necessarily falling into obvious contradiction. Simply put, response to the war even in support for American intervention was not monolithic or static.

Regardless of their previously held positions, once war had been officially declared, women, just as their male soldier counterparts, were mobilized. That mobilization took a variety of forms, each touted as essential to America's success in the conflict. The effort to mobilize women was particularly vehement, and the government imbued the female worker with a highly visible and powerful symbolic presence in their war efforts. Van Wienen argues that this particular emphasis on women's roles was a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to win a battle of sentiment over women's previously celebrated opposition to the war (*Partisans* 143). A pervasive and highly visible example of women's engagement in the war effort was the figure of the woman knitter. In her 1920 history of the National League for Woman's Service, Bessie Rowland James noted that while the practice of knitting for the war was "well established when American women began to mobilize[, and the] declaration of war was merely the signal to increasing relief," once fully mobilized,

> The knitting bag was in evidence everywhere, and the clicking of needles was heard in every public place. Street cars often resembled the monthly meeting of the church sewing circle…The crowning touch came when a dressmaker designed a ball gown in whose folds were concealed a pocket

> for yarn and needles; no time was to be wasted even between the waltz and one-step. (126).

Discussing America's army of women knitters, historian Christopher Capozzola remarks, "the knitting woman provided a powerful image of a female citizen fulfilling her wartime obligations" (83). Of course, there is far more to the homey image of the knitting woman than merely the service of providing soldiers with socks, sweaters, and mufflers, as Capozzola and other have observed. Making women armed with knitting needles responsible for clothing soldiers made them to some degree also responsible for those soldiers' military success or failure. Furthermore, as the United States mobilized the homefront for mass participation in the war effort, the kinds of work assigned to women was deliberately personal, bringing the war right into women's domestic spheres and sewing baskets, and fostering a support for the war through the sentiment such work conveyed. The Comforts Committee established by the Woman's Section of the Navy League in March 1917, "valued hand-made garments more highly than machine-made ones because of the 'sentiment attached to that sort of work'" (Steinson 331). While ultimately military uniforms rolled off the assembly lines, "unmasking the knitting woman as a political, rather than an economic, necessity" (Capozzola 86), the army of women knitters demonstrates that mobilization could not be passive and that many women saw themselves (and were encouraged to consider themselves) instrumental in the work of waging war. Regardless of whether they had previously maintained a pacifist stance or not, women, just like the nation, were now at war. This reality perceptively altered the terrain of pro-war sentiment in the fiction women authored at this moment in American history.

While earlier pro-war texts were content to celebrate the American policy of limited preparedness, by 1917 the imaginative sphere of pro-war sentiment reflected the shifting realties of the political landscape and directly engaged with the politics of mobilization that permeated American life (of both civilian and soldier). Sylvia Bates' 1916 novel, *The Vintage*, for instance, advocated for a type of preparedness that corresponded to the established aims of national preparedness, a policy that on the institutional level was intended not as preparation for United States intervention in the World War, but rather as purely defensive measure. Historian John Patrick Finnegan explains: "In a collapsing world, America was arming against nameless dangers which would follow the end of the European war" and therefore the preparedness movement was "isolationist, not interventionist, despite the personal attitudes of many supporters" (4). Appropriate to the aims of the preparedness movement, Bates' young protagonist Henry is admonished by his grandfather that only "if a foreign enemy should ever *come*," he be prepared to defend his country (emphasis mine). In 1917, however, pro-war sentiment could not be configured merely as a defense against a speculative invading menace. Rather pro-war sentiment was expressed as a proactive force, confidently asserting America's competency and willingness to face the conflict. Perhaps most importantly, participation in war, for both men and women—as soldiers or civilians, sons or mothers, husbands or wives—could no longer be configured as a choice. The characters the narratives describe are no longer standing at the crossroads between engaging and disengaging, but rather are part of the nation's mobilization. Gone is the opportunity for Philip Landicutt, of Andrews' *The Three Things*, to volunteer with a foreign military service, as is his mother's moment to choose whether or not to relinquish

her son. Stories emerging from America's mobilization depict characters already in the midst of conflict.

This chapter considers the works of two American women, both representing the mobilization of the American homefront. *And the Captain Answered*, by the popular nineteenth century writer Alice French, represents the urgent need to overcome any lingering pacifism in American mothers as the nation prepares for its greatest conflict. Hetty Lawrence Hemenway Richard's sole novel, *Four Days: The Story of a War Marriage*, highlights how the war affects an entire generation and how men and women of that generation bear the burden of the conflict equally.

We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us: Combating the Pacifists Within

While the preparedness movement garnered strength from 1915 onward, America's path to belligerency gained even greater momentum with a direct call to mobilize against a much nearer foe. The Mexican Expedition (or Punitive Expedition) of 1916-7 was the United States' largest military engagement since the Spanish-American War. On March 8-9, 1916, Mexican irregular forces under revolutionary leader Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico in retaliation for Wilson's official recognition of Villa's rival, Venustiano Carranza, as president of Mexico.[1] General John J. Pershing led 11,000 U.S. troops across the US-Mexico border in pursuit of Villa in attempt to quash the guerrilla band's raids of American settlements. Today, due in part perhaps to its anticlimactic outcome, the conflict is largely overlooked in discussions of American history and the Great War. Though the incident in Mexico exposed the shortcomings of the American military, without the backdrop of the European War and the threat of

Germany as an invading force, the army's lackluster showing in a small-stakes border dispute would likely have been deemed insignificant (Zieger 38). The timing of the Mexican Expedition, however, in the midst of the Great War and with anti-German sentiment rising, served to rouse support for measures to greatly increase the American army in (however misguided) anticipation of a full-fledged German invasion. For American writers in 1917, even in the absence of a plausible threat to the physical security of the country, the Mexican Expedition provided a landscape in which to imagine American soldiers in action. Since the expedition was mounted in defense of U.S. land, pro-war novels could evoke the spirit of preparedness and extend it to its natural fulfillment—American intervention in the European war. Perhaps even more importantly, the campaign in Mexico was useful in confronting any lingering pacifist sentiment in America's ranks.

The Mexican Expedition created further tensions for the Woman's Peace Party; members in some state branches joined patriotic relief activities which, while providing relief for families of American soldiers called to the Mexican border, also promoted better military defense for America. WPP executive secretary Harriet Thomas admonished members that while they were free to join any relief group, the WPP could not be affiliated with such activities (Steinson 155). Despite the WPP's limited influence in dealing with the conflict, and while undoubtedly garnering more support for the preparedness activists, the Mexican Expedition also provided an opportunity for pacifists to demonstrate how hostilities could be successfully diffused. The American Union Against Militarism (AUAM), another American pacifist organization active during the First World War and open to both male and female members, was instrumental in

mediating the conflict. Initial reports covering the battle at Carrazil on June 21, 1916 proclaimed that American soldiers had been ambushed, which prompted President Wilson to prepare to solicit Congress' approval for a full-scale invasion of northern Mexico. When a later report revealed that Americans had been the aggressors, the AUAM swung into action: "By mobilizing an anti-war coalition among influential groups in the United States, and by establishing links with the Mexicans for information and mediation [the AUAM] helped to counter demands from business interests, some religious organizations, and the jingo press, which had been pushing President Wilson, against his judgment, toward war with Mexico" (Chambers xx). By enlisting the support of the wider American populace, the AUAM successfully helped avert full war, a bold indication of the influence pacifist forces maintained in mobilizing sentiment against war. The AUAM's success at a time in which preparedness advocacy was eager to turn any threat of hostility to its advantage provides another illustration of how the nation's response to the Great War was complex and at times contradictory. The AUAM's success where the WPP failed also points to the limitations of identifying a purely gender-based response to the First World War. The Mexican Expedition thus was a significant site where competing ideologies regarding the future of American military preparedness and intervention collided. On the one hand, by mobilizing American soldiers and engaging in battle, it paved the way for American belligerency; on the other, it proved the success of mediation in handling conflict and demonstrated that pacifism could not yet be disregarded as a viable solution to America's dilemma in dealing with the European war.

Alice French's sole war novel, *And the Captain Answered* is an example of a pro-war novel which evokes the Mexican Expedition to bolster American readiness for the

United States' declaration of belligerency against the Entente Powers. French (who published under the pseudonym Octave Thanet) was an established regionalist writer and among the best paid of the late nineteenth century. She was considered Iowa's first major literary figure and as such influenced younger Davenport writers including Susan Glaspell. Despite her successful career, French's literary stature was waning by the time *And the Captain Answered* was undertaken, and her works are now out of print.[2]

While the novel ultimately failed to be either a commercial or popular success, French undoubtedly felt the message of her story keenly important to the debates surrounding American intervention in the European war. At the time of the book's inception, French's life was heavily invested in the war effort. Despite being in her mid-sixties, she volunteered with the Davenport Red Cross and joined the Four-Minute Men, a group that gave brief, rousing, patriotic speeches agitating on behalf of U.S. intervention in the war. French told her editor at Bobbs-Merrill, Hewitt H. Howland, "Propaganda is our job and we seem to be making right good progress" (qtd. in McMichael 208). Former president Teddy Roosevelt wrote to congratulate French on *And the Captain Answered*, remarking that it was "the kind of book which represents something very real and necessary at this time" (qtd. in McMichael 209). Roosevelt, ever a ready critic of Wilson's, spent the early war years acting as "the nation's foremost champion of an expanded military," and delivering vociferous speeches and articles and "savaging" anyone who opposed his viewpoint (Zieger 34). Given the bitterly contentious relationship between the former president Roosevelt and the then president Wilson, Roosevelt's robust endorsement of French's war novel perhaps most aptly reveals the novel's propagandistic overtones and its impatience with any resistance to the nation's

mobilization. The novel is also undoubtedly an attempt to wrest the significance of the Mexican Expedition from the hands of the mediating pacifists and suggest instead that the narrowly averted conflict served the wider interests of American intervention in the European war.

French completed *And the Captain Answered* in the spring of 1917, and though she was eager for its quick release, the novel was not published until November. The time of its conception and publication is significant because it highlights the urgency French likely felt of countering lingering pacifist sentiment on the eve of America's declaration of war. Though the Mexican Expedition is clearly evoked through the characters' debates surrounding probability of a war with Mexico, the details of the military engagement are never discussed, nor are they in any way considered relevant to the plot of the story. One character remarks, "I hardly think we shall [have a real war] this time…And it would only be a little war, did it come, but I feel sure that we shall have a war later and that it will not be a small affair. Perhaps it is as well that we should have this little one now" (12). Thus, the potential "little war" with Mexico is significant only in that it lends itself to discussions of the looming "bigger war" with Germany. Nonetheless, as the only overtly named political and military context in French's novel, the Mexican Expedition is vital to the rhetorical effectiveness of French's novel. French characterizes the expedition as an imaginatively evocative undertaking; the narrator remarks, "The men in general did not believe there would be war with Mexico; where they were convinced of its imminence they belittled its effects, but the women, having more imagination and less logic, were more deeply moved" (4). The war with Mexico, then, served to mobilize the sentiment of American women and gave preparedness advocates an opportunity to

directly confront and rebuke pacifists (who had gained the upper-hand in influencing the country's response to the Mexican conflict) in preparation for the looming Great War.

The novel examines the underpinnings of women's pacifism by revealing pacifism's misguided foundation and demonstrating that, once unfettered from the shackles of anti-war ideology, American mothers' patriotic sensibilities naturally lead them to revel in their sons' military service. As evidence, the narrative chronicles one such mother's transformation from pacifism to militarism. The protagonist, Ellen Hardy, struggles throughout the story to keep her son Victor, a guardsman dispatched to Fort Dodge for training, from taking the newly instated Federal oath. Initially Ellen is content that her son has enlisted only in the guard and not in the regulars (units of permanent military services); however, while seeing Victor off at the train station at the start of the novel, she overhears another woman remarking that all guardsmen will be administered a Federal oath during their training. Before Victor departs, she cajoles him into promising that he will refuse such an oath under any circumstance. The young private is clearly reluctant, and the novel chronicles Ellen's ever-growing worry that her hold over Victor will break and that he will renege on his promise. By contrast, the widowed Mrs. Winthrop, whom Ellen meets at the train station, serves as Ellen's foil—she proudly and sedately sends off her own son, a captain, to Fort Dodge. In the end, Ellen sees the patriotic light in time and spares young Victor the dismal fate that she had intended for him—that of being branded a pacifist and coward for his unwillingness to take the oath.

The conflict around the rights of Guardsmen to refuse to take a newly instated Federal oath is borne out of a historical debate surrounding Wilson's preparedness measures. Up to 1916, the preparedness movement had "produced a fervent desire to

sacrifice for the nation in the abstract;" now the Punitive Expedition served as a barometer for the nation's willingness to put the sentiment into action (Finnegan 170). In 1916, the Hay Bill was passed, which introduced a modest and gradual increase in regular army strength and a greatly expanded and federalized National Guard as the nation's second line of defense. Until the passage of the Hay Bill, the Guard had been a collection of forty-eight state armies of varying competency and efficiency, each sworn to serve as their state's militia. The Hay Bill established a dual oath for Guardsmen, meaning, in the words of a disapproving contemporary, that "under the Hay Law, the organized Militia may now be mobilized at any time, into the active service up to six years, by virtue of the dual oath, whether there is a National emergency or not" (Schaefer 209). Simply put, the debate around the Federal oath grew out of conflicting views as to whether the National Guardsmen ought to be considered United States soldiers versus state soldiers, and this debate was intrinsically tied to the questions of military preparedness and mobilization that came to light as a result of the war in Europe. In French's book, Ellen desperately asks her dignified (and duly patriotic) counterpart, Mrs. Winthrop, whether guardsmen can refuse to take the federal oath. Mrs. Winthrop remarks, "They can refuse, but—you wouldn't want your boy, the grandson of two brave soldiers and the son of another, to refuse to do his bit for his country. No woman has a right to ask her son to feel disgraced, even to save his life" (26). Opposition to the Hay Bill, in the novel embodied by Ellen's insistence that the guard served "only [for] defending the country," was often dismissed as anti-preparedness posturing undertaken for the sake of preserving an implicitly pacifist stance (25).

Perhaps because French saw her task in writing the novel as candidly propagandistic, *And the Captain Answered* is far less equivocal about the war than the earlier novels considered above. For instance, whereas the earlier pro-war fictions by American women in some fashion attempted to accommodate Wilson's hesitation in abandoning a position of neutrality, French's novel was decidedly less nuanced. Her biographer noted, "She felt that civilized men could not afford to be indifferent; the German sinking of the *Lusitania* was an outrage against humanity, and Wilson's reaction was treasonous" (McMichael 202). A staunch campaigner against pacifism, French stated her views in a *New York Times* interview in October of 1915: "There has grown up among women a blind horror of war, a blind devotion to peace" (qtd. in McMichael 202). Significantly, her novel evokes as enemy not Mexicans ("greasers" in the parlance of the story) or Germans, but pacifists.

In French's novel, pacifism is not a legitimate moral stance, but is merely a selfish and cowardly shirking of duty. Consequently, however superficially sympathetic French's portrait of her protagonist may be, Ellen is a reprehensible example of an American mother who would cling to a pacifist position out of her own selfishness and in complete disregard of her son's own values. When pressed, for instance, Ellen offers several reasons for her present pacifism: first, the poverty she endured as a child when her father, a Civil War veteran gravely injured, died early, leaving his wife and daughter unable to provide for themselves. In turn, her impoverished mother raised Ellen to "hate war" on this principle alone (13). Later, Ellen unknowingly marries a guardsman (she thought he was a just a grocer) who dies of typhoid fever during the Spanish-American War. Ellen's father-in-law, Victor Hardy, Sr., also a Civil War veteran, helps provide for the family,

but, much to his daughter-in-law's chagrin, instills young Victor with an indelible commitment to military service; Victor promises his grandfather before his death that he will enlist in the guard as soon as he turns 21. Though Ellen somewhat grudgingly agrees that Captain Victor Hardy had been a "very fine man," she complains to Mrs. Winthrop that he caused her a good deal of suffering in part due to his insistence on "help[ing] every old wreck that came along who pretended he had been a soldier" (17). Ellen's pacifism narrowly manages to encompass some vague sense that it is wrong to "murder other women's sons," but in the main is rooted in her own selfish desire to keep her "lover-son" near and under her influence (27, 71). She confesses to Mrs. Winthrop that "when [Victor, Sr.] died I thought, now the battle between us is over, now my boy is mine" (27). Thus the central conflict of the story is the competition of wills between Ellen and her deceased father-in-law.

Additionally, Ellen's selfishness manifests itself in a lack of consideration for Victor extending beyond the context of military service. She confesses to a perceptibly disapproving Mrs. Winthrop that though Victor had carefully saved the small legacy his grandfather left to him in the hopes of attending college, she persuaded him to give that money to his younger sister, since she was the smarter of the two. Later, when she surmises that Victor will break his promise to her and take the Federal oath, Ellen feigns an injury so that she can call Victor to her side, an attempt to have him miss his chance to take the oath with the rest of his company. Motherhood had already been established as an essential vehicle for women to participate in the war effort; in French's novel, a selfish woman perverted through damaging exposure to unpatriotic ideas attempts to use her power as a mother to interfere with the war.

Ellen is not only selfish, however, but also weak. The narratorial description of the protagonist lingers on the ineffectuality of Ellen's identity, both physical and intellectual. Described as "rather low of stature," Ellen's beauty, for instance, is "softer, less assured" when compared to the dignified charm of Mrs. Winthrop (5). The narrative refers to its protagonist repeatedly as "little Mrs. Hardy" (7, 10, 29). The narrator offers readers a summation of Ellen's character: "She was like hundreds of her kind who are met in literary clubs ardently listening—often to women who know less than they themselves" (5-6). French includes a curious detail of a slight limp caused by an injury Ellen sustained when attending a meeting of the Peace Department of the Woman's Club. The implication suggests that Ellen Hardy is easily influenced, her beliefs malleable and shaped by external forces rather than her own internal convictions, and—if we extrapolate from her ankle injury—that the external forces of the Women's Club's Peace Department are hampering her moral development.

Despite Ellen's distaste for her son's devotion to military service, French presents service as rife with promise. A love-interest fleetingly dangled before the readers' eyes demonstrates that once in uniform, Victor can secure the affection of even Amy Carruth, a girl of higher social status. As Ellen observes the girl throwing a rose to her departing son, she notes that Victor "smiled on her as an equal" (8). In service of his country, young Victor, unlike his mother, cherishes a new, fully developed understanding of his patriotic sentiment. Of Amy Carruth's newly developed interest in him, he concludes that "it was because he was a soldier. 'She loves our country, too,' he thought" (34). Military life brings Victor great insights:

> [H]e realized what is love of country, that mystical, misunderstood, misused emotion which rests like a sword in a scabbard most of the time, but comes out flashing mightily in the hour of peril; he realized it was not only love of the fair heritage on earth bequeathed by the fathers; it was not land or gear, it was not even the kindly people of his blood who lived about him; but it was the men of all the past whose heroism had not been in vain … it meant all the past. And it meant the future. (36-7).

The link between patriotism and war is made through Victor's insights and Mrs. Winthrop's assertions. As Mrs. Winthrop earnestly explains to a yet uncomprehending Ellen:

> [War is] very dreadful; but there are far more dreadful things; national dishonor is more dreadful; to lose the hopes and ideals of our forefathers because we are too cowardly or too mercenary or too sentimental to fight for them is more dreadful! […] War with all its horrors is saving the souls of England and France and Russia. War some day will save ours, for believe me, dear Mrs. Hardy, war we shall surely have! (30-1).

For Mrs. Winthrop, war is expressed in "beautiful moment[s]," such as the waving khaki-clad young arms of a departing trainload of soldiers (29). She insists that "all their lives will be the richer for [having served their country]" and that they could hardly have a "better death" than dying while in service of the United States (29). While Ellen Hardy can only see the destruction of bodies, Mrs. Winthrop sees war as "saving souls." And perhaps even more importantly given the context of the book's publication, war is simply inevitable and inescapable.

Fortunately for Ellen, her weakness leaves her susceptible to the edifying powers as much as the meaner impulses. And with her son in the military, Ellen is drawn away from the vulgar influences to nobler ones. “With actual joy sacrificing the money she had laid by for her winter hat and suit,” Ellen sends Victor care packages instead (45). She learns first aid and how to knit useful garments for soldiers. Through this toil and self-sacrifice, Ellen’s self-preserving instincts weaken, leaving her susceptible to patriotic stirrings: “there were times when to her unutterable self-reproach she felt a thrill as she caught the note of a bugle or saw the flag flutter and its fair colors burn against the sky” (46). In the end, it is Victor, embodying all the edifying influence of patriotic sentiment, who is able to fully save his mother from her wayward principles. When Victor discovers Ellen’s duplicity in feigning an injury so as to cause him to miss taking the Federal oath, his bewildered and pained reaction begins the journey of Ellen’s redemption: “Somehow the arguments that had once seemed so convincing to her to-day looked futile and unreal” (74). After hearing the sounding of a bugle, these same arguments once “so beautiful and lofty turned, without warning, into tarnished and tawdry pleas. […] Without warning or logic it was as if a wall in her soul, preventing any sally of her vision into other views than those for which she had fought so long had toppled into wreck” (79-80). Though Ellen thought she had been fighting the memory of his dead grandfather for Victor’s soul, the boy had always been loyal to his grandfather’s sense of patriotism and service. Rather, it was ultimately Ellen’s own soul which is fought for and won. Victor had already committed to taking the oath despite his mother’s protestations, but as she witnesses him doing so, she relinquishes her attempts to control her son and celebrates her own newly-inscribed patriotism by expressing gratitude that her son had pledged

himself to serve his country, telling him "[your father and grandfather] have won. You got there in time! Oh thank God!" (85).

As Ellen is persuaded to abandon her "peace principles," by realizing that they were untenable and foolish, so too does French through her novel hope to counter any resistance on the part of her readers to the mobilization effort (17). The premise of the book—that the dead exert a great power over the living—is celebrated through Captain Victor Hardy's indelible influence on his grandson. Like Sylvia Chatfield Bates in the 1916 *The Vintage*, French appeals to America's martial past as a means of inspiring a martial future. Mrs. Winthrop admonishes Ellen, "The dead are stronger than we are. They are beyond our reach, but we are not beyond theirs" (27). (Admittedly, French, writing in the spirit of pro-war propaganda, obviously wishes only those dead with pro-war sentiment to linger in the psyche of their loved ones.) But unlike Bates' novel, in which the women guide the development of a young man's commitment to his country, here it is the son who must instruct his mother. *And the Captain Answered* is one example of how the fiction of mobilization marked a distinct shift of moral and ethical righteousness from the older generation to the young generation of American men and women. This generational divide will only become more pronounced in future war fiction.

Entangling Alliances: American war brides and British soldier-husbands

Hetty Hemenway's story, *Four Days*, was initially published in the May 1917 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The novella is perhaps the most significant work of Hemenway's slight and obscure *oeuvre*, the paucity of which was bemoaned by *Atlantic*

Monthly editor Ellery Sedgewick: "Very often a story of quality is born without successors, but I know of few instances where a story so genuinely conceived, so sensitively told as this, remains almost the sole achievement of a gifted pen. In spite of the editor's remonstrances Hetty Hemenway married, and a succession of babies have formed a clamorous barrier against an admirable career" (114). The novella (later published as a separate volume) centers on the marriage of a young American woman named Marjorie to a British serviceman named Leonard Leeds. The third person narrator recounts the couple's past: they first met in New York in the idyllic summer of 1914 and were soon thereafter engaged. Wedding preparations were well underway when Leonard innocently traveled back to England to "keep a rowing engagement" that unhappily coincided with the outbreak of the war (6). Conscripted and sent to the front, Leonard cannot return to New York for his wedding. (At some unspecified point in the intervening months, Marjorie "crossed the precarious ocean" to be in England and in the company of Leonard's family (6).) Ten months later, in the present-day of the story, the novel opens with Marjorie awaiting Leonard's arrival at the train station in London and anticipating their long-postponed wedding later that evening. The story chronicles their four days of married life, and ends with Leonard, about to embark to the Dardanelles, bidding farewell to his new wife at Victoria Station.

In crafting her story, Hemenway was highly attuned to the context from which her plot evolves. Leonard's 96-hour leave from the front comes courtesy of his transfer from the Western Front to the Dardanelles. The military operation, now known as the Gallipoli Disaster, was part of the woefully misguided and catastrophic nine-month Allied assault begun in April 1915, and the story's poignancy results from the brutality of the real

historical event. Spearheaded by Winston Churchill, the Dardanelles campaign involved two amphibious assaults, both poorly planned and executed, with the disastrous consequence that by the time of the Allies' defeat and withdrawal more than a quarter-million Allied troops had been killed or wounded, with roughly equal casualties on the Turkish side. As Leonard and Marjorie part at Victoria Station, they overhear a crippled and apparently insane man telling bystanders that "the average life of an officer in the Dardanelles is eleven days" (55). This remark, casually offered, serves as a dark omen of Leonard's future; even a reader grossly uninformed of the events of the Great War would not fail to mistake the ominous implication of Leonard's transfer to Gallipoli. In the final scene, Leonard's train disappears into the night while the crippled man offers a "sardonic" benediction, "I came that they might have Life — Life — Life!" (57). The man's ironic evocation of the Biblical quotation, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly," (John 10:10) heightens the horror of the story's conclusion and positions the readers alongside Marjorie as she helplessly watches the men depart, their deaths all but certain.

In keeping with the political circumstances of the book's publication, Hemenway inserted American participation by creating not an American soldier who volunteers with a foreign service, but an American female protagonist who finds herself deeply entwined with the European war due to her relationship to a British serviceman. Though the United States had severed diplomatic relations with Germany as early as February 3rd, the first wave of American troops would not arrive in France until the 26th of June 1917, and their first major action, helping to stop the German advance at Chateau-Thierry, would not occur until June of 1918. Through Marjorie and Leonard, Hemenway could not only

evoke the war with all the bitter realities with which the European soldiers had been living over the course of the preceding three years, but also underscore, through Marjorie, American women's relationship to the war. Though Marjorie is unusual in her marriage to a British serviceman, by the time of the story's publication on the heels of Wilson's declaration of war, American women just like Marjorie were preparing to send their husbands and fiancés into the conflict. In 1917, Marjorie served as an omen of what awaited many American women.

In contrast to the works considered in the previous chapter, *Four Days* is far more committed to an exposure of the misery war inflicts on both men and women than concerned with promoting American intervention in the war effort. As the publication of the story was poised just following America's declaration of war, the tone of the narrative is cognizant that further debate of whether or how American involvement should be construed is at this juncture largely—if not wholly—irrelevant. There is no choice offered to either of the story's protagonists—Leonard cannot debate the circumstances of his conscription, and though presumably Marjorie did not have to go through with her engagement to him, the story does not reflect on the practical or emotional circumstances of how Marjorie came to cross the Atlantic to join her fiancé. As readers, we meet these characters with their fates already decided, and just as the narrative offers the characters no opportunities in which to exercise control over their fates, readers are not invited to speculate on alternative courses of action for Marjorie and Leonard. The war, with all the pain and horror it brings to the young couple, is a decided fact of their lives; their married life (their wedding date, their honeymoon) is entirely shaped to the strictures of a

mobilized nation (the fictive world of England in 1915 standing in for the readers' America of 1917).

