RECOVERING SACRIFICE FROM THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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By

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Sacrifice, particularly as it relates to death in the American Civil War, is succinctly defined by historian Drew Gilpin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering*, a text on which this thesis heavily relies, as the decision by a subject “to lay down [their] life” (Faust 3) for a cause. As Faust shows, this decision to die during the time of the war was influenced and shaped by a myriad of circumstances and beliefs—details that would later be forgotten as the death from the war was later used to “override persisting differences about the meaning of race, citizenship, and nationhood to establish sacrifice and its memorialization as the ground on which North and South would ultimately reunite” (Faust xiii). Faust’s text is critical in some ways of this “elegiac understanding” (Faust xiii) of the war, but ultimately seems to uphold the more mainstream narrative.

In adding to the vast collection on Civil War scholarship, I seek to return to the historical causes of the conflict and soldiers’ own perceptions of why they were fighting as a way of further exploring this marginalized and complicated critical position. I incorporate the substantial ideas of Leo Bersani’s *Culture of Redemption* and Althusser’s model of ideology in situating legitimate violence and death within a distinctively Christian construction colored by the redemptive frame of state delegation. Heavily influenced by the work of Michael Warner, I work to tie Civil War ideology
and intellectual considerations to the current embattlement of the perception of violence within American culture, seeking to highlight the disconnect between a culture demanding sacrifice that death may be redemptive, and the fact of terrible loss. My anti-redemptive reading and delineation between the dead and the subjectivity existing BEFORE death contrasts with the idea that the war was redemptive in nature because it ended slavery and founded American values, an idea posited by historians and within general U.S. remembrance.

By emphasizing the competing nationalisms of the conflict and cataloguing the disunities of these soldiers while they were alive, I want to touch on the passions of the men that fought and died, commemorating their actual fervor and causes even at the expense of the unity of the dead and the pro-American nationalist narrative. Investigating their subjectivity, I examine the way that various media from the war, and the performed identity of soldiers, created a rhetoric of redemptive sacrifice that acts as a foundational part of American identity. In excavating the “resources of their culture, codes of masculinity, patriotism, and religion” that formed a death-bound identity for soldiers during the war, this thesis explores the normative and inescapable subject position for the fighting man.
For Luck
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INTRODUCTION
The Civil War as redemptively unifying and the recovery of subjectivity through disunity.

Commemorating the Civil War has been the subject of fierce debate since Lee’s surrender at Appomattox in 1865. The vast number of war deaths and the tremendous amount of mourning that resulted from the war remains unmatched in American history, and how these losses should be remembered has been influenced by nationalist ideology to create a narrative of redemption and unity. But this narrative is constantly in need of reiteration and repetition because it is, as recent critics have argued, most notably David Blight in the 2001 Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory, fundamentally unstable. Only by glossing over the actual causes of the fighting and the actual historical circumstances in the 19th century are Americans able to recover from the divisiveness of the conflict and maintain a sense of coherent national identity.

The current critical climate mirrors the dispute that has continued for the past 150 years: most mainstream cultural sources look to the war as a foundational and successful part of American nationalism, and those on the margin seek to complicate the relationship between the war and its aftermath. This dissenting voice questions the unity of those that died, as well as questioning whether the war should be remembered as part of a divine plan to rid the United States of slavery and prepare the nation for the future or whether it should be seen instead as an ideological conflict, rooted in social and economic difference, in which the victorious nation was then able to propagate a way of commemorating that foregrounded unity and brotherhood at the expense of remembering why those societies were actually killing and, most of all, dying.
Sacrifice, particularly as it relates to death in the American Civil War, is succinctly defined by historian Drew Gilpin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering*, a text on which this thesis heavily relies, as the decision by a subject “to lay down [their] life” (Faust 3) for a cause. As Faust shows, this decision to die during the time of the war was influenced and shaped by a myriad of circumstances and beliefs—details that would later be forgotten as the death from the war was later used to “override persisting differences about the meaning of race, citizenship, and nationhood to establish sacrifice and its memorialization as the ground on which North and South would ultimately reunite” (Faust xiii). Faust’s text is critical in some ways of this “elegiac understanding” (Faust xiii) of the war, but ultimately seems to uphold the more mainstream narrative.

In adding to the vast collection on Civil War scholarship, I seek to return to the historical causes of the conflict and soldiers’ own perceptions of why they were fighting as a way of further exploring this marginalized and complicated critical position. I incorporate the substantial ideas of Leo Bersani’s *Culture of Redemption*¹ and Althusser’s model of ideology² in situating legitimate violence and death within a distinctively Christian construction colored by the redemptive frame of state delegation. Heavily influenced by the work of Michael Warner, I work to tie Civil War ideology and intellectual considerations to the current embattlement of the perception of violence within American culture, seeking to highlight the disconnect between a

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¹ Bersani’s text is widely read but difficult to explain in brief. When *The Culture of Redemption* was reviewed by *The New York Times* in 1990, reviewer John Sturrock does an admirable summary of the problem with redemption: the tame “culture of redemption,” … holds …that the grand designs of art are grand because they compensate us for the tedium, pain and disorder of reality. Such a philosophy of art, Mr. Bersani suggests, devalues both reality and art - reality because once it is thus redeemed the real is dead, its *uniqueness having been sacrificed in the cause of intelligibility*; and art because it now appears as some sort of repair kit, a merely rational, insufficiently pleasurable makeweight for the shortcomings of life. (Sturrock, emphasis added)

The mainstream culture of redemption is reiterated and sustained—insufficiently—and the result is the sacrifice of actual, “real,” life. We will see that this is literalized in the way the Civil War has been remembered.

culture demanding redemptive sacrifice and the fact of terrible loss. My anti-redemptive reading and delineation between the dead and the subjectivity existing before death contrasts with the idea that the war was redemptive in nature because it ended slavery and founded American values, an idea posited by historians and within general U.S. remembrance.

By emphasizing the competing nationalisms of the conflict and cataloguing the disunities of these soldiers while they were alive, I want to touch on the passions of the men that fought and died, commemorating their actual fervor and causes even at the expense of the unity of the dead and the pro-American nationalist narrative. Investigating their subjectivity, I examine the way that various media from the war, and the performed identity of soldiers, created a rhetoric of redemptive sacrifice that acts as a foundational part of American identity. In excavating the “resources of their culture, codes of masculinity, patriotism, and religion” that formed a death-bound identity for soldiers during the war, this thesis explores the normative and inescapable subject position of the fighting man.

I use Judith Butler’s theory of performativity to show that these aspects of culture were not just ideas used to cope with the reality of a pending death; they were prescribed on and for the subject, a foundational ideology of sacrifice that, whether properly or dreadfully, demanded and constructed a death-bound identity. While Faust’s This Republic of Suffering unifies North and South under the heading of “soldier,” I seek to look more deeply at this unity by exploring the concept that “at the heart of the soldier’s understanding of his duty rested the notion of sacrifice” and showing that the causes for duty and sacrifice were very different for the Union and Confederate soldier (Faust 5).

In positing the difference between Union and Confederate, this death-bound identity resonated with both sides, but the overwhelming ideology of sacrifice leading to unity was
unique to Union Civil War soldiers and cannot be broadened to soldiers generally. Rhetoric existed in both armies that placed the position of the soldier as one whose “business is to die” and each side “rationalized the violence of this devastating war by casting it as the instrument of both nationalist and Christian imperatives: soldiers would die for God and Country” (Faust 5, 6). The difference rested, as Faust shows in her earlier text *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, with Union and Confederate soldiers fighting for very dissimilar passions.

Union soldiers, in seeing death as their primary duty, were able to place the emphasis of the war on sacrificing for the Union as opposed to killing their counterparts on the other side. This focus further allowed them to justify the killing that they were doing as another type of sacrifice for the Union. If they were willing to sacrifice themselves, it justified sacrificing their brother officers. This was vital because the nature of the war as fratricidal would not allow any justification for killing and bloodshed; soldiers could not fall back on divisions related to ontological difference, for example. As we shall see, Confederate soldiers had the acute sense that they were fighting for their lives and the lives of their families, whereas Northern soldiers were fighting a more ideological and nationally colored battle.

For all practical purposes, there are two Civil Wars—the actual historical conflict that violently split the nation and in which the entire population mobilized itself to defend its chosen homeland—and the ahistorical conflict that has become a fixture in American memory, culture, and consciousness.

The mainstream narrative of the war foregrounds unity amongst Americans and redemption for the American nation, accounting for the tremendous death toll in the conflict as penance and price for the salvation the war would bring; the phenomenal number of deaths resulted in the end of slavery, the re-unification of the Union, and the prospering of American
nationalism. The marginalized narrative of the war highlights a conflicted relationship between the nationalist (pro-unity) remembering of the deaths in the conflict and the actual causes of their dying. There is a moment, the learned narrative goes, when all things great about these United States could have ceased to be and, at that moment, a man held them together. With God and Right on his side, and the blood of a nation willing to fight for the cause, he led them to answer the call and sacrifice so that the Union might be upheld. That the Union prevailed proves the strength of the nation, the redemptive power of bodily sacrifice, the triumph of unity over division, and the unique, God-supported, destiny which exists for the United States. Whitman biographer David S. Reynolds elucidates perhaps the common narrative most clearly in explaining the poet’s own response to the war—a unifying response which Whitman propagated throughout his post-war poetry and essays:

In [Whitman’s] eyes, the Civil War accomplished for America what he had hoped his poetry would accomplish. It blew away many of the social ills his poetry had tried to rectify. It cleared the air like a thunderstorm, an image he liked to use for the war. It seemed to rid the North…of many of its prewar problems. It turned the fuzzy, shifting issue of states’ rights versus national power into the crystal-clear one of Secession versus Union. It made most people in the Northern States rally around the ideal of union he had long cherished. It pulled together virtually all Americans, North and South, in a common action and spirit of heroic self-sacrifice.

Yet when the modern reader considers the actual war, Reynolds’ assertions of “a common action” or spirit between North and South become suspect. Historians have often revisited the motivations behind the war—including economic, social, and ideological factors—and the conclusions have varied between a mainstream reading of the ahistorical war, one which echoes the narrative of Union, unity, and resolving the sin of slavery, and broader concerns that the South was essentially fighting for self-preservation of its society—a society thriving on the continued bondage of African Americans. Whitman is particularly interesting as a source of
study for this divide, as his poems and essays contain both sides of the spectrum—in some he is a major voice of unification and in others he is lamenting the loss of the “real war.” While the poet is certainly a major figure in interpreting the war, there are numerous other letters, essays, poems, speeches, songs, and images that illustrate the differing views of the conflict. As we shall see, Frederick Douglass, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Herman Melville, and numerous others, including President Lincoln, had a public or artistically stated position on the way in which the war should be remembered. In addressing the differing interpretations of the war, the issue is tied inherently to American nationalism—or more precisely the dual nationalisms that came to exist during the war and the necessity, in the interest of preserving a coherent national identity, for creating a framework for unification that remembers the war as redemptive in its consequences.

My thesis explores the enduring conflict between the perception of violence as redemptive and the actual devastation of corporeal sacrifice while considering the importance of mourning and remembrance in order to render death as redemptive. I extend many of the same ideologies for the fighting of the war to include the rationale for soldiers’ dying. Looking specifically at the rationale behind the fighting on each side, and the tremendous cultural and ideological pressure the war exerted on fighting men and civilians, I have sought to add to the understanding of the motivations for the violence, at times racist and casually domineering, in order to recapture in some way the essence of the actual sacrifices, contrasting those with the current widespread narrative of the war as redemptive. In characterizing the “national interest” that drives this redemptive ideology, and the silencing/marginalization of the anti-redemptive voice, I investigate the way that soldiers at the time displayed an internalized death-bound identity, colored by rhetoric of redemptive sacrifice, and the way in which the remembering and commemorating of this sacrifice continues to act as a foundational part of American identity.
Recent historical studies such as Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering*, explore “the work of death” within American society during and after the Civil War in order to highlight how sacrifice was viewed as redemptive in the 19th century and the way that sacrifice echoes today. Faust’s text is unique as it contextualizes the 19th century ideal of the Good Death and deals explicitly with the ideologies and mindsets of soldiers during the war, working to understand the moments before death, the subjectivity existing before the encounter with the bullet, and the cultural factors that brought soldiers to the point where they were willing and ready to die. She breaks down her study into eight essential categories about the different facets of death before concluding with an epilogue about survival. Her categories are Dying, Killing, Burying, Naming (and the Unknown), Realizing (mourning), Believing and Doubting (finding meaning in the carnage), Accounting, and Numbering. I am interested in the intersection between subjectivity in the archetypal soldier and Faust’s work on Dying: Faust asserts that “men and women approach death in ways shaped by history, culture, conditions that vary over time and across space” before moving specifically into the way different parties to the Civil War approached death and concluding with how those deaths have been remembered (xi).