Though *Four Days* is an intensely dark and brooding story, and while the war is not depicted as a battlefield where triumph, heroism, and enlightenment await soldiers (as it is in Mary Shipman Raymond Andrews' *Three Things*, for instance), theoretical positions for or against engagement in the conflict are in no way relevant to the landscape the characters inhabit. Hemenway's text does not celebrate war, but neither does it urge pacifism, or isolationism, or resist on any ideological level American intervention, nor, based on its critical reception, was her story deemed an anti-war text.[3] Leonard addresses pacifism directly when he tells his new bride, "For God's sake, lamb, don't cherish any fool Yankee pacifist notions" (19). Hemenway's own biography likely invalidated potential pacifist readings of her work in 1917. Her husband Auguste Richard joined the New York National Guard in 1913. In April of 1917, he was sent to Officers Training Camp at Plattsburg before reporting for duty with the newly formed National Army. Richard was among the first American soldiers to arrive in France; he would survive the war and return home in 1919. As the wife of a career guardsman, it is unlikely that Hemenway opposed war in general or this World War in particular. Her story describes a man and woman who encounter the war as an established, inescapable fact of their lives.

Even the novella's title points to the minutia of existence rather than a larger sentiment of war. Fittingly then, the Germans as foe embody no particular evil to either character. Hemenway weaves a complicated relationship between Marjorie and Leonard and their German enemies. As a teenager, Marjorie was sent to a German boarding school to learn the language and culture. She jokingly characterizes her experiences there as

"dreadful," telling Leonard, "the girls only bathed once a year!" but her light-hearted tone and exaggerated characterization undermines any serious criticism of her boarding school experience (34). While recounting her schoolgirl days, Marjorie confesses to Leonard that her first love was a German officer named Carl von Ehnheim. The conversation about Marjorie's first love is surprisingly blithe in the midst of a largely dark and brooding story, and serves as a moment in which she and Leonard tease each other about prior relationships as a means of asserting their commitment to each other. The German officer of Marjorie's tale is kind and devoted and Leonard dismisses his admiration for Marjorie a "most abominable case of puppy love" (35).

Though of an entirely different nature, Leonard's relationship to his German counterparts contributes to the complexity raised by Marjorie's past. At first Leonard attempts to parry Marjorie's questions about how it feels to kill other men with humor: "No different from killing your first rabbit, if you don't sit down on the bank and watch it kick, and write poetry. Besides, you always have the pleasure of thinking it's a German rabbit" (18). Later, however, he discusses more frankly the deeply disturbing and personal encounter with a German combatant he had experienced on the front. Seeing a Prussian officer helmet glinting amidst the wreckage of No Man's Land, Leonard seized it, remembering that Marjorie had written to him that "all the girls had them" (26). The helmet, an evocation of the tactless insensitivity of the homefront, forces readers to consider the price securing such a souvenir entails for men like Leonard. In his case, Leonard discovers the wearer of the pilfered helmet still alive. After a brief struggle in which both men sustained injuries—the German's fatal—Leonard was left in the

unenviable position of having to watch the man he had just shot die. He recounts the scene for Marjorie:

> "Suddenly [the German soldier] smiled at me."
>
> "Did you think you were playing your football when you came down on top of me that way, eh?"
>
> "I say, I was a bit surprised. Football doesn't seem a very congenial subject for a dying man; but do you know, we sat there and talked for an hour at least about all kinds of sports and athletics….But after a while he seemed to get on to the fact that he was losing an awful lot of blood, and then he said again, 'Schade.' That was all"…. Leonard paused; then he said, suddenly, averting his eyes like a child caught in a wrong act, "That talk we had was so queer—I mean it was as if—don't you know ?—as if we were—well, sort of the same at heart. I mean, of course, if he hadn't been German. War is queer." (28-9).

Marjorie naturally speculates as to the identity of the dead German soldier, wondering whether he may have been her former beau, Carl von Ehnheim. After suggesting this possible connection to Leonard, "[he] looked at her, and for some reason his eyes flinched. 'What difference would that make? He was German,' was all he said" (40-1). The novella, too, remains silent about anything else concerning the helmet, refusing to articulate the reasons for Leonard's feelings or reveal Marjorie's own response to the circumstances surrounding her souvenir of the battlefront.

Disturbing though the helmet story is in itself, the most unsettling aspect of the novella is this silence in response to the profound questions the two characters raise

throughout Four Days. That discomforting absence of response is central to the effect of the novella and highlights the divisive nature of war experience as it alienates men and women from each other. In the midst of Leonard's tally of the deaths of his boyhood friends and companions, the narrator describes Marjorie's interpretation of her husband's grief:

> [H]is eyes, full of an uncomplaining and uncomprehending agony, sought hers; and Marjorie looked dumbly back with a feeling of desolation growing within her as vast and dreary as the gray expanse lapping beside them, for it seemed to her that Leonard was groping, pleading—oh, so silently—for an explanation, an inspiration deeper than anything he had known before—a something immense that would make it all right, this gigantic twentieth-century work of killing; square it with the ideals and ideas that this most enlightened century had given him. Marjorie strangled a fierce tide of feeling that welled up within her, and her eyes, bent on Leonard, were fierce because she loved him most and she had nothing, nothing to give him. (30-1).

Privately, Marjorie knows that Leonard hates war, that the characterization of the war as a wonderful "sport" was a "pitiful bluff" put on by the young men who had no alternative but to endure it (31). But unable to give Leonard any explanation of the war that would alleviate his disillusionment and suffering, Marjorie finds the only thing she has to offer him is her silence and complicity in the charade. Both Leonard and Marjorie act out their roles as part of the bluff—Marjorie requests a German helmet like those given other girls with a complete disregard of the circumstances of how such a trophy comes to a soldier's

hands, and Leonard complies with a bravado that makes light of the act of killing. As is apparent by the end of the story, however, both characters are profoundly sensitive to the horrors of the war, and both are cognizant of the part they themselves are playing in an ongoing act to conceal (from each other, and presumably the larger world) their knowledge that the war was no wonderful sport for either the men at the battlefront nor the women on the homefront. "She knew," the narrator remarks, "but she would never dare let Leonard see that she knew" (31).

In the narrative, Marjorie and Leonard function not as individuals defined by their own personalities and dispositions, but rather as characters they are assigned to play in the war charade—Leonard the everyman officer, Marjorie the war bride. The stilted characterization of their own personas Leonard and Marjorie employ highlights how members of their generation adopted personas defined through their relationship to the war as a means of surviving its emotional toll. This interpretation of how the war affected personal identifies was central to the work Hemenway produced in her short career. Shortly after publishing *Four Days* , Hemenway penned another war story entitled "Their War," also published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The short story, this time set in Canada, recounts the tale of two young lovers, Edwin Byrne and Doris Gilbert. The focal point of the story lies in Edwin's mother's struggle to understand her adolescent son, whom she continues to view as a child despite the fact that he has enlisted and his regiment is about to be sent to France. Before leaving, Edwin asks his mother for permission to marry Doris, which Mrs. Bryne denies, claiming that "It really wouldn't be fair to yourself or to her…You'll know dozens of girls before you find the right one" (452). When news of Edwin's death reaches his hometown, Mrs. Bryne finds herself at a dressmaker's shop

where she witnesses Doris, accompanied by her mother, begging to be allowed to wear mourning clothes. Her mother and the dressmaker resist Doris' tearful entreaties, citing the fact that she had not been engaged or married to Edwin and thus that such attire would be inappropriate. Mrs. Bryne, however, intervenes, revealing Edwin's attempt to demonstrate his commitment to Doris before departing. She tells Mrs. Gilbert, "We found them old enough to send them out there to the horror" and that Doris "is right; this is her sorrow. Let it be black, all black. It's all black for them" (457-8). "Their War" highlights the tensions between the younger and older generation and exhorts the older generation to accept that just as the war, with all its concomitant suffering and sacrifice, to the young, so too does the right to insist that their elders respect their judgment and acknowledge their grieving. This theme, simplified in the short story, is significantly drawn out in *Four Days*, with Leonard and Marjorie standing in for their entire burdened generation.

In *Four Days*, the contrast between the sheltered older generation and the burdened younger generation is expressed through Leonard's family, who are unable to fathom the reality of Leonard's military experience despite their demonstrable love and admiration for him. In her husband, Marjorie is reminded of other young men she has seen, "sitting with their elders, gray-haired fathers who talked war, war, war, while the young tongues—once so easily braggart—remained speechless" (12). Leonard's Aunt Hortense, clearly expressing disappointment that Marjorie does not find Leonard's own correspondence appropriate for publication, remarks, "So many young officers' letters have been published…Lady Alice Fryzel was telling me the other day that she was putting all her son's letters into book form" (48-9). While both Marjorie and Leonard are performing their response to the war by adopting facades built upon highly gendered

roles, they are nonetheless standing on the same world stage. By contrast, Aunt Hortense, and all those men and women who interact with the war through published letters and collected helmets, sit complacent in the audience. While Hemenway's story records how the war divides the sexes, it nonetheless demonstrates that the greatest division lies not between the male soldiers on the battlefront and their wives on the homefront, but between the generation who viewed the war as spectator and that which had to act out the horror and endure suffering. Marjorie's plaintive query best articulates the dilemma: "Why don't old people, like Aunt Hortense, fight wars, if they're so crazy about it?" (50). Hemenway does not offer any answers to the questions Marjorie and Leonard grapple with; rather, she reflects the world in all its confusion back to her readers to elicit sympathy and support for the young generation (her own, in fact) who had to bear the brunt of the hardship and suffering. *Four Days* mobilizes sentiment in support of the war generation, both the men and the women, who must face the war and the suffering it imposes on their entire generation, regardless of the larger political and ideological conversations that frame the war in abstractions. With America's belligerency only just declared, Hemenway's story memorialized the young men and women who were about to join the generation of burdened Europeans and represented the futility of anti-war rhetoric in the light of the war's arrival as an established reality of the American experience.

[1]The extent of Germany's involvement in Villa's machinations and the larger political intrigue surrounding the Mexican revolution is debated; see David Traxel's *Crusader*

Nation: The United States in Peace and the Great War, 1898-1920. New York: Vintage Books, 2007. 215-6. Print.

[2] Though French was an established writer in her day, her lack of discernment about the significant issues of the early twentieth century is troubling for a present-day reader and no doubt contributed to her present obscurity. Her then critically and financially successful 1910 novel, *By Inheritance*, for example, resolved the "Negro Question" by asserting that an African American graduate of Harvard Law School would be happiest in menial positions in service of a "good white family." See Clarence A. Andrews' *A Literary History of Iowa*. Iowa City: U of IA P, 1972. 50. Print.

[3] Edward J. O'Brien in *The Bookman*'s review of the best American short stories of 1917, notes that *Four Days* is a "remarkable story of the spiritual effect of the war upon two young people… I shall…commend it to the reader here as an artistically woven study in war psychology" (702). The 1917-18 volume of *The Booklist: A Guide to the Best New Books* declares that it "holds in its small compass the essence of the tragedy of the war for all young lovers" (96). In the 1919 *The Best American Short Stories and the Yearbook of the American Short Story* editors Edward Joseph Harrington O'Brien and Martha Foley remarked that "When Miss Hemenway published "Four Days" in the *Atlantic Monthly* last year, it created more discussion than any other war story of the year [and] represent[s] one of the few important contributions America has made to the imaginative literature of the war. The war has taught us that youth is old enough, under the stress of events, to speak for itself…" (377). The critical readership seems unified in their celebration the novella's artistry and relevance to discussions of the war, while highlighting the significance of Hemenway's advocacy on behalf of the young generation.

CHAPTER THREE

Waging an American War; 1917-1918

Though the earliest arriving American troops fired their first shots from trenches in France as early as October of 1917, the United State's position as a detached observer of the Great War came to a more definitive end in 1918, with the mass deployment of U.S. soldiers to overseas battlefronts. As American civilians registered the absence of their soldiering husbands and sons, and home became homefront, the Great War became a fully-realized presence in civilian lives. Reflecting a national consciousness now deeply invested in the conflict, the number of war novels published by American women exploded in 1918; tales of the patriotic awakenings of men and women of all circumstances are mingled with romances and international intrigues drawn from the political events that shaped the course of the war.[1]

The transition to a full-fledged belligerent nation brought with it an increased need to define and ultimately control how the war was perceived and represented in the American mindset. Political events, especially Russia's collapse into revolution at the end of 1917, convinced the Wilson administration of the necessity dictating how American involvement in the war was appropriately perceived and represented on the homefront. Though Russia had been a member of the Allied Powers while under the Tsar, its newly instated Bolshevik government negotiated a separate peace with Germany and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. In a military context, Russia's political turmoil had obvious implications for the Allied war effort, but the fate of Russia also raised political and ethical questions for Americans now poised to enter the war themselves.

When Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin ordered the Tsar's secret treaties published in November 1917, "replete with their sordid territorial and economic provisions," the underlying imperial ambitions of the Allied countries were exposed (Zieger 188). This redefinition of the European conflict in terms of imperial ambition had the potential to upend the "respective domestic orders" of all belligerent nations, explains historian Robert. H. Zieger, but especially that of the American war effort. Given the United States' unlikely and conflicted journey from neutrality to belligerency, Bolshevik propaganda had the potential to undermine the rhetoric defining the motivations of belligerent nations as an altruistic effort to make the world safe for democracy (Zieger 188-9).

In this context, Wilson's speech to a joint session of Congress on January 8, 1918, introducing his Fourteen Points to permanent world peace, served not only as a guide to American war aims, but also as an attempt to alleviate fears that the United States had entered a war to serve imperial interests. Wilson's address to Congress sought to assure Americans first that "There is no confusion of counsel among the adversaries of the Central Powers, no uncertainty of principle, no vagueness of detail. The only secrecy of counsel, the only lack of fearless frankness, the only failure to make definite statement of the objects of the war, lies with Germany and her allies" (Wilson, *Essential* 260). Wilson sought also to convince Americans of both the absolute necessity of American belligerency and the absence of self-serving national motives, stating that "We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible […] What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves" (Wilson, *Essential* 261). Rather, the principle Wilson

articulated, that of "justice to all peoples and nationalities," was to define the spirit of American war efforts (Wilson, *Essential* 263).

However magnanimous Wilson's purported rationale for United States entry in the war, those who wanted to raise objections were effectively silenced with the passing of the Sedition Act in May of 1918. Though short-lived (both it and the Espionage Act were repealed in 1920), the Sedition Act represented a new degree of governmental control over American citizens' responses to the waging of war. The Sedition Act was far-reaching, targeting those who interfered with the draft, but also those individuals who publicly criticized the government; the Act's aim was to punish those who would "utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces of the United States." Thus, the Sedition Act was instated to squelch any suggestion of opposition and served to dictate the tone American war sentiment was to take. The administration was not only concerned with repressing dissenting war rhetoric, but also actively committed to disseminating appropriate rhetoric to civilians. Most obviously central to defining the American experience of the war was the Committee on Public Information (CPI), but the mobilization of the American populace involved publicity and propaganda efforts of virtually every federal agency from the Treasury Department, to the Selective Service Board, to the Food Administration (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 142).

Through the workings of these institutions and encouraged by the general enthusiasm of the American populace, women's relationship to the Great War underwent a dramatic repositioning. The process debilitated the former feminist pacifist contingent,

which fell into confusion regarding the precise nature of their role in wartime America (Steinson 149). By 1918, even those women whose pacifist ideology remained unmoved by the pro-war sentiment surrounding them were largely overshadowed by the vehemence of American war fervor, if not directly silenced by the measures the Wilson administration employed to suppress dissent. The ground had so shifted beneath their feet that by November of 1917, a Woman's Peace Party board member, Lucia Mead, opposed a WPP's conciliatory statement disavowing a "peace at any price" philosophy on the basis that the statement was not explicit enough in its patriotism, failed to proclaim loyalty to the President, and neglected to openly condemn Prussian policy (Steinson 286-7). This transformation of women from "natural pacifists to perfect patriots, accepted by the NAWSA [National American Woman Suffrage Association] and many former WPP members, […] made it imperative for feminist pacifists to reject the essentialism of earlier thinking about women's pacifism" (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 180). With the essentialism of women's pacifism overthrown, the reason for a separate women's movement also dissolved, and pacifists rejoined forces with the male peace movement (Steinson 249). The position of a unified woman's response to war was again open to (re)interpretation.

Women holding non-pacifist positions could and did seize upon the relinquished definition of women's natural response to war and redefined it according to their own perspective, one that would radically reposition the sentiment which many believed governed women's inherent maternal instincts. Integral to the redefinition was women's natural capacity for sacrifice. By embracing a patriotism defined primarily through their willingness to proudly send their sons to war, women revised their biological, maternal

imperatives, and transfigured their gendered identity from protector to martyr. Thus, supporters of American intervention argued that while surely a mother does not celebrate relinquishing her child to mortal danger, her inherently self-effacing nature makes her a prime vehicle of patriotism. The essentialism of womanhood was reconfigured so that the expectation of voluntary sacrifice which serves as the ideological core for both mothers and soldiers allowed for the equation of both identities in service to the country. Because "Mothers and soldiers experience the same burdens of duty and guilt as well face mortal danger in fulfilling their responsibilities," women could construct identities borne of the same patriotism that defined their soldier-sons (Haytock 32).

The deemed "natural" propensity to sacrifice extended beyond women's maternal function to inform all other forms of war work women undertook. Perhaps most visible was Herbert Hoover's Food Administration, which preached the dogma of "voluntary sacrifice" through efforts to conserve household consumption, and instated pledge cards representing women's promise to carry out the directions and accept the advice of the Food Administrator. Motivations for women's staunch commitment to mobilization activities and relief work were themselves complicated by multiple desires and hopes. Not only did women want to help their country in a time of need, but they also "believed that a competent performance in their war services activities would enhance the position for women in American society" (Steinson 299). Women's war service raised the profile of women in the public sphere and "increased the participating women's awareness of the importance of their public roles" (Steinson 300). Even the NAWSA offered its services to the government despite its former cooperation with the Woman's Peace Party due to president Carrie Chapman Catt's calculation that wartime service would win more

support for the woman suffrage cause than pacifism would (Steinson 237). The implicit—or explicit—debate of what was owed to women in exchange for their sacrifices on behalf of their country was itself contested since in expecting reward, women risked undermining the selflessness of their sacrificing natures. Therefore, "[s]uccessful arguments about woman suffrage resonated with the prevailing culture of obligation, not because women used their service as a bargaining chip but because they showed through the fulfillment of obligation that they could be entrusted with rights" (Capozzola 104).

The celebrated image of women at the center of American war efforts seemed at face value to elevate their position as the heart of the mobilization of the nation. However, while "ostensibly the homefront campaign […] was about sacrifice and altruism, the symbolism and rhetoric of texts…[produced] are fundamentally about power" (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 160). Mark W. Van Wienen argues that though women were inscribed with a role that equated their sacrifice with that of their soldier counterparts (consider Hoover's slogan "Food Will Win the War"), propagandists inadvertently celebrated their control over household consumption—and by extension, women's sentiment—through vehement advertising campaigns that indirectly depicted women under the masculine authority of various federal programs. Women enlisted by the Food Administration, for instance, were asked to relinquish control over their kitchens and defer to the Administrator's decisions as to how women should run their households in service of their country (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 165). In the propaganda dispersed over the course of the country's mobilization, American women were configured both as heroic soldiers, propelled by the same spirit of sacrifice as their

husbands and sons, and as subjects of the state who subordinated their own autonomy to that of the country. Sentiment in support of American intervention, then, embodied these conflicting impulses of empowerment and acquiescence.

This political climate permeated the American war fiction of 1918. Ethel May Kelley's *Over Here: The Story of a War Bride*, Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' second war story, *Her Country: A Story of the Liberty Loans*, and Edith Wharton's first war novel, *The Marne: A Story of the War*, are all concerned with articulating why this war ought to be undertaken, what the stakes are for American men and women and what Americans stand to gain by their sacrifices.

I Want to Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier: American Womanhood during War

Published in April of 1918, Ethel May Kelley's war novel, *Over There: The Story of a War Bride*, offered a timely message to American women about the sacrifices required of women by the onset of United States' belligerency. The novel's adolescent protagonist, Elizabeth, advances through the story in a narrative arc that chronicles her transformation from flighty girl to wise woman as a result of the suffering and exhilaration the war provides her generation. The novel is comprised of Elizabeth's monthly journal-like reflections beginning on her 18th birthday in November 1916, and concluding with the final entry just over a year later in January 1918. As the year unfolds, each chapter traces month-by-month the events of Elizabeth's 18th year, from her courtship and marriage to Captain Thomas Richardson, to her eventual widowhood in November of 1917, and then closing with the birth of her son Obadiah in January of the New Year.

The narrative dynamics at work in the novel center on *Over Here*'s opportune relationship to American belligerency and the emergence of a new homefront dynamic where marriage, motherhood, and widowhood have the potential to collide. The effectiveness of Kelley's story is linked to the timeliness of its message; by the time of the novel's publication in early 1918, the American homefront was confronting the first significant casualties of war, and as a war bride (and widow) Elizabeth serves as a model for how this sacrifice and suffering is to be borne. Kelley's novel is also a clear repudiation of former claims on the essentiality of women's pacifist tendencies. The Alfred Bryan and Al Piantadosi song "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier" sold 650,000 copies in the first three months of 1915 and served as a rallying cry for the Woman's Peace Party. By 1918, however, the fictional Elizabeth, having just lost a husband to the war and given birth to a son, voices the new sentiment of the nation when she proudly proclaims, "I want to raise my boy to be a soldier" (258). Kelley's novel serves to inspire and convince readers of the trustworthiness and loyalty of women to the nation (despite their former pacifist transgressions). What is more, Elizabeth is not newly converted to the obligations of patriotism; the gradual evolution of her support of the war effort is presented as instinctive, and a natural consequence of maturation for women of her generation. When reviewing *Over Here*, *Booklist* deemed it "a sincere, unassuming little story…at times rather sentimental," suggesting that its contemporary readers too found Kelley's representation of American womanhood's unequivocal support for intervention unsurprising, despite the fact that three years earlier such bellicosity would likely have been deemed unnatural in a woman and mother (339).

The novel is deeply engaged with the political discourse surrounding America's relationship to the war and traces a neat trajectory from the political rhetoric of Wilson in 1916 (and the issues surrounding preparedness) to the ideological underpinnings for the declaration of war. The preparedness young Elizabeth espouses perfectly captures the ethos of the movement in 1916; she remarks, "I do want the men I know to be…in a state of preparedness in their souls as well as their bodies" (14). In addition to Elizabeth's concern about men's physical and emotional preparedness, she herself does setting-up exercises each night, goes to rifle practice (though mainly to secure Thomas's favor) and plans on taking a Red Cross class on basic nursing. Elizabeth recounts with enthusiasm the "zippiness and joy" that greeted President Wilson's "peace without victory" address to the Senate on January of 1917, deeming it "a corking idea for peace to come through us" (49). Likewise, Elizabeth's love interest and eventual husband is committed to military service, attending Officers' Training Camp, at Plattsburg, New York at the time of the novel's opening.[2]

In contrast to many of the earlier war novels, *Over Here* readily identifies Germany as the political enemy of the nation. Elizabeth refers to Germans as "The Scourge of Attila," and statements such as "The Germans, of course, have always been wrong, they never had any decency of any kind," and "there were no bounds or limits to the organized savagery of the Prussians," go entirely unquestioned in the novel (47, 20, 58). Here, as elsewhere in the novel, Kelley offers a direct reflection of American politics of the moment. As early as 1915, Wilson launched an attack on hyphenated Americans, playing on fears of their presumed disloyalty to their adopted home country; historian David Kennedy remarks, "Xenophobia was not new in American in 1917, but the war

opened a wider field for its excesses" (24). However, the novel maintains a degree of ambivalence for the 100% Americanism of the Wilson administration. When debating whether one should or should not do business with the Germans in the neighborhood, Elizabeth concludes,

> I don't believe one should except in special instances of Germans one knows and likes. I wouldn't go into a German restaurant for anything—the food would choke me, and I won't play a bit of German music, neither do I think they should give German opera at the Metropolitan—but I do think our grocer is blameless, and also that comfortable good-looking laundress we employ that does up my tucked waists as if they were her own daughter's. (93).

Elizabeth's rationale is comical, and Thomas dismisses her "feminine" logic as a "Prussian prejudice that works theoretically but not actually" (93). Historian Christopher Capozzola explains the ambivalence with which Americans regarded the political foes:

> Native-born Americans projected general anxieties about immigration and ethnic difference onto unlucky Germans placed by the forces of history in the wrong place at exactly the wrong time. That's why wartime Americans often seemed so confused about whether the culprit was the enemy German state, a barbaric German culture, or the German people themselves. (181-2).

Despite a theoretical "Prussian prejudice" which accounts for Elizabeth's uninhibited references to the unsavory nature of the German people generally, German soldiers are in no way central to the plot of the novel; in fact, German combatants remain

surprisingly distant in Kelley's portrayal of the war. Consider, for instance, Thomas's reaction to the enemy combatants he encounters when he arrives in France. In a letter to Elizabeth he describes his view of the front: "In the distance I saw a lot of other—mosquitoes, that's all they look like, you know. They came nearer and there were bursts of smoke and *one* dropped, —an enemy I suppose. It was like watching a battle among educated fleas, they looked so little" (219). Where we might expect the image of the enemy to come into view at its most perfidious, at the moment in which Thomas's death is revealed, we find instead a curious silence as to the identity of the perpetrator. Elizabeth reports: "He was just walking along and a stray shell exploded near him, and killed him" (242). The inconsequential nature of the killing blow—a stray shell, divested from a malicious intent as it missed its intended target—evaporates any anger at the enemy hand. The death is completely impersonal; Thomas was disengaged from battle, not staring down an opponent. The closest the novel comes to identifying a German enemy menace is in its characterization of a former friend of the family, the expatriated Fraulein Walerstein. The Fraulein is undoubtedly utterly tactless in her criticism of America and her dogged—if somewhat comical—assertions of Germany's cultural superiority. But aside from muttering cryptic allusions to an unsubstantiated anti-American plot on the part of the German-American community, the extent of Fraulein Walerstein's menace is her complacent assurance to Elizabeth that "[Elizabeth] was very undeveloped for [her] age compared with the rosy German mädchens" (103). On a plot-level, at least, the Germans are not the antagonists of this story. In fact, much like Margaret Prescott Montague's *Of Water and the Spirit*, no enemy is explicitly identified.

Though the novel is demonstrably conversant with the wider political debates that enveloped the nation during the war years, *Over Here*, as its title suggests, is in the main concerned with issues of the homefront. Writers had portrayed the American homefront before, perhaps as a place where the internal struggle for the conscience and soul of a mother is waged in private as she wrestles with permitting her son to go to war (as in Mary Shipman Raymond's *The Three Things* or Alice French's *And the Captain Answered*). The homefront Kelley describes, however, is a fully realized physical space. The external landscape of Elizabeth's home and neighborhood is represented as a warzone where national measures in the service of waging war are enacted. Through Elizabeth's teenage eyes, the gender politics of the nation come to a forefront, allowing Kelley to explore the how the domestic sphere is politicized—and militarized—to define gender-appropriate responses to American war efforts.

The American homefront of 1918 was saturated with propaganda urging unequivocal support for the war effort by turning sentiment into a currency of patriotism. Though Americans were urged to participate in war relief efforts and other practical matters to aid in the war effort, the propaganda directed at the homefront was also concerned with eliciting purely emotional displays of patriotism. As she records the country's path to belligerency, Elizabeth describes the pervasiveness of patriotic propaganda, explaining:

> You can't go *anywhere* in any comfort with belongings to hold, because the moment you are seated in a public place the orchestra plays *The Star Spangled Banner* and just as soon as you have recovered from that,—*The Marseillaise.* … I don't mind it at the movies so much—I like to go to the

> movies now all the military stuff is released and you can really see our boys drilling—but in a restaurant when you are perishing of hunger and the waiter after interminable delays has just served the soup, why, then one or two verses of orchestral enthusiasm comes harder. (85).

Elizabeth's wry observation of the more intrusive displays of patriotism enforced on the public is amusing, despite (or perhaps because of) the seriousness with which such displays were undertaken and received.

Women were primary targets of the country's efforts to mobilize the nation and *Over Here* aptly reflects how the domestic sphere was recast into an ideological battlefront. Most visible in the novel is the Food Administration's food conservation program which affected women across the country and was adopted with ferocity. "There is no service in this war," Hoover declared, "in which women can so well enlist themselves as in this" (qtd. in Capozzola 96). Just how influential Hoover's Food Administration was in dictating terms of American women's war effort is perhaps best expressed through Bessie Rowland James' 1920 retrospective *For God, for Country, for Home: The National League for Woman's Service*, which recounts the work of American women mobilized for war service, and devotes an entire chapter to home economics during the war. James explains how American women contributed greatly toward the winning of the war, stating:

> If the American people—the American housewife in particular—had not heeded carefully the warnings and instructions issued by the Food Administration…the United States might have faced starvation, and the army and the Allies not have been fed. […]

> There were slackers, of course, women who simply would not save, and who could not be shamed into saving, but they were exceptions. Nearly every woman enlisted in the army which was fighting the war by saving food constituted herself a committee of one to win recruits. There were many vigilance committees who sought out waste in the communities… (212, 221).

In the fictional world of the novel, Elizabeth's domestic arrangements, likely mirroring those of the novel's contemporary readership's, are orchestrated to comply with the Hoover conservation regimen. Despite the gravity of James' tone in regard to the significance of women and their "kitchen soldiering," Elizabeth pokes gentle fun at the program of "Meatless Monday and Wheatless Wednesdays." Of Hoover and his "Food Will Win the War" campaign, Elizabeth quips, "Mr. Hoover becomes our official Old Mother Hubbard and takes charge of the National Cupboard—no disrespect intended" (169). Ultimately, despite the seriousness with which the campaign was adopted across the country, the novel's light-hearted tone in regard to food conservation was the more realistic; Capozzola notes that by most estimates, wartime meat consumption increased rather than decreased and that ultimately the program had an insignificant effect on the Allied war effort (101). In retrospect, it is clear that the significance of the Food Administration's campaign was in supplying the homefront with practices that would provide women with a means to demonstrate a largely ideological support of the war.

Undoubtedly, many women, like Bessie Rowland James, responded to the Wilson administration's efforts to mobilize sentiment on the homefront with considerable gravity and earnestness. But Kelley's novel is not a paean to women's knitting efforts or food

conservation. By inviting readers to find humor where they might have considered only gravitas, Kelley effectively undermines the rhetoric that measured women's significance to the war effort by the tangible materials they produced or conserved. The novel suggests instead that American women's sacrifice ought not to be considered in the number of cups of sugar they deprived themselves, or by the number of socks they knitted, but by a far more emotional and deeper kind of sacrifice. The journey through this sacrifice takes Elizabeth from a blithe adolescence to an enlightened womanhood and serves as a redefinition of women's identities as inherent patriots.

Elizabeth's father, a doting parent in most respects, is nonetheless—from a twenty-first century perspective at least—cringingly sexist. He dissuades his daughter's interest in college because he "does not like higher education for women" (51). More significantly, Elizabeth's father is especially useful in exposing the gender politics embedded in the rhetoric of wartime America. Elizabeth explains, "He cares about politics and patriotism as if they were me and mother personified" (81). Even before American belligerency, Elizabeth's father concedes that he wishes Elizabeth had been a boy, so that he would have a son to partake in the conflict. Elizabeth recalls their subsequent conversation regarding women and integrity:

> "Do you think that women as a general thing, father," I said, "have a whole lot of integrity?"
>
> "I don't know," he said again.
>
> "How could I, for instance, show that I had it?"

> "By claiming your own, by acknowledging your own, by fighting and if necessary by giving your life for that in which your honor is involved. The principle is the same whether you are a man or a woman."
>
> "You're thinking about the Germans again, father," I said.
>
> "Well, maybe I am." (63)

Though the United States is not yet officially at war when this conversation takes place, this exchange is obviously significant to Elizabeth's development into a woman of integrity, that is—according to the terms set by her father—a woman who is willing to make what to his mind are masculine sacrifices. Before American belligerency, Elizabeth's immaturity is explained in terms of her struggle to understand how her father can concern himself so passionately about a war from which she sees herself so far removed. She admits, "It seems strange that anybody can feel about those things as if they were personal troubles" (81). As the novel progresses, of course, Elizabeth matures precisely because the war becomes deeply personal.

When the novel opens on Elizabeth's 18th birthday in 1916, Elizabeth declares herself an adult. Her opinions on war, however, are distinctly "girlish," or immature, at least in the parameters of the novel. She declares "I *am* patriotic, but I hope I shan't have to suffer for it, or have those I love in any way, suffer," and later remarks, "I'd hate to have the war really affect me so I'd lose my appetite or anything" (14, 33). Once Elizabeth and Thomas declare their love for each other, Elizabeth is at first mollified that "If you loved anybody really and truly you would care more about them than war" (81). She believes that she and Thomas would not be parted because he would not leave her side. In fact, Thomas agrees not to enlist, and at Elizabeth's mother's urging, to find a

way out of conscription. It is Elizabeth who suddenly insists to her stunned parents and fiancé that Thomas must enlist at once. Though she is at a loss to explain how her beliefs changed, she reflects later, "It seems very strange that before I saw Tommy I didn't understand how I felt or what I wanted to do, and that after I saw him I knew perfectly, so that I could make it clear to everyone. I was selfish in my love at first, but I am not that way anymore. … We mustn't try to do our bit,— that isn't enough. We must do our all. It would be a good deal easier not to believe this, but it wouldn't be right" (111). Where we might assume Elizabeth's love would urge her to act selfishly, Kelley's novel instead suggests that through her love for Thomas, Elizabeth understands sacrifice in a way she was unable to before.

Thomas' deployment to France only heightens Elizabeth's commitment both to her country and more significantly to the importance of sacrifice. Elizabeth dwells endlessly on her own inner nature and her ability, or lack thereof, to adequately sacrifice on behalf of her country. Despite having sent her husband to war, Elizabeth confesses to an unshakeable feeling that the war demands something immaterial of her that she has been unable to give. "There are certain feelings you have to give up too," she explains to a friend, "I can't exactly explain, there are ways in which I am a pig about the war. I don't put it first, for one thing" (173-4). Her friend, Lester, points out that having sent Thomas, she has nothing left to give. But Elizabeth insists that she is remiss. Though precisely what Elizabeth means is never entirely clarified, her statement, "I keep telling myself that I have done more than enough—more than I can endure. In my soul I have *not let him go* yet," perhaps best illuminates the parameters of her struggle (227). In a conversation with Marcella Harcourt, a Canadian friend whose sweetheart had been

killed early in the war, Elizabeth reaches a new understanding of sacrifice as self-sustaining. Marcella tells Elizabeth, "I am sustained…by the war itself" (233). She explains that the war has given her the "opportunity to give—all I had…It's only that I've had a chance to share what's going on in the world by—by acquiescing in the common experience" (234).

Kelley's novel resembles Hetty Hemenway's earlier story, *Four Days*. Both center on the experiences and responses of American war brides, with the essential difference that in place of Hemenway's dark, foreboding tone, cast amidst an English backdrop, Kelley inserts an almost cheerful aura around sacrifice and widowhood on the American homefront. But the two novels share as well an attempt to define a generation of youth, irrevocably marked by war, as intrinsically different (and perhaps better) than the generation which preceded them. For all Elizabeth's blithe manner, her adolescence has clearly been marked by the consequences of the war even while it remained a continent removed. In the novel's opening chapter, she notes, "Most of the official chaperons are nursing the French wounded anyhow, so the younger set—I am now the younger set—have to look out for themselves much more than they had to formerly when the world was not at war" (12). Later, with America's declaration of war against Germany, the stakes for this generation are much higher than a lack of official chaperones. While Elizabeth has willingly offered her husband's service to her country, her mother resists making a similar sacrifice, refusing to grant her own husband—full of bellicose fervor from the very start of the conflict—permission to enlist. When Elizabeth encourages her mother to consider the possibility, she replies, "Don't be silly…What would we do?" (212). Consequently Elizabeth notes, "It was no use, though. Mother is

perfectly sweet, and does all the minor details of her duty, but she wouldn't give up the *last* thing, or know that it was there to give up. She's right for her, and I am right for me, I suppose" (212). When Elizabeth's mother sadly concludes that her daughter has "grown beyond [her]," Elizabeth reflects, "I'm a war scarred veteran now in my secret soul. The war got what it was after from me. Mother's just played with it. We don't speak just exactly the same language" (211). Having joined the "fraternity of those who lay their voluntary sacrifices on the altar," Elizabeth earns the right to say, "this is *my* war" (239, 228). Allowing herself to take ownership of the war gives her access to the same degree of sacrifice and integrity afforded male soldiers, as even her father acknowledges. Kelley's novel then mobilized sentiment in support of the war by redefining women's natural relationship to it and suggesting that, for the young generation of women at least, through their love of their husbands and sons, they are led not to selfish impulses but to the truest patriotic sentiment which requires and celebrates the fullest extent of sacrifice.

Slacker Reformed: Liberty Loans and Patriotism's Price Tag

In the First World War, the term "slacker" was applied to individuals who shirked their wartime duty. Failing to volunteer for military service and evading the draft were the most egregious forms of slacking, and public disapproval and outrage resulted in "slacker raids," which rounded up thousands of suspected draft evaders. But the term was equally applicable to those citizens who neglected to purchase Liberty Bonds or Liberty Stamps, or otherwise resisted the mobilization of patriotic sentiment. The wider applicability of the term, which could refer to both men and women, is indicative of how the First World War, as a total war, engaged both battlefront and homefront in equal turn.

Suspicions about disloyal and negligent citizens sparked the creation of various civilian propaganda groups, perhaps the most influential of which was the Vigilantes, a group of writers and artists who proposed to "drive the peace-at-any-price men to cover, to arouse the youth of the nation to their duties in peace and war, and to carry on a propaganda that will thrill the country" (qtd. in Kennedy 41). Begun at the end of 1916, the Vigilantes grew out of the established preparedness movement and the group's "implacable" and "fierce" recruiting tactics made it a force to be reckoned with during America's military engagement with the war (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 155). Citizen involvement was essential to the continuation of the war efforts in all belligerent countries. America was no exception, but given the nascent state of the newly instated federalized military, the country was direly underprepared to enter the European conflict. While taxation financed some of the war costs, then Secretary of the Treasury William Gibbs McAdoo concluded that borrowing was a quicker and more practical course of action. Thus, most of the war effort was paid for through citizens' voluntary purchase of Liberty Loans, a program of war bonds to which Americans readily contributed, thanks to McAdoo's shrewd use of wide-reaching publicity and high-flying emotional appeals supplied by Vigilantes writers and other propagandists (Zieger 75).

Drawing inspiration and purpose from the Liberty Loan campaign and the need to reform lingering slacker-citizens, Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews returned to the Great War as the subject of her fiction in a slight novel entitled *Her Country: A Story of the Liberty Loans*.[3] First printed in the woman's magazine *The Delineator* in May 1918, it was later that year republished in book form by Charles Scribner's Sons. *Her Country* chronicles the reformation of young Honor Mannering, a seventeen-year-old aspiring

singer who hopes that a lucrative career as a musician will redeem her family's fallen fortunes. To achieve such an end, she takes on work as a secretary and saves diligently in anticipation of moving to New York City where she can begin her professional training and her career. In the meantime, Honor's older brother, Eric, lame and therefore unable to enlist, becomes a fiery orator on behalf of the Liberty Loan program. Hoping to heighten the drama of his speeches, Eric solicits an apathetic Honor to lend her voice to his next rally at a motor-factory where her singing of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" is a great success. Eric shrewdly observes the effect of Honor's singing on the audience, finding hardened men left "touched, open-souled, ready for an impression," and notes, "It's good dope. It works to a charm" (36). Honor, performing a variety of patriotic verses including the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," spends the next few months accompanying her brother to each rally. Eventually, Honor is so moved by her brother's speeches that she pledges all her savings for a Liberty Bond, thereby giving up her own dream of going to New York City to launch her career. At the following bond rally, the great singer McIvor (a fictional character) is unable to perform and Honor is invited to take his place; McIvor had heard Honor sing two years ago and deemed her voice "fine" but with "something lacking" (20). At the rally, however, Honor's voice is transformed into a vehicle from which "to pour out love of country and sacrifice and unending devotion" (74). Deeply moved, McIvor decides to take her on as his pupil, thereby ensuring her future success.

The menace that Germany—as the declared enemy—presents is barely present in the novel, and appears only briefly in one of Eric Mannering's jingoistic speeches. "As sure as we are here to-day, just so surely Germany will invade America if she can starve

out England and make her give up that fleet," Eric declares. "We've got to see that England isn't starved; we've got to help her fight. She deserves it of us if we were in no peril at all, because she has fought our battle for three years—but we're in deadly peril" (42). Once having reinstated (through Eric's rhetoric) Germany's rapacious intentions, the story is entirely unconcerned with the nature of the military foe. The purpose of Eric's oratory is, after all, not to encourage the laborers to enlist and fight against German combatants, but rather to encourage a different kind of participation: the fulfillment of patriotic obligations through the purchase of Liberty Bonds. Beyond assuring audiences of the realness of a threat, the Liberty Loan campaign needed to direct the bellicose fervor the oratory elicited to mobilize pocketbooks as opposed to combatants. The threat to the success of American war efforts identified in the narrative then is not the military might of the Central Powers, but the lurking danger of "slacker" Americans who could undermine the nation's success from within.

The means of public persuasion adopted in order to equate the purchasing of Liberty Loans with the duties of American citizenship were part of Wilson's attempt to control the representation of the war to the larger public. To this end, and in tandem with agencies and programs including the Food Administration, the Red Cross, the Division of Civic and Educational Publications, Committee on Public Information (CPI) artists and writers worked closely with the Department of the Treasury in Liberty Loan campaigns (Zieger 79). Most famously, the CPI implemented the "Four-Minute Men" program which brought local citizens to various public spaces to give brief, rousing patriotic speeches on a variety of issues relating to American war aims. Of the nature of the rhetoric employed, historian Alfred E. Cornebise remarks, "The Four Minute Men's

addresses, to be sure, lacked a certain sophistication, owing more to American 'boosterism' and its 'bandwagon syndrome' than to psychological enlightenment" (x). Nonetheless, one of the Four Minute Men's primary tasks was enacting appeals for the purchase of Liberty Loans. Though Andrews never specifies the Four Minute Men as the group to which Eric belongs (and his speeches seem to be lengthier engagements), Andrews clearly intends Eric's character as a fictional member of a program with identical aims.

Through the invocation of patriotic vigilance organizations like the Vigilantes and the Four Minute Men, Andrews explores the gender dynamics at work in an American homefront where women's contributions and loyalties to the mobilization efforts of the nation were at risk of being either ignored or viewed with suspicion. The Four Minute Men, as the name suggests, was largely a male-run endeavor. Women's divisions of the Four Minute Men were organized, but solely to address the mostly female audiences of women's clubs and matinee showings of movies (Cornebise 14), suggesting that male organizers believed women capable of persuading only other women. Of women's efforts to ingratiate themselves into the kind of work the Four Minute Men undertook, historian Barbara J. Steinson notes that "many men regarded the women as useful only for propaganda purposes and not for selling bonds" (343). Even when the federal government instated a Women's Liberty Loan Committee (WLLC), "many of the state male Liberty Loan leaders…were not willing to cooperate with the women" (Steinson 343-4). The resistance on the part of male leaders to incorporate women's efforts might have been due at least in part an enduring sense of women's divergent relationship to war. The gender politics at work in the Vigilantes is a good case in point, particularly

given that the group provided propaganda directly to government agencies, including the Liberty Loan publicity division. Mark Van Wienen contends that the Vigilantes drew power from the success with which it defined "American homefront mobilization in terms of conservative (and repressive) politics" (*Partisans* 156). Despite the efforts on the part of women to revise their public image in support of American intervention and establish womanhood as inherently patriotic, the Vigilantes continued to "assum[e] as normative an absolute divide between bellicose masculinity and pacifist femininity," and consequently much of their rhetoric "characterize[d] any man's unwillingness to go to war as the consequence of a woman's undue and unnatural influence over him" (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 156).

Unsurprisingly, the Vigilantes was a heavily male-dominated group; women comprised only a quarter of the group's membership in 1917 and 1918. What is surprising, however, is the fact that a significant percentage (nearly half) of the surviving propaganda writing the Vigilantes disseminated in the form of poetry and press releases was in fact authored by women; thus, women's association with these groups and causes like the Liberty Loans were important sites from which to solicit "recognition for espousing America's cause" (Van Wienen, *Partisans* 165). As a story concerned with the instrumental influence of propaganda on the American homefront, *Her Country* positions Honor's work for the Liberty Loan cause within this gendered context; the group of propagandistic orators to which Eric belongs is comprised entirely of men, and in fact, with the exception of one particularly bedraggled audience of female workers at a knitting mill, Honor is the only female character in the entire novel. Against a backdrop of masculine oratory, Honor's voice is set apart; newspaper articles covering Eric's

speeches begin printing his sister's name as well, noting "her work *with* her brother" (italics mine) (47). That Honor is credited as working with rather than for her brother is significant as it equates the value of the contributions of both siblings to the Liberty Loan campaign (47). Because the story was initially published in a women's magazine, *Her Country*'s celebration of a woman's patriotic service would have been especially resonant to a female readership. Additionally, Andrews's novel serves as a metaphorical representation of women's authorship of war fiction as a form of fulfilling patriotic obligation.

The use of art in service of the country is a further component to Honor's journey to success. The story celebrates the invocation of art to rouse patriotic sentiment. In turn, the patriotic service art is meant to foster is almost exclusively defined as the financial transaction of purchasing Liberty Loans. At the start of the novel, Honor's motivations for her singing career are purely financial—the Mannering family estate has fallen into disrepair and she seeks in a future as a famous singer the income to restore the Mannering home to its former glory. She unabashedly tells her father (and later McIvor) "Don't you see, father—I've *got* to have money! Even—music is just for that [purpose]" (13). As she recounts her plans to her brother and her father, both men resist. Mannering feels it shameful for his daughter to enter a "trade," but Eric objects on the grounds of the commercialization of art, protesting, "to think of art in terms of money—almost wholly in terms of money, as you do! It's degrading" (5, 8). Honor acquiesces to Eric's request to perform at his Liberty Loan rallies merely because she hopes the publicity will benefit her career; her brother tells his fellow orators, "as for the country, [Honor] takes no more responsibility for it than a squirrel up a tree" (33). In contrast to Honor's purely financial

interests, Eric's invocation of art to induce patriotism to in turn generate money is acceptable because the exchange serves the country. While Honor intends to use her artistic talent to serve only her own selfish and materialistic desires, her motivations are condemned as inartistic. Only in service of her country is the financial exchange of art for money acceptable and appropriate; through the Liberty Loans campaign, Honor finds the acceptable use for her natural talent. Eric tells his sister, "You've a gift and you've a right to want to use it" (7-8). Furthermore, Honor's newly discovered devotion to her country is what allows her to improve upon her natural talent and achieve success. At the start of the story, McIvor warns the young and ambitious Honor that "Art is an exacting mistress. The price she asks for success is one's heart" (24). Mercenary and untouched by patriotic sentiment and voluntary sacrifice, Honor's talent is merely "mechanical," waiting to be touched by "a big emotion" (25, 27). At the sight of the American flag unfurled, "suddenly [Honor's] whole vigorous, fresh being rose to it in warmth and in loyalty," and by allowing her heart to be swayed by sentiment, Honor's voice achieves the greatness McIvor saw latent in her (35). The story as a whole serves as propaganda for the Liberty Loans program with the moral that any sacrifice such a purchase demands will be duly rewarded. In Honor's case, nothing is ultimately forfeited; her sacrifice actually results in her greatest boon in that she not only secures McIvor as a mentor, but more significantly, by acquiescing to patriotic sentiment, Honor unlocks her full potential as an artist.

The tension in the story comes not from the menace of the invading Germans, but rather from the need to transcend the inertia of a complacent American homefront. While Honor initially serves as foil to the duly patriotic Eric, it is actually Mannering senior who embodies the dangerous lethargy of a slacker-filled homefront. The elder Mannering

is an almost comically ineffectual presence throughout the novel, defined entirely by his inability to exert any kind of influence over his children, his estate, or the world at large. Honor and Eric are fond of their father, but both clearly find him disappointing. Unabashedly elitist, despite the fact that his estate is in complete disrepair, he scoffs at the legendary singer McIvor because he was a former mill-hand, and finds Honor's desire to turn her musical talent into a trade inappropriate given her lineage. Honor tells her father, "we do hate to go bang into your theories. So put 'em on a high shelf out of our reach, beautiful one. They don't go with us at all, but they're simply lovely on you" (31). Mannering welcomes his children's dismissal because "it would have disturbed his placid laziness to argue" (32).

Though Mannering senior's inability to assert any kind of authority throughout the novel is amusing, the complacency he so glibly exudes is also meant to trouble the readers with its wider implications for Mannering's generation as a whole. The Mannering ancestry, as we are repeatedly assured, is impeccably patriotic. War novels discussed previously such as *The Vintage* by Sylvia Chatfield Bates (1916) and *And the Captain Answered* by Alice French (1917) have depicted characters of staunchly patriotic ancestry with established histories of military service. Likewise, the Mannering family descends from a soldier in the Revolutionary War, a woman who took up arms in defense of her home and two infant children during the Cherry Valley Massacre, two Civil War soldiers (one on either side), one wartime governor, and an ambassador at an unspecified foreign post. This long line of service, however, splinters with Mannering senior, who thinks of nothing but his own comfort and who unabashedly lets his estate fall into disrepair while spending his yearly charitable check, courtesy of a distant relative, on his

annual vacation in Newport. Honor tells her father, “You’re beautiful, and entrancing to talk to, and finished and accomplished beyond words,” but, “you know that you’re not built to fight the world” (6). Like Elizabeth’s mother in Kelley’s *Over Here*, who refuses to even consider allowing her husband to enlist because of the discomfort doing so would wreak on her own cosseted existence, the elder Mannering is clearly a vision of an American gone soft. Even when Honor is able to trick her father into promising his pleasure money towards the purchase of a Liberty Loan, he abides by his wager although it was made in jest because the “Mannering word” was one of the “few things sound yet in Eric Mannering’s flabby code” (60). Though needled by his daughter into taking up his due patriotic duty, and though Eric junior suggests that “It will make over his life to help the country, like the others—grandfather and such,” ultimately, Mannering’s character seems beyond the redemptive sway of patriotic service (61). His assessment that “it’s beautiful to see such energy with such youth,” suggests that he is content to observe the world streaming by him from his own sedentary existence (8). Thus, Mannering senior is a cautionary figure, one used to evoke an emotional reaction against the dangers of complacency and “high-bred indifference” to which Americans of his generation seemed dangerously prone (58).

Mannering senior offers a compelling contrast to one of Andrews’ previous fictional parental creations. In *The Three Things*, Philip Landicutt’s mother, Margaret, was the bastion of moral rectitude and soundness. Published in 1915, Andrews’ first war novel made diffident neutrality an appropriate and judicious moral stance. There, the Germans were reluctant soldiers and worthy of Margaret’s benevolent grace. Her upstart and stubborn son, Philip, goes to war to learn the wisdom of Margaret’s ways. In *Her*

Country, however, the Mannering children must resist the dangerous allure of their father's complacent worldview. The evolution of Andrews' fictional stories suggest that it is no longer young men who need to be persuaded of the duty and honor of patriotic service; rather it is the adult generation who must defer to the wisdom and fervor of the young who wage the war and are capable of the sacrifice necessary. Young men, like Eric Mannering, and even young women, like Honor, are prepared to give all they have and in turn reap the rewards of their sacrifices.

"Lafayette, We Are Here": Fraternity of Arms

The first Americans to reach France arrived on June 14, 1917. Lead by John Joseph Pershing, the group was charged with establishing a logistical base to support U.S. participation in the war effort; their arrival signaled the possibility of an end to the deadly stalemate in which the Allies and Central Powers had been mired for three long years. America's cultural kinship to Britain had been lauded in the months leading up to America's declaration of war. But Americans shared a history with their French allies as well, one that for the logistical necessity of generating a bonhomous relationship between the two countries was duly celebrated and reinstated in the American psyche. Because the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) operated out of France, meaning that United States soldiers would both live and die on French soil, a reassurance of that kinship was essential once doughboys left their native shore. The oft-quoted and misattributed statement, "Lafayette, we are here," (Major Charles E. Stanton, not Pershing, is credited with the line spoken at an address at Lafayette's tomb in Paris), not only symbolically suggested that the United States was repaying the debt of Marquis de Lafayette's

contributions to the American Revolution, but also served to reinforce the idea of a continued Franco-American solidarity on both sides of the Atlantic. “France,” historian David Kennedy remarks, was in those days of war “ever more heavily invested with sentiment and symbol in the American mind” (145).

This solidarity, however broadly proclaimed, was in actuality fraught with tension that resonated across cultural and political lines. Repeatedly, General Pershing resisted considerable Allied pressure (most famously in the form of French General Joseph Joffre’s blunt “We want men, men, men”) to allow the integration of American troops into existent Allied armies. Pershing’s resistance stemmed from not only an awareness of the Wilson administration’s determination to create an established American army, but also an acknowledgement that the American people expected their soldiers to fight not under the command of the French or the British, but as an independent, purely American body (Zieger 92).[4] The military separateness with which American soldiers were kept from their co-belligerents was inextricably linked to the cultivation of American cultural separateness. Many Americans, though advocates for and supporters of intervention, remained ambivalent about the legacy of Europe’s past and its future. While French and British soldiers might be motivated by the desire to preserve their “ancient privileges or to promote national aggrandizement at the expense of others,” American soldiers were expected to draw from “a distinctive American ideology, a world view that combined moral superiority, unquenchable optimism, and pride in their nation’s limitless pursuit of material and social progress” (Zieger 91).

Edith Wharton’s 1918 war novel, *The Marne* directly confronts the tension between the reality of military codependence between the Americans and the French and

the perceived if not actual social and cultural differences dividing the nations. Wharton, a committed Francophile, found in the Great War a catalyst for her own version of war propaganda, one that centered on war engagement not as a means of serving forward-looking American interests but rather as part of a long-standing American obligation to France. Unlike other writers in this study, Wharton had experienced the war in the immediacy of her surroundings. Where the other American war writers were left to imagine the French battlefront, Wharton, from her vantage point in France, had to imagine the American homefront. While living in France, the tragedies of the war compelled Wharton to take action; she was such a visible and significant figure in the war relief effort that in 1917, France made Wharton a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. Emerging as it does from Wharton's well established passionate Francophilia, *The Marne* serves much in the same way as the ceremonies of solidarity at Lafayette's tomb. Nonetheless, like the other war-supporting writers, Wharton identified in the country's military participation the enrichment of American values and the improvement of the American people. Despite the fact that the novel culminates with the battlefront experience of a young American would-be solider, *The Marne*, like *Over Here* and *Her Country*, clearly speaks to the ethos and mindset of American homefront.