She begins by explaining the plight of the soldier, “Civil War soldiers had many opportunities to die and a variety of ways in which to do so” (4). Faust continues with the point that not only did soldiers have the opportunity to die, it was “[their] business” to do so. Faust takes great pains throughout the remainder of the chapter to explore the reasoning and “motivations” behind what she identifies as the soldier’s central commitment: “At the heart of the soldier’s understanding of his duty rested the notion of sacrifice” (5). She uses sources ranging from sermons to soldiers’ letters to establish that “dying had clear preeminence over killing in the soldier’s construction of his emotional and moral universe” (6). She goes on to
interrogate the Good Death, a social construction rooted in “Christian practice”—but divergent from it by the time of the Civil War—that called for an agreement about “death’s transcendent importance,” as well as an American need to “construct a Good Death even amid chaos” (8, 9). By upholding and reiterating the desire to die in a certain context and for a certain cause, this striving for a Good Death in turn produced the desire by soldiers to court battlefield death—partly out of fear of dying ignobly in a hospital or of disease.

Considering primarily the current academic discussion on nationalism, ideology, and the subject, Chapter 1, titled “For the Dear Old Flag I Die: Dual Nationalism and the Death-Bound Identity,” leans heavily on Chandra Manning’s What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War and Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities in conversation with Faust’s This Republic of Suffering and the earlier 1988 book, The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South. Examining primary documents from during the war, this chapter looks at the two distinct nationalisms—North and South—that existed during the war and investigates the tremendous interest the American nation has in remembering the war as redemptive. Just as the war marked the beginning of modern warfare, Lincoln’s final sacrifice for the Union at the hands of an assassin in 1865 began modern rituals of public mourning. In addition to Lincoln’s, the war claimed the lives of more than 600,000 Americans. The way these deaths have been unified and made redemptive is essential to the American consciousness and their constant commemoration serves a vital function in building and reinforcing American nationalism.

3 Estimated about 620,000: more than “the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War combined” and over 10 times the casualties from the Vietnam War. Roughly 2% of the population, about 6 million today, died in the five year conflict and, in the Confederate South, about one in five men were lost to the Civil War (Faust xi, emphasis added).
Chapter 2, titled “Freedom or Death: Singing Toward Sacrifice in the Civil War” considers how marching songs function as theatrical performance and ritual while representing a part of the reiterative performed identity of the soldiers. The function of war songs and marching songs continues to be to fortify, reinforce, and repeat group unity, patriotism, and brotherly sacrifice, and Civil War song satisfied this tradition; however, the overwhelming focus on sacrifice, returning to God, and dying generally characterizes them as distinctive to the Civil War. There is a death-boundness about these songs that is not so readily apparent in the songs and rhetoric of other wars.

A Butlerian understanding of the performative aspect of wartime behavior, motivations, and patriotism subtly runs through Faust’s text, which I think produces a slightly more complicated reading of some of Faust’s data while stretching and challenging whether Butler’s argument can be expanded to include overtly nationalistic, and non-gender related, subject-positions.

In attempting to recover the subjectivity of what Whitman considered the “interior history” of the war—“the rank and file of the armies, both sides”⁴—I consider the tremendous complexity (and disunity) of their sacrifice, and how it continues to reverberate in the current cultural climate. In this time of analogous violent crisis, it is vital to understand a foundational moment of American sacrifice. Considering the marching songs as live performances and textual representations, I will look closely at the way these objects are received and experienced by a contemporary audience as both redemptive and cautionary.

The death-bound identity, colored particularly by a demand for sacrifice, was an inescapable position for able bodied fighting-age men during the Civil War. They found their

place in longing to fulfill—depending on their side—the will of God, the needs of their family, their personal honor, and, undeniably, the requirements of their self-defined homeland. The tremendous cultural and ideological pressure that the war produced revealed itself through the musical lyrics that remain, as well as the testimony of soldiers from the rank and file of each army. Even when soldiers themselves could not discern the exact cause of their fighting, they knew the conflict was worthy of their dying. The records of the musical performances, as well as the propagation of ideologically-driven lyrics, gave voice to an iron-clad version of the unisonance in Anderson’s imagined community—a group on each side continuously reinforced and propelled by the blood of its slain soldiers. As historians have noted, the war would turn and eventually the North would prevail, but the larger project was the reunification of the idea of the country as one nation, with one voice and one administrative center. This project was multifaceted and, in many ways, deployed the same strategies Anderson outlines as successful for twentieth-century nationalism.

Greatest among these was, perhaps, the collective desire to remember these sacrifices as ultimately redemptive. Creating a narrative of sin-conflict-redemption played on the ideologies of the age to forge an American identity that incorporated tremendous bodily loss in the pursuit of a higher calling, ultimately determined to be God-ordained American unity. Anderson explains that “all profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias” and the result of unifying the national consciousness has, for the most part, required the silencing or subduing of the voices of dissent (204). When Whitman declares from the vantage point of 1882 that the rank and file of each army is unrecoverable to history,5 he is illuminating—during a reconstructive moment in which the nation precariously sought to

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unify itself-- that these men will remain “in eternal darkness” because it is their death that the nation needs to remember, not the vibrancy of their lives.

The nation has need for the “deaths that structure the nation’s biography,” but these “violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as ‘our own’…in order to serve the narrative purpose” (Anderson 205, 206). In remembering the individual from each army, the cultural consciousness runs the risk of reopening the ideological and cultural divide that provoked the war to begin with. Better to remember the “poignant martyrdoms” that allow a nation to thrive, and visit the cemeteries and battlefields as reminders of the incredible sacrifices that allowed the nation to continue (Anderson 206). In celebrating this unified sacrifice as creating the modern nation—all dying for the will of God, all dying that the Union may be preserved—the redemptive narrative is upheld and the dissenting voice regulated to an academic station.

In looking at the disunity that existed during the war and how this return to specificity is at odds with coherent nationalism of the type Anderson suggests, Marc Redfield’s "Imagi-Nation: The Imagined Community and the Aesthetics of Mourning" provides an excellent template for not only investigating these nationalist erasures, but understanding the role of gender in the nationalist abstraction. He argues that the supposed masculine gender of the soldier places the onus for grieving and mourning on the feminine subject and this sort of gendered mourning recurs in Civil War songs, supplemented by the gendering of the nation as female and the conflation between the nation and the mother. Redfield’s arguments help to facilitate the disunity that these songs suggest and his analysis further highlights the difference between a public and private loss—the same distinction that characterized Northern and Southern motivations for fighting.
Analyzing the nationalistic framework for the Civil War requires an understanding of the complexity of the issue: in tying the current embattled perception of violence to this alternate, actual, history of the Civil War and, in turn, highlighting the anti-redemptive, I want to avoid what Michael Warner calls “the facile critique of some purer undeception.” The issue is certainly not simply a binary between naivety and knowledge—there is no redemptive revealing or undeceiving that would then lead to a successful solution to the dilemma of challenging the accepted narrative of the war. Mediated by lyric, my thesis is an attempt to touch the past and understand more fully the basis of so much death, the weight of so much remembering.

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Chapter 1
For the Dear Old Flag I Die: Nationalism and the Death-Bound Identity

If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

Abraham Lincoln
“Second Inaugural Address”
March 4, 1865

The nation’s biography snatches, against the going mortality rate, exemplary suicides, poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, executions, wars, and holocausts. But, to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as ‘our own.’

Benedict Anderson
Imagined Communities

Paying special attention to the intense ideological pressure that each side created in seeking to establish its own unique national identity, this section contrasts the nationalist ideological pressure of the Union with the more personal, self-preserving passions of the South and considers how each of these pressures resulted ultimately in a death-bound subject position for men of fighting age on both sides of the conflict, although with very different historical resonances.

While there is an inherent tension in looking broadly at nationalisms and ideologies with the aim of touching on the individual, it is in understanding the way
these men died and have been remembered as a group that we are able to better relate to their individual sacrifice. Whitman chronicles in *Specimen Days*, “101: The Real War Will Never Get in the Books,” that he found his greatest interest in the fighting men, those that survived and those that did not.

I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field. To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one-third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved.

In taking up the poet’s passion for the fighting men of the Civil War, I want to challenge Whitman’s position that the *real war*—not an enduring ahistorical narrative—will never be remembered. The poet himself seems conflicted as to whether this is possible: as Whitman continues his essay with an poetic-prose examination of what, exactly, “future years” will never know of the conflict, he attempts, in his way, to give voice to those “buried in the grave, in eternal darkness” by chronicling his own experiences with “the seething hell and the black infernal background” that the war created. Offering his essays as “notes” that “may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey’d to the future,” Whitman suggests from his vantage point in the 1880’s that the real war will never be remembered on three basic facts: “the mushy influences of current times,” the decision to remember the “official surface courteousness” as opposed to the “cruelties” of
violence, and the impossibility of capturing more than a “few scraps and distortions” of
the fighting man.

Yet the poet seems to be attempting the very retelling he finds impossible and,
while Whitman stops short of a redemptive viewpoint in this essay, his message is
decidedly unifying in its outlook. His meditation on “the actual soldier” is particularly
effective:

Such was the war. It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior
history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds
and passions, will never be even suggested. The actual soldier of 1862–
’65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness,
habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite,
rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred
unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—
perhaps must not and should not be.

In his description of the actual soldiers—in his epic lament, and grouping of “the
soldier” as a unified group undivided by national loyalty—Whitman is retelling a vision
of the war in an attempt to create a history he admits is nearly impossible. He is
suggesting that the immense vitality and beauty of these men can never be touched by
future generations even while he chronicles them, mourns their loss, for future
remembrance. Whitman’s work finds the conflict, while horrifying at the time,
ultimately redemptive in building the American nation that he so loved.

Whitman bemoans the death of so many vital men but his message of unity,
“common action,” and “heroic self-sacrifice” is evident even in this treatise on the
finality of death and the impossibility of remembering. Indeed, he seems to be adding
instead to the “unending, universal mourning-wail” that continues to define the war and
perpetuating the narrative of a redemptive violence as much as mourning the passing of those whom he personally touched.

In recovering the vitality of the dead and challenging the impossibility of excavating the “untold and unwritten history of the war,” I want to use current critical perspectives, combined with an understanding of the existence of two Civil Wars—actual and ahistorical/remembered—to take a broader view in responding to the poet’s remaining concerns of an “official” narrative of the war superseding the actual “passions” of the conflict, while also addressing his belief that the actual conflict is unrecoverable, unable to be touched by future generations.

There is an official narrative of the war that exists and is constantly reiterated as a part of the American consciousness. The account of this war is clear and vital to American nationalism: we were once a nation divided and a nation living with a tremendous sin against God. Slavery divided the Union and slavery eventually caused such a rift that some states attempted to dissolve the Union. But through the triumph of Good—in some variations through the will of God and, in nearly every version, through the greatness of Abraham Lincoln—the Union held and the Secessionists were defeated. American exceptionalism carried the nation through its darkest hour and what emerged was a stronger nation, free of sin, and bought with the blood of so many. So many Americans, North and South, were sacrificed to this war that the nation could endure. But their sacrifice was not in vain because the Union was saved—and their deaths had redemptive value because they are unified, posthumously, as Americans.
Contrasting this official and widespread narrative with the actual death tolls and motivations behind the fighting, and the “unwritten,” “untold,” war begins to come into focus. It has not, in fact, remained unwritten for the past 150 years but instead has been relegated to the margin, to the “scraps,” as a means of preserving a national narrative. The tremendous cost of this marginalization and silencing is the loss that Whitman laments: the passions, dauntlessness, and fierce friendships subsumed to the American sacrifice.

Unavailable to Whitman, current scholarship, especially work by Carolyn Dinshaw in *Getting Medieval*, creates a place where the juxtaposition of the pre-modern and the post-modern allows a trans-historicism that “[makes] entities past and present touch”—creating a “partial connection” This transtemporal experience of history through a queer historiography generates a distinct opportunity to contact the subjectivity of these soldiers and, in turn, begin to investigate the disunities that the unifying narrative of history has erased. In excavating the subject position available for soldiers and understanding the motivating contexts for their sacrifice—personal and national, voluntary and prescribed—we are critically able to recover a part of the actual war, and the men that died there, while simultaneously giving renewed voice to an anti-redemptive understanding of the “tragedy”⁷ that was the Civil War. By connecting across time, the interior of these sacrifices is given new voice at a relevant cultural juncture while critical-historical trends of redemption are challenged and evaluated from the vantage of a national agenda.

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⁷ Whitman again, From “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books”
Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering* states outright the value of this redemptive reading by linking “the Dead” from the wartime period with the postwar project of national unity. Using language from Benedict Anderson’s prominent exegesis on nationalism, *Imagined Communities* (1983), Faust situates the dead in direct relation to the way they would then be culturally appropriated over the next one hundred and fifty years.

Without agendas, without politics, the Dead became what their survivors chose to make them. For a time they served as the repository of continuing hostility between North and South, but by the end of the century the Dead had become the vehicle for a unifying national project of memorialization. Civil War death and the Civil War Dead belonged to the whole nation. The Dead became the focus of an imagined national community for the reunited states, a constituency all could willingly serve—“the dead, the dead, the dead—our dead—or South or North, ours all (all, all, all, finally dear to me),” Walt Whitman chanted.

When considering Faust’s conclusions about the way these individuals “lived beyond their own deaths” in order to become the “lifeblood of the nation” in relationship to a divide between the ahistorical (redemptive) narrative of the war, and the thus-far-unsustainable challenge to this legitimizing narrative, a return to Anderson’s text begins to highlight the disconnect between the accepted idea of the nation as agenda-less and the existence of an agenda for the nation-state. The dead may have been “without agendas, without politics,” but the way their sacrifice has been dislocated from their intentions and passions has allowed the American nation to use their memory in fostering a redemptive narrative that has been a significant, unifying, ideological force.

Looking broadly at the essential importance of redemptively remembering the Civil War, Anderson’s text provides the framework for understanding the cultural
factors and group ideologies that come to be called a nation, as well as the vital nature of remembering the conflict as unifying. Within the context of Imagined Communities, Anderson also uses specific examples and assessments about the necessity of certain shared cultural experiences and ways of relating to events in order to sustain a coherent national identity—examples and ideas analogous to what was required for the United States to remember the Civil War as a unifying event.

Anderson’s basic argument to which Faust refers is now well known. He draws upon the works of Erich Auerbach, Walter Benjamin, and Victor Turner in establishing the existence and global stretch of “imagined communities” that underpin the idea of the nation. Tracing the decline of dynastic realms and religious communities, the nation, for Anderson, is a group of people with some common cultural tenants that have been brought together by characteristics of technology and modernity. Namely, he refers to the development of secular as opposed to religious state-languages, the proliferation of print media combined with the rise of capitalism, and, perhaps most importantly for reviewing Civil War nationalism, the changing perception of space and time.

Simultaneity, aligned for Anderson with Benjamin’s idea of Messianic time and allied most closely with the modernist idea of the “meanwhile,” “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation” (Anderson 25). While the Civil War sits before the boundary of traditional Modernism, the sort of technologies that Anderson highlights—especially print media—were certainly of use in the war effort. The simultaneity of feeling that maintains an imagined community was put to great ideological use during the war for North and South alike. Briefly,
The idea of the sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity. (Anderson 26)

Consider how much greater this simultaneity feels in times of violent crisis or state-delegated conflict. The post-September 11 reaction is perhaps our most telling contemporary example. Regardless of political affiliation or any other potentially divisive issue, the terrorist attack on American civilian citizens provoked a lasting and powerful national response. Americans everywhere had been attacked. The “complete confidence” in the “steady, anonymous” national unity was heightened by a nation-wide response of grief, outrage, and calls for retribution. Americans were angry and they were afraid, but they had never been more sure that they were American.

Perhaps the clearest way of understanding the debate that raged in 1860, ultimately leading to war, is to understand that there were two nationalisms at work and each nation thought their survival was essential, although for very different reasons. The one believed in the idea of Union—of the national government—and the other in the uncompromising importance of States’ Rights, including the right for a state to determine its own policy on slavery. The Union was fighting for nationalist aims, but Southern soldiers, as we shall see, believed they were fighting for the self-preservation of their homes and families—with the formation of a Confederate nation as the
outgrowth of this fight. The importance of this distinction in personal cause cannot be overstated as we look at the conflicting ideological forces in the conflict.

While some historians have questioned the existence of a Southern nationalism and the validity of whether the Confederacy ever achieved “nation” status, Faust’s *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism* draws upon Clifford Geertz’s work in methodically considering the “Problem of Confederate Nationalism.” Her work is characteristically rigorous and produces perhaps the strongest historical case for not only the existence of a Confederate nation, but also for a picture of the “self-conscious” (5) effort by Southerners during the war to build on that inherent nationalism. The effort to build this nationalism was perhaps symptomatic of the lack of a unified nationalism in the South—Confederate identity rested instead with the individual.

Chandra Manning’s *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* rigorously works through soldiers’ attitudes and representations of why they fighting in the war. The text sets up a very different reasoning by Union and Confederate soldiers, as well as tracking how the rationale for the war changed as the conflict continued, finally arriving at slavery as the central divisive issue for which soldiers attributed the war. In effect, she argues that Union soldiers were fighting to preserve the Union and, eventually, to repent or account for the sin of slavery (similar language is reflected in Lincoln’s Second Inaugural) while Confederate soldiers were fighting to preserve a particular way of life that they felt was threatened by Lincoln and the political climate at the time. The existence of such a society in the South was inseparably tied to the existence of slavery.
Manning’s work is useful because it deals so deeply and thoroughly with the actual war, and why soldiers were fighting *at that time*. To the modern reader, understanding slavery and a “caste-system” society8 as a noble ambition worth fighting and dying for seems antiquated at best and horrifying at worst, but in the narrative of the Civil War it is understood that even pro-slavery needed champions so that the “vague” issues to which Reynolds alludes could be settled through the “thunderstorm,” and reunification-purification could be possible through the use of force.

That the Union has been viewed by history as a nation goes without saying, and it is this re-unified narrative that has continued to obscure the intentionality with which the South was fighting. Looking at these two dueling ideological forces creates the clearest picture of the sort of intense feeling—and pressure on each side—that was present during the war, as well as explaining the critical importance of the later project of unification and redemption. The Civil War was not a conflict between one nation divided so much as it was two differing sets of nationalism and political philosophies colliding—with 620,000-odd casualties as the result.

The causes, debates, misunderstandings, and motivations that eventually led to the war have been well-chronicled elsewhere, and the purpose here is not to rehash those views in their entirety. The purpose is instead to show that Warner’s analogy of violent crisis is apt in that the coming of the war brought with it tremendous violence and intense—although divided—feelings of national interest. The war brought immense ideological pressure on both sides and these pressures would produce an

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inescapable position for the fighting men, but they would also create the necessity for
the “national project of reunification” that Faust highlights in the her conclusion to This
Republic of Suffering. Faust’s seems to view the American nation as without agenda or,
perhaps more correctly, without the same ideological pressure she describes in The
Creation of Confederate Nationalism as self-consciously propagated by the South—this
is where her text affirms the cultural narrative of redemptive violence and unity, and
where it diverges from Anderson’s original study.

In his chapter on “Patriotism and Racism,” Anderson highlights the seeming
disconnect concerning the way the nation is perceived by the populace, the tremendous
toll this perception can take, and the actual interestedness of the national agenda.
Contrasting familial love with national interest, Anderson explains the purity and moral
grandeur of state-delegated sacrifice, but from a skeptical perspective.

While it is true that in the past two decades the idea of the family-as-
articulated-power-structure has been much written about, such a
conception is certainly foreign to the overwhelming bulk of mankind. Rather, the family has traditionally been conceived as the domain of
disinterested love and solidarity. So too, if historians, diplomats,
politicians, and social scientists are quite at ease with the idea of
‘national interest,’ for most ordinary people of whatever class the whole
point of the nation is that it is interestless. Just for that reason it can ask
for sacrifices...The idea of ultimate sacrifice comes only with an idea of
purity, through fatality. Dying for one’s country, which usually one does
not choose, assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party,
the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty
International can not rival...Ironically enough, it may be that to the
extent that Marxist interpretations of history are felt (rather than
intellected) as representations of ineluctable necessity, they also acquire
an aura of purity and disinterestedness. (143-144)
And so it is for the dead of the Civil War, North and South. In the narrative of American history, the ineluctable necessity or these deaths for a stronger nation, free of sin, coalesces with the purity of their ultimate sacrifice and they are relegated to the subject position that was prescribed for them at the time by the tremendous interestedness of their respective nations. And so they continue to be remembered because, as Anderson continues to explain, the nation—especially, in this case, the recently compressed dual nationalisms of North and South—needs the unity of these deaths as badly as it needs the amnesias that allow nationalism to continue. He uses the work of French historian Michelet on the French Revolution to elucidate the usefulness of the dead to the national cause—even while the basis of their dying is ignored. The parallels to the usefulness of the Civil War dead in creating a narrative of an American nation redeemed by blood and forged through sacrifice are in many ways self-evident:

Michelet, self-appointed historian of the revolution, most clearly exemplifies the national imagining being born, for he was the first selfconsciously to write on behalf of the dead…Here and elsewhere Michelet made it clear that those whom he was exhuming were by no means a random assemblage of forgotten, anonymous dead. They were those whose sacrifices, throughout History, made possible the rupture of 1789 and the selfconscious appearance of the French nation, even when these sacrifices were not understood as such by the victims.

This formulation is probably unprecedented. Michelet not only claimed to speak on behalf of large numbers of anonymous dead people, but insisted, with poignant authority, that he could say what they ‘really’ meant and ‘really’ wanted, since they themselves ‘did not understand.’ From then on, the silence of the dead was no obstacle to their deepest desires. (Anderson 197-198)

After establishing the fundamental importance of the dead toward a national identity Anderson, in the chapter “Memory and Forgetting,” continues to deal with many of the
ideas that color the redemptive and unified reading of the war. He explains, “all profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias” (204), and, when taken with his continual concern with the interestedness of the nations, Anderson makes evident the danger in taking for granted the narrative of history.

Nationalism’s interest, Anderson asserts with a note of caution, is in serving the “leaderships” that put “serving the interests of the state first and foremost,” sometimes at incredible cost to the people (159). While this interestedness is certainly not the redemptive reveal that Warner warns against, it no doubt underlies the project of unity and redemption that has defined the Civil War’s constant commemoration. The same unifying ideology that causes violence to be seen as redemptive and silences the voices of disunity, while subsuming the actual subjectivity of the fighting men in favor of the narrative of national salvation, was ultimately at the center of the death toll and has been appropriated as such for the past 150 years.

In examining Union nationalism and the resulting death-bound identity, the public performances and documents of Abraham Lincoln signify a clear representation of the rhetoric and ideological pressure present at the time of the Civil War. The scholarly trope of allowing Lincoln to represent the ideological masses—“the people”—is to cultural theorist Dana Luciano “a familiar enough move in the memorial discourse for Lincoln” (215). Luciano’s chapter “Representative Mournfulness,” from Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America (2007), builds upon this memorial discourse in explaining the “distinctive” quality of Lincoln’s eulogies as
resting with the “affective rhetoric…which stressed as part of his illustrious career an especially developed capacity for feeling” (216). She continues to examine the “proleptic function of his representative status” (218) and it is this status of Lincoln as already inhabiting the representative role he would historical fulfill that I want to place in conversation with the death-bound identity for Union soldiers.

Luciano’s argument is centered firmly in the “monumentalization” (218) and mourning of Lincoln and, in a sense, my considering his very alive and speech-performing body within Luciano’s frame is somewhat out of time—unless we consider Luciano’s “time of Lincoln” and its transhistorical implications (219). Explaining the death-bound identity for Civil War soldiers and engaging with this “time of Lincoln” coalesces in a reading (perhaps rereading) of Lincoln’s speeches and their relationship to national belonging.