Most likely composed during the fall of 1918, *The Marne* is a slim tale of teenaged Troy Belknap, the son of wealthy (and distinctly superficial) American parents, who, as a result of spending each summer vacationing in France, has cultivated a deep love of and appreciation for the country. Troy is bitterly disappointed in the United States' failure to rush to France's aid in the opening months of the war, and much of the novel is spent chronicling his indignation. His French friend and tutor, Paul Gantier, in

the meantime, dies defending his country in the First Battle of the Marne. Troy is still too young to enlist with the American Expeditionary Forces when America does eventually declare war, and instead joins the American Ambulance as a driver. When his ambulance breaks down and leaves him stranded a short distance from the front, Troy impulsively joins a passing American regiment and inadvertently participates in the Second Battle of the Marne, where he is wounded while taking part in a scouting expedition. Delirious, Troy meets with a vision of his dead tutor, Paul, who expresses approval of Troy's heroic sacrifice on behalf of France and delivers him safely to a first aid station.

In the novel, Wharton sets out to explain to "the baffled American heart," the import of the war which was, according to Troy, "*To save France*—that was the clear duty of the world" (42, 38). But the Americans around him remain largely unmoved. Troy remarks, "None of these kindly careless people about him knew what he meant when he said 'France'" (38). The oft-invoked "Dulce et decorum est..." appears unironically in Wharton's novel when Troy considers how "The old hackneyed phrase had taken on a beauty that filled his eyes with tears" (52). Just what country Troy feels it is both sweet and right to die for is never in doubt: it is France's "sacred soil" that Troy could have knelt down and kissed upon his return (94). This idea that France was "holy ground" and that the French had "saved the soul of the world" in past battles featured heavily in the American army's newspaper, *Stars and Stripes* (Kennedy 208). Wharton's novel relays the same message soldiers were receiving on the battlefront to the civilians on the homefront. Troy himself understands France because of his tutor's instruction: Paul had shown Troy how "France had always been alive in every fibre, and how her inexhaustible vitality had been perpetually nourished on criticism, analysis and

dissatisfaction. ‘Self-satisfaction is death,’ he had said; ‘France is the phoenix-country, always rising from the ashes of her recognized mistakes’” (39). This understanding of France is significant to an American readership because it dovetails with America’s purported investment in the war—the chance to lead an old European order out of the past and into a democratic, enlightened future. The novel, however, takes this outlook and turns it on its head, putting French, not American values, at the core of the world order. Troy considers how “all civilization was bound up in her (France), and that nothing that concerned her could concern her only” (40). At the time that Wharton was writing *The Marne*, the fall of 1918, the Great War was clearly heading to an end. Taken together, the Second Battle of the Marne (July – August 1918) and the Amiens Offensive (August 1918) were distinct Allied victories that marked the end of German military threat—following their defeats here, Germany would launch no further offensives. The work of *The Marne*, then, is no longer concerned with mobilizing American sentiment in support of intervention. As Troy observes his country’s eventual shift from neutrality to belligerency, and records with disgust the lingering hindrance the pacifist movement imposed on American intervention in the Great War, he is relieved by the ultimate triumph of American sentiment over reason: “Luckily most people did not require to reason the matter out in order to feel as Troy did, and in the long run the *Lusitania* and Plattsburg won the day” (45). Thus, the novel operates from the context of an America which has already intervened in the Great War, and has already helped contribute to its definitive end. *The Marne* is primarily concerned with how the legacy of the war may be misperceived by an American homefront rife with unenlightened views of France and prone to an inflated sense of America’s importance. Furthermore, *The Marne* implies that

given their tangential relationship to the war, American women in particular are at risk of misunderstanding American involvement in the effort.

While Troy mirrors Wharton's own predilections and is therefore too much a Francophile to serve as representative of the common American, the novel is replete with secondary characters who serve as reflections of the average American public. And though the novel features a young, male protagonist, Troy's character does not confront internal conflicts or change as a result of the events of the story. Confrontation and redemption are reserved for the secondary female characters of the tale, who taken together represent a rather dire portrait of American womanhood's largely misguided response to the Great War and the ideological significance of France (especially when their frivolity is contrasted to the humility of their long-suffering French counterparts). Two women in particular represent facets of American women's relationship to the war. Josephine Belknap, Troy's wealthy and socialite mother, personifies the "kindly" but "careless" "passport-clutchers," of the older, established population of American women (39, 19). Hinda Warlick, a brazen YMCA entertainer from the Midwest, embodies the young "Columbias" and "war-goddesses" of Troy's generation (59, 46).

The novel's description of Josephine Belknap's relationship to the Great War falls somewhere between comical and contemptible. From Troy's perspective, few Americans understand the import of the war and the significance of France to the civilized world. Women of Mrs. Belknap's social status and class, however, are particularly vulnerable to adopting an inane posture in relationship to the war and the extent of their own sacrifices on its behalf. Stranded in France by the war's sudden outbreak, Mrs. Belknap and her compatriots provide generous funds for war relief efforts, but also register the hardship of

the war in terms of the personal inconveniences it presents to their attempts to secure safe (and suitably luxurious) return passage to America. To Troy's chagrin, when the first battle of the Marne threatens Paris, the stranded American women adopt personas as martyrs and their temporary exile becomes proof of their heroism and benevolence to a war-torn country: "'What did I do?—Why, I just simply *stayed in* Paris…Not to run away was the only thing one *could* do to show one's sympathy," [Troy] heard one of the passport-clutchers declare, a year later, in a New York drawing-room" (19). Mrs. Belknap becomes particularly invested in her identity as a heroic champion of France upon her return to New York society, where her experience there lends her a good measure of prestige and fame:

> "The tragedy of it—the tragedy— no one can tell who hasn't seen it, and been through it," Mrs. Belknap would begin, looking down her long dinner table between the orchids and the candelabra; and the pretty women and prosperous men would interrupt their talk, and listen for a moment, half absently, with spurts of easy indignation that faded out again as they heard the story oftener. (34).

Though we are not given a sense of the parental relationship between Troy and his mother before the Great War, the war causes an irreparable breach between them. Troy reflects dolefully "His father, with whom he might have talked, was gone; and [he] could not talk to his mother" (14). Later, he and Mrs. Belknap travel to the town of Mondement, home of Troy's beloved tutor Paul Gantier. While touring the site of the battle of the Marne with a French officer, Troy and his mother enter a cemetery and Troy discovers Gantier's grave. He does not point the grave out to his mother, however, and

she offers only "vague inattentive murmurs," and "took no notice" (30). As she turns to leave the cemetery and return to the car, Mrs. Belknap absently comments, "'Oh, poor fellows…poor fellows. Yes, that's right, Troy; put the roses on their graves" (30). From Troy's perspective, American women like Josephine Belknap are too invested in social posturing and preening to truly recognize the tragedy of the war. Likewise, France—which means so much to Troy—serves only as an accessory to their identity. These American women swathe themselves in the most recent charity events as they had formerly clothed themselves in the latest Parisian fashions, and never realize the true cultural and historical import of the country.

Although introduced as an antagonistic influence to Troy, Hinda Warlick and her journey to redemption is essential to both the ideological underpinnings of the novel and to exposing the dangers of the self-satisfaction which the novel suggests is pervasive on the American homefront. Finally en route to France to serve as a driver for the American Ambulance, Troy encounters the distinctive American ideology that many American volunteers, influenced by a heady dose of superiority, took with them to France. Of his fellow male passengers Troy is dejected to find that "most of them were full of the importance of America's mission," and so complacent in their certainty that "[t]his was Liberty's chance to Enlighten the World," they evidently overlooked the fact that America's Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World was a gift from France to America (58). Troy finds the female volunteers even more misguided: "The women were even more sure of their mission; and there were plenty of them, middle-aged as well as young, in uniform too, cocked-hatted, badged and gaitered—though most of them, apparently, were going to sit in the offices of Paris war charities; and Troy had never noticed that

Frenchwomen had donned khaki for that purpose" (59). Attired in a military costume that served as a prop for their token importance, these women found in the destruction of France the opportunity to recreate themselves as its saviors. Buoyed by such self-importance and a "ghoulish glee," the "war-goddesses" kept a "continuous picnic on the ruins of civilization" (34). The most prominent among these self-satisfied crusaders is Hinda Warlick.[5]

That Hinda arrives in France as part of the Y.M.C.A. in itself gestures to the moral and ideological differences Americans perceived between themselves and their French allies. A letter in which Georges Clemenceau, premier of France, offered to help the American military establish licensed houses of prostitution like those provided in the French army was passed around the Wilson administration like a hot potato until Secretary of War Newton D. Baker got hold of it and reputedly declared, "For God's sake…don't show this to the President or he'll stop the war" (Kennedy 187). To counteract the potentially morally eroding climate, the War Department therefore established the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) which operated through civilian groups, including the Y.M.C.A. The novel articulates this sentiment as a disembodied chorus of American morality: "France must be purified…Frenchmen must be taught to respect Women. We must protect our boys from contamination… […] we must set the example …" (61). Thus, Hinda's character is a personification of the personally and institutionally entrenched feeling of moral superiority that guides—at least in Troy's estimation—all American women in their volunteer efforts for the war. To her fellow American volunteers she declares, "We must carry America right into the heart of France—for she has got a great big splendid heart, in spite of *everything*" (61). Troy

cringes upon hearing Hinda's proclamations, remembering his tutor's comment that "self-satisfaction is death" (62).

Though on the surface it seems that Wharton's perspective is different from that of her compatriots—her war novel agitates for American war engagement to preserve France rather than to uplift the United States—she shares the fundamental belief that war will enlighten Americans even as it preserves the sanctity of French culture and life. When left in the eroding climate of his wife's social circle, Troy's father is vulnerable to the same self-aggrandizing impulses that guide Josephine and her compatriots' responses to the war. Eventually, however, Mr. Belknap accepts a position with the Red Cross in Italy and consequently adopts a duly dignified relationship to the war, leaving him "more impressive and important than usual" (72). The young American soldiers Troy first encounters in Paris initially are "bewildered, depressed and unresponsive" by their first sojourn on French soil (78). The officers Troy encounters perceive France only by what she lacked compared to America, demanding of Troy "where in the blasted place you could get fried hominy and a real porterhouse steak for breakfast, and when the ball-game season began, and whether it rained every day all the year round" (79). Once en route to the front, however, Troy finds the American soldiers "a different race of men" (79), because even as an ambulance driver, Troy feels that "It was something—it was a great deal—to be even the humblest part, the most infinitesimal cog, in that mighty machinery of the future" (86). As participants—soldiers, ambulance drivers, or Red Cross employees—the male characters acquire a direct relationship to the conflict which in turn provides an avenue through which to understand France. Of course, these opportunities

are not readily available to American women, even those who undertake relief work in France.

Hinda Warlick, however, inspired by a trip "pretty near the edge" of the French front, is proof that American women can be enlightened by their time in France (97). When Troy's path crosses hers again, at the Y.M.C.A. hut where she is performing as part of the soldiers' entertainment, she explains that a trip near the front was her "first sight of—things—of that sort" and having witnessed the commitment and sacrifice of French soldiers, Hinda is compelled to publically recant her previously held views about France (97). Most significant is how Hinda couches her recanting. She tells the American soldiers, "I have to laugh now when I remember what I thought of France when I landed. My! How d'you suppose she got on so long without us? Done a few things too—poor little toddler! Well—it was time we took her by the hand, and showed her how to behave" (98). Having gotten to know the country, however, Hinda concedes that her self-satisfied views of superior American values were misguided, and inverts the mother-child relationship she imagined between the United States and France, aligning instead with Troy's sense of France as "the Naomi-country that had but to beckon, and her children rose and came…" (107). Concluding with a rousing "Veever [sic] la France!," Miss Warlick exits the novel having accomplished Wharton's purpose of showing the conversion experience Americans must undergo if they are to understand the purpose of the war undertaken as an expression of solidarity with France.

When an "emotional" nurse, overcome by the heroism of Troy's rescue, tells Troy that he must devote the rest of his life to identifying the mysterious "sergeant of the *chasseurs a pied*" who delivered him to safety (Troy knows the man to be the ghost of

Paul Gantier but understandably does not attempt to explain this to others), Troy agrees, swearing that "he would do [so] on the battle-fields of France" (128). By this point, however, Troy's pledge is a strictly metaphorical endeavor. With Troy's participation in the Second Battle of the Marne, Wharton celebrated the irrefutable American presence in the war. Finally redeeming themselves by coming to France's aid, Americans had acquitted themselves well on French soil, thereby fulfilling their historical debt to Lafayette and his country. They arrived barely in time to settle the score; at eleven o'clock on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the Armistice was signed and the war was over. By the time of *The Marne*'s publication in December of 1918, Wilson had set sail for the Paris Peace Conference and the doughboys were making their way back home. Whether they would bring with them Troy's same pledge to honor the legacy of France remained to be determined in the aftermath of the conflict.

[1] A popular example was Irene Temple Bailey's lengthy novel, *The Tin Soldier*, about a slacker millionaire and the women who attempt to ensnare him and his millions. Of the international intrigue variety is Marjorie Benton Cooke's novel *The Clutch of Circumstance* which recounts the exploits and redemption of a woman of Germanic descent who becomes a secret agent for the Germans and dies as a result of her treachery.
[2] However, he resists signing up with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces or Ambulance service, explaining, "I don't care much about adopting this war from the outside. When I fight I want to fight as an American with Americans" (38). While not all Americans shared Thomas's preference, he echoes the sentiment espoused by American leaders including Wilson, the Secretary of War Newton Baker, and General John Pershing, all of whom believed that Americans would serve best as Americans and under the command of American officers. Though this novel only addresses this debate in a tangential way through Thomas's long delay in actually getting to the front despite being among the earliest American soldiers to depart for France, this belief was at the heart of preserving the integrity of Wilson's ideological framework that defined the nation's place in what had been the European War.

[3] Her previous book-length war work, the 1915 *The Three Things: The Forge in Which the Soul of a Man was Tested*, was discussed in Chapter 1.
[4] The lack of integration between the AEF and French forces notwithstanding, the Americans were nonetheless significantly dependent on their Allied allies in ways that belied the separation between them. Despite Pershing's intentions, the AEF was unable to break the war out of the trenches and into open combat, for instance, suggesting rather pointedly that for all the U.S.'s insistence on their independence as a military force and ideological position, the AEF's fate was nonetheless intertwined with that of their French hosts (Zieger 102).
[5] To borrow Julie Olin-Ammenthorp's excellent description, "a character with a satiric name of Dickensian proportions." See *Edith Wharton's Writings from the Great War*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2004. 69. Print.

CHAPTER FOUR

Return to Normalcy: Demobilization and Post-Armistice America; 1919-1920

On November 11, 1918 Allied forces celebrated their victory over the Central Powers, but just what they had won had yet to be determined. Complicating the significance of the war's outcome was the fact that Germany had not been unequivocally defeated on the battlefield; only months before losing decisively in the west, Germany celebrated an overwhelming victory on the eastern front. Furthermore, while France and Belgium suffered enormous material damage at the hands of invading forces, no enemy soldier set foot in Germany proper until after the signing of the Armistice. Thus, historian Robert H. Zieger notes that "for all its horror and killing, the Great War ended ambiguously" (159). American sentiment regarding the war in the immediate postwar years was similarly ambiguous, marked by jubilation, frustration, and apathy in turn. Historians agree that the U.S., caught off guard by the timing of Germany's capitulation, was ill-equipped for the logistical arrangements necessary in demobilizing its armed forces. The lengthy demobilization process combined with the protracted peace negotiations at Versailles contributed to the feeling of "post-Armistice agitation" that affected both soldiers and noncombatants (Keene 142).[1] The plodding pace of the peace negotiations in Versailles (which took six months to finalize), was prolonged a further nine months for Americans as the Senate heatedly debated whether the nation should or should not agree to the terms of the Treaty. The congressional dithering heightened the sense of uncertainty and frustration of the months following the cessation of hostilities. Finally, the election of Republican Warren G. Harding signaled the end of a pronounced

engagement with the war and its aftermath. In choosing Harding, who had secured his bid for the presidency in 1920 by pledging to the American people a "return to normalcy," Americans were acting on a desire to leave behind the extraordinary aspirations that reigned during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. In a speech on May 14, 1920, Harding explained: "America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy… not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality. It is one thing to battle successfully against world domination by military autocracy…but it is quite another thing to revise human nature" (Harding 223). In between Armistice Day 1918 and the normalcy heralded by Harding's presidential victory in 1920 lay the last American battle of the Great War: the fight over the Treaty of Versailles and its concomitant League of Nations, upon which the legacy of the war depended.

American intervention in the war had indisputably achieved the nation's military goal of bringing about Germany's defeat. For the American public, however, the success of the "war to end all wars" depended heavily on President Wilson's ability to broker a sustainable peace for the present that would endure into the future. Soon after the cessation of hostilities it became readily apparent that Wilson's war would not transition neatly into Wilson's peace. Most essential to Wilson's success was the creation of a League of Nations that would ensure a future without war. Persuading his Allied counterparts of the value of the League proved easier than convincing his own country. Hoping to forestall a Republican victory in Congress that might impede the establishment of the League, and attempting to capitalize on his popularity as a wartime president, Wilson had urged Americans to support Democratic candidates in the 1918 election.

American voters failed to re-elect a Democratic Congress, however, and instead awarded Republicans majorities in both houses. Not only was this a clear indication that Wilson had lost touch with his constituency, but it also served as a harbinger of the political strife that would characterize the peace-making process.

Wilson returned to the United States in July of 1919, bearing with him a treaty whose punitive qualities were, by Wilson's own standards, a failure of his former ideals. While the president was confident that the League of Nations would redress the inadequacies of the treaty, the domestic politics of the country over which he presided had shifted during his absence. In a climate of escalating race and labor tensions, a Red Scare and the threat of revolution, and with women returning to their suffrage efforts with renewed fervor, postwar Americans were preoccupied with issues close to home and did not universally embrace Wilson's vision of a new American-led world order. Simply put, the American public's enthusiasm for the League had dwindled. On March 2, 1919, 39 senators signed a Round Robin urging the separation of the League of Nations from the treaty, a proposal Wilson refused to consider. In attempt to regain his lost ground, Wilson began an 8,000 mile tour of the country, delivering 40 speeches in 29 cities in 22 days before collapsing in Pueblo, Colorado and subsequently suffering from a debilitating stroke in October. The Senate rejected the treaty on November 19, 1919, then again on March 19, 1920. Not only did the United States never join its allies in signing the treaty Wilson had helped devise, but the country also refused membership in the League of Nations. Without the participation of the United States, the League had little chance of success.[2] The U.S. finally signed separate, perfunctory peace treaties with Germany, Hungary, and Austria in October 1921. Though some (Wilson perhaps the most among

them) hoped that the country would at some future point accept membership in the League, the Treaty's rejection in 1920 and the subsequent election of a president vehemently opposed to League membership most definitively symbolized the failure of the Great War to accomplish the idealistic aims many had held at the onset of American intervention.

Further undermining a sense of victory following the Armistice was the largely disappointing nature of the postwar reconstruction period. Because Wilson affixed so much significance to the peace conference in determining the success of the war, he focused his attentions almost entirely on the treaty talks in Versailles at the expense of domestic issues (Goldberg 14). Furthermore, and to the disappointment of many of his progressive followers, the president quickly dismantled the government agencies instated during the conflict. Many progressives had envisioned participation in the Great War as an avenue through which to bring about constructive changes in American society as much as in global politics. Wilson's decision to dissolve the programs indicated that the president had no intention of using wartime mobilization as a basis of domestic reform (Goldberg 41). The American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), a precursor to the vast U.S. military establishment of today, were rapidly demobilized, and the enormous army and the elaborate political and technical networks on which the AEF depended atrophied, leaving only skeletal remnants in place by the 1930s (Zieger 236). For Americans, then, "whether the subject is military development, foreign policy, race relations, labor relations, women's status, or government functions, the Great War stimulated potentially powerful changes that were to end, abruptly, before they could take root" (Zieger 236). Thus, even in 1919, the Great War no longer held the promise of being the redemptive

process of the world and of the nation. The subsequent disillusionment would be registered by both American men and women, but the underwhelming and perfunctory dismantling of many of the organizations that supported active homefront engagement with the war had particular consequences for women and their sense of the Great War's successes and failures.

The Armistice on November 11, 1918, left the many women's organizations and groups which had grown out of the war facing an uncertain future. Historian Barbara J. Steinson notes that "[a]lthough pleased that the struggle had come to an end, many women […] seemed almost wistful that one of the most active chapters in their lives was closing. Their wistfulness, however, did not translate itself into constructive programs for women in the postwar period" (380). Many women who had joined relief organizations were content to cease their efforts, assuming that they were no longer needed in a world at peace. In the absence of a comprehensive reconstruction program proffered by the Wilson administration, even women who believed that the reconstruction period would require their continued service were uncertain how and where to direct their attentions (Steinson 350). Consequently, the state councils of the Council of National Defense, and the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense (WCCND) were discouraged by the administration's failure to engage the organization in future projects; the WCCND executive committee resigned in February 1919 (Steinson 373-4). The Woman's Section of the Navy League (WSNL) also ceased to exist in 1919 since "[a]fter the Armistice, it became increasingly difficult for the WSNL Comforts Committee leaders to interest women in knitting" (Steinson 375).

Consequently, while women were vociferous participants in the shaping of the country's relationship to the conflict from the opening weeks of the Great War, identifying their responses to the war and the peace process in the immediacy of the Armistice is a far greater challenge. Not only did women who had supported American intervention struggle to find avenues through which to register a continued presence in the public debates about the war and its aftermath, but pacifist women were also largely excluded from the peace-making process. Most significantly, women's organizations had no role or place at the Versailles peace conference. One week after the Armistice had been signed, Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, convened a meeting uniting women's organizations of New York to act on a resolution demanding female representation at the peace conference. Because of "women's roles as the 'second line of defense' during the war, their desire to prevent future wars, and, most important, the special interest of women that would be over-looked by men," Catt argued that women's presence at the peace talks was essential (Steinson 354). Despite the efforts of the NAWSA, however, Wilson had no intention of incorporating women delegates in the conference proceedings (Steinson 354).

For the Woman's Peace Party—effectively silenced during America's tenure in the Great War—the Armistice held the promise of renewed efforts for the pacifists. Excluded from the Versailles peace conference, woman pacifists directed their attentions instead to determining American proposals for the International Congress of Women held in Zurich in the spring of 1919.[3] The delegates used the conference to establish a permanent body, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), with the WPP becoming the American section. While it is tempting to consider the

postwar period as a time in which American pacifist women resurrected their identities as representatives of American women's responses to the First World War, the relationship between the WPP and the domestic politics of the nation was ambiguous. Whereas "American women held key positions in the international group even though the main focus of its activities was in Europe," pacifist women remained "more uncertain about their domestic than their international responsibilities in postwar America" (Steinson 381). Consequently, it was not until 1920 that the American WILPF (formerly the WPP) even formulated a program that was concerned with domestic issues (Steinson 381). Where we might have expected a vocal pacifist engagement with postwar policy—the advancement of the League of Nations—most women were ambivalent. The majority of women pacifists did support Wilson's initial proposal for a peace-keeping body and strongly endorsed the creation of an international organization, but the League that emerged from the deliberations at Versailles was less compelling. While distressed by America's failure to join the League, and believing that even a flawed League could be improved, pacifist women such as Jane Addams did little speaking on its behalf (Steinson 370).[4]

Thus, for many American women, active involvement in the Great War and its aftermath came to an abrupt end. Steinson suggests that "even if the government had supported some program for women in the postwar years, […] it is unlikely that the response would have approximated the wartime response" (381). Some women did find new outlets in reconstruction and aid programs in France after the war; others channeled their energies to the promotion of a super-Americanism that exacerbated the already fraught social tensions of the postwar years. Ultimately, however, it is worth considering

that women, finally granted suffrage with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in August 1920, helped Harding secure the presidency by a landslide victory. Despite the vociferousness with which many women advocated for American intervention and their expectations of what intervention would accomplish for the nation, by 1920 women joined men in longing for a return to the more modest sensibilities of the prewar days.

For Americans in the post-Armistice period, the success or failure of the Great War was yet to be determined, and the question was debated with ferocity in public speeches, newspaper columns and in popular fiction. Fiction writers used their stories not only to mourn what had been lost and to celebrate what had been gained through American intervention in the Great War, but also to articulate an assessment of where in the balance of success and failure America stood. Though the amount of war fiction produced by both American men and women had steadily dwindled by 1920, some writers, compelled by the events surrounding the cessation of hostilities, continued to write novels directly engaged with the circumstances of post-Armistice America. Perhaps insolated by the conventionally solitary act of writing and thereby less affected by the dispersal of women's organizations and public propaganda campaigns, women writers continued to write war novels that grappled with the tensions facing the country. Significantly, however, the novels written by American women during the Armistice period implicitly or explicitly reject the premise that the war and the ideals that guided it were to be dismissed as—in Harding's term—nostrums. The circumstances their stories describe celebrate the potential for extraordinary change still possible during the Armistice period. To celebrate the war as a successful endeavor in 1919-20 meant that American involvement in the war—if not an unequivocal triumph—had left the nation

wiser, stronger and purer than at the outset of the conflict. This chapter considers the works of three women whose novels distinctly engage in the debates of post-Armistice America. The earliest work, *His Wife's Job* (1919), written by the prolific Grace Sartwell Mason, approached the postwar climate with great optimism. The two works published just a year later, *Man's Highest Duty: a Story and a Message* (1920) by Irene Nylen and *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* (1920) by Margaret Prescott Montague, conversely reflect and respond to the pervasive deepening disillusion and despair that characterized the Armistice period while struggling to maintain hope that the promise of the Great War could still be fulfilled.

Women and the American Workplace

Grace Sartwell Mason[5] published two novels in 1919, both of which invoke the Great War and the homecoming of its soldiers to examine how the nation had evolved socially and culturally as a result of the war. *The Shadow of Rosalie Byrnes*, which received uniformly disparaging reviews, is a mystery-romance involving identical twins and mistaken identity, a hasty marriage and a scheming, disapproving family, and an attempted murder.[6] The Great War provides the springboard for the characters' machinations, but beyond using the war in service of the plot, the novel provides no substantial commentary on its significance to American society. Mason's second war novel, *His Wife's Job*, however, offers a sustained examination of the effect of war on the American homefront, with particular emphasis on its consequences for the domestic sphere (the war's significance lies squarely in its effect on the relationship between husband and wife).

His Wife's Job appeared in installments in the April and May 1919 issues of *The Woman's Home Companion* before being published in book form later the same year. The novel opens in 1917 with the protagonist, a flighty upper-middle class woman named Anne Henderson, finding herself for the first time in her life, "squarely and uncompromisingly up against reality" (1). Reality arrives in the form of husband Roger Henderson's sudden and surprising decision to enlist in the army, and a subsequent drastic reduction in Anne's personal comforts and daily frivolity. With Roger away at Plattsburg and later overseas in France, Anne initially falls under the sway of a feckless society woman named Marian Beal, who convinces Anne to join her in a poorly planned business venture. The women borrow money from a disreputable Colonel Hardenbrook in order to open an antique shop. The business is a failure and Marian quickly abandons Anne, leaving her to handle both the store and the lecherous advances of the Colonel. Without appealing to her husband for help or advice, Anne manages to secure the money needed to repay her debt, disengages herself from the predatory Hardenbrook, and eventually finds clerical work in her husband's former construction firm. Hard work reforms Anne, prompting her to reassess her former belief that wives ought to be coddled and sheltered, and she experiences the great thrill of being a working member of society and financially independent. When an injured Roger is sent home, he finds his wife utterly transformed; Anne has advanced up the ranks of the Leavitt Construction Company and is unwilling to relinquish her career despite her husband's return. After some debate, the couple restores their relationship and enjoys greater contentment in their marriage as equal partners. The novel ends with Roger's company sending him to France as part of a government commission to help with reconstruction efforts after the war.