The time of Lincoln is an idea that inhabits both “historical” and “transhistorical” resonances while also “[invoking] at once the historical period associated with Lincoln’s presidency and assassination and a transtemporal, quasi-reformist mode of national belonging” (Luciano 219). This transtemporal mode of national belonging draws heavily on Imagined Communities and, to Luciano, was made available—“opened”—“by Lincoln’s own memorial speeches during the Civil War” (219). In tying Lincoln so deeply to the death-bound identity, I want to reexamine the transtemporal national belonging and further complicate it, reconsidering the relationship between national belonging and “redemptive Americanness” within the context of a death-bound identity (Luciano 219)
To simply say that Lincoln represented “the people” and, as such, his words as President enforce and represent the presence of the death-bound identity would be to simplify Lincoln’s relationship as representative. Luciano explains that “not that Lincoln, as president, was directly linked to the state” (219), and I want to examine the sixteenth president as a law-maker but also as a figure that represented the people of the Union, a population that mourned Lincoln through a “preoccupation with his own desire for justice, a desire understood as rooted in personal affection rather than legal abstraction” (219). The deeply personal attachment to Lincoln, as well as his role as lawmaker (it was Lincoln, after all, who was calling for more troops and endless war), perpetuated the death-bound identity even as Lincoln himself suffered and mourned the overwhelming amount of bloodshed. He had the distinctive and internalized position of perpetuating so much death, even as he provided the reflection and template for the “historically appropriate” mourning and sadness that characterizes the memory of the war (Luciano 217).

Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address show the type of ideological pressure felt by the Union population and its grief stricken commander-in-chief. Reading and analyzing the Gettysburg Address within the context of the death-bound subject position shows many of the same attitudes that we will see recurring repeatedly in representations from the war.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

In her reading of the text, Luciano draws particular attention to the way time functions, “rhetorically creating a sense of American newness as an unbroken, unbreakable tradition” (222), and the way the speech “carries the present forward…toward a destined future: not simply the completion of the war but the temporal completeness of the nation-form” (223). The language of predetermination she highlights in the “we cannot dedicate this ground…It is for us the living rather, to be dedicated…” section is eerily similar to language we will see recur throughout Civil War songs, especially in the lyrics of Julia Ward Howe (223).

This idea of an unstoppable momentum and a predetermined future was what made Union sacrifice so unique and so bloody. The ideological framework was essentially: the war would be won by the Union, as was ordained by God, and the nation would be preserved. This made every death worthwhile and every sacrifice justifiable.
because the outcome was already decided provided that the Union was willing to pay the cost of freedom. Unlike most major wars and especially different from their Southern counterparts, Northern soldiers in no way felt that their homeland was threatened. They felt that the Union was threatened, that the nation—Lincoln’s rhetoric above reflects this—was in danger, but they did not see themselves as fighting a war of self-preservation in the way that Confederate soldiers framed the conflict. Their way of life was not being persecuted, but still they felt compelled to fight and die. For them, the idea of the nation—provided they would be fondly remembered and the nation would positively endure—was worth the sacrifice.

The idea of fond and important remembrance, the Good Death, was also being reinforced by this section of the Gettysburg Address. The same section that plays on the idea of unfinished work and a destined future also reinforces the Good Death by placing the sacrifice of the men that died as greater than anything the living can achieve—except maybe to honor the memory appropriately by winning the war. When Lincoln explains that the living “can not dedicate…can not consecrate… can not hallow” he is making the dead greater than the living while making obvious what Faust calls the “redemptive vision of political immortality” (Faust 2008; 189). These men have achieved in death what the living could not hope to and their sacrifice has “consecrated” the cemetery “far above [the living’s] poor power to add or detract.” Faust continues her analysis to explain the way “the dead themselves become the agents of political meaning and devotion” (189), but she stops short of suggesting that the position of the living soldiers as death-bound was tied to the way the dead were politicized.
That “the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here” gives a full recognition of the Good Death for those that died at Gettysburg and that this acknowledgement would come not only from the president of the Union, but also from the representative voice of the people makes this tribute all the more significant. Luciano notes that Lincoln’s language causes “the dead [to] lose all specificities,” including the paramount difference of North and South (223). By welcoming the Confederate soldiers back into the nation with their death, Lincoln is casting their death as a sacrifice on par with the Union soldiers’ sacrifice, a notion that would be disputed at various times⁹, but ultimately form a part of the way the war would be remembered. This was a necessary move in the interest of national unification, but one that occurred at the cost of the actual subjectivities and causes of the soldiers, including their position as bound to death. Their death was as destined as Union victory in the war and the overwhelming need—by both North and South—to make death politically meaningful and imbued with “transcendent meaning” in turn caused death to be mandated for those that continued to fight (Faust 189). From a Union perspective, death for the Union soldier was the highest honor, a part of the elaborate national narrative, and a compulsory sacrifice toward a destined conclusion, a sacrifice that would be rewarded by the living and the divine. Death for the Confederate soldier was simply an essential sacrifice on the road to a fated finale.

Roughly eighteen months after the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln would again speak publically in an affirmation and reiteration of the necessity of more bloodshed. In

⁹ See especially Faust’s conclusion pg 265-271 for some of the most prominent dissent to unification of the dead
her analysis of the Second Inaugural, Faust places particular emphasis on the changing way that the fighting in the war was being perceived, mainly on account of the tremendous number of war dead. Luciano echoes these sentiments in highlighting the text’s “revision of the cause of the war” from “testing the durability of national principles to expiating the sin of slavery” (226). In historicizing this point, Faust in turn broadens her analysis to include war itself, “war’s dead and war’s cost were changing and amplifying the understanding of its ends” (Faust 2008; 190), and highlights what Chandra Manning explains was a broader shift (revision) in the reasoning behind why the war was being fought. To account for the tremendous death toll and provide a more noble narrative for history to remember, the issue of the war became slavery and human freedom instead of competing nationalisms. Faust poignantly presents an 1864 quote by Georgia bishop Stephen Elliott in showing the changing attitudes of the time:

To shed such blood, as we have spilled in this contest for the mere name of independence, for the vanity or pride of having a separate national existence, would be unjustifiable before God and man. We must have higher aims than these.  

Similar to the reasons for the soldiers’ dying, what these higher aims were depended in large part on the side for which a soldier was fighting. Both sides felt an incredible pressure to die, but as one side began to see defeat, the landscape changed radically. The South had always believed they were fighting a war of self-preservation and within the context of that society there was no higher calling than defending ones family and

10 Ibid pg 190
home\textsuperscript{11} except maybe obeying the will of God. The impending Southern defeat forced “Confederates [to confront] what for many became a profound test of faith” (Faust 190).
The Southern nation was not only losing the war but suffering in its national aims.

Because the Union army was winning the war and due to the abolitionist feelings that had existed and festered before and during the conflict, the “properly progressive” (Luciano 224) Northern population was ready to allow the affective passions of “Christian and nationalist imperatives [to merge]” (Faust 189) so that the “United States [could claim] its place as a redeemer nation” (Faust 191). The “higher aims” of the North became the singular issue of slavery, supported by the desire for justice and a population linked to its president and his sense of righteousness. Faust explains the divide concisely as “the northern dead…could be explained as part of a larger purpose and grander plan…But for the defeated South, war’s terrible losses could only seem meaningless” (191). This divide between North and South was not to last, however, as it soon became comprehensible—and nationally vital—for the reconstituted United States to welcome the Southern dead as counterparts to their Northern brethren.

\textsuperscript{11} Manning again, from pages 12 and 217: “A true man protected and controlled dependents, which for white Southerners meant that a man competently exercised mastery over blacks (whether or not he owned any) as well as over women and children. It also meant that a man took care of his family and sheltered his loved ones from harm, including the almost unimaginable harm that white Southerners feared emancipation would bring, because they assumed that slaves released from bondage would terrorize, murder, and violate vulnerable white women and children. (12) Slavery’s absence would doom the prosperity of the South…but most of all, feared enlisted Confederate soldiers, the disappearance of slavery would endanger their families’ safety, welfare, and material aspirations, and undermine their very identities as white men.” (217)
In continuing the trend established in the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln’s language of unity, destined Union victory, and necessary sacrifice plays nicely into the orientation of the war as redeeming the sins of slavery. “Mining the rhetorical archive of sentimental culture,” Lincoln’s speech deploys language in which “human suffering becomes a divinely ordained medium of compensatory exchange” (Luciano 225). This exchange, evident in the section that opens this chapter, has the same sort of death-bound logic that characterizes the destined language of the Gettysburg Address. God’s will is paramount and unchanging, His will is for the Union victory and any related sacrifice is inevitable, thus Union soldiers must continue to fight and die until the war’s end. The Second Inaugural plays upon the concept of divine will, emotionally appeals for sacrifice in exchange for slavery, and justifies not only suffering but endless sacrifice, even as it is affirming glory for the slain soldier. The speech is amazing in that it further deploys a rhetoric of unity and nation building while managing to elevate the tremendous death toll as a vital aspect of the conflict—as a part of God’s plan and a requirement, a payment, for a unified and, most importantly free, nation. “Death was not loss” in Lincoln’s speech “but both the instrument and the substance of victory” (Faust 2008: 190), and in framing death and sacrifice in this way—aligned inescapably with victory—Lincoln, representative of national feeling and wielding presidential power, was able to again propagate the inevitability of death. His message of a death-bound subject and the unity this death would provide, whether prescribed by the president or merely displayed by the representative figure, is evident in the subjectivity soldiers themselves began to display.
By commenting on the ideological national pressure from the war and the prescribed death-bound identity it produced, I am attempting in some way to touch on the actual dead, the real victims from the conflict, and the personal passions that caused them to follow the ideology of the age. The goal is to do this without falling into the trap, perhaps unavoidable, of speaking for them and showing what they “really” meant. By combating the “necessary” amnesia and recovering the dead’s position and passion, it creates an occasion, not only to reconsider whether violence is redemptive, but also to feel those private losses that Whitman so poignantly mourns.

In further relating Faust’s historical work to critical theory, especially Judith Butler, the opening pages of *This Republic of Suffering* offer an opportunity for productive exchange. Butler’s *Bodies That Matter* includes a reading of Althusser’s “Ideology and State Apparatuses” that deals with Althusser’s model of hailing and interpellation as a means of highlighting the “slippage between discursive command, and its appropriated effect” (122) that can occur at the moment the hail from a figure of authority “initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject” (121). While Butler is here interested mainly in the possibility of potential subversion resulting from the excess in “this constitutive failure of the performative” (122), I am interested in her use of naming (“the occupation of the name is that by which one is, quite without choice, situated within discourse” [Butler 122]) and how this relates to the men identified as “soldier.”

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12 There is, however, a lasting record of what these men wanted and Chandra Manning’s *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* meticulously attempts to excavate these desires. I have used Manning wherever possible.
Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering* begins with just this sort of interpellation, chronicling a Confederate chaplain’s hailing of a group of soldiers in 1863 with the name of “Soldier” (Faust 5) and the “socially constituted” (Butler 121) subject position of death-bound. “Soldier” the chaplain states, “it is your business to die” (Faust 5). A business that not only constituted the subject position for soldiers during the war, but which would be so prescribed for them that they would come to perform, reiterate, and desire the heroic death that the nation and the cultural ideology demanded of them.

The desire to die in a particular way, and the death-bound identity and rhetoric that resulted from such is open to a further Butlerian analysis because, diversely and ritualistically, soldiers at the time were reinforcing and reiterating their desire to die. Turning to *Gender Trouble*, Butler explains that “the subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through substantializing effects” (145). Within the context of a soldier performing a death-bound identity, repeating in letters and other representations the desire to die in a certain way for certain reasons, this continued repetition eventually dislocates and as “all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat” (Butler 145), produces a subject bound to his “business” of dying, perhaps even dislocated from the original motivation. As Butler states in “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions,” “attributes that are not expressive but performative…effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal” (115).

What interests me most about the intersection of Butler and Faust is the blending
of theatrical and social acts. Jon McKenzie’s “Genre Trouble” explains that Butler pulls from early performance theory and “cites Schechner while distilling the differences between theatrical and social acts” (222). Taking Butler’s distillation of these differences, I have found while researching soldiers’ representations of death and dying that there are several representations—particularly in the performance of the marching songs when sung for the benefit and mental fortification of those performing them—that enact liminality, inhabiting both the theatrical and the social categories while also providing soldiers an outlet to reinforce their pending Good Death and, in turn, their death bound identity.

For example, George Cooper’s *For the Dear Old Flag, I Die*\(^\text{13}\) was originally a poem that was later set to music and sung by different Union regiments during the Civil War.

*Verse 1*

For the dear old Flag I die,
Said the wounded drummer boy;
Mother, press your lips to mine;
O, they bring me peace and joy!
'Tis the last time on earth
I shall ever see your face
Mother take me to your heart,
Let me die in your embrace.