Roger accepts the position only after securing work for Anne with the post-World War I relief organization called the American Committee for Devastated France.[7] As the two walk arm-in-arm out of the train station, Anne feels "as if they had discovered the secret rhythm of the world, and were moving joyously in touch with it" (239).

Critics received the novel favorably; an anonymous review from the *New York Times* declared *His Wife's Job* a "very human story of wartimes, sympathetically told, and with a dash of restrained humor here and there that adds greatly to its charm." The reviewer, however, questioned the timeliness of the "moral lesson" conveyed by the story, remarking that it "would have had more point a year ago, when the war was on, than it conveys now" ("Rev. of *His Wife's Job*" 82). In her discussion of Mason's career and works, Diane Willins Moul takes issue with the reviewer's suggestion that the shelf-life of the lesson proffered in *His Wife's Job* would have been exceeded by the middle of 1919; Moul writes, "the 'moral lesson' of this tale, one that is repeated in countless stories by Mason, is that marriages cannot flourish in a hierarchy of inequality" (169). Moul argues that only a misreading of Mason's tale would allow a reader to presume that "only the extremities of war made this equality important or possible," as, in the novel, "the war has merely served as the pretext for Roger's escape, leaving his wife to cope on her own…a process that could have occurred…in any number of different ways and circumstances" (169). As Moul's interpretation of this novel is invested in the larger trajectory of Mason's own writing career, her analysis of *His Wife's Job* and the largely irrelevant nature of the war as its driving force are certainly defensible. However, when reading Mason's novel as part of the tradition of American women's writing of the Great War, the assessment offered by the *New York Times*' reviewer more readily suggests not a

blithe misreading of Mason's novel, but an identification of the novel's sentiment as tied to a specific historical moment in time, one that by midway through 1919 was already waning. Thus, the reviewer concludes that "The main thing is that here is an interesting sketch of contemporaneous life, with the exploration of the part one woman played in wartimes while her husband was 'over there.'" To understand Mason's novel, we may disregard its historical underpinnings; however, to understand the *New York Times* reviewer (and with him, presumably, the wider American reading public of 1919), we cannot.

Central to the redemptive arc of the narrative is the opportunity the Great War extended to American men and women to restore a vital sense of purpose to their lives, one which had dissipated in the early twentieth century. Mason, like the war writers before her, saw the war as an opportunity to reform some of the wayward tendencies of American society itself. Mason critiques pre-war, urban American life which "pour[s] its subtle poison into the […] veins" of unsuspecting citizens (11). For the purposes of the novel, the consequences of the ailing American society are in the main the disintegration of Roger and Anne's marriage. But it is evident that both Anne and Roger suffer as individuals, as well. The dangers of the poisonous environment the Hendersons inhabit manifest through the couple's struggle to achieve personal fulfillment and social success according to the gendered expectations for American men and women.

Accordingly, it is not a commitment to patriotic service or a desire to vanquish Prussian militarism that fuels Roger's decision to enlist: the narrator explains that "[t]here was nothing flamboyantly patriotic about Roger. Like the average American man he had, deeply concealed in him, quite a fund of sentiment, but he was horribly afraid of the

sentimental gesture" (2). Although occasionally moved by emotional appeals to his patriotic sensibilities after the nation's declaration of war, Roger is compelled to join the armed forces by an appeal of a different nature. Eager to escape the bitter quarrel with his wife over his decision to enlist, Roger leaves the house, and his walk around the neighborhood provides him with a moment for self-reflection:

> That night Roger Henderson did something that few men ever stop long enough in this busy world to do: he walked all around his House of Life, looked in at the windows and then stepped back and sized up the whole structure.
>
> He did not in the least like what he saw. The House was all right — presentable, modern and smart. But its foundations went no deeper than the surface. It struck him—he was savagely depressed—that the first good strong ill wind would blow the whole thing over. Also the furnishings of the House came in for a gloomy scrutiny: and the conclusion he came to was that what was in his House of Life was mostly junk—pretentious junk, at that. (9).

The "pretentious junk" that comprises Roger's metaphorical "House" includes an entourage of casual acquaintances in place of sustained friendships, a spending habit that provides for the acquisition of the latest status symbols but precludes savings for meaningful investments, and finally a wife who "was just an ornamental thing outside a man's real, important life—and…a mighty expensive appendage" (15). Roger's individual dissatisfaction reflects the disappointment which engulfed all of his generation; comparing his own circumstances with those of the other young couples he

knew, Roger concludes that "Something was making them all shallow and restless" (20). His self-reflection causes "something wild, untamed, unhusbandlike, [to break] loose in him. It reared up and sneered at the Bridge Club and all that it stood for; it contemplated with derision those flabby muscles of his; it raged and lashed out against the futility, the monotony and the burdens of his life" (7).

By contrast, enlistment with the armed forces offers men the opportunity to re-center their priorities and to escape from the bonds of ennui and dissatisfaction husbands like Roger face. The transformative qualities of military service are best exemplified by the minor character of Stubby, a clerk in Roger's office whose penchant for singing and fox-trotting through the building causes the office staff to regard him as a comical nuisance at best, a "pestiferous cub" at worst (120). The day Stubby enlists, shocking his colleagues at the Leavitt Company, however, the "smile on his face…struck them all as being somehow different from the one to which they were accustomed" (4-5). Later, Roger stumbles upon Stubby—now a Lieutenant—while in France. Roger writes to Anne: "He's improved a hundred per cent., and he says when he gets back home he's going to the boss and tell him he wants to learn the business from the bottom up" (123). The reformed character of Stubby, a transformation that begins the moment he dons his uniform and culminates in his revised perspective on his place and responsibility in the world, stems directly from his experience as a soldier. Significantly, the war does not outright change the opportunities American society extends to men like Stubby and Roger; rather, it makes them aware of ones they were failing to seize. Roger's letter to his wife continues, "I realized, as I never have before, how decent the boss has been to all of us, what a chance we all had to work up. What we've seen over here makes America look

good to us in a way it never did before" (123). The larger political goals of the war are not nearly as significant to Mason's novel as is the opportunity the war provided Americans to reflect on and restore the qualities that modern life has gradually eroded and concealed behind veneers of materialism.

The war did, however, radically change the opportunities readily available to women, or, at least, it shifted the landscape enough to throw those opportunities into apparent relief even for women as oblivious and sheltered as Anne Henderson. Before he enlists, Roger laments privately that his wife "knew as much about his work and his ambitions as a kitten knows of algebra" (12). By the time Roger returns home convalescing from a battlefield injury, Anne not only understands precisely the nature of his work, but is actually performing it, while cultivating professional ambitions of her own. The Great War famously provided American women with employment opportunities hitherto entirely unavailable to them. Zieger notes that while the wartime employment boom did not in actuality reflect the induction of new female workers into paid labor, it did dramatically reconfigure the kinds of work women were undertaking. Rather than find employment in the confines of domestic service, women instead found new positions as semiskilled manufacturing operatives and laborers, office clerks and telephone operators (144). *His Wife's Job* interjects itself directly into this historical context; the narrator explains, "At this early stage of the game (Spring of 1917) there had not begun that rush of women into industry that was to be an astonishing feature of the following year; but even then women were doing many interesting things in war work" (28). Before the failure of her antique shop leaves her in dire financial straits, Anne surveys the field of enticing career choices before her: motor car driver, overseas canteen

worker, nurse. Later, Anne attempts to secure employment as a field secretary of a corporation, a social worker, a settlement worker, and a mail order clerk, before settling briefly in a position as a cloak and wrap model in an upscale department store.

Initially, however, Anne's foray into the working world merely exposes her elitism and condescension to the working classes. As a "great horde of alien garment workers" fill the side streets at the end of the working day, Anne is filled with distaste at "the cheapness of their clothes, the efforts of the girls to catch the style of the minute, …and their crude voices as they jostled past her" (103). Mason's protagonist, like those of many of the writers considered above, has an impeccable family ancestry. The novel assures readers that Anne, "who was American of the oldest American stock, sheltered all her life according to the best ideal of the American man, felt infinitely superior to these underbred aliens" (103). As Anne begins her humble overtures into honest labor, however, she is filled with admiration for the women around who are infinitely more independent and productive. Like Roger, she undergoes painful self reflection:

> [S]he had always considered herself and [her friends …] capable and rather gifted. Their homes were furnished with cleverness and, to their own way of thinking, with a quite high degree of artistic ability, most of which they had acquired from magazines … Why should not these wives consider themselves successes? But by whose standards were they measured? She was beginning to suspect that she and Ada Kent and the other women of their immediate circle had set their own standards. It struck her, in this moment of most unusual reflection, that they had been rather easy standards. (115-6).

While wrestling with these insights, Anne turns to her comfortably situated sister and demands, "What share of the world's work are we doing?" (176). Although Mason's novel does not directly engage with the activist war work undertaken by American women (as preparedness advocates, etc.), it does provide an illustrative example of how the Great War so widened the circumference of women's established spheres that Anne suddenly feels compelled to consider her own life in terms of her contribution to the world. Anne's sister is affronted by the question Anne poses and unwilling to pursue the conversation, but the reader of the novel is certainly encouraged to empathize with Anne as she declares, "[Even] If I had leisure and money I should want to take part in the life of the city and the nation, not just the society life, but the big life that is made up of better laws, better education, better institution" (217). Furthermore, as in Roger's case, it is not the country that has precluded women from self-fulfillment; Anne notices that "A latent ambition, a will-to-accomplish which had been smothered in the softness of her life was stirring in her… She came of ancestors who had been workers and fighters; it was no fault of her inheritance that she was flabby" (117).

Clearly then, the novel is committed to a celebration of the opportunity participation in the Great War provided Americans to redress the moral, spiritual and physical atrophy of the nation's men and women. *His Wife's Job*, however, was published in the midst of demobilization. Consequently, Mason's novel purveys a vision of how the process might unfold to the country and its citizens' greatest advantage. *His Wife's Job* addresses the circumstances of demobilization directly when Roger returns home and learns the truth about his wife's fully-established career in his absence, a situation which was reflected in some form in many American households. The change is deeply

problematic for Roger as it will be, Mason suggests, for all husbands in similar positions. Anne considers that "They (Roger and his fellow returning soldiers) had come back to find a new order, but most difficult of all was the change within themselves. They had looked on the faces of splendor and of horror—they were going to find it not easy to come back to the drafting-boards, the ledgers, the shops—and the competition of women" (204). Mason's protagonist is surprisingly strong-willed as a consequence of her experience in wartime America. When Roger protests the indecency of his wife continuing employment now that he has returned, Anne offers only remonstrance: "You have to remember that, while you've been over there in France, things have been moving fast here, too. Thousands of wives have discovered they can make money, earn wages, and it has changed their viewpoint a lot. Well, don't you see, the husbands' viewpoint will have to change, too?" (215). That the Hendersons ultimately secure careers in reconstruction is perfectly fitting given the zeitgeist of 1919. Reflecting on the circumstances in which she and Roger find themselves in the aftermath of his return, Anne considers that "for Roger, perhaps for them both, a period of reconstruction had begun" (211-2). Thus, Anne's future employment with the ACDF is apt—she will help to rebuild France, as she has helped to reconstruct the role of women in American society.

The optimism of Mason's novel was ultimately unrealistic. Having been told by recruiting campaigns in 1917 that it was their patriotic duty to take up positions as stenographers and factory workers, women as early as 1918 were admonished by such sources as the Central Federated Union of New York that that "same patriotism…should induce them to vacate their positions after the war" (qtd. in Kennedy 285). The advances women made in the workforce were quickly lost, which is why, by the time of the novel's

review in the *New York Times*, the reviewer might well have considered the novel's lesson out-of-date. Of Anne's transformation, the review remarks: "She has learned the lesson of patriotic efficiency." Once the war was over, of course, women no longer needed to apply their efficiency on behalf of the country. Part of the complicated demobilization process over the course of 1919 included an effort to return soldiers as jobs for them became available at home. As a result, by 1920 women comprised a smaller percentage in the labor force than they had in 1910 (Kennedy 285). Anne's cheerful declaration, "It's going to be a great world for women," was—at least by the standards Mason's novel sets forth—too grand a claim (217). The coming years would continue to challenge the great restorative qualities America's participation in the war had allegedly enacted for both men and women.

Returning Soldiers and their Message for America

The Armistice celebrations of 1919 brought a surge of renewed optimism that anticipated the dislocation of American materialism, the restructuring of capitalism, and the redistribution of power in service of the common good (Kennedy 246). *Man's Highest Duty: A Story and a Message*, published in 1920 by an entirely obscure writer, Irene Nylen, is one such fictional representation of this anticipated revision of American economic and societal frameworks. Unlike Mason and Montague, both of whom established careers as writers and whose works were published and reviewed in popular periodicals of the day, Nylen, it seems, was not a professional writer. It is plausible that she published only this one work—her foreword explains that she felt unusually compelled to convey her message to the public and that she appropriated the medium of

fiction only to enhance its appeal in the hope of gaining a larger audience.[8] The work itself is a strange piece, part religious tract, part epiphanic fantasy, part bromidic romance. The scant plot hinges on the redemption of Allen Swetland, the wealthy president of Swetland, Inc., a machinery corporation in New York City. Guiding Swetland to atone for and reform his abrasive and self-serving business practices is a newly returned soldier, Norman Hamilton, the manager of the company's sales department. Thanks to a witnessed act of heroism on the battlefield in France, Hamilton returns to New York with a conviction that the world, having endured such bloodshed and horror, is poised on the brink of a "new earth" (8). After struggling in vain to reacclimatize to the workforce and reflecting on his military service and his war injury, Norman comes to a decision about his responsibility to his fellow citizens declaring to himself, "I understand everything. That uniform, my service abroad, and this everrecurring [sic] pain stand for something. They constitute a message that it is my duty to deliver to my fellow-men" (48). Obstacles remain, however. At first dismissed as an idealistic "rainbow chaser," Hamilton cannot find peace until he overcomes Swetland's resistance to the glorious change that awaits the post-war world (61). As a result of the bitterness caused by the untimely death of his wife, Swetland is unrelentingly elitist and holds his workers in disdain causing (an unspecified) dissatisfaction in the company. Swetland's son Clifford has inherited his father's snobbery, although his longstanding friendship with Hamilton has made him more amenable to Hamilton's influence. Swetland's foster-daughter, Marjorie Reed, meanwhile, serves as the love-interest for both Hamilton and Clifford. The novel ends when Swetland achieves salvation and with Hamilton's marriage to Marjorie (Clifford's romantic interests are redirected to another

eligible young woman). The happy endings doled out to the characters are figuratively extended to the nation as a whole, suggesting that once America has swept away the last remnants of the old order, she will lead the world to a new, Edenic future.

Nylen's novel is deeply invested in the idea that the end of the war harkened the spiritual rebirth of the world. This conviction was shaped by both political and religious discourses of the era. Nylen's definitively Christian characterization of her protagonist's experience of the war, obviously imbued with evangelical intent, is not without precedent; previous writers—Montague in particular—had portrayed the war in an expressively Christian framework. Wilson's own rhetoric often communicated a political ideology guided in large part by religious conviction. For Wilson, the war presented the opportunity for America as "the purified descendent of Europe" to "carry forth the mission of Western civilization free of the sins and errors of Mother Europe herself" (Zieger 156). In an address to Congress in February of 1918, Wilson insisted on the triumph of justice over the "attempted mastery of selfish groups of autocratic rulers" (*War Addresses* 110). Echoing Wilsonian sentiments, Hamilton urges Swetland to consider the example of Europe:

> For hundreds of years greedy, incompetent, and unscrupulous European kings and rulers oppressed and crushed their helpless subjects, and bred in their hearts hate and bitterness and suspicion toward all other races and nationalities […] And what was the underlying purpose of most of those wars? Was it to vindicate some noble ideal? No—it was that those kings might display their vast power and satisfy their greed! (54).

In contrast to their disreputable European counterparts, Americans—at least those who subscribed to a Wilsonian outlook—employed no small supply of noble ideals in defining American war aims: Wilson declared that Americans desired no less than "a new international order under which reason and justice and the common interests of mankind shall prevail" (*War Addresses* 110). Wilson's speeches predicted a dramatically changed global landscape as a result of the war, and this expectation is embedded in the narratives of demobilization. Nylen further overlays the political events with a religious purpose, interpreting the struggles America faced in 1919-1920 in a Christian millennial tradition which reinforces the notion of a remade, purified world. Tracing an inclination to view American exceptionalism in a "providential cast," Zieger cites the legacy left by the Puritans, the Founding Fathers, and Abraham Lincoln, all of whom reinforced "Americans' sense that their country enjoyed a special sort of divine dispensation" (154). Finally redeemed, Swetland tells his employees that "we Americans, because our ideals are so high and so unselfish, have unquestionably been chosen to lay the corner-stone of this glorious Kingdom!" (118). Thus, on a religious plane, Nylen's story suggests that the hardships facing Americans in the postwar climate serve as a kind of Judgment Day harkening not the return of Christ, but the ascendancy of the United States as newly established center of a world of peace and prosperity.

The ideological underpinnings of Nylen's story are significant because they highlight just how much was at stake for Americans in the postwar years. Abetted by a long-standing history of interpreting their nation's existence in terms of providential grace, and further encouraged by the Christianity imbued in Wilson's political worldview, the tenor of postwar debate was invested in redemption, great and small,

global and local. *Man's Highest Duty* demonstrates Nylen's receptiveness to the optimism with which Americans greeted the Armistice, and resonates with the thematic concerns of other war works published by American women. Like *His Wife's Job*, *Man's Highest Duty* is fundamentally about the moment during which the nation transitions from war to peace. For all its heralding of the new and glorious world order, however, *Man's Highest Duty* is not a joyous novel. Published a year after Mason's novel, Nylen's creation emerges from the increasingly darkening realities confronting the country in 1920 as the nation's exorbitant hopes for the postwar era only underscored how deeply the victory in Europe failed to translate to a triumphant and peaceful American homefront. Nylen's foreword to the novella addresses the tensions directly: "For several years past I have given much time and thought to the sufferings and struggles of humanity everywhere, in an effort to understand the purpose behind it all, and I have come to believe that suffering, dissatisfaction, and struggle constitute a process whereby individuals and nations are prepared for finer and happier conditions, and higher and nobler ideals" (3). While undoubtedly part of the suffering to which Nylen alludes refers to the horrors of modern warfare, and while the story draws on the war to provide historical and social context, the struggle most explored in the book is the political and social strife into which America descended following the Armistice. And so, *Man's Highest Duty* endeavors to illustrate how typical Americans might resolve the "certain problems with which we are *now* confronted" (emphasis added; 3).

Nylen, like other Americans, looked for explanations for the postwar disappointment that only escalated as the shortcomings of the peacekeeping efforts became increasingly evident. The novel gives voice to the nationwide residual

dissatisfaction through the long-brewing labor tensions that continued throughout the course of the Wilson presidency. Labor dynamics underwent tumultuous refashioning during the years of the Great War; as an essential component of wartime, labor concerns achieved heightened status. In Europe, belligerent nations were confronted with socialist and radical movements which affirmed the primacy of the working class in industrial societies. The inherent threat to the established order that the labor problem posed was most obvious in Russia, with the Bolshevik takeover that resulted in Russia's withdrawal from the war. By the time of America's declared belligerency, the American Federation of Labor, the Socialist Party and the radical Industrial Workers of the World had all applied pressure to the conventional relations between labor and capital. In a "decade of strikes of unprecedented scale and continuity," conflict was common, sometimes violent (Montgomery 93). While Wilson took some measures to acknowledge the labor issues at hand—he was the first United States president to address a labor convention, for instance—some laborers continued to oppose U.S. war efforts, claiming the war was "inherently illiberal, promoted by profit-seeking capitalists but fought and paid for by oppressed workers" (Zieger 118). To placate resistant but much-needed labor forces, the Wilson administration wrestled throughout the war years with mediating between the desires of capital and labor (Kennedy 267). In light of the increased attention and prominence, "few groups during the war had fed so lavishly as labor on hopes for the aftermath" (Kennedy 258). After the Armistice, these preexisting tensions were further fueled by postwar disillusionment and disappointment.

The novel suggests that the acrimony between labor and capital epitomizes the general social frustration brewing in post-Armistice America. More importantly, the book

also contends that returning soldiers, enlightened by their war experiences, bear with them the necessary insights to dissolve hostility and move the nation forward. After witnessing two American soldiers—one a Southern millionaire, the other a Polish coal miner—saving each other's lives during the battle of Chateau-Thierry, Norman comes to the realization that "the life force that sustains one man is the same life force that sustains another. That life takes no rise from a man's birth or breeding or education" (20). As the "great leveller [sic]" of mankind, war teaches Norman—and presumably all of his fellow soldiers—this lesson and leaves him with an obligation to impart it to those who have not experienced combat themselves, namely, Swetland and his son, Clifford (19).

It is tempting then to understand this story as an extended commentary on the strained labor relations of the postwar nation. But while Nylen is ostensibly drawing from the real political tensions that characterized one of the bitterest conflicts facing America during demobilization, the fact remains that despite the personal elitism of its owner, Swetland, Inc. is a decent place to work. Even Norman concedes, "your factory is a model one in every way, and your workers are paid very good wages" (16). The problem to Norman's mind "isn't so much what [Swetland] say[s,] it is that unbearable 'holier-than-thou' attitude that surrounds [his] every word and act" (15). Despite Nylen's characterization of Norman as a visionary prophet of the new world order, to see the lesson gleaned from Chateau-Thierry carried out, Norman's single goal is to urge Swetland to celebrate the codependence between labor and capital by having each "clasp hands and work together harmoniously and in good fellowship" with the other (17). Thus, Nylen simply appropriates labor conflicts as a context through which she can comment

upon the wider dissatisfaction of the country following the Armistice and suggests that its solution lies simply in how individuals respect and value each other.

For all the terminology that positions the postwar world as newly enlightened, ultimately the great lesson the First World War imparts to its combatants is hardly novel; even the characters refer to it as simply "the Golden Rule" (72, 116). In reality, Norman's battlefield revelation has already served as the guiding sentiment for half of the American citizenry—namely, women. Admittedly, it is easy to overlook entirely the novel's two female characters given that the narrative is propelled and, with the exception of Marjorie Reed, inhabited by an almost exclusively male cast. Furthermore, Marjorie is no Anne Henderson. In contrast to Anne's independence and determination, the orphaned and adopted Marjorie is "very sweet and pretty, and exceedingly innocent and trusting" (12). Her love of her foster-father "was wholesomely sprinkled with fear," and when Swetland demands that Marjorie accept his desire that she marry not Norman—the man she loves—but Clifford, Marjorie's response is be "thoroughly frightened" of his rage, and to assure him of her complete acquiescence (12, 27). She tells her best friend Ethel, "I guess I had better put [Norman] out of my heart, and try to love Clifford…that is what Daddy wants me to do, and of course I must not disobey him" (14). Nowhere in the previous war novels considered here has a female character been so disempowered and so passively receptive to the wills and desires of the male characters around her. In her delicate demeanor, Marjorie most closely resembles Grandmother Evelyn Colbrooke and young Lucy Ammerton from Sylvia Chatfield Bates' *The Vintage* (1916). But unlike those two women, who so profoundly influence a resistant Henry Colbrooke and quietly lead him to a greater understanding of the duties of citizenship and the glory of patriotic service,

Marjorie has no other role to play than to be perpetually self-effacing and submissive to the wants of her foster-father, and later Norman. Not only does her life seems entirely untouched by the recent war, but she also displays no understanding of herself or of her identity in terms any broader than those of her immediate circle of relations; the scope of her life and of her engagement with the world fails to transcend borders of the Swetland grounds.

To readers of 1920, Marjorie may have seemed appropriate given the general retreat of women from their service activities during demobilization, thereby positioning Marjorie's retiring presence as emblematic of the wider displacement of women's roles and influence in the postwar climate. Furthermore, even in a novel that ostensibly celebrated a new world order, Nylen's story may nonetheless have assured its readership that conventional feminine values would endure. The war and women's consequent activist activities had inadvertently raised some anxiety about women's role and place in the new century. This generational tension between women raised on either side of the twentieth century affected both the peace and preparedness movements. Young women who attended WSNL National Service Schools celebrated their masculine training regime of drilling and marching with disregard to conventional views of women's domestic role, causing conflict with older women in the WSNL who found such an outlook damaging to feminine virtues. Similarly, older feminist pacifists resented and were disturbed by their younger counterparts' emphasis on personal freedom and provocative peace propaganda tactics (Steinson 394). Furthermore, as Mason's novel perhaps best illustrates, women in the workforce during the war years—regardless of their opinion on American

intervention in the conflict—had access to the kinds of jobs formerly reserved for male employees. Marjorie, by contrast, reaffirms all conventional gender expectations.

Even so, the submissiveness of Marjorie's character is not shared by the story's second, admittedly spectral female presence. The most significant character in the novel is Clifford's long-departed mother—a woman he cannot remember, and who Swetland has exorcised from his own memory. Though dead 28 years before the story opens, the character of Helen Swetland haunts the narrative and her memory serves as the lynchpin for Swetland's eventual redemption and acceptance of Norman's ideals. Initially readers are told only that Clifford's "sweet and gentle" mother had regrettably passed away when her son was two years old (7). Later, however, Norman is able to extract from a reluctant Swetland the circumstances surrounding Helen's life and death. Raised by a wealthy and devoted father, Helen's only disappointment as an adolescent was her inability to convince her father, the owner of a large steel mill, that he ought to treat his employees with kindness and respect. Admonished by her father that "it was business—something a woman should not meddle with," Helen nonetheless attempted to assuage her father's harshness by coming to the rescue of employees and their families who were in need of financial or moral aid (72). She continued her aid work even after her marriage to Swetland and the birth of their son; Swetland recalls, "Our marriage in no way lessened her interest in her father's workers" (73). Three years after marrying Swetland, Helen was called to the home of one of her father's employees to tend to a dangerously ill child whose destitute mother could not afford to call for a doctor. When the child's father returned home, he attacked his wife in a drunken rage and inadvertently killed Helen who had attempted to intervene. Recounting the trauma of the day, Swetland tells Norman

> Later, when I knelt at the body of the dearest thing in life to me, the body bruised and dead at the hands of one whose family she had befriended, something in me died. I felt that my rights as a husband had been foully trampled upon, and it filled me with bitterness. And when I thought of my baby boy at home, left motherless because his mother had tried to save some one [sic] else's baby, my bitterness was further increased. (75).

Thus, especially when contrasted to Marjorie, Helen is a somewhat subversive figure whose feminine sensibilities drew her to continue to amend for her father's wayward business practices, even when such work took her away from her own family.