*(Chorus)*

For the dear old Flag I die,
Mother, dry your weeping eye;

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For the honor of our land
And the dear old Flag I die,

Verse 2
Do not mourn, my mother, dear,
Every pang will soon be o'er;
For I hear the angel band
Calling from their starry shore;
Now I see their banners wave
In the light of perfect day,
though 'tis hard to part with you,
Yet I would not wish to stay.

Performed as both a public performance and a social ritual preparing soldiers for combat, the song reveals many of the archetypal attitudes Faust explains in her text. The soldiers repeated every time the song was sung their willingness and desire to sacrifice their existence for their country. “For the dear old Flag I die, Mother, dry your weeping eye; For the honor of our land. And the dear old Flag I die” rings with purpose and meaning, fulfilling the prerequisites of a Good Death while causing the soldiers singing the song to ask for and cherish a death in service of their country. The song demands a lack of grieving and upholds instead a noble death confirmed by a heavenly reward. But the way in which the soldiers are asking for death in this context represents a deeper desire propagated by the nationalist ideology behind the war.

The song is theatrically performative because, sung en masse by the soldiers, it creates a performed feeling of unity and joint purpose, rallying but also confirming the validity of the group ideology. The song is a social repetitive act because it is evidence
of the regulated process of repetition that, in conjunction with Faust’s research, turns
the death-bound identity from a theatrical performance to a social act and subject
category.

As the song continues into the conclusion of the second verse, “Yet I would not
wish to stay,” the death-bound aspect of the performative act becomes clearer still. The
soldiers are not only courting death as part of a theatrical performance, but also
revealing their repeated subject position. In considering a gendered reading of the song,
the text sets up the mother, female, as the mourner, but leaves the boy as the sacrificed,
the person to be mourned. Additionally, the line, “Mother take me to your heart, Let me
die in your embrace” conflates the Mother and the Flag—the Union. This gendering of
flag and country, as well as sacrificed and mourner, echoes the Redfield article
mentioned earlier and provides an insight into the archetypal gendered positions
available to the feminine and masculine subjects. These are positions we will see
expanded farther as we work through more songs.

Butler’s text is explicitly related to sex and gender constructions; however,
Butler’s catachrestic understanding of performance and subjectivity is extremely useful
in understanding the way performance and performativity intersected with the driving
ideology behind a death-bound identity for Civil War soldiers. In putting Butlerian
notions of performativity in conversation with historical theories of identity and
subjectivity—reading them as texts and performances—the death-bound identity for
these men becomes evident, giving some insight into their war-time existence.

Using the shared experience of loss, trauma, mourning, and grieving, the nation
was able to use the tremendous sacrifices of the Civil War for unifying self-definition. While there were voices of dissent and anti-redemptive threads, they have been marginalized and relegated to an academic station distanced from mainstream culture. The project of national identity has demanded the marginalization/silencing of these voices, present and past, and the result has been the loss, both actual and to history, of the “real war”—the motivations and passions for which these men gave their lives. Although there has been a critical move to recover the minutiae of their lives and “what this cruel war was over,” only when acknowledging more fully the anti-redemptive voice is it possible to touch their sacrifice. These men were dying not so the nation could survive, but so they could support their own nation—one that has survived and transformed, and the other which has been relegated to nostalgia. Some of these men died in vain.

We need to constantly commemorate their loss as unifying so as to relegate the war to the past, to perpetuate the narrative of redemptive sacrifice, and to preserve an ideal of unified American nationalism, even in the face of evidence (racial, nostalgic, and occasionally violent) to the contrary.

In looking more fully at the marching songs, the following section continues the critical application of performance theory and historical study to the available texts. Placing the songs more fully in their historical context and examining a cross section of the most famous songs shows the prominence of the death-bound identity while simultaneously attempting to disunify the historicization of the soldiers from the war. In this disunity and textual/historical study, the aspiration is to feel the passions of those
that are absent, even from across a great temporal and cultural distance.
Chapter 2
Freedom or Death: Singing Toward Sacrifice in the Civil War

On the march, sitting about the campfire, riding trains or transports, at home on furlough—wherever Yankees assembled—the strains of popular tunes were sure to be heard. More than American fighters of any other period, the men who wore the blue, and the butternut Rebs who opposed them, deserved to be called singing soldiers.

Historian Bell Irvin Wiley
The Life of Billy Yank

The distance between sacred and secular song was often short. While men may have believed deeply in a Christian god and salvation in the hereafter, they also applied a similar religious-like fervor to their relationship with state and country, comrade and family.

Historian Stephen Cornelius
Music of the Civil War Era

Looking closely at Civil War songs requires a twofold analysis: the lyrics of the song as written text and the actual performance, unavailable to the current audience. What exists in relation to the actual performances are records from countless men in every station of martial life detailing the tremendous importance of music as entertainment, as a control mechanism in military life, and as an avenue for emotional expression. Using historical scholarship to capture the importance of musical performance in combination with the most widely accepted textual version of each song gives a sense of the content and exposure of the common soldier’s musical life. Voices from letters, diaries, and published memoirs tell the story of struggle and sacrifice during the war—and the songs that chronicled and repeated the actions and motivations of the fighting man. Using Faust’s extensive study on the required sacrifice that retroactively defines the Civil War to interpret these performances gives distinct voice to the plight and courage of these men, just as the lyrics echo across time and provide a
look at the foundational struggle that continues to define American identity. Music, because of its relationship to affect, nationalism, and male emotional expression, inhabited a unique space for fighting men.

With soldiers of any period, death is a constant shadowy companion and the specter of death haunts even the bravest warriors, even those assured of their place in the afterlife. Soldiers during the Civil War related to death and suffering in a unique way—defined by the ideology undergirding their society and the ideas of sacrifice that came to define the conflict. As their subject position was prescribed for them by the powers that were, and continuously reinforced by aspects of culture, they in turn began the process of displaying and reiterating their desire to die nobly and in the name of sacrifice. In dealing with the proximity to death, as well as the overpowering demand for more sacrifice, soldiers would return to the things they knew best and the forces already strongest in their lives. That they would then use these expressions as an opportunity to fortify and reiterate their death-bound subject position is a testament to the overwhelming sense of duty that left them vulnerable to death’s purview.

The music of the era is particularly telling of their emotional and ideological framework, as it inhabited a unique affective position; critical to understanding music and the death-bound identity is the relationship between masculinity and music. Historian Stephen Cornelius elucidates the role music played in male affect: contrary to a traditional stoic response to death, the presence of music provided an emotional outlet for men that was culturally acceptable and even encouraged. “Deeply affecting” lyrics led to a “remarkable situation”: 
Men, who would never show ‘feminine’ emotions in response to their own personal trying circumstances, were free to do so during a song recital. Tears were acceptable because the memories and/or hopes being expressed were experienced communally as human universals…such a response confirmed one’s breath of humanity, not weakness of character. (Cornelius 10)

Lincoln embodied these affects and this type of emotional masculinity and depth of feeling that made him resonate with the population. “Although firm enough to push America’s bloodiest war to its conclusion, he was also ‘cultured enough to weep’” and Cornelius includes testimony from Lincoln’s bodyguard Ward Lamon, who recalled the song ‘Twenty Years Ago’ and related that “he had many times seen Lincoln weep during his rendering” (11). Lincoln, as we have seen, was representative of the people in many ways—not least in his depth of feeling and grieving—and this representativeness translated into the musical sphere as well. Music provided men an outlet for their hopes and desires while also being used as a cultural tool for solidifying their place as desiring sacrifice. For military men, music further had significance because it would come to define their existence so deeply as to later haunt their thinking.

Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* takes special care to link the development and power of nationalism with song and music. He expands on his ideas of simultaneity to include the power of ritual songs and explains the authority of such music across vast geographic areas before continuing to elucidate the influence of music that is actually sung simultaneously, both as a way of validating the imagined community, and as a
venue for producing feelings of unity. Chapter 8 specifically speaks to the organization of a sonically unified population:

There is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests—above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesian Raya [for example] provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community...How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound. (145)

Anderson includes the distinctive instances when this unisonance and the resulting choruses “are joinable in time” and points to these moments as definitive to allowing those that are “not in blood” to be “invited into the imagined community” (145). Anderson’s community as one that is “simultaneously open and closed,” and yet regulated, evaluated, and linked through sound is a perfect description of military life during the Civil War (146). As we will see, military life for soldiers was heavily regulated by music and, years later, these men would be affected by the songs that were ingrained in them during the war. Music was simultaneously a place for affective displays and a regulatory mechanism toward building a cohesive military community. In a broader sense, music served as emblematic of the underlying motivations and attitudes for each side of the conflict. Music was part of the process of regulation for men of fighting age, part of the cultural pressure to die for one’s side and, subsequently, a way for men to express their internalized death-bound identity. Looking closely at
the songs from the period, and the reactions of men even years later, the fundamental importance of music to constructed identity becomes evident.

Eric Campbell’s essay, “Civil War Music and the Common Soldier” uses the life of the extraordinary Medal of Honor winner Charles Reed as a “representative of the average soldier” in exploring the way music played through the lives of military men (203). Reed was the “First Bugler” of the Ninth Massachusetts and “like the majority of his comrades, Reed was literate, native born, white, and from a lower middle class background” (Campbell 203). With this “average” example serving as the archetypal male subject inhabiting the death-bound identity, we are able to begin to see the relationship between music and authority, ideology, and—eventually—reiteration.

Gender was of paramount importance to the way both Union and Confederate populations functioned in relation to death and loss, with the masculanized subject inhabiting the role of death-bound and sacrificed, and the feminized filling, as we shall see, one of only a few available roles, all of which were oriented around the masculine position of soldier. Music was “indispensable to the Civil War soldier” (Campbell 202). Indeed, Campbell explains:

Music, primarily bugle calls, [was used] to regulate and control the soldiers in camp and on the battlefield. In camp, and at the most basic level, music had a tremendous impact on the soldiers’ existence, for it set and controlled their daily routine. Bugle calls controlled the men’s movements and actions during their every waking moment from morning until night. (211)

In 1861 nearly every Union regiment (a unit representing roughly 1000 soldiers) went to war with its own formal band and, additionally, historian Bell Irvin Wiley considered
music the “second most popular pastime after reading” (206). Music was a part of the daily life of the soldier whether as part of formal performance, a venue for entertainment, or as a military tool for organization. The fighting men in both armies responded to music at a deep emotional level accepted by their culture, and they adapted to its role in military life in such a way that would fundamentally change their relationship to music and highlight music’s relationship to sacrifice and death.

There was, deeply ingrained for soldiers even decades after the war, an inseparable relationship between music and military life and, consequently, music and death. John D. Billings’ *Hardtack and Coffee, or the Unwritten Story of Army Life* (1887) explains the emotions and memories produced at hearing “Taps” some twenty years after the war.

Well do I recall, after the lapse of more than twenty years, the melodious tones of this little bit of army music coming to our ears so consecutively from various parts of the army as to make continuous vibrations for nearly fifteen minutes, softened and sweetened by varying distances, as more than a thousand bugles gave tongue to the still and clear evening air, telling us that...a hundred thousand men had come out of their rude temporary homes—possibly the last ones they would ever occupy—to respond to their names, and give token, that though Nature’s pall had now overshadowed the earth, they were yet loyally at their posts awaiting further orders for their county’s service.

Billings is explaining sacrifice. He explains the power of music, unaffected by time, and the intense relationship between music and affect for the soldier. The “little bit of army music” that governed his life for the duration of the war continued to be a constant reminder of the plight of the soldier, as well as the loyalty and service that was demanded—many hundreds of thousands of times ending in the ultimate service,
sacrifice. Billings’s passage alludes to the difficulties of soldiering life that Whitman so vividly sought to capture and offers a glimpse into the rank and file of military life. In considering the “rude” conditions of soldiering life and the nobility of their loyalty, Billings recounts the unflagging quality that makes Civil War sacrifice so compelling to the modern audience. Despite the muddled conditions that produced the war, history—often through cultural influences at the time—has remembered the conflict as a noble one and the sacrifices as meaningful. This redemptive memorializing, challenged then and now, becomes further complicated by the inescapable cultural demand for sacrifice at the time of the war. While music was but a small part of this demand for sacrifice, it performed a vital service in the life of soldier and civilian, strengthening the ideological foundation for the war. Particularly when considering Billings’s account in light of the imagined community, it becomes evident that the nationalistic demand for sacrifice was at the forefront of the identity for the soldier. These men had been invited into the community and awarded heroic status within the nation’s boundaries, but at the highest price. They had to be committed to dying even more certainly than killing.

There is a fascination by Civil War historians with the music from the war. Book after book about the conflict opens with a musical line and subsequent explanation as to how the song illustrated something foundational about the war. This fascination, combined with recognition of the importance of song in the life of the fighting man, has caused the subject of Civil War music to become an important area of interest for scholars in the past decade. In contrast to previous considerations, which occurred either scattered across fields or in footnote to other works, there has been a
concentrated effort to unify the study of Civil War music and carve out its own scholarly niche.

Emblematic of this trend is the inclusion of an entire section of wartime songs in Ian Finseth’s *An Anthology of Essential Writings* (2006). Similarly, Cornelius’s 2004 *Music of the Civil War Era* gives a broad historical account of the role and experience of music—live performance and printed text—as it functioned during and after the war, and the 2004 compilation *Bugle Resounding: Music and Musicians of the Civil War* draws together scholars across disciplines in order to highlight the importance of music to American society during the period. These texts give a detailed account of the influence of music on the various aspects of the population, including immigrant and minority groups, and their scholarly-historical study of music works with Faust’s section on dying and Butler’s concept of performed identity to reinforce the relationship between music and death.

In comparing the Civil War across time, Finseth equates the musical impact of the war most closely with that of Vietnam. Civil War music shaped perceptions of the conflict, sustained soldiers in the fighting, and helped Americans cope with the “horrific” death toll, while also displaying many of the cultural attitudes and values of the time, including the glorification of sacrifice and noble death (Finseth 331). Finseth explains the importance of song “for both soldiers and civilians” as providing “a measure of social cohesion and emotional comfort in the midst of chaos” (331). He explains the role of music in the life of civilians:
For civilians, music could salve the pain of separation, anxiety, and loss, and it could define the war in terms that made sense to those far removed from the front lines and from the centers of power.

But just as music was acting as a salve for relatives and friends, those positioned as mourners or relations were also being shaped and defined by the “terms” of the songs they were hearing. Those singing songs on the home front were there to encourage the men to fight and mend them when they were lost, often in that order. The acceptance, recitation, and overwhelming repetition of many of these songs in turn led to a broad, unified, and dangerous ideological message. If the songs made the war intelligible for those left at home, they in turn made it more important that those on the field of battle live up to the orchestrated ideal. Finseth further explicates the plight of soldiers:

For soldiers, singing was a way of wiling away the time, boosting morale, relieving the grind of marching or the monotony of camp, feeling reconnected to home, and, to some extent, resisting the ideological pressure under which they were expected to fight for a cause.

Soldiers were connecting to their homes, as well as their ideological foundation, through their singing and repeated performance of these often sacrifice-bound songs. The songs are further an example of the determined body, unable to escape ideology, performing outward the prescribed subject position. Finseth’s suggestion of songs allowing soldiers to escape ideological pressure is extremely intriguing, but more difficult to find borne out in the texts. His acknowledgement of the underlying ideology driving the war works with Faust’s research to create an understating of the importance of a Good Death and the inescapability of sacrifice during the period; however there has been little textual evidence of performances as such. Cornelius points to the soldiers’
self-awareness of their place in history and their recognition of their textual and musical relics as historically significant en route to explaining the utter lack of vulgarity in the texts: “Surely they sang vulgar songs; I found not a single example” (Cornelius xiv). Perhaps it is this same concern that led to a dearth of evidence of material that avoided the ideological pressure of the age, but, in researching the death-bound identity for Civil War soldiers, I have come across very little that was actually performed that supported a subversion or relief from ideological pressures. Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* and other dissenting voices did exist, but they were not inhabited nor performed by the voice of the soldier.

When understanding the dual role of music as displaying and encouraging the death-bound identity for male soldiers during the Civil War, it is important to realize the role of music during prewar political posturing, as well as the exponential proliferation of songs and published material during the time of the war. Before the war, music was often incorporated as a tool for abolitionist writers and thinkers, functioning to unify African Americans with mainstream culture, as well as provide wrenching and soulful accounts of the plight of slaves. “Using music as a means to raise Northern abolitionist sentiments” (Cornelius 8), speakers such a Frederick Douglass would incorporate music in their presentations, just as popular literature such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* played on the emotional use of music to provide imagery of a “Saintly slave Uncle Tom” who “rejoiced in singing Methodist hymns” (Cornelius 7).

With the use of music as a political tool already established, the technology that was developing during the period allowed music to reach an even broader audience. In
blending the rich streams of culture: European, African, and Native American (Cornelius 10), the result was something distinctly American—and highly marketable. Indeed, “sheet music publication increased steadily from about 600 pieces in the late 1820s to about 1,600 annually in the early 1840s to about 5,000 annually by the early 1850s” and the onset of the war stimulated music publishing as composers set quickly unfolding events to music”—often at a newspaper pace (Cornelius 16). While the economic conditions and relative strengths of each side also greatly influenced publishing, the war provided a unique “boon for Southern music publishers” on the basis of the dissolution of copyright laws. The South published roughly 648 pieces during the war (Cornelius 17), but “as prolific as the South’s publishing industry may have been, its output fell far short of the North’s” (Cornelius 18). The publishers for each side were waging in miniature a conflict mirroring the actual military campaigns, and—simulating the inbred nature of the conflict—were often stealing the other’s music and setting it to different lyrics.

In addition, “the piano as an essential fixture in the middle-class home” during the middle of the 19th century increased the influence and prevalence of music on American culture (Cornelius 19). In building upon the idea of music reinforcing the desire for a Good Death, and commemoration and remembrance as such, Cornelius draws particular attention to the musical movements of a made-for-the-home piano

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14 Roughly 180,000 African Americans served in the Union military and 20,000 Native Americans participated in the Civil War, often grouped with African Americans in U.S. Colored Infantry regiment.
15 “Lyricists responded to unfolding events with newspaper quickness” (Cornelius 25).
16 Less Southern songs have survived as a result of economic conditions such as lack of materials, as well as the necessity to abandon publishing facilities toward the end of the war.
piece that sought to reenact the Battle of Roanoke Island. The piece featured “crashing chords, a constant array of changing themes, and no musical depth to speak of” (21). The piece follows the battle from the opening Union general’s address to his soldiers to the general fight, “a combination of imitation bugle calls and discordant harmonies,” and concludes with a “Burial of the Dead finale” that is essentially a “brief slow march in C minor” (Cornelius 21). This epic made-for-the-home recasting of a relatively minor battle speaks to the incredible audience that existed for even the most minor facets of the war, as well as the prevalence and proliferation of such tributes throughout the cultural landscape. Though music, soldiers were remembered, battles fought, and a conflict was heroically performed and reiterated. When the subject turned to battlefield death, the outpour became even greater: composers would write entire “works to honor war heroes” and this tribute began as early as 1861 when Jefferson Davis was the subject of three separate piano works and Septimus Winner published “Col. Ellsworth’s Funeral March” (Cornelius 22). Cornelius notes that, while the music of these arrangements was sub-par, they appealed to a vast audience and “accessibility was the goal” (Cornelius 22).

Due to its range, accessibility, and role in memorializing conflict and fallen heroes alike, music was an essential element in the “resources of their culture, codes of masculinity, patriotism, and religion” that Faust states were so essential to the ideally constructed death for soldiers. To die in battle meant to be forever remembered in song and have your glory performed across the nation—and many of the marching songs we
will consider later had the same effect of commemoration, this time within the military brotherhood.

In turning again to the war songs and establishing a musical divide between North and South, there emerged two distinct, unofficial, war anthems. “I Wish I Was in Dixie’s Land” in the South and “John Brown’s Body” in the North—later to become “Battle Hymn of the Republic” when set to Julia Ward Howe’s poetry in 1862—are seen by scholars as important in establishing the nature of each army. Historian Eileen Southern calls “John Brown’s Body” the “unofficial theme song of black soldiers”\(^{17}\) and both songs, which became popular during the Antebellum period,\(^{18}\) reflected the mood of the army they represented—although “Dixie” in more complex ways (Cornelius 28).

“John Brown’s Body,” particularly when matched with Howe’s lyrics, seemed to echo the relentless drive that later came to epitomize the Northern campaign. Soldiers from the North had enlisted not to further Brown’s mission of ending slavery, but to undertake the serious mission of “preservation of the Union and defending it against treason” (Cornelius 2) and the resolve that underlay their mission is best captured in Howe’s lyrics and the ruthless music of the march:

> The march like rhythm seems to demand that every emotion, just like a soldier’s every step, must be controlled and contained if fear and other potential character flaws are to be overcome. (Cornelius 26)

Indoctrinated into the regiment and pace of military life, soldiers daily responded to music to set the tempo for their lives. In turning to the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,”

\(^{17}\) John Brown’s martyrdom arguably “chilled” relations to the “breaking point”—beginning a “twelve month countdown to Lincoln’s election” that resulted in Southern secession (Cornelius 27).

\(^{18}\) Both songs became popular around 1859 (Cornelius 25).
they were able to find a booming anthem that actualized the undertones of loyalty, controlled service, faith, and relentless sacrifice that defined their campaign life. As they repeated and celebrated their service through this song, they were also giving voice and bringing into the world the death-bound ideology that underlay the war. These soldiers were disregarding their earthly bodies in pursuit of God’s will and Howe’s lyrics give voice to the afterlife-bound desire that characterized Northern military life.

In looking at the lyrics, the narrator (normally a group of Northern soldiers) sets the tone and defines the terms of the conflict immediately—the narrative begins at the end, with the coming of the Lord and victory for the Union. In placing the conflict in such stark and unchangeable terms, in presenting the conclusion in the opening line, the lyrics highlight the finality of the conflict and elevate the value of sacrifice. If victory on the side of good, the side of the singer-soldier, the soldier is assured then no sacrifice can be in vain—it has value toward a noble end. As Howe continues with biblical references to the wrath of God, the theme of bloodshed and sacrifice is brought into focus. The “grapes of wrath” the narrator alludes to are widely considered to be an allusion to a section in Isaiah that contains a wrathful God pouring out His vengeance until His clothing is “soiled” with the “life blood” of His offending people. This death-bound reference, combined with Lincoln’s similarly themed Second Inaugural Address, gives voice to a very real demand for bodily sacrifice. Reading the lyrics as a whole, combined with an understanding of the stoic, march-like quality of the song


20 Isaiah 63:3
creates a picture of just how relentless and committed the Union had become by 1862. The pervasive theme of a present and engaged God, His spirit burning “in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps,” continues the image of a violent and sacrifice-demanding Old Testament God.

Sections of the text, especially the replacement throughout the text of “God” for the Union army, as well as the call at the start of the fourth verse that “He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat” builds on the relentlessness and unshakeable qualities of the song. Within the biblical perspective underlying the poem, the Union army was “not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits”21 and the bodily sacrifice of those men involved on both sides of the conflict was simply the sacrifice demanded for the inevitable Union victory. Howe’s lyrics actualize this sentiment at the conclusion of the fifth verse when the narrator encourages soldiers that “He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.” This stoic and relentless attitude, reiterated for soldiers through Lincoln’s address and instilled as the groundwork for the eventual Union victory, built upon the idea of the Good Death as rewarding those willing to sacrifice themselves, finally embodying the “steely power of Howe’s apocalyptic vision” (Cornelius 30).