Nylen celebrated the Great War's ability to teach men about the fairness and compassion women such as Helen already embraced and put into practice. Helen had been unable to sway her father, but now, Nylen suggests, fellow men, as former soldiers, can enlighten others of how societal ills can be overcome by applying feminine sentiment to the male world of business and labor (and presumably all other conventionally masculine domains). At the heart of this novel is a message akin to that of Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' 1915 novel, *The Three Things*, in which Philip Landicutt goes to war to acquire the same values and knowledge that his mother Margaret already possessed but had been unable to communicate directly to her son. Readers are not privy to Norman's feelings upon entering the war, but we do know that like Philip, Norman returns to America with insights that counter class prejudice and bigotry. In light of all the confusion about just what the Great War signified for America during demobilization, ultimately Nylen returned to earlier notions about the war—that it would teach men to adopt feminine sensibilities as essential truths. Ultimately, the only thing "new" about the

message of the Golden Rule is in fact the messenger: in applying feminine virtues of compassion and kindness to the male world, men like Norman ensure that women like Marjorie do not need to sacrifice themselves or invest their time and labor in families not their own. Helen's commitment to the mill workers' families was a direct attempt to redress the sins of her father; in effect, she was killed because of his inability to incorporate feminine values into his professional life. Marjorie, however, will be spared such a fate, as will hopefully all wives and mothers now that Norman and his fellow "rainbow-chasing" soldiers have returned home to proclaim their message for America. Clifford, more amenable to Norman's influence, says of his friend, "I think [Norman] has a wonderful understanding of the spirit of the times" (60). Nylen's story provided a way for readers to understand the hardship and disillusion of the present moment of 1920 while determinately refusing to relinquish the most grandiose promises of Victory Day, 1918. As Swetland announces to his employees, "Let us make [the American flag] loved and honored in every country in the world—that it might teach Mankind the lessons of Love, Equality, Justice, Liberty and Progress. This is America's destiny, and let no one attempt to stay its course!" (118).

Sacrificial Sams and "The League Fight"

In an impassioned statement to Congress on August 19, 1919, President Wilson presented the outcome of the Peace Conference and urged Americans to embrace the Treaty of Versailles as a success. Wilson declared: "It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead, and nowhere else" (*Politics* 370). As his rhetoric implies, Wilson was blinkered by his own

idealism and failed to perceive that domestic political realities were turning rapidly against him and his plans for the future of American foreign policy. Wilson neglected entirely to garner any bipartisan support for his treaty plans, including his central League of Nations covenant, and with the president overseas negotiating the Treaty of Versailles for six months, the newly elected Republican Congress steered the nation away from the affairs of the world and back toward the isolationist stance of the prewar years. The League of Nations as unveiled to Congress in February 1919 included articles on disarmament, the future of colonial possessions, and working conditions for laborers, but the most controversial (and ultimately problematic for the United States) was Article X, which made international enforcement the central tenet. Historian John Milton Cooper explains, "Article X guaranteed the political independence and territorial integrity of League members against external aggression, and it required members to take action, even to the extent of using military force, against violators of this guarantee" (11). Article X promised a new role for the United States in world affairs, overturning the country's long-held policy of isolationism. Such a profound refashioning of American political values roused controversy. For the next 13 months the nation was engulfed in "the League fight," as Americans debated the nation's role in the postwar world. The most vehement critiques claimed that the proposed League was "a dangerous experiment that violated the U.S. Constitution and compromised American sovereignty" (Zieger 184). Meanwhile, to reject the treaty would, Wilson contended, "break the heart of the world" (*Politics* 368). By the time of his return to the United States after months of protracted peace negotiations, Wilson had neither the physical or mental resources necessary to brook any compromise with a resistant Congress; he refused to consider either revisions

to the League covenant or the prospect of separating the League from the Treaty of Versailles. Sadly indicative of the country's considerable fall from its anticipated role as peacekeeper of the world is the fact that the United States would never sign the Treaty of Versailles, never join the League of Nations and did not officially end hostilities with Germany and Austria until October of 1921.

As the political debate concerning the League raged, Americans reflected upon their participation in the war (as both civilian and soldier) and considered their position in a world now at peace. Like the other stories that grew out of the post-Armistice period, Margaret Prescott Montague joined Mason and Nylen in depicting the price of American disillusionment. By the time of the publication of *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* in 1920, Montague had written three previous war novels (all serialized in periodicals first) spanning the course of American neutrality to preparedness to belligerency. Montague had been a supporter of U.S. intervention when President Wilson was still urging the country to retain a neutral posture towards the European War (as discussed above concerning her 1916 story *Of Water and the Spirit*). She continued to champion United States war efforts even after the Armistice, in 1919 receiving the O. Henry Memorial Prize for her story *England to America*, which celebrates the kinship between the two nations and the collaboration of their citizens. As a story set during the war years but published nearly a year after the Armistice, *England to America* served as an affirmation of and assurance that American's sacrifices and hardship resultant of their intervention in the war were justified. In March of 1919 Montague published *The Gift*, a homefront story set in the spring of 1918 in which the faiths of a grieving clergyman and a terminally ill woman are restored through a conversation about their sons, both early casualties of the

Great War. Following on the heels of these stories affirming the value of the war, *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge*, first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in June 1920, is a concerted effort at maintaining the same sentiment, but is also a much darker and disturbing tale whose reliance on a heavily allegorical framework suggests that the story's estimation of America's future potential was more fantasy than reality. Confronting a contentious political environment and the failure of the senate to ratify the League of Nations, Montague's story advocates a reassessment of American postwar sensibilities and urges Americans to come to terms with their disillusionment and reclaim the idealism now lost.

The tale is set in the in a little village of Newton, located somewhere in the southern Appalachian Mountains. The local postmaster, Blair Rogers, welcomes a nameless (and for all intents and purposes, characterless) city reporter on an assignment to cover a story about a Newton resident which had been garnering attention across the region. Blair obligingly recounts the legend of Uncle Sam for the reporter, explaining that Sam had been an unassuming local man, a widow and single-father, dubbed Uncle Sam during the war because he bore such a striking resemblance to the national figure. During the war years he achieved a degree of fame for dressing up as Uncle Sam and participating in parades and Liberty Loan campaigns. When his son and only living family member volunteers as soon as America declares war, Sam proudly carries on the patriotic pageantry, telling sympathetic listeners soberly, "He's the best I've got, …but he's none too good if his country wants him an' he's fightin' to end war, an' bring the nations together onced for all; an' that's the finest cause ever a man put gun to shoulder for" (14). Several months later, moments before a scheduled appearance at a Liberty

Loan campaign, Sam receives word that his son had been killed during the battle of Chateau Thierry; despite his grief, he proceeds with his Uncle Sam routine, gaining the respect and admiration of his fellow townsmen which carry him through the remaining months of the war.

When the Senate fails to ratify the League of Nations plan, however, the weight of Sam's disillusionment causes his composure to unravel, and eventually the embittered old man becomes a local embarrassment. According to Blair, when the American public "just wrote letters to the papers, an' signed a few protests, instead of stampedin' on Washington in a body an' yankin' the Senate up to stand by our allies, an' what our men had died for," that was the moment that Sam's "heart broke over [his son's] death," a direct echo of Wilson's admonishment to the Senate upon his return from the Peace Conference (31). When asked to pose as Uncle Sam in a local church benefit tableaux, Sam obliges, but shocks onlookers by appearing with his neck and arms bound in a dirty old rope to symbolize the nation's disgrace in failing to honor the cause for which its men had been sacrificed. On March 20, 1920, when faced with the news that the United States Senate had failed again to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and U.S. involvement in the League of Nations, Sam dresses up as Uncle Sam, wraps himself up in an American flag, and while standing in front of a photograph of his son in uniform, shoots himself through the heart. As suicide note he leaves the pronouncement: "Accept, O Lord, I beseech Thee, the blood of Uncle Sam for the washing-away of the country's sins, and for an atonement to my dead sons" (49-50). The village and wider community are greatly moved by Sam's sacrifice and so inspired that every man in the area takes an oath reaffirming his commitment to his country in Sam's honor. The story ends with Blair impressing upon

the reporter, "Oh, maybe it won't make any difference to the rest of the country that Uncle Sam is dead, but it's made a difference to *us!* An' right down here in Newton he's had his resurrection, all right" (60).

Unsurprisingly, Wilson appreciated the sentiment crafted through Montague's story, offering an endorsement of the tale during an interview with the *New York Times*; the President is quoted as saying, "That lady has written a story that breathes of patriotism so pure and wholesome as to make the other things of life seem of little consequence. I wish that every person who questions the benefits to humanity that will be guaranteed by the League of Nations might read it" ("Wilson Talks" 1). Wilson's public endorsement of the work and its clearly propagandistic nature lead to accusations that Montague's story had been financed by the British who believed the viability of the League depended on American involvement.[9] Though this charge was denied, *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* was clearly borne of and participated in a heated debate raging through the nation. By the time of the novel's initial publication, of course, the treaty was already dead, but some believed that membership in the League of Nations would be a defining issue in the upcoming presidential election.[10] To that end and to a certain extent, this novel continues to advance Wilson's pro-League propaganda. Though *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* does not consider what the country (and the wider world) stands to gain through its participation in such a League, what it loses in refusing membership is never in question: to refuse the League is to allow American soldiers to have died in vain. A defiant Sam, costumed in shackles, tells the affronted onlookers, "you're ashamed to show Uncle Sam like this here in this little lost place, but you're willin' enough to have him stand disgraced and dishonoured in the face of the whole world, bound hand and foot

with a rope of everlastin' talk; desertin' his Allies who looked to him, an' betrayin' all that our sons have died for!" (35).

While staunchly advocating for the adoption of Wilson's League, Montague's novel is entirely unconcerned with the question of how the nation's foreign policy would be redefined as a consequence of League membership. The focus of the novel is strictly on domestic politics and the tale is therefore significant for its characterization of the partisan dynamics at play during the nation's demobilization and for its identification of the contentious political environment as the cause of America's postwar disillusionment. Montague continued to insist, as she had in her earlier fiction, that the war itself had been a noble opportunity for American betterment. Recalling the spirit of the country in 1917-18, Blair sighs, "Oh, those were the great days! […] I guess all of us were bigger then than we ever had been before or since. We sort of tapped into somethin' larger than our everyday selves, an' all pulled together for a big end" (24). The patriotic, spiritual fervor reached its climax during the town's Armistice celebration where Sam was invited to light the bonfire in commemoration of the soldiers' sacrifices. Blair continued, "We were all kind of exalted, carried off our feet, an' I recollect feelin' that that was just the way I'd always like to think of America —a noble, consecrated Uncle Sam like that" (27). What followed in the wake of the celebrated peace, however, made such a vision impossible for Blair—and the rest of the village—to preserve. He confesses that with the German enemy vanquished, everyone returned to their self-serving ways. Politics encouraged complacency; Blair remarks, "we were satisfied to listen to all the rotten talk in Washington, that kind of got us balled up an' confused, an' rocked our ideals to sleep" (33). Blair characterizes the political climate surrounding the League fight as "two parties

manoeuvrin' round, watchin' each other an' ready to spring like a couple of … dirty alley cats, spittin' at each other on a back fence, and the country's honour on the dump-heap!" (37).

Echoing the same sentiment expressed in Montague's novel, a *New York Times* reviewer of *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* noted:

> Its appearance is particularly timely just now when the country, after having been disgraced by partisan purpose to an unusual extent and after having slumped from its high and noble aims of a little while ago to deplorable depths of materialism and selfishness, is entering upon a Presidential campaign that is likely to intensify partisan aims and obscure genuine patriotism with the canting and conventional phrases of the professional politician. In such a situation the simple, homely, genuine appeal of the central figure of Miss Montague's parable makes a much needed call to the better spirit of the country, the real spirit of the great masses of the people. ("Rev. of *Uncle Sam*" 46).

Significantly, while *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* undoubtedly condemns the politicians who infused the League fight with much of its vitriol, the heart of the novel is concerned precisely with "the great masses" of Americans whose moral sensibilities have corroded in the political climate and who have consequently replaced their idealism with cynicism and apathy. Blair himself is poisoned by the partisan tensions; he and his best friend, Andy Mason, get into a fistfight when Andy, a Republican, tries to take over Blair's position as postmaster. Blair painfully admits to the reporter the extent of his own disillusion, declaring on the day the Senate rejected the treaty for the second time,

"Anybody's a darned fool who thinks this rotten country's got any ideals worth dyin' for" (45). The two former friends mend their relationship over Sam's death. Like Blair and Mason, the village men from either party find in Sam's suicide an opportunity to atone for their participation in the damaging partisan discourse which mired the country's nobler ideals in petty politics; even Judge Braxton—"a dyedin-the-wool party man, [about which] people have said he'd throw down the country's honour every time so long as the party was saved" is inspired to recant (54). In death, Sam inspires a grim *mea culpa*; as Blair solemnly explains to the journalist, "One person'd meet another an' say, 'Uncle Sam is dead,' an' the t'other'd answer,' Yes, an' I killed him'" (56-7). At Sam's funeral, Judge Braxton intones, "don't blame Washington … Blame yourself! Let us take the fact right home into our own hearts, an' lay the responsibility there, where it belongs—for it is our own smug selfishness an' indifference to our country's honour that has brought about this great tragedy—the death of Uncle Sam" (58).

Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge departs significantly from the elements common to Montague's previous war stories. Montague's earlier narratives centered on the ordinary person, such as the commonplace, unremarkable female character of Sadie Smithson of the previously discussed *Of Water and the Spirit* (1916). Likewise, in *The Gift* (1919), Mrs. Seldon who helps to restore Reverend Thomas McCord's lost faith in response to his son's death, is described as "a small personality, a childishly undeveloped woman, stunted by ease and money; yet under it all there was something else that was poignantly appealing" (29). The poignancy of the story lies directly in the fact that "a little woman, ordinary enough according to her own confession," could fortify the faith of another equally commonplace individual (46). Their religious redemption serves as a celebration

of "the heroism of all the world" which includes the "little gray unnoticed humanity" from which most of Montague's characters are drawn (56-7). Unlike Sadie Smithson, Reverend McCord, and the dying Mrs. Seldon, however, Sam is an extraordinary man who attracts the attention of the entire community and later, the entire region—the novelty of his story is the premise upon which the novel's framework depends: a big city journalist is drawn to an otherwise insignificant small town to evangelize Sam's Christ-like martyrdom to the rest of the country.

The novel is further remarkable in its entire absence of female characters. The town of Newton, it appears, is populated almost entirely by men; the story makes a sole note of townswomen in a passing reference to the "ladies of the Red Cross" who first provide Sam with his regalia (16). As in Nylen's narrative, the main characters are orphaned and/or widowed, wholly deprived of their maternal, feminine caregivers. The characters' lives, however, are not affected by the absence of mothers and wives as is the case in *Man's Highest Duty*. Blair recalls that after the death of his wife, "All the folks thought [Sam] ought to put the baby with some woman to raise" (10). Instead, Sam raised the child himself and Blair concludes, "I reckon everybody round here would say he did the job all right. We never had a finer, straighter young feller to grow up in this county" (10). Women are even more noticeably absent from the Sam's own life; not only does his unnamed wife die early in their marriage, but his own mother's identity is rendered entirely irrelevant to Sam's biography, divested even from her conventional function as child bearer. Part of Sam's legend includes his figurative birth from the dead body of his father, a fallen Union soldier during the Civil War. Blair reports:

> [Sam] was just a kid then, not near old enough to fight. But his father was fightin' on the Union side, an' he ran away an' got to him somehow, just before the battle of Cedar Creek, where his father was killed. …when the fightin' was over, he got out on the battlefield lookin' for his father, an' … he found his dead body an' stayed by it all night. …
>
> Well, … he curled up like a little stray dog, … an' whimpered himself off to sleep with his head on his father's breast. An' when he woke up he was different. … he wasn't just a little scared boy any more, he was a member of somethin' bigger, and that somethin' was his country. (7-8).

As a result, Blair explains, Sam "always maintained that he was born on the battlefield" (3).

Certainly, readers are not to conclude that there are no women in the town of Newton, but women are so wholly insignificant to the message the narrative conveys that there is no room for them in the legend of Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge. Given Montague's earlier sensitivity to the significance of women in shaping American response to the Great War, their exclusion from this narrative likely results from the story's emphasis on the postwar political arena, a context in which women failed to register clearly demarked responses. Historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones contends that "women were relatively silent in the months when the Senate first debated and then failed to ratify U.S. membership in the League" (12). Their silence was due in part to the ideological problem raised by the wartime compromise struck by Carrie Chapman Catt and other suffragists with President Wilson which promised loyalty to the martial ways of men in exchange for suffrage (Jeffreys-Jones 14). During this important period, "leaders

who had abandoned their pacifism as a price for the vote could not convincingly turn around at the war's end to support Wilson's goal of American entry into the peacekeeping League of Nations" (Jeffreys-Jones 11-12). Furthermore, some of the women who had retained their pacifist stance throughout the war and who might have been Wilson's most formidable allies in the League fight had been embittered and marginalized by the Wilson administration's wartime measures of suppressing dissention (Jeffreys-Jones 26).

Of course, this is not to suggest that women were entirely disinterested in the political debate concerning the appropriateness of American membership in the League of Nations as they are absent in Montague's fictional Newton. The General American Federation of Women's Clubs endorsed the League without reservations, while Anti-League forces formed the Special Campaign Committee of American Women Opposed to the League of Nations (J. Cooper, 212). Furthermore, that an established women writer such as Montague took it upon herself to compose a pro-League propaganda piece illustrates how women continued to engage in the process of mobilizing sentiment across the nation for specific political purposes. Like Nylen, who through the spectral presence of Helen Swetland in *Man's Highest Duty* similarly camouflaged women's voices and influence, Montague ventriloquized her perspective on the post-Armistice debates of the nation through the voices of the male characters she created. Ironically, at the moment in which women were finally granted the right to vote and a political voice, the political and social circumstances of the peace debates seemed to undermine a sense that women were directly participating in the process of crafting the country's response. Perhaps writers like Montague felt, as Nylen's story suggests, that the success of the post-Armistice

period was one that relied entirely on whether or not men had in fact learned the feminine values women hoped intervention in the war would yield. Considered in this light, *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* is an optimistic story, one that affirms the hope that the war brought women and men together in shared sentiment.

Ultimately, however, whereas Montague's earlier advocacy for American wartime interests was met by an outpouring of similarly motivated writings and public service activities especially directed towards women, the question of League membership did not elicit such a response. Women, like men, were subject to a "distinct waning interest in the issue" (J. Cooper 213). Rather than being a dominant issue in the presidential election of 1920, the League issue "simply faded away" (Jeffreys-Jones 27). Uncle Sam's sacrifice served only to remind Americans of the distance between the most extravagant sentiments of 1917 and the disappointing realities of 1920.

[1] For more on both the logistical and broader societal complications the unexpected demobilization of American forces posed to the nation, see also Nancy G. Ford's *The Great War and America: Civil-military Relations During World War I*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Security International, 2008. 93-116. Print.

[2] Having failed to prevent the Second World War, the League had all but disappeared as a governing presence by 1939 and was officially dissolved in 1946. The League of Nations was, however, an instructive precursor to the United Nations, which replaced the League in 1946.

[3] The women's congress, comprised of pacifist women from Allied and Central Powers and neutral nations, was the first organized body to criticize the peace accords emerging from the concurrent peace talks at Versailles (Steinson 359).

[4] A notable exception is Anna Howard Shaw, former head of the WCCND, who accepted an invitation to tour the United States in 1919 in support of the League of Nations: "Chosen because of her speaking ability and her immense national prestige, Shaw believed that she had a duty to help acquaint the American people with [its] purposes and powers." Shaw followed an exhausting lecture schedule and died of pneumonia as a

result on July 2, 1919. "In view of her service to the country for over two years, it is not surprising that many women considered her a real war casualty" (Steinson 375).

[5] Grace Sartwell Mason (1877-?) is another example of a prolific American author of the first half of the twentieth century who—despite a long career and an impressive record of publication in the most popular periodicals of the day—has disappeared from the record of American writers. She is credited with eight novels and at least eighty short stories mainly centered on the domestic themes of love and marriage considered palatable to the tastes of the mass market readership. For a substantial recovery work of Grace Sartwell Mason's life and writings, see Diane Wellins Moul's "A Certain Something: Reclaiming Grace Sartwell Mason." Diss. U of Rhode Island, 1998. Print.

[6] The novel's protagonist, Rosalie, falls in love with Lieutenant Gerald Cromwell while volunteering as a camp entertainer for American soldiers in France. When he receives his orders to move to the front, he and Rosalie marry immediately. Cromwell's subsequent battlefield injury delays his return to the country, thus allowing Rosalie's character to endure humiliation and hardship by his family's refusal to accept her as Cromwell's wife, her position considerably worsened by the shenanigans of her misguided twin sister who manages to get entangled in an attempted murder.

[7] The American Committee for Devastated France was an actual organization formed in 1918 to provide emergency relief and restoration aid to the citizens of France. The ACDF was staffed primarily by American women of a professional background. Beyond providing basic necessities, the organization also supplied constructive aid in the form of vocational, educational, and physical training, providing farm equipment, building restoration, public health facilities and libraries. See "American Committee for Devastated France Records, 1919-1926: Finding Aid." *Princeton University Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library*. n.d. Web. 16 Sept. 2010.

[8] Who exactly comprised Nylen's usual audience is unfathomable; possibly her family or reading group regularly endured lengthy expositions about the ills of the world. For her part, Nylen explains only "Instead of giving out my interpretation in the form of an article, I felt it would create more interest, and strike a far more responsive chord in the hearts of my readers, if I selected a few characters, typical of our American life of today, and showed how certain problems with which we are now confronted applied to their individual lives and how they were worked out. Hence my message in the form of a short story."

[9]See "Deny British Financed 'Uncle Sam' Story." *New York Times* 1 Sep. 1920: 3. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Web. 15 Apr. 2010.

[10] The Montague household itself was drawn into the public spectacle; in the October 6, 1920 edition of *The Outlook* featured an essay by R. W. Montague of West Virginia, entitled "Harding's All-American Plan." While Margaret Montague supported Democrat James Middleton Cox's presidential campaign, her father, R. W. Montague, endorsed the Republican Warren G. Harding. After acknowledging the familial relationship between the Montagues, *The Outlook* observes, "Mr. Montague comes to a different conclusion from that which his daughter has reached; and he states his reasons in this article. We believe knowledge of these facts will add zest to the reading" (211). R. W. Montague's

support for Harding is couched in his sense of the nation's relationship to the outside world. He remarks, "To join any League of European nations was a long step for the United States to take; the odds were always against the League. It is contrary to our traditions and superstitions" (236).

CHAPTER FIVE

Remembering What Made the War Great: 1921-1922

By 1921, with Warren G. Harding in office, America's new "normalcy" signified an attempt to close the chapter on the nation's experience of the Great War. Despite efforts to bring all political engagement with the Great War and its aftermath to an end—through the aborted Treaty of Versailles discussions, the wholesale abandonment of Wilson's League of Nations, and a return to an isolationist foreign policy—Americans' emotional engagement with the conflict could not truly come to an end until the nation's war dead were appropriately buried and their sacrifices interpreted.[1] The emotional needs of the American people dictated the tone of efforts to commemorate and memorialize the war losses during the early 1920s and represented a cultural response to the war and its aftermath. But, as historians have observed, there was an inescapable practical element to the circumstances as well: after the fighting was over all belligerent countries had to confront the simple but painful question of what to do with the bodies. European nations initially intended to bury their soldiers where they had fallen. But even in France, where the distance between the battlefields and the homefronts did not span the Atlantic Ocean, this decision was contentious. Although military cemeteries had been built throughout France and Flanders to accommodate the immediate need of interring bodies, many parents demanded that their sons be returned to them for reburial in local parishes.[2] For bereaved American families, the enormous distance between their homes and their loved ones' burial plots compounded the inherently emotional issue.

When America first joined the war, the War Department planned to repatriate the war dead in accordance with the policies that had governed earlier overseas conflicts; families therefore assumed that any relatives killed overseas would be returned for burial (Piehler 171).[3] It was not until after the war that many within the government and armed forces began voicing arguments in favor of leaving the dead buried in France. The underlying motivations for this reversal of position ranged from sentimental to pragmatic. Obviously, repatriation of over 50,000 American war fatalities raised huge logistical and financial problems. But the burial of American men in France also required a particular justification of the war's meaning in order to placate bereaved families and assure them that their sons' and husbands' sacrifices were appropriately recognized. The American Field of Honor was organized in January 1920 both to establish overseas cemeteries and to explain to the public that the burial of American soldiers in France served as a meaningful reminder to Europe of the United States' support of the Allied powers (Piehler 172). Theodore Roosevelt, claiming that the appropriate burial ground for a warrior was the battlefield, was the most visible advocate of overseas burial. His own son, Quentin, a member of the U.S. Army Air Force, had been buried by Germans at the site of his plane's crash in France, and his father insisted that he remain there (Piehler 173).

Most bereaved American families, however, rejected Roosevelt's example. Their resistance may only in part have been the desire to bury their loved ones in family plots. As G. Kurt Piehler explains, "Opposition to maintaining American cemeteries in Europe mirrored the ambivalence of the United States towards Europe" (169). This opposition manifested itself politically in Congress' rejection of the League of Nations, and socially

in parents and widows' determined effort to secure the return of their loved ones to American soil. Ultimately, by 1920, more than 70 percent of American casualties were repatriated (Piehler 174). Those remaining were reinterred in one of several permanent cemeteries in France, Belgium, and England, overseen by the American Battlefield Monuments Commission which erected massive, neoclassical shrines on the battlegrounds of the Marne and Argonne (Trout, *Memorial* 16). The debates concerning how most suitably to handle the remains of American war losses "addressed more than anything else the nation's need for an affirmative vision of wartime loss no longer tied to the now suspect ideals for which America had originally fought" (Trout, *Memorial* 25). The commemorations of the dead served to convey an interpretation of what America's intervention in the Great War had accomplished; "Commemoration was a political act; it could not be neutral, and war memorials carried political messages" (Winter 82).

Regardless of whether their final resting places were in military cemeteries overseas or in the local cemeteries of their home communities, the war dead lingered in the American psyche, demanding further efforts to commemorate their sacrifices. The efforts to memorialize fallen soldiers and to interpret the significance of the Great War were more complicated than "the conventional shibboleths of patriotism," for, as Jay Winter observes, while all belligerent nations understood that their soldiers had died for their country, "to say so was merely to begin, not to conclude, the search for the 'meaning' of the unprecedented slaughter of the Great War" (*Sites* 2). In his study of the cultural history of mourning and commemoration in European nations, Winter concludes that the search for "meaning" of the Great War was fraught with "ambivalence and confusion, charged with tentativeness and more than a fragment of futility" (*Sites* 2). The

United States' experience of the Great War was different from that of their allies and foes—they had lost far fewer men, but had sent their soldiers further away from the homeland they were meant to protect. Soldiers were celebrated for their willingness to die for their country, but the country was never in the same peril as were other European nations. Moreover, earlier much-touted war slogans ("The War to End All Wars;" "The War To Make the World Safe for Democracy") were dismissed in the widespread postwar disillusionment. Uncertain that the war had accomplished any goal other than the military defeat of Germany, Americans striving to locate meaning in the death of American men had to find other means of interpretation.

Further complicating efforts to aptly commemorate America's experience of the Great War were the political, social, and economic changes generated by the war which resonated throughout the 1920s. These changes undermined the inherently conservative act of memorialization which commemorates the past. The political situation of the world was vastly more complex after the war than it had been in the prewar era; America had to confront a hostile Bolshevik regime, Japan's ambitions in East Asia, and increasing resentment from Latin American countries. Even more troubling than international politics in the day-to-day life of Americans was the significant upheaval the country's social and cultural framework underwent during the Jazz Age. Historian Gary Dean Best cites the millions of American men who might otherwise never have left their counties or boroughs and were suddenly exposed to European culture to which only the wealthy had previously had access: "That experience, summed up by the popular song lyrics 'How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Paree?' meant profound changes in the attitudes of a large percentage of a whole generation of American males" (6). Though

contemporary, revisionist historians have disputed earlier claims that the Great War single-handedly crushed the progressive reform movement, fostered disillusionment and subsequent isolationism, and brought about the reactionary, hedonistic, and self-centered Americanism of the 1920s, they also acknowledge that the general public of the 1920s believed the war undermined traditional values, religious faith, and sexual mores (Dumenil 10). Additionally, American women had experienced momentous changes during the war years, mainly in the form of expanded opportunities for work and identity outside of the home, whether as new employees in jobs vacated by soldiering men, or as participants in peace/preparedness/patriotic parties and groups expressly created by the war. As a small but telling example of the changing mores of postwar American society, Best cites the widespread indulgence in smoking as a consequence of the financial independence and individual freedom the war provided women (7). The cultural tolerance for smoking was not universally embraced, of course. "The war has in no small measure been responsible for the spread of smoking in this country," Ella A. Boole, president of the New York branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union reproved in a *New York Times* article in 1920. Boole continued, "The cigarette was found to act as a sedative when no other kind could be found. It may have had its uses on the battlefield. But the war is over and the peculiar needs of the war are over. There is no reason why we should carry over into the peace period a habit that was taken up as a war measure ("Women Smokers" 28). Just as Boole does, Americans of the 1920s evoked the Great War to "pin down [the beginning of] a troubling change in mood" which manifested itself in various issues confronting Americans of the postwar era: urbanization, Prohibition, immigration, women's suffrage, the brief revival of the Ku Klux Klan, secularism, leisure, and

consumerism (Dumenil 11). The Great War, then, was perceived as a catalyst for a wholesale change in the country's social, political, and cultural fabric (Dumenil 10).

Such upheaval and change was not always welcome, particularly as bereaved American families struggled to locate the same values in the postwar world for which their loved ones had sacrificed their lives during the war. Steven Trout locates a "desperate desire for clear-cut meaning" in the everyday postwar culture through 1922 and "an anxious effort to fill in the interpretive vacuum created by the Great War" (*Memorial* 15, 26). Patriotic language provided a touchstone for such efforts to provide a continuity between the worlds on either side of the war. Winter explains, "[T]he power of patriotic appeals derived from the fact that they were distilled from a set of what may be called 'traditional values'—classical, romantic, or religious images and ideas widely disseminated in both elite and popular culture before and during the war" (*Sites* 3). Connecting the experiences of American doughboys to the celebrated traditions of American military service allowed Americans of the early 1920s to feel a sense of pride in the accomplishments of its soldiers that was conveniently divested from the now undermined rationales for intervening in the Great War (Trout, *Battlefield* 11-12). In part, the determination of the bereaved to repatriate their fallen family members was inextricably related to a desire to extract American soldiers from discredited narratives of service to wider international aims, and deliver them instead into quintessentially American narratives of military service and patriotism. The figurative equivalent of transplanting the bodies of American soldiers from cemeteries in France to burial sites in the United States involved reinterpreting the narratives that commemorated their

sacrifices. No longer did American soldiers die on behalf of Europe; rather their deaths were understood as part of a strictly American tradition on behalf of American interests.

Women played a distinct role in the interpretative efforts of postwar America. John R. Gillis observes, “Thought of as belonging more to the past, women came to serve in various (and usually unpaid) ways as the keepers and embodiments of memory. They provided consolation to men terrified that they had become rootless as a result of their own upward and outward mobility” (10). Additionally, according to Winter, the act of commemorating was necessarily political. The American War Mothers, founded in 1919, for instance, grounded itself in traditional views of women as mothers and nurturers, and insisted in the justness of American intervention in the Great War. To the American War Mothers, the war’s legacy was the need for ongoing military preparedness (Piehler 175). Implicit in their commemoration of lost sons was also the belief that a good mother reluctantly but willingly sacrificed her son for the needs of her country.

The needs and desires of American women—as widows and grieving mothers—played a prominent role in the rhetoric employed by efforts both to repatriate the war dead as well as to urge overseas burial. G. Kurt Piehler notes that “Since the founding of the republic, women were expected and were often eager to play a major role in mourning the fallen and preserving the memory of past wars for future generations” (170). Though men comprised the leadership of the “Bring Back the Dead League,” formed in 1919 to ensure the return of fallen American soldiers, the group nonetheless drew heavily upon rhetoric grounded in the wishes of mothers in arguing for the repatriation of the war dead (Piehler 173). The focus on the needs and desires of bereaved mothers belies a deeper truth about the practice of commemoration and memorialization

following the Great War. Even in 1922, while Americans were still in the midst of debates on how their soldiers ought to be commemorated, women—particularly mothers—not only decided how commemorative work ought to be undertaken, but also played a prominent role in the commemorations themselves. Piehler contends that "Gold Star Mothers"—that is, mothers who had lost their sons in the war—"won praise for sacrificing their sons to the nation…[and] served as the theme of many speeches and poems commemorating the First World War, and monuments were erected in their honor" (*Remembering War* 102). Likewise, in America's ceremony honoring an "Unknown Soldier," mothers were given a prominent position: Mrs. R. Emmett Digney was selected to represent all mothers during the ceremony and placed a wreath on the tomb, and a representative of the British War Mothers, Amelia Emma McCudden, who had lost three sons in the conflict, was invited to attend the ceremony in Arlington where she placed a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown American Soldier in a show of solidarity for all bereaved mothers ("Honors" I2). In her study of the British and French women of the First World War, Susan R. Grayzel, claims that one of the most significant legacies of the war for women was "the monuments and rituals…[that] made the mourning mother a bearer of memory for the nation of her fallen son" (226).

American women had been shaping the process of commemoration and memorialization from the very start of American intervention in the European war. As early as 1917, many women not only voiced publicly their support for American intervention, but also began suggesting ways in which lost servicemen might be remembered (Budreau 87). While such foresight on the part of mothers who had only just relinquished their sons to America's war effort seems unlikely, a *New York Times* report

in November 1917 announced a Chicago-based movement underway to substitute a gold star armband for the traditional mourning clothing with which to honor dead American soldiers. Arguing that "the glory of the death should be emphasized rather than its sadness," the chairman of the Woman's Committee of the State Council of Defense, Louise De Koven Bowen remarked, "The psychological effect of multitudes in mourning is not good….It is not too early to consider this subject now" ("Gold Star" 7). Several months later, Anna Howard Shaw, speaking as Chairman of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, echoed Bowen's sentiment, explaining, "The badge, which has been suggested as a means of honoring our dead, is not so much a symbol of mourning as a sign of rank of those who have been counted worthy to make the supreme sacrifice for their country and humanity. …we, too, must meet our fate, whatever it may be, in the same spirit, and show to the world that as our men can die bravely we women can live bravely" ("Insignia" 11). Such sentiment encapsulated "[a] new Republican Mother [that] had emerged with this war, one anxious to participate in and support the nationalist dialogue in dramatically profound ways" (Budreau 87). In the years following the war, veterans' groups (most prominently the American Legion which was founded in 1919), together with woman's organizations, worked to "transform personal grief and doubt over the war's achievements into full allegiance to the state. In return, they received…national assurances that the sacrifice of life had not been in vain" (Budreau 99).

Acts of commemoration and memorialization were carried out not only in the creation of public monuments and celebrations, but also in war writing that directly engaged with such practices. The literary output of war-related writing in America was

by 1921 a shadow of its former proportions. In his compilation of American war poetry, Mark Van Wienen notes that "By the time of the armistice, most poems ever written about the Great War already had been" (*Rendezvous* 249). War poetry published immediately after the war appeared in single authored collections comprised largely of poems written before the armistice (Van Wienen, *Rendezvous* 249). Between 1921 and 1922, just 25 novels on war-related subjects were published in the United States, most were British-authored or translations of French or German works.[4] Two notable exceptions are John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* (1921) and E. E. Cummings *The Enormous Room* (1922). Those few writers who did represent war, though, continued to use fiction to interpret the war's significance, and in doing so, to commemorate and memorialize the dead. Drawing on their traditional roles as mourners and rememberers, some American women writers composed stories that directly engaged with the commemorative activities of the postwar period. Several of these American writers had advocated for American intervention and garnered sentiment in favor of the war in previous works of fiction. With the war over, these writers used their fiction to describe efforts of memorialization and to reflect on the consequences and significance of war for the bereaved. This chapter returns to the work of Margaret Prescott Montague, who published *The Man From God's Country* in 1922 in conjunction with the first anniversary of England's memorial celebration at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, who, drawing from similar inspiration, published *Yellow Butterflies* in 1922, an account of America's commemoration ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. With hostilities over, Montague and Andrews' return to the war subject was invested in the idea of memory and memorial. Willa Cather had not

previously written war fiction, but her Pulitzer Prize novel winning *One of Ours*, in part a tribute to her cousin, G. P. Cather, was published the same year as Montague and Andrews' works, and shares with them an effort to commemorate and interpret the causalities of war.

Mourning the Citizens of God's Country

By the time *The Man From God's Country* was published in *The North American Review* in November 1922 (later released in book form in 1924), Margaret Prescott Montague had authored four previous war novels spanning the years 1916-1922. Though little of her biography can be ascertained, Montague appears to have been a career writer, publishing books and stories regularly from the 1900s through the early 1930s. And while the subjects of her literary output ranged from Christian mysticism to the deaf and blind, during the war years, she wrote mostly about the war. She wrote early to urge American intervention; she wrote during the war years to reassure Americans of the bond between the U.S. and its allies; she wrote stories after the war to offer spiritual comfort to the bereaved; and when postwar disillusionment spread across the country, she wrote an allegorical tale maintaining that the war still offered the hope of redemption.[5] Then, in time for the second anniversary of England's Armistice Day commemoration of the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey, Montague returned to the subject one final time in a novel about the practice of commemoration and the attempt to make peace with the disappointing outcome of the Great War.

The novel's protagonist is Richard Webb, an American journalist who covered the events of the Great War with great gusto for six years as a foreign correspondent. The

story takes place on a single day, November 11, 1920, and opens with Webb reflecting on his relief at attending England's Armistice Day ceremony without the need to "think [the great spectacle] into words" (607). Bitter, disillusioned, and plagued by guilt, he seeks refuge in the anonymity of a crowd, yearning "to draw its masked psychology about him like a cloak" (606). Several years before Hemingway's Frederic Henry declares that "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates," a sentiment which has become an iconic statement of the postwar generation, Webb expresses a similar disgust with the inability of language to encompass the tragedy of the war (196). Viewing his war reporting as a medium "through which the agony of a disintegrating world had flowed from the center of the great disaster, across the Atlantic, to be flung in headlines upon comfortable American breakfast tables," Webb bitterly reflects, "how very tired he was of words!" (606). His journalistic silence is the only tribute he has to offer the Unknown Soldier.

Webb's bitterness and guilt, readers eventually discover, stems from an encounter in 1916 with a young American private who had volunteered with a British regiment (Webb and the soldier identify each other as hailing "from God's Country"—both meaning America). In the chance meeting, the private revealed that Webb's own war reporting had spurred him to volunteer, even before the United States entered the fray. The unnamed soldier explains eagerly that Webb's writing "showed [him] where a man ought to be" (608). By 1916 Webb had already seen enough of the war's brutality to temper his earlier fervor for the conflict and is discomforted by the American volunteer's earnest gratitude. By the time of the novel's present, Webb's unease has given way to

guilt and remorse: “What right had he to spread a net of golden words to entrap eager young souls like that!” (607-8). Imagining the unnamed soldier as a representation of all the world’s youth wrongly led to their deaths by jingoistic writers, Webb attends the ceremony in London to offer his “atonement” (608). During the ceremony, he is distracted by a visibly distraught and delusional woman. Clad in an evening dress and tasseled bedroom slippers, the woman seems to Webb a “transparent wisp of humanity” (609). When he overhears her adamantly declaring to a policeman that she is the mother of the soldier about to be buried, Webb is moved to intervene so that she is not forcibly returned to the care facility from which she has evidently escaped. The woman believes Webb is an acquaintance of the family and therefore knew her son, Christopher, and he obliges her fantasy, allowing her to recount Christopher’s childhood days in a “disjointed [and] continuous murmur” (611). In the midst of the ceremony, the young soldier Webb encountered in 1916 accosts Webb in the crowd. Prematurely aged and missing an arm, the soldier nonetheless forgives Webb for enticing him into the war with inflated rhetoric and offers only the reproach, “for God’s sake, next time, give us something better than war to die for!” (614). The unnamed soldier then joins Webb in consoling the bereaved woman by claiming to have served with her son. As the procession continues to the Cenotaph, the woman confusedly conflates Christopher first with the son of the King, and then with “the Son of Man who is dead for all the sins of the world” (615). The story draws to a close with the proffered two minutes of silence that seemed to Webb to spread “over all the world” (615).

Notably, the story recounts a past event (November 11, 1920) in a foreign country (England) to an American audience of 1922. Montague could have chosen to recount the

similar commemoration of the monument of the Tomb of Unknowns which took place in Arlington National Cemetery a year later, on Armistice Day 1921. Both Richard Webb and the young soldier he inspired are, after all, Americans. But that the ceremony recounted serves to commemorate the British dead is important to how Montague's story interprets both the meaning of the war and the sacrifice of its soldiers. For this reason, the novel's faithful description of the ceremony highlights the power of the commemorative practices employed. Winter notes that while war memorials such as the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are powerful symbols of national pride and convey political messages that resonate to this day, they performed a different function for the generation directly touched by the war. In the aftermath of the war, the interpretation of the war losses was personal as much as political, and such memorials functioned as a site of mourning for the bereaved who had to confront their losses in highly individual, personalized terms as much, if not more so, than as "collective representations" of national identity (Winter, *Sites* 79).

Montague's story pays tribute to the need for individualized grief, while moving her characters (and presumably the readers) towards a contemplation of the war in terms of the existential and spiritual. Clearly addled in mind and physically frail, the bereaved mother who believes the Unknown Warrior is her son attends the ceremony to grieve a specific person. Here, the memorial performs the function of providing "first and foremost a framework for and legitimation of individual and family grief" (Winter, *Sites* 93). Her need to grieve a specific person makes her seem insane, and yet, those around her recognize that while the national ceremony is meant to commemorate all England's war dead, the physical presence of a single body nonetheless evokes the loss of an

individual. First apprehended by a police officer, the woman, despite her "breathless, distressed little voice," adamantly insists that she attend the proceedings (610). When she protests, "with a gentle finality," "I am his Mother," the policeman's "big face flushed all over" (610). Visibly flustered, he is uncertain how to proceed; while he knows the woman is mentally unwell, he cannot dispute her claim or undermine her right to witness the proceedings as a means of grieving her lost son. The crowd responds in kind, "straining respectfully back, [and making] a little space for her beside Webb" (610). Likewise, the young American soldier mirrors the policeman's reaction when Webb introduces the elderly woman as the mother of the man about to be buried: "The other's face flushed darkly all over, and he pressed his lips tight together. 'I understand,' he got out at length" (613). Uncomfortable though the others are by the old woman's delusions, as participants in a ceremony of commemoration and mourning, they cannot dismiss her or discredit her mourning. As twin impulses to commemorate both the dead and the mothers of the dead suggest, the embarrassment and shame both men exhibit when faced with a grieving mother demonstrates their recognition that her suffering trumps their own; even the soldier who has lost his arm and his youth in the war feels he has sacrificed less than this mother.

The Great War marked a new practice of recognizing the individual soldier. As Thomas W. Laqueur explains in his study of the burial and commemorative practices of the British through the Great War, the attention paid to identifying all fallen soldiers—regardless of their rank or stature—was a novel development during the First World War.[6] In previous wars, the British dead were often buried in common and unmarked graves, and any commemoration was a private activity (152). Laqueur notes that by 1915,

however, “a new era of remembrance began: the era of the common soldier’s name or its self-conscious and sacralized oblivion,” marking a “distinctively modern way of creating meaning” (152, 158). Montague’s story extends this impulse to include not only soldiers, but also mothers. In the story, the would-be Unknown Soldier, the son of the woman Webb encounters, has a distinct name and identity. His identity, which the bereaved mother divulges through her rambling reminiscences, contrasts sharply with her own lack of identity. She remains unnamed throughout the story, her identity entirely dependent on her relationship to her dead son. As the “unnamed/unknown mother,” Montague evokes the old woman as a clear representation of more than a single bereaved woman. Webb reflects, “she seemed to be so an epitome of all that England had suffered that one almost thought of her as having been distilled out of the hidden sorrow of the crowd” (609). Though “real enough in herself,” Webb is startled by her appearance, as though “a curtain had been withdrawn and a being had stepped through from the other world” (608-9). He also considers how “she seemed in her tragic person to bring England’s happy years before 1914 straying back into the present, shattered by the agony of the war and confused by all the shifting changes of the times” (611). Though she readily joins Webb and speaks eagerly with the American soldier, the unnamed woman cannot identify either of them; she simply assumes and accepts that they knew Christopher and are therefore friends. At one point, sensing that she is overwhelmed by the multitude of the crowd, the American soldier comforts her by saying, “all these other people are [Christopher’s] friends, and of course yours as well. They do not actually recognize you, perhaps, but they know you must be somewhere here, and all their hearts are with you” (614). Christopher’s mother, then, unnamed and unknown to all in the crowd of the Armistice

Day ceremony, is nonetheless known to all as "his Mother," the only name Montague provides for her character.

Similarly, the American soldier who Webb providentially reencounters during the Armistice Day ceremony remains unnamed throughout the tale. Similar to Christopher's mother, Webb believes that he is attending "the funeral of a man he had known; a man for whose death he felt poignantly responsible, and for whom he had cared"—specifically the young American soldier he met in 1916 (607). For Webb (and presumably for the readers), the matter of identity is more complex than for the grieving mother for whom the Unknown Soldier is literally Christopher. While Webb imagines that the unknown soldier about to be buried is the selfsame American he met in 1916, he alleviates his feelings of "impertinence" in transforming England's soldier into an American by claiming that the soldier belonged to "a larger nationality" (609). Remembering that the two men had recognized each other as hailing from "God's Country," Webb then reconfigures "God's Country" to mean "the land of youth, of faith, of glorious sacrifice" (613). When he and the young volunteer meet again, and Webb confesses that he had believed that the Unknown Warrior was in fact the body of the young American soldier, the soldier remarks, "a part of me is dead, so perhaps they are burying it today" (612). Thus, Montague invites her American readers to reflect on the British Unknown Warrior as representative of "a larger nationality… No matter from what part of the known globe such eager souls hailed, they were all natives of that one land" (609).

In the story, the Cenotaph plays a crucial role in the transition for the individual to the collective mourning. At the center of the burial ceremony of England's Unknown Warrior was the Cenotaph, an "empty tomb," and arguably the best-known monument of

its kind. Designed by Edwin Lutyens, a British architect, the original Cenotaph was a wood-and-plaster piece initially intended as a temporary centerpiece for a victory march in London in July 1919. The monument had such a profound effect on the public, however, that it was transformed into a permanent British memorial of the war and unveiled in its permanent form during the Armistice ceremony of 1920. Discussing the peculiar power of the Cenotaph, Jay Winter observes that the "abstract architectural form somehow managed to transform a victory parade, a moment of high politics, into a time when millions could contemplate the timeless, the eternal, the inexorable reality of death in war" (103-4). As the processional makes its way past Webb and his two companions, and the casket of the Unknown Soldier passes before them, the old woman "stood without a quiver, all her being gathered up in one intense look, fastened upon the flag covered casket. As he passed she spoke softly to her son. 'Christopher—Kit!'" (615). Upon reaching the Cenotaph, however, the casket transcends first the individual, then the collective of the nation, till finally the woman declares with "complete conviction" that "No! The Son of Man—it is the Son of Man who is dead for all the sins of the world" (615).

Webb is deeply invested in the emotional import of the ceremony from the very beginning of the story. Despite his feelings of the war and his discomfort with the role he played in promoting it, Webb does not reject the sentiment of the ceremony nor is he disengaged; rather he relishes the privacy of his response, that "what he got out of it would be nobody's business but his very own" (606). Webb believes that the emotional import of the event can only be "cheapened" in its translation into "newspaper phrases" (606). Just how much or whether Montague saw her own role as a writer in similarly

culpable terms as her protagonist Richard Webb does, is impossible to know. When the embittered American soldier demands, “Oh, can’t you give us something better than [war] to die for?” Webb asks his compatriot what he would consider a “moral equivalent” to war. The soldier replies angrily, “Lord, I don’t know… That isn’t for us to know. It’s for you writing chaps to find out. We only follow a good lead, I tell you” (612). The story implicitly reinforces the power and peril of the writer both in eliciting emotional response and in discovering sentiments worth dying for. But words have limited power, as Webb himself avers. The novel ends with the two minutes of silence which has become traditional in Armistice Day celebrations, calling into question the ability of language to legitimately commemorate the dead and memorialize the war. After years of composing fiction inspired by the events of the war, Montague left the subject behind in her future work.

Grieving Mothers as Heroines and Victims

Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews made a living writing, and like Montague, she returned to the subject of the Great War regularly during the war years and in the years immediately following the conflict. Within the span of eight years, Andrews published short story collections, poems, and at least four novels, all concerned with American participation in the Great War. As her previous two contributions considered above demonstrate,[7] Andrews remained unwavering in support of the war, and certain that participation in the global conflict offered Americans—both as soldiers and as citizens—the opportunity for betterment through patriotic sacrifice. Whereas Montague’s pro-war fictions demonstrate a receptiveness to the shifting anxieties of the moment of

publication, Andrews' writings reflect a largely static and unchallenged understanding of the Great War, one in which all promise is fulfilled through the redemption of the individual protagonists. Her last war novel, *Yellow Butterflies*, published in December of 1922, however, is a departure from her previous war writings. Here, Andrews uses sentiment not to argue for redemption and improvement of America's citizenry, but as a means of honoring the already exemplary qualities of American women (specifically mothers). In doing so, she participated in the debate about how individual grief ought to be publically expressed in light the country's ongoing struggle to interpret the war and the resulting deaths of its men.

The novel opens with a mother (she remains unnamed throughout the book) finding her cherubic five-year-old son Dick in a field full of yellow butterflies. As several alight on his head, his mother, tells him, "It's good luck to have a butterfly light on you…A butterfly is the symbol of immortality" (2). Dick's father dies when the boy is eleven, and his mother continues to raise her son, making sure she "missed no chance to make her citizen first of all things an American" (6). Consequently, by 1917, Dick is eager to join the American war effort. His mother is duly proud and readily takes to heart a popular newspaper jingle which "hit straight at armies of women in those days" (7):

> America, he is my only one,
>
> My hope, my pride, and joy;
>
> But if I had another
>
> He should march beside his brother,
>
> America, here's my boy! (7)

During Dick's last visit to his Kentucky home before embarking for France, his mother urges him to visit an adoring neighbor girl, Lynnette, ordering him to kiss her goodbye. Dick obliges, though he considered the girl merely a "worthy child," as opposed to an actual love interest (13).

With Dick overseas, his mother continues her war work for the Red Cross. In a letter Dick tells his mother, "Nothing can happen that's unbearable," and she clings to this sentiment when he is reported among the missing (23). Months later, finally giving up hope of Dick's survival, and in response to the country's disillusionment following the Armistice, Dick's mother "came to tie her boy's coming home to the coming of world peace" (29), an expectation she sees fulfilled when news of the anticipated ceremony for an Unknown Soldier is announced alongside the 1921-22 Naval Disarmament Conference. As Dick's mother follows the press accounts of the selection process of the Unknown Soldier, Lynnette confesses that she and Dick had been in love, a sentiment she felt sure of because of his goodbye kiss. Dick's mother resolves never to reveal to the girl that it was she who urged her son to kiss Lynnette. In November, she travels to Washington, D.C. to attend the ceremony for the Unknown Soldier and is disappointed not to receive a sign from God that proves that the soldier honored is in fact Dick. As Lynnette comforts the disappointed mother back in Kentucky, readers discover that Lynnette had been lying to Dick's mother about her feelings of love for Dick (and that she ever assumed Dick loved her in turn). Conflicted over her dishonesty, Lynnette reveals, "Dick left me, in a sort of way, to his mother. He said: 'Be sweet to her, Lynnette.' Well…I reckon I can lie a good while longer, if it helps her" (69). Still desperately waiting to receive some sign from God, Dick's mother returns to Arlington

Cemetery the following spring. The novel ends with the bereaved mother witnessing a swarm of yellow butterflies alighting on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, proving to her (and presumably to the reader) that the soldier buried there is in fact Dick.

At the center of the story is a fictional reimagining of the United States' Armistice Day commemoration of the Unknown Soldier on November 11, 1921. Adopting similar ceremonies held the previous year in England and France, the United States Congress approved the burial of an unidentified American serviceman in early 1921. An elaborate ceremony was devised for the selection of the body. First, the remains of four unidentified servicemen were exhumed from American cemeteries in France on Memorial Day, 1921. Then a highly decorated U.S. Army serviceman, Sergeant Edward F. Younger, selected the Unknown Soldier by placing white roses on one of four identical caskets. The remaining three caskets were interred in the Meuse Argonne Cemetery in France. The selected casket was then transported to the United States aboard the *USS Olympia*; the Unknown Soldier lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda until Armistice Day 1921, when President Harding officiated the interment ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery. The novel departs from the plot to recount the events of the Unknown's journey, tying the novel to a distinct historical moment.

Like *The Man from God's Country*, the central female character—the grieving mother—remains nameless throughout the story, whereas the identity of the Unknown Soldier is presumably the mother's lost son. Unlike Montague's story, however, the identity of the Unknown Soldier of Andrews' fashioning does not eventually subsume the losses of an entire nation and of a whole generation. In fact, to some extent, his identity moves in the reverse direction. A stranger gives Dick's mother a newspaper article with a

composite photograph of twenty-nine soldiers, one from each of the combat divisions in France, upon her arrival in Washington, D.C. to witness the interment ceremonies. The woman tells her, “It’s your boy, too” (36). As Dick’s mother examines the photograph she considers, “the vague, lovely face of an uncommonly handsome lad, dreamy, deep-eyed, steady-mouthed, a face rather short from brow to chin, with a wide facial arch between the cheek-bones—such as was Dick’s face. The sweet extreme of youth was like Dick, but a certain haunting, ethereal quality was not like him; yet, even so might her boy look at her through the veil of another world” (37). Even while acknowledging the manner of likeness between the composite photograph and Dick’s face, however, his mother concludes simply that “this was not the sign [that the Unknown Soldier was Dick]. She would know that when it came” (37). While the identity of the soldier remains uncertain in Dick’s mother’s mind, he represents all of America’s lost young men. Once the yellow butterflies amass on the grave, however, his identity as Dick is definitively established. This movement from collective to individual identity is the reverse of that presented in Montague’s story where the mother identifies the Unknown first as exclusively her son Christopher, and finally as the “Son of Man.”