In contrast to the apocalyptic march from the North, “Dixie” conveys “lightness and joy rather than firm resolve” (Cornelius 27). The lighthearted origins of the song made it one of Lincoln’s favorites and it is evident that the perceived joyful nature of

21 Ephesians 6:12 from New Living Translation (2007)
Southern life was at the heart of secession. Believing the joy of “Dixie” to be in peril, Southern men rose up to defend the end of their way of life:

Southern diaries and letters suggest that the notion of states’ rights, not slavery, was the issue for which most of those fiercely individualistic men went to war. As the struggle developed and the death toll mounted, however, they increasingly fought for personal honor and to protect their Southern way of life. (Cornelius 2)

The song “Dixie” has a unique and obscured history. Although the origins of the tune are unknown, the 1859 published version is the work of a Northern black-face minstrel show and was composed by Daniel Emmett, a Northerner from Ohio, to conclude one of the troupe’s performances. While the song would soon provide an anthem for Southerners seeking to explain their defense of their homeland, Emmett himself was “an ardent Unionist” that was heard to declare “if I had known to what use they were going to put my song, I will be damned if I’d have written it!” (Cornelius 32, 33). But use “Dixie” the Confederate States did—and to great effect. Chandra Manning’s What This Cruel War was Over, the title of which is drawn from the song of the same name, investigates the relationship between soldiers’ motivations and slavery, tracking how their reasons for fighting changed across the duration of the conflict. Manning’s research in turn “sheds light on how nineteenth-century Americans, especially Southerners, defined what it meant to be a man” (11). She explains that white Southerners closely linked the relationship between slavery and manhood:

A true man protected and controlled dependents, which for white Southerners meant that a man competently exercised mastery over blacks

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22 The minstrel-show origins have further placed the song in an ambiguous cultural position for the modern audience, as some feel the text reflects only an abiding love of the South and others citing the origins and lyrics as overtly racist.
(whether or not he owned any) as well as over women and children. It also meant that a man took care of his family and sheltered his loved ones from harm, including the almost unimaginable harm that white Southerners feared emancipation would bring, because they assumed that slaves released from bondage would terrorize, murder, and violate vulnerable white women and children… Slavery’s absence would doom the prosperity of the South…but most of all, feared enlisted Confederate soldiers, the disappearance of slavery would endanger their families’ safety, welfare, and material aspirations, and undermine their very identities as white men. (Maning 12, 217)

Manning elucidates the South’s investment in maintaining slavery and her study highlights the undertones that pervade “Dixie.” The song is a mixture of a longing ode for Southern life—a life free of the threat of emancipation—and an explanation of the joyful existence of slaves, a life that needed to be preserved. As the black narrator of the text continues exulting Southern life, and white soldiers enacted a jubilant black-face impression, the validity of the Southern position is playfully confirmed and reiterated. As “confederate soldiers reminded themselves that no matter how bad the Confederacy was, the Union was worse because the Union meant abolition and the attendant destruction of everything that mattered” (Manning 218). “Dixie” served as a vivid reminder of all that was right for a slave in the South. From the opening “I wish I was in de land of cotton,” the free black narrator romanticizes and nostalgically desires a return to Southern life—a desire that echoed with white Southerners’ longing for a return to unquestioned authority and manhood while simultaneously affirming the claim that life for African Americans was better in bondage. As the war continued and Southern life continued to decline, the need for this sort of affirmation became vital and the way of life the song triumphed reiterated, as ever in the South, as a way of life worth dying for.
With an understanding that Southern manhood, the life of the family, and a unique sense of Southern nationalism were at stake during the war, the desire to die so that Dixie may survive echoed many of the same themes that characterized Northern expression. The idea of fighting for the nation, or the motherland, echoed throughout Southern ideology. In keeping with the war effort to politicize and nationalize different music, alternate verses for “Dixie” were written that revealed the same sort of sacrifice-bound identity for Confederates as was on display for their Northern counterparts. This verse by Confederate hero Albert Pike was extremely popular during the war and reflects the call for a Good Death and sacrifice for the South:

Southrons! hear your country call you!
Up! lest worse than death befall you! . . .
Hear the Northern thunders mutter! . . .
Northern flags in South wind flutter; . . .
Send them back your fierce defiance!
Stamp upon the cursed alliance

The overtly nationalistic call to “hear your country” combines with the familiar refrain that defeat would be worse than death to build a unisonance of sacrifice on par with anything the North would offer. The Southern defeat in the conflict has left the impression that the personal honor and state’s rights for which the South fought perhaps lacked the same relentless power and biblical commitment of Northern ideology; however, the South comparatively had far fewer resources (including soldiers) than the North and it is often the nobility in death of Southern soldiers that receives the more sympathetic historical view.
In placing “Dixie” in historical perspective, the 20th century use of the phrase “Whistling Dixie” comes to mind. Used as a reference to day-dreaming or longing for a place or vision that does not exist instead of toiling for a realistic goal, the phrase puts into context the way this Southern anthem has been remembered and, paradoxically, added to its nobility. “Whistling Dixie” in a non-military circumstance is akin to idleness, but “Whistling Dixie” on the way to one’s death has become a powerful way that the dignity of the war has been remembered. Poets, writers, and filmmakers characterizing Southern sacrifice have found great nobility in Southern gentlemen riding to their death against an overwhelming opponent and dying for an idea that never existed. In placing this tremendous sacrifice (approximately 260,000 for the South—one in five able-bodied men) in the context of age-old military heroism, the death-bound identity has been upheld, even as the causes for which these men went to war continue to be reevaluated and, often, undermined.

While the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” characterized a specific and vital aspect of Union military attitudes and “Dixie” spoke to the South’s intense desire for self-preservation, historian James McPherson offers a differing opinion as to the song that best defined the war. McPherson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning history The Battle Cry of Freedom (1988) gives a detailed narrative of the Civil War era and opens with the lyrics and music of the song reflected in the title. McPherson details the uses of the song for each army and uses the song to show the remarkable similarities between the two sides. While the similarity between the two armies in unmistakable, Cornelius places “The

23 Gone with the Wind comes strongly to mind here.
Battle Cry of Freedom” as a firmly Union song. He explains that “so inspiring were the tune and lyrics that more than once the song was credited for turning the tide of battle” before relating a series of valiant instances when a regiment “on the verge of defeat” would begin the song—often referred to as “Rally Round the Flag, Boys”—and change the outcome of the battle (Cornelius 47, 48). Composer George F. Root, who penned the song in 1862 as Lincoln called for another 300,000 volunteers, would later explain in his autobiography that this song above all others affected Southern officers. He relates a post-war encounter with a group of high-ranking Confederate officers that explained the importance of the song during the “Seven Days’ Fight” of June 25 to July 1, 1862. The action took place around Richmond and proved a major Confederate victory when Robert E. Lee repelled the invading Army of the Potomac commanded by McClellan; however, the men Root came across explained that, for them personally, a musical encounter during the fighting led them to view the conflict in very different terms.

I shall never forget the first time I heard “Rally Round the Flag.” ‘Twas a nasty night…I was on picket, when, just before “Taps” some fellow on the other side struck up that song and others joined in the chorus until it seemed to me the whole Yankee army was singing. Tom B-, who was with me, sung out “Good heavens, Cap, what are those fellows made of, anyway? Here we’ve licked them six days running, and now on the eve of the seventh they’re singing, ‘Rally Round the Flag’.” I am not naturally superstitious, but I tell you that song sounded to me like the ‘knell of doom,’ and my heart went down into my boots; and though I’ve tried to do my duty, it has been an uphill fight with me ever since that night.

The almost supernatural power of music to which the men allude was far reaching. The call for sacrifice exists even in this straightforward battle-cry: the penultimate line in the second and concluding verse, “And we'll fill our vacant ranks of our brothers gone
before,” has the same message of unrelenting sacrifice that characterized the entire Union campaign. Just as the appearance of the “Battle Cry of Freedom” would coincide with Howe’s calamitous vision to provide decisive anthems for the Union’s death bound march, the Confederate victory during the Seven Days Battles would ensure the casualty-conscious McClellan would be replaced by men more willing to enforce Lincoln’s inexorable drive toward a total war. The president’s convictions and the unyielding ideology of sacrifice driving the population made it nearly impossible for the fighting man to view himself in any other context save as a small piece of the will of a higher power—be that God or country.

Should the fighting man seek refuge with family or on the home-front, the subject positions available to civilians—particularly women—was limited to those that reiterated and encouraged bodily sacrifice. Historian Lenora Cuccia’s essay “They Weren’t All like Lorena: Musical Portraits of Women in the Civil War Era” explains that there were essentially three subject positions available to women: “mother, sweetheart, [and] ‘gutsy gal’.”

The mother figure is perhaps the most lyricized of the three figures, particularly during what Cornelius calls the “Middle Years” of the war, and the role of the mother as symbolizing “fidelity and innocence, hearth and home” was definitive in building the idea that there was something worth dying for remaining

24 See especially Ethan S. Rafuse, McClellan’s War. The Failure of Moderation in the Struggle for the Union (Indiana University Press, 2005)
at home, while also providing a symbol of unity that was often broadened to include
nationalist themes (Cornelius 63, 64).

Broadening the purview of these songs and accounting for the intense
ideological pressure asserted by every level of society affirming the valor of sacrifice
and the importance of the Good Death refines Cornelius’s reading, offering less
emphasis on “subjugation of self for country” and instead exposes the way these songs,
through the work of mourning, preservation, and commemoration, enacted the very
ideals Cornelius suggests they move away from. In presenting these emotional scenarios
temporally alongside stoic marches like “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” the
message of a necessary but heart-rending conflict becomes clear. By replacing the
image of the nation (or in many cases the flag) with the affect-producing image of the
mother, the strict gender-roles of the subject positions are upheld, while a deeply
moving call for personal sacrifice is simultaneously sustained. The sacrifice of soldiers
was required by the motherland and they would be mourned and remembered for their
tremendous valor, but anything less than sacrifice was unmentionable: those returning
wounded, maimed, otherwise less than able-bodied are absent from song. While some

26 As the fighting dragged on and intensified, even pro-war songs offered less emphasis on masculinity,
less subjugation of self for country…Lyrics reflected that reality by focusing on particularly emotional
scenarios…[confronting] war’s horror while holding desperately to the…notion that death in combat was
a glorious end…Motherhood balanced masculine images of valor and duty, nation and flag. As the
horrors and suffering of the war became better understood, images of nation were replaced with
nurturing, even mystical, images of mother. (Cornelius 64)

Mother I’ve Come home to Die” (1863), “The Dying Mother’s Advice to Her Volunteer Son” (1863),
“The Soldier’s Home” (1863), and the “particularly disturbing” (Cornelius 65) “My Boy is Coming from
the War” (1863) in which the boy does not, in fact, come home alive.
of these songs feature hospital scenes, it is strictly in the context of the moment before death, when a soldier is able to fondly remember those he loves, anticipates his reward in the afterlife, and affirms the cause of his dying.

A soldier could return home or he could die for his cause, but there was no place for the damaged veteran. In the case of the homecoming, this was when the “sweetheart” became the central figure in the victorious narrative. “When lovers replaced mothers in song texts, they could stand in for mother and country both” and they did so in the service of the nation (Cornelius 68). Women of this age, particularly as Manning has explained in the case of the Confederate man, proved the cause of the fighting, as well as something soldiers longed to return to. The still-sung “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” (1863) is emblematic of the songs available for sweethearts left at home. They were to fulfill the voice of optimism and, above all, patient anticipation. Men longed to return to the women in this role and the strict gender divide of the war perpetuated the rhetoric of sacrifice by creating a binary in which a man should either return home bodily whole to his sweetheart, or die on the field of battle so that she could mourn her loss with dignity and proper feminine honor—looking ahead to seeing her beloved in the afterlife.

The gutsy gal was one of two figures: the woman on the homefront that held the family together, producing “man’s work” at home while also potentially contributing to the war effort—Julia Ward Howe and her poetic/intellectual involvement comes to mind here—or the contributor (often a nurse) from the front lines such as the female protagonist in C. D. Benson’s “Lucilla, the Maid of Shiloh!” (1864). When fulfilling
this role, the gutsy gal affirms the validity of the soldier and enables the required sacrifice. The soldier will be mourned at home should he perish in defending the nation, but his presence is not required on the home front—not with the gutsy gal capable of managing affairs and further encouraging the importance of a stoic campaign. This section from “Lucilla” features a woman that is altered from sweetheart to gutsy gal, embodying nation, mother, and relentless believer in noble sacrifice.

Aurora shed her crimson blushes,
O’er Shiloh’s bleak and dreary hills,
A maiden fair to battle rushes,
Resolved to share her lover’s ills,
In buoyant steps she onward presses,
With bold defiance, proud disdain,
Advancing in a march triumphant,
She marks her pathway with the slain.

This song is transformative, featuring the sweetheart that has “shed her crimson blushes,” the patient feminine passivity, in favor of rushing to battle and the aide of her lover. “Buoyant” in her support of the cause, she is bold and proud as any nation, with an evitable triumph in her march, and a stoic acceptance for the slain that became necessary for both sides as the war dragged on. In embodying the masculine position of a marching soldier, the protagonist takes on the qualities of the nation and affirms the importance of the march. Women would fight if they could, the song asserts, and their men should draw strength from that spirit even as they add their names to the numbers of the dead. The identity of men as death-bound was strengthened by this notion because if women were willing to sacrifice, then their masculinity demanded that they do the same, pushing soldiers closer to death. When considering the divide between
North and South in terms of motivation, the idea of the fighting woman—horrifying in many ways to Southern men—would have been doubly as powerful in the Confederacy.

In considering dissenting musical voices, there is a paradox in the songs that are now considered anti-war for the period. Cornelius draws particular attention to the handful of anti-war songs that existed during the war—including those sung by soldiers—and the irony of each of these texts is that, although they are classified as “anti-war,” each song is a tribute to soldiers slain in the conflict. While the lyrics definitely speak to the horror of death and loss, they also reaffirm that these are men that will be remembered long after the conflict—that their sacrifice will not be forgotten and, through their mourning by loved ones and anonymous Americans, they are able to achieve the Good Death, as well as fulfilling the role of required “violent deaths” that *Imagined Communities* highlights as fundamental to nationalism.

The result of the war, in terms of the imagined community, was that each side of the conflict developed its own sense of nationalism. This is perhaps why Americans, when reunited, would lean so heavily on the shared experience of loss and grief—so great was the perceived ideological rift between them during the war, it required a “human universal” of communal trauma and devastation to allow reconciliation. Of the nationalistic divide that developed between North and South, there is perhaps no clearer musical example than the differing lyrics each side developed for the election of 1864. “Lincoln ran on a platform that would continue the war until the South capitulated” and McClellan’s Democrats “sought to end the fighting immediately and negotiate a settlement,” which would have been a de facto Southern victory (Cornelius 71). This
section from the “Campaign Song for Abraham Lincoln” attests to the incredibly militant and unforgiving tone the conflict had taken, contrasting those loyal to the Union and those deserving of death.

Come all ye true hearted, let this be your cry:
Our chieftain must conquer, the traitor shall die!
‘Neath freedom’s proud banner we’ll march to the field,
Now press them with vigor, the traitors shall yield.

While American nationalism has attempted to remember the two sides as serving the same purpose, and has reappropriated the dead to that end, the brutality and violence that existed during this fratricide is obvious. The two sides would ultimately respect each other as combatants, but the truth remains they were trying to kill one another for what they thought was right. The stark terms of the song are clear from the beginning—one is either true hearted or a traitor (although it is unclear whether the song refers to McClellan or to the Confederate army), and the use of the war-like “chieftain” as a term for Lincoln establishes the martial atmosphere that pervaded the election. Union soldiers voted enormously in favor of Lincoln in the election and it is no surprise that the ideology of a preordained Union victory that they had been inundated with since the start of the conflict in turn gave rise to songs of the same flavor—although with a much more violent twist. The violently different lyrics each side set to the tune of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” indicate the intensity of feeling around the elections and, while the Confederate states would not vote in the election, they made their feelings of Lincoln well known. In juxtaposing these two versions of the same tune confirms the continued theme of two populations that were at once intimately related,
and dreadfully opposed. Both versions decline to mention Lincoln by name, with the pro-Lincoln version substituting the “Union cause” and “Uncle Sam” for the president, and the anti-Lincoln version simply referring to him as the “widow-maker.”

The pro-Lincoln version, with its ideologically consistent, forward-looking intractable motion, and vengeful call for a Rebel death sentence:

The Union cause is going ahead,  
Ahead! Ahead!  
The Rebel cause will soon be dead,  
Be dead! Be dead!  
Their game is up and their hope is fled,  
And we’ll make them pay for the blood they shed,  
We’ll all drink to Uncle Sam,  
Johnny fill up the bowl!

Contrasted with the racist themed, violently personal, and forcefully home-looking anti-Lincoln verse:

The widow-maker soon must cave,  
Hurrah, Hurrah,  
We’ll plant him in some nigger’s grave,  
Hurrah, Hurrah.

Torn from your farm, your ship, your raft,  
Conscript. How do you like the draft,  
And we’ll stop that too,  
When little Mac takes the helm.

The “hotly contested” race may have “gone for McClellan” had it not been for Sherman’s critical victory in the South and Lincoln’s victory—combined with the president’s own relentless rhetoric—would prove central to the Union’s victory in 1865 (Cornelius 70). The lasting ideological conflict—including the question of whether the bodily sacrifices for the war were redemptive/meaningful—would be much more
difficult to reconcile and, with Lincoln’s assassination, the project became even more convoluted. In a sense, with the ideology already in place to locate Lincoln’s death as sacrificial and redemptive, his assassination provided a framework for the massive project of mourning that would begin to reunify the national consciousness.  

Working through the texts of these songs and the historical circumstances that surrounded their singing, the disunity of the lives and subjects that sang and listened becomes evident. The clearest divide is perhaps in reclaiming the division of North and South, the reasoning behind each side’s fighting and dying. Other disunities, those of race and gender particularly, also begin to surface while considering more fully these songs and the sacrifices they supported. Perhaps the erroneous erasure that is the national narrative of the Civil War would be best replaced with an acknowledgement of the differences and disunities these songs reveal—including the inescapable death-bound position for men of fighting age—and this admission would lead instead to a newer narrative that accounts for the subjectivities that have been expunged. Or perhaps the United States remains a “nation divided from itself, split into soul and body by the mark of difference and death” and unifying, redemptive mourning is a perquisite of continued national coherence, requiring relentless grief that is “as irreducible as the gap between an allegorical sign and its meaning” (Redfield 81) My hope in contributing to the vast representations of the war is to open the possibility that, if we must

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28 See especially:
“monumentalize such scenes and fence them off,” that we can include inside that barrier—display with that lasting spectacle—an homage of our differences and faults alongside our conquests (Redfield 81).
Conclusion: Sustainable Remembering?

The National Archives’ two-part “Discovering the Civil War” exhibit in Washington DC, beginning in April and running through September 6, 2010, is one of the most recent in an ongoing series of public exhibitions dedicated to the Civil War. New York Times columnist Edward Rothstein’s reaction to the display was a mixture of suspicion and praise, underscoring the war’s importance to the continued American identity while simultaneously praising the exhibit for its “marginality” and depth in exploring underrepresented Civil War stories. Rothstein inhabits many of the ambivalent and perplexed attitudes that characterize the educated reader’s response to the war and his reflection is emblematic of the deliberation that exists as to how and why the war should be remembered. He symbolizes in many ways the attitudes this project has sought to consider while adding the concern that the war has become too “familiar.” He explains:

Of the Civil War, there is no end. So exhibitions commemorating the 150th anniversary of its beginning might seem superfluous. In recent decades hasn’t the Civil War been in almost continuous commemoration? It is now considered to be as central an event in the history of the United States as the Revolutionary War. Its key documents — all of them Lincoln’s, including the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Second Inaugural Address — have become as fundamental for understanding American ideals as anything written by the founding fathers.

And the effects of the devastation wrought by the war, the stultifying ways in which its noblest ambitions diffused into post-Reconstruction ambivalence, and the length of the shadows it still casts over the contemporary political scene — these are readily felt by anyone exploring the ever-growing literature. The risk now may be that we view the Civil War almost familiarly, as if its immensity were commonplace. (Rothstein)
The Civil War has become more than a conflict between armies, a site of trauma, or a decisive historical event. Through its recitation and commemoration, the war has become a cultural phenomenon used for national definition and value-based political designation. In reading across the vast collection of Civil War scholarship and cultural study, each text seems to begin with an echo of Rothstein’s assessment of an ever-growing body of literature. In adding to the interpretation of the war, his article is emblematic of the ambivalent and often confused way that mainstream culture relates to the history of the event.

And yet, Rothstein asserts, correctly, that “the risk now may be that we view the Civil War almost familiarly, as if its immensity were commonplace.” Some of this is the work of time fading the original object through repetition, the work of over-inundation of the type Rothstein explains, and some is a facet of the scale of globalization and war on an international stage.

It is not the number of dead then that should be overvalued, and it is not the sacrifice that should win the desire for study. That “there is no end” to the war, or to its “continuous commemoration,” must instead tie to the importance of reiterating the narrative with the same nationalist aims. And exhibitions such as “Discovering the Civil War” offer some interesting opportunities to color history in a particular way—by bringing the details and subjectivities of each side into full view, the similarities between the armies and their Americaness is fore-grounded while the reasons for their fighting ignored. Even the article’s title, “New Shades of the Blue and the Gray” suggests that there is an existing difference between the two sides—although they are
never discussed in any depth. The war has become a tired mainstream narrative and, in many representations, the inclusion of the anti-redemptive voice is slowly becoming a part of that narrative.

Anti-redemptive sources have not changed much in the 150 years the Civil War has been commemorated. While African Americans, former soldiers, and marginalized academic writing have achieved this voice, the vast majority of sources uphold the accepted narrative. Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering* is an exception to the limited audience of academic writing due to its broader success; however, the text ultimately adheres to the prescribed narrative and upholds American nationalism. Faust’s conclusion considers speeches by Frederick Douglass and Oliver Wendell Holmes that decry the dead as lost or, in Douglass’s case, when referring to slavery-supporting Confederate soldiers, much worse.

Her work is similar in many ways to the broader trend—by containing the anti-redemptive voice and using it as a counterpoint, it is possible that its meaning does not become scandalous and, instead of asking whether what Holmes and Douglass are saying is true, the reader instead sees them as fitting within a particular historical moment.

Some poets or artistic sources develop into part of the anti-redemptive expression, although they most often include a unifying or redemptive tone as well—as Michael Warner says in reviewing Melville’s anti-redemptive voice, the project is not sustainable in the current culture. Warner’s 2003 article “What Like a Bullet Can Undeceive” compares the redemptive language of post-September 11 poetry with
Herman Melville’s 1862 poem “Shiloh” in order to highlight the “paradox in its redemptive language” that echoes across analogous times of “violent crisis.” Warner’s article, which appeared in *Public Culture*, specifically focuses on a reading of Melville’s poem that “forswears any motivating structure for violence” in order to “say much about how violence comes to be scandalous, about the traps of redemption, and about the dilemmas of liberal culture.” For Warner, current liberal culture is facing a crisis in determining the legitimacy of the often unquestioned authority of state-delegated violence, a dilemma inextricably tied to the emergence of global terrorism (non-state delegated violence) and America’s post-September 11 War-on-Terror. He compares this period of crisis and dialogue about the legitimacy of any violence with the Civil War era and the subsequent national predicament with whether the national mobilization of violence—and resulting unprecedented bloodshed—could be condoned and celebrated when contrasted with the number of casualties.

Warner’s anti-redemptive reading of Melville is consistent with some recent critical scholarship on Civil War poetry, particularly that of Melville and Walt Whitman, and his consideration of an “embattled” perception of violence within a liberal culture is extremely useful in understanding the redemptive remembering of the Civil War as vital to current American nationalism.

Warner highlights the “complex structure of feeling” mobilized when Melville’s poem contrasts the mainstream thought of Civil War death as nationally delivering and the fact of corporeal loss as devastating—placing suspicion on the role of the state in these violent deaths, and opening a space for evaluating the complex relationship
between redemptive valuations and an understanding that the war was actually as opposed to \textit{abstractly} violent.

Interrogating Melville’s poem, Warner inhabits an anti-redemptive voice and exposes the possibility of a divergent ethics even at the time of the conflict, which included a “challenge to redemptive vision” that continues in current scholarship. In chronicling redemptive/anti-redemptive voices, Warner alludes to the dual history of the war that remains so present in American consciousness. This section closely examines Whitman’s “The Wound Dresser”\textsuperscript{29} while historicizing the unsustainable “delegitimizing perception of the war” in the face of the tremendous bloodshed and the tremendous ideological pressure propagating national unity.

In navigating the difference between a mainstream reading of death in the war and Warner’s move to disassociate death and violence from redemption, the simultaneous existence of a dissenting influence across time becomes visible. The voices of dissent and mourning during and after the war have been well chronicled, as has the intellectual turmoil present during the late 19th century; however, the overpowering legacy of the war is redemptive. Perhaps the anti-redemptive voice is simply not sustainable—and the greatest aspiration in touching the past may be in doing exactly that and nothing farther, investigating the passions and motivations, the personal subjectivities, without tying them to a greater narrative. Human remembering with no

\textsuperscript{29} Here Warner draws attention to Whitman’s poem, which “similarly repudiates the motivating frameworks of war” while, characteristic of Whitman, still managing to glorify the personal resonance and private commemoration of the conflict. The “divided subject” in the poem “creates an antiphony between public narratives of heroism and the private memory,” something we have also seen in “The Real War...”
greater desire than remembering. Faust's research demonstrates the vast ideology of redemptive sacrifice existing during the Civil War and, in stretching across time and summoning