Andrews’ novel further resists some of the attempts to reconfigure personal grief (of an individual’s death) into national celebration (of collective patriotism). While Dick’s mother does wear a gold star, she also dresses in the traditional clothes of mourning, including a black veil. The traditional attire of mourning was, as we have seen, unofficially frowned upon as an expression of grief in part because it shifted attention from the solider to the mourner, from nation to individual. In a letter to the editor, one soldier remarked complainingly of the depressing effect of the “gloomy black” attire

worn by all women in France and continued, “When we come home…we hope our women will not depress themselves and us by adhering to this old, unwise custom.” Likewise, Anna Howard Shaw contended that “If [men] can face death with cheerfulness and spring forward to their fate with shouts of victory, and exult in that for which they die,” women should not “cast a shadow over their triumph and go about garbed in mourning” (“Insignia” 11). By contrast, the gold star represented “pride, not sorrow” (Greene 8). Dick’s mother, however, does not envision the glory of her son’s death—since he is one of the missing, she has no idea of the circumstances of his demise and only fleetingly allows herself to consider the many painful scenarios which may have resulted in his disappearance. Certainly, she delights in Dick’s patriotism, telling him, “I couldn’t bear it if you weren’t in the service” (10), and her continued commitment to women’s war activities demonstrate that her patriotism and pride in her son’s service are unabated even after Dick is listed among the missing. But her grief is also deeply personal. Steven Trout observes, “The Gold Star signified the willingness of American mothers to see their personal tragedy as meaningful civil action; the symbol encouraged the friends and neighbors of the bereaved to view them less as victims than as heroines who had willingly sacrificed their greatest treasure for the good of the nation” (Trout, *Memorial* 57). Conversely, in Andrews’ novel, Dick’s mother’s appearance moves strangers to view her neither as entirely a victim nor as a heroine: “In great Washington, packed with all human sorts, people turned to look at her. ‘The gold star! The black—the veil! What a face of tragedy!’” and “Many people remarked the slender, tall woman in her billowy black veil with the gold star on her arm. Some spoke of her. ‘A wonderful face,’ they said, and: ‘Her eyes are burning her up’” (36, 43). While the gold star alone

may have functioned to celebrate the fallen soldier, by coupling the star with the mourning clothes, Andrews refuses to relegate the mother's individual grief to secondary importance. Dick's mother elicits both sympathy and admiration.

Like the woman of Montague's story, Dick's mother's sanity as she expresses her grief is suspect (though never to the extent that she is committed to a care facility). In the months that follow the notice that Dick has been listed among the missing, Lynette earnestly attempts to reassure Dick's mother that there may still be hope of Dick's survival, "not realizing to what a dangerous borderland of sanity she was urging desperate footsteps" (26). As the bereaved mother tries to reconcile herself to the death of her son, "unnoticed, the mind overwrought had been developing a mania. Peace." (28). Peace, in Dick's mother's mind, arrives in the form of the Disarmament Conference. The conference, bearing the possibility that an enduring international peace was still possible, tantalized a country coming to terms with the failure of the League of Nations and all of its former ideals. Though ultimately the results of the disarmament talks were underwhelming, anticipation of the conference naturally heightened the emotional stakes of the commemoration of the Unknown Soldier (Trout, *Battlefield* 141). The conference was also an opportunity for women to reinforce their investment in peace and to force the world to acknowledge their unique suffering in war. An article in the *Washington Post* in November 1921 elucidates this point, remarking: "Woman as a sex suffers more from war than man. For the man—death; for the woman who loves him—memories of all he suffered and life without him….There you have it—the greater importance of human life to the woman than to the man, as yet unrecognized by the world" (Drexel 6). The article outlines the steps women have taken to ensure a more prominent role in the proceedings

in contrast to their marginal presence during the Versailles peace talks. In tying the mother's grieving for her son to a longing for peace, Andrews employs the prospect of future disarmament to assuage some of the grief felt by a bereaved mother faced with the question confronting all Americans during the postwar years: "Had her boy, had all the boys, died for nothing?" (28).

Furthermore, though the novel's narration repeatedly draws attention to the compromised state of its protagonist's mental faculties, that the bereaved mother believes the body of the Unknown Soldier to be her son would have been socially unsurprising for readers in 1921; such sentiment was common and even encouraged as part of the ceremony. An article in the *Washington Post* recapping the ceremony commemorating the Unknown Soldier cites the president of the National War Mothers, Mrs. R. Emmett Digney, who remarked, "Every mother whose boy died on the field of battle and whose body was interred in a foreign land must feel that the body interred today is that of her boy and glean comfort from that thought" ("Bereaved" 4). Digney's comments are significant for two reasons. First, while the narrator observes that the mother's certainty that the unidentified soldier is her son "was, judged by a medical standard, madness," Dick's mother is performing a part in a publicly accepted fantasy (31). Like Webb and the young American soldier in Montague's *The Man from God's Country*, those around grieving mothers support and participate in such fantasies. Secondly, Digney's statement underscores how the location of American soldiers' final resting places factored into the interpretation of what aims the war had served and what it had accomplished. By believing that Dick's homecoming would bring about world peace, his mother reaffirmed the rationale for American intervention but also put American interests and security at the

forefront. As the mother explains, "America was the nation to bring at the last peace; Dick was the typical American; with his home-coming peace would come home to the country, and so to the world. Till Dick came home there could be no surety, no rest for the flag which he served" (31).

In the preface, Andrews acknowledges that the story incorporates selections of a newspaper account of the ceremony ("surely the most thrilling episode in all history to write about," Andrews declares) written by Krike L. Simpson for the *Los Angeles Times*.[8] Andrews explains "If other sentences or phrases occur for which proper credit has not been given, it is because the story-teller's mind was so saturated with the beauty of this account that its wording seemed the inevitable form." Andrews' ready citation of a newspaper story as the basis of her own depiction of the event contrast sharply, of course, to the distrust displayed in Montague's story for words in general, and newspaper stories in particular. But while Andrews embraces the newspapers' celebratory reports of the heroism of American soldiers, her story commemorates not the men, but the women. Mothers who bore the suffering of the war therefore acted as both heroines (denoted by the gold star) and victims (denoted by the mourning veil and black attire). Both aspects of this identity resonate in the commemoration of America's Unknown Soldier, ultimately demonstrating the "elusiveness of the Unknown Soldier as a national symbol" (Trout, *Battlefield* 130).

One of Many

Like Edith Wharton, Willa Cather is an unlikely figure in a study of otherwise wholly obscure participants in America's early twentieth century literary scene. But her

Pulitzer Prize winning war novel, *One of Ours*, published in 1922, faced nearly the same fate as the war stories of Montague and Andrews. In fact, critics of *One of Ours*—both then and present-day—have often dismissed the novel precisely because the sentiment of the story too closely resembled that found in war fiction already in circulation at the time. In his historical overview of the novel's critical reception, Richard Harris observes that one early assessment that *One of Ours* was fated "to go the way of all topical fiction" proved more or less accurate in the sixty years following its publication (665).[9] Collective memory of the Great War gravitated to the representations of the war proffered by writers like Erich Maria Remarque and Hemingway. Consequently, a novel like *One of Ours*—in which a commonplace American farm boy escapes the stifled confines of his Nebraska home, finds culture and kinship on the battlefronts of France, and dies a hero's death—seemed hopelessly irrelevant. Where the novel ought to reveal "alienation," "noninvolvement and revulsion," *One of Ours* instead espouses a "military sentiment" deemed both inaccurate and, in light of the postwar disillusionment, inappropriate in any representation of the Great War (S. Cooper 32). In short, the sentiment conveyed by Cather's story was borne out of a particular moment in time during America's engagement with the conflict, and once that moment passed, the relevance of that sentiment did as well.

Some have attributed *One of Ours*' ephemerality to its journalistic quality, one necessitated by the war subject. Expressing a similar resistance to the kind of journalistic-based representation of the war eschewed by Richard Webb (and unabashedly embraced by both the writer and protagonist of *Yellow Butterflies*), Cather herself identified the journalistic quality in the "war sections" of the book as problematic. Harris observes that

Cather eventually saw her "journalistic approach as a fundamental flaw"; Cather worried that the melding of a personal story with recent historic events was unfortunate as the topic took her out of her own realm of knowledge and forced her to rely on outside research (625). But, as is the case for all the war novels covered here, the timeliness of the story is crucial to revealing how the debates of the war's significance were entwined with efforts to memorialize and commemorate the country's war dead. In his recent analysis of Cather's war writing, Trout situates *One of Ours* "within the culture of American military commemoration" (*Memorial* 8). In part, the novel is a personal commemoration of a specific individual: G. P. Cather, Willa Cather's cousin, who served as prototype for the novel's protagonist, Claude Wheeler. Also, in part, the novel functions as part of the wider, collective "culture of martial remembrance and mourning" (*Memorial* 14). Trout observes that while Cather completed her novel, other commemorative efforts were underway: the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri; the interment of the original Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery; G.P. Cather's reburial in his hometown of Bladen, Nebraska; and the memorial work of the Society of the First Division (Trout, *Memorial* 8-9). Thus, like the works of Montague and Andrews, Cather's war novel is intrinsically invested in this particular moment of American history. The novel engages with the debate of how American involvement in the Great War might be understood and how its casualties might be celebrated and mourned. *One of Ours* does not explicitly depict the ceremonies at the heart of Montague's and Andrews' 1922 war books. Nonetheless, Trout argues that by employing the same patriotic iconography that guided the commemorative efforts during the early 1920s, *One of Ours* serves as a "war memorial in prose" (*Memorial* 8). [10] The

memorializing nature of the novel is most visible through the representation of a mother's grief over the loss of her soldier son.

One of Ours employs a similar representation of the patriotic mother-soldier son bond and the interpretation of the war as in the novels penned by Cather's contemporaries. The parallels between Cather's *One of Ours* and the writings of the Andrews and Montagues of the American literary scene demonstrate how Cather's war novel evokes sentiments shared across war fiction in support of American war efforts. Most obviously, and most unpalatable to *One of Our*'s fiercest critics, is that the narrative shares with the rest of the "maudlin buncombe of the time" the same redemptive trajectory for its protagonist (Mencken 225). War brings Claude—like the characters in the fiction preceding *One of Ours*—fulfillment, enrichment, and enlightenment in equal turn.[11] Even when the text directly challenges pro-war rhetoric, it does so by echoing the sentiments expressed by the women-authored war texts which came before it. Perhaps the most surprising example of this is when David Gerhardt rejects outright the notion that American intervention in the Great War serves the goal of paving the way for a democratic world, and asserts unequivocally that Americans are not "going to get out of this war what [they] went in for" (539). Nonetheless, he admits to Claude that "something unforeseen" must yet come of the war (539). He explains, "I've sometimes wondered whether the young men of our time had to die to bring a new idea into the world" (539). Elizabeth's father expresses this same sentiment in Ethel May Kelley's *Over There* (1918) telling his daughter, "Life is a struggle for *life*. Remove the struggle and you have a static—a nonexistent world" (141). Like Gerhardt, Elizabeth's father rejects entirely the premise that the Great War will end all future conflicts, dismissing such belief as mere

"fluffing" (140). Furthermore, both men come to identical conclusions about the result (and perhaps purpose) of the struggle. Elizabeth's father claims that the struggle develops "spiritual muscle," and confides in his daughter, "since this war began, my personal faith in things seems to be augmented rather than lessened. I am not a religious man in any sense of the word, but I am more nearly a religious man than I have been" (142). Likewise, Gerhardt tells Claude simply, "Since I've been over here this time, I've come to believe in immortality" (539). Not quite religious, both men nonetheless locate in the war a consequent engagement with the notions of "a life beyond" (Kelley 143).

Thus, even though *One of Ours* rejects the platitudes proffered in favor of America's intervention in the Great War, the war nonetheless brings faith, not cynicism. This understanding that the war's accomplishments were spiritual as opposed to practical is essential in the postwar context of *One of Ours*. Readers in 1922 knew that America's first global conflict did not meet their pre-intervention expectations. For the war to be a success, it had to deliver on a spiritual, personal level what it could not on a practical, national one. This interpretation of the war—as a matter of faith—is the most crucial point of connection between mothers and their soldier sons and provides a means of memorializing their children even when the war's practical accomplishments were unclear. In *One of Ours*, the "bright faith" Claude finds as a result of his war experience provides solace to his mother after his death (604).

Part of the commemorative work of the early 1920s required a definition of the appropriate womanly responses to the war, and Cather's novel illustrates this engagement through its representation of Claude's mother, Evangeline Wheeler. While Evangeline mirrors many of the fictive maternal characters that preceded her, in an initial reading of

the novel, she is easily overlooked. She is not a central character in the same way as is Dick's mother in *Yellow Butterflies*. Dick's mother is not only the protagonist of her story, but she also exerts a commanding presence throughout the text even as she is enveloped in her grief. Evangeline, on the other hand, possesses a far more ethereal presence throughout *One of Ours*, more akin to the unnamed mother of Montague's *The Man from God's Country*. Like Christopher's mother, "whose body appeared…to have fallen away leaving only her spirit there" (615), Evangeline's presence is spectral more so than corporal. Claude reflects how his mother's "imprisoned spirit was almost more present to people than her corporeal self," and in his last visit to the Wheeler homestead, Claude observes that even his mother's hands were "almost like the groping fingers of a spirit" (278, 342).

Her passivity in response to the personalities and whims of the "the men God had apportioned her" only underscores how significantly the war sharpens Evangeline's identity (18). Though Evangeline does not have to influence Claude to embrace his patriotic duty, her emotional responses to the war shape the novel's representation of the conflict. By engaging with it, she defines the war's significance not only to her family, but also to the nation. *One of Ours* first recounts the news of the war scare making its way across Middle America in late July of 1914 via rising prices of wheat. While Evangeline questions whether there is any truth to the rumor, Nat Wheeler sees in the war scare simply a potential for financial gain, telling his wife dismissively, "There's seventy cents a bushel in it" (218). Evangeline's prescient remark, "If there's that much, I'm somehow afraid there will be more" (218), prompts her to consider the deeper implications of the conflict. Here, as "on many prairie homesteads, [where] the

women…were hunting for a map," Evangeline is free, like the other farmwomen, to consider the war in terms other than the agricultural market and to suggest a sentimental as opposed to pragmatic response (219). In the months and years that follow, she engages with the idea of the war just as strongly—if not more so—than the men around her. Claude (and concomitantly, the narrative) departs the Wheeler homestead before Herbert Hoover's Food Administration's policies of food conservation came into effect in later 1917, but it is easy to imagine Evangeline adopting the same "Hooverizing" practices Cather wrote at length about in an article for *The Red Cross Magazine* in July of 1919. "[E]veryone was living in the war and for the war," Cather remembered of her 1918 visit to the West. She continues, "The women were 'in the war' even more than the men. Not only in their thoughts, because they had sons and brothers in France, but in almost every detail of their daily lives" (Cather, "Roll Call" 27). Evangeline's mental engagement in the war is readily apparent in the *One of Ours*: "Mrs. Wheeler now went every morning to the mailbox at the crossroads, a quarter of a mile away, to get yesterday's Omaha and Kansas City papers…. In her eagerness she opened and began to read them as she turned homeward…" (230-1). Even while Claude is demonstrably engaged in the war news, it is to his wife that Nat Wheeler addresses the telephone message drawing the family's attention to Germany's intention to resume unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917, an acknowledgement of her investment in the news and her understanding of its significance. Evangeline alludes to her impatience with President Wilson, and the underlying suspicion that his stance on neutrality and preparedness belied cowardice or shirking of moral duty with her comment, "To think that at this time, of all times, we should have a Democratic administration!" (305).

Additionally, the war becomes a link between Evangeline and her favorite son as together they followed the war dispatches and spend time "reading the papers aloud to each other in snatches" (304). The sole barrier in the relationship between Claude and his mother is his resistance to his mother's Christian faith, and his disappointment in her distrust of anything worldly. But the war rids Evangeline of some of her fear of the worldly and allows Claude to develop a different kind of faith. While awaiting news of the First Battle of the Marne, Claude and his mother are awake long into the night: Evangeline by her "growing solicitude for Paris," a city she had previously dismissed as "the wickedest of cities," and Claude by his wish to join French soldiers at the Marne, whose "name had come to have the purity of an abstract idea" (232). In Evangeline's mind, the war and her Christian faith become fused; when neighbor Ernest Havel questions the ability of the United States to mobilize its forces in time to avert a German victory, Evangeline replies, "I don't know anything, Ernest, but I believe the Bible. I believe that in the twinkling of an eye we shall be changed!" (306). Because Claude shares Evangeline's sensibilities, the link between the two becomes even more pronounced in relationship to the war. Evangeline's affection for Claude contrasts to the rift between Evangeline and her eldest son, Bayliss, who has adopted a pragmatically self-serving pacifism in response to the war. While the novel does not depict a scene of confrontation between the two characters, the narrative reveals that Bayliss avoided his parents' home, telling his father, "No, Mother's too violent. I'd better not" (311). Even the largely impassive Nat Wheeler finds his son's outlook troubling, but Evangeline's disapproval contrasts sharply with her otherwise retiring demeanor. She announces unequivocally:

> [W]e must stand somewhere, morally. They have told us all along that we could be more helpful to the Allies out of the war than in it, because we could send munitions and supplies. If we agree to withdraw that aid, where are we? Helping Germany, all the time we are pretending to mind our own business! If our only alternative is to be at the bottom of the sea, we had better be there!" (306).

Despite her diffidence and her general outlook that "'worldliness' [is] only another word for wickedness," Evangeline takes a part in the debates concerning American intervention (42). Claude is surprised by this, but acknowledges that as the eve of American intervention draws closer, "A question hung in the air; over all this quiet land about him, over him, over his mother, even" (307).

The depth of Evangeline's connection to Claude resonates with the other war novels considered in this chapter. (Although typically the mother—occasionally widowed to heighten the emotional stakes—has only one son as in the case of Dick's mother, and presumably also the unnamed mother in Montague's novel.) After Claude announces his decision to enlist, Mrs. Wheeler finds herself alone at the breakfast table: "She was not crying. Her eyes were utterly sightless. Her back was so stooped that she seemed to be bending under a burden" (315). Readers are not provided further insight into Evangeline's thoughts in this moment, but her relationship with Claude as well as her previous war sympathies makes clear that however painful the impending separation, Evangeline supports Claude's decision. At this crucial junction in the war narrative, Evangeline implicitly shares the sentiment conveyed by Dick's mother in *Yellow Butterflies*. When confronted with her own son's decision to enlist, Dick's mother

declares, “I couldn’t bear it if you weren’t in the service” (Andrews 10). Though Evangeline does not articulate this sentiment directly, Claude expresses his certainty in his mother’s affinity with his cause during his first morning in the trenches. First wishing that his mother “could know how he felt” as he “enjoy[s] the scenery” of No Man’s Land that morning, Claude concludes that perhaps his mother did suspect the extent of his contentment with his present circumstances (480). “At any rate,” he muses, “she would not have him anywhere else” (480).

As part of the memorializing tradition, *One of Ours* draws on similar representations of maternal bereavement and grief as well as remembrance. Dick’s mother begs God to show His mercy through a sign that proves her son’s immortality, “the subtle, underlying, enormous hope” (17). Similarly, Evangeline Wheeler is comforted by Mahailey’s reminder that she will see her boy again “up yonder” (606). But even before Evangeline is reunited with her son in the afterlife, in the closing chapter of the book, the narrator concludes, “By the banks of Lovely Creek, where it began, Claude Wheeler’s story still goes on” (603). In the hour following the telephone message from the War Department announcing Claude’s death, Evangeline “had an hour alone, when there was nothing but him in the room,—but him and the map there, which was the end of his road” (603). Claude’s letters reassure his mother, and serve as a testament to his faith: “for him the call was clear, the cause was glorious. Never a doubt stained his bright faith” (604).

By remembering their sons, mothers extend their stories beyond the moment of their sons’ deaths and into their own presents. The need to carry their sons into the present is a burden for the mothers. As the postwar disillusionment sets in, “when human

nature looked to her uglier than it had ever done before," Evangeline rejoices in Claude's "safety" among the dead (604). She must find the strength to do what she is certain he could not—live with "meanness and greed," the "last, desolating disappointment" (604). That disillusionment divides the dead from the living, a division that is at the heart of all three novels, but is articulated most clearly in Montague's when neither Richard Webb nor his soldier compatriot can any longer claim citizenship to "God's Country." To Webb and the American soldier, "it was the man from God's Country that they were burying today [at the commemoration of the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior]," and while both may still believe that "our side was right," Webb and the soldier have lost the "youth," "faith," and "glorious sacrifice" necessary to claim citizenship to God's Country (609, 612-13). All three works considered in this chapter then center on dead sons who "died believing [their] own country better than it is" (604). This uncompromised "beautiful belie[f]," however, is not the same comfort granted to the bereaved mothers (604). Evangeline rejects a positive interpretation of the war's significance and the sacrifice of soldiers' lives, an interpretation that allows mothers to bridge the distance between the living and the dead, American citizens and those of God's Country. But Evangeline does not disavow the sincerity of Claude's faith in the cause, and it is in reminders of his certainly that she finds solace.

Evangeline's bitter disillusionment in the cause is not clearly shared by the unnamed mother of Montague's *The Man from God's Country* or Andrews' *Yellow Butterflies*. But perhaps these mothers are not truly duped either. Even Andrews, who had written fiction consistently in support of the war efforts and whose stories most unambiguously celebrated the cause, does not imbue Dick's mother with confidence in

the war's righteousness. As she grapples with Dick's death, his mother quotes from a poem entitled "Armistice Night—1920" by Curtis Wheeler:

> To every man a different meaning, yet—
>
> Faith to the thing that set him, at his best,
>
> Something above the blood and dirt and sweat,
>
> Something apart. May God forget the rest. (28-9)

In full, the poem criticizes contemporary Americans for forgetting their fallen servicemen. Meanwhile:

> Silent, all silent to the passer-by,
>
> Those lonely mounds, or rows of crosses white,
>
> Beyond the need of bitter words they lie. [12]

In acknowledging the bitterness of postwar America and the compromised nature of the war as failed crusade, Dick's mother is not suggesting that the war was truly a wonderful endeavor for Americans, and that her son's death accomplished the goal of world peace. She chooses to "forget the rest," and instead, to keep Dick's spirit alongside her, to honor him by remembering—if not actually believing—the beliefs he died with. In France, Claude reflects that "Life was so short that it meant nothing at all unless it were continually reinforced by something that endured; unless the shadows of individual existence came and went against a background that held together" (535). In their remembrance of their sons and their attempt to keep faith without bitterness in the cause for which their sons had died, the texts pay tribute to bereaved mothers who cannot—in the words of Cutis Wheeler's poem—"In petty strife […] ease our souls their pain."

In a letter to Edmund Wilson in 1923, Ernest Hemingway offered what has become the iconic Lost Generation take on *One of Ours* (and by association, all other women's war fiction): "Wasn't that last scene in the lines wonderful? Do you know where it came from? The battle scene in *Birth of a Nation*. I identified episode after episode, Catherized. Poor woman, she had to get her war experience somewhere" (qtd. in Trout, *Memorial* 106). That Cather scholars inevitably cite Hemingway in every examination of *One of Ours* as a war text demonstrates the extent to which Lost Generation writers have set the terms for determining the legitimacy of representations of the First World War. Hemingway's assessment also suggests that in the postwar context of *One of Ours*' publication, there were multiple perspectives on the legacy of the war, and that these competing perspectives were configured as mutually exclusive representations. That the assessment of the war illustrated in works like Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) became the widely accepted in our cultural memory is self-evident. But it is problematic to impose that retrospective vision of the Great War on all Americans struggling to make sense of the conflict as it unfolded.

Women's war fiction represents one such complication to the legacy of the Great War left by the Lost Generation. Women could not be soldiers in the First World War, but that did not mean that they saw themselves as unequal to the task of determining the war's significance and disseminating that interpretation to the rest of the nation. The novels of Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, Sylvia Chatfield Bates, Willa Cather, Alice French (Octave Thanet), Ethel May Kelley, Grace Sartwell Mason, Margaret Prescott

Montague, Irene Nylen, Hetty Lawrence Hemenway, and Edith Wharton demonstrate that women were dedicated to interpreting the significance of the Great War on behalf of the nation. And as their novels reveal, for many Americans, the experience of the Great War was more complicated than one of bitter disillusionment or patriotic fervor, but encompassed elements of both.

[1] Steven Trout argues that contrary to popular opinion, which has categorized the Great War as America's "forgotten conflict," the nation's sustained fascination with its first global conflict in fact continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The ongoing remembrance projects, representations of the Great War in literature and film, and continued efforts of interpretation "reveal the processes of American war remembrance at their most supercharged" (*Battlefield* 1-2).
[2] The French government entitled bereaved families to one free visit to their loved one's gravesite annually, but military cemeteries were located in Northern France, and the distance proved a hardship for families residing in the southern half of the country. Eventually capitulating to public pressure and outrage, the French government reversed its policy and permitted the reburial of its soldiers in their home communities. The British government was not so accommodating and would not repatriate its war dead.
[3] The Graves Registration Service of the United States Army was established for this purpose in 1917, but the slow pace of mobilization efforts meant that such energy and resources could not be spared on fallen soldiers during the war effort, and consequently the role of the Graves Registration Service was curtailed to registering graves and organizing burials at centralized cemeteries in France. Still, the official intention remained to return the war dead to their families once the hostilities had ceased (Piehler 172).
[4] See Hager, Philip E, and Desmond Taylor. *The Novels of World War I: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland Pub, 1981. Print.
[5] See earlier discussions of Montague's *Of Water and the Spirit* (1916) in chapter one and *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* (1920) in chapter four.
[6] Laqueur notes that the Gettysburg National Cemetery, begin in 1863, does have individual graves. However, Laqueur claims that Gettysburg was "something of an exception;" neither army had "any great interest in marking the graves of dead soldiers" (158).
[7] *The Three Things: The Forge in Which the Soul of a Man was Tested* (1915) is considered in chapter one, and *Her Country: A Story of the Liberty Loans* (1918) in chapter three.

[8] See Kirke L. Simpson's "Kingly Tomb Receive Body of Plain Solider." *Los Angeles Times* 12 Nov. 1921, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Web. 24 Jan. 2011.
[9] Nonetheless, because Cather's literary reputation did not evaporate as did those of Montague and Andrews, *One of Ours* was not wholly neglected by scholarly attention. Eventually, interest in *One of Ours* resurfaced and rather than dismissing the novel as a highly romanticized representation of the war, later scholars suggested instead that the novel might be reclaimed if Cather's narratorial presence in the novel is understood as the ironic counterpoint to Claude Wheeler's naïve sentimentality.
[10] Trout identifies this iconography in the novel's celebration of a new, eastward frontier and the concomitant engagement in global politics; its evocation of sunrises and sunsets; its preoccupation with notions of chivalry (via the legend of Joan of Arc). See pages 38-52.
[11] Arguably, Cather's evocation of war experience as redemptive differs somewhat in context and significance depending on whether the novel is understood as ironic or unironic, as a tribute to all American soldiers ("all of ours") or to the life experiences of one individual soldier (Claude Wheeler). Many war novels considered here have celebrated the edifying powers of patriotism and service to country which do not speak entirely to Claude's experience. Claude is, after all, not the German-hating bigot that Philip Landicutt was; nor does he share the snide cynicism of Henry Colbrooke, the grasping selfishness of Ellen Hardy, or the crass materialism of Honor Mannering. The Great War merely allows Claude to escape the mistakes of his own past, to substitute his failed relationships with the camaraderie of his fellow soldiers, and to disavow the materialism of cotemporary Midwestern society by embracing the culture of France (in this way echoing Wharton's *The Marne* (1918)).
[12] Supposedly first published in the *New York Times*, I can only locate the text in full in *Current Opinion* 70 (1921): 125-126. Print.

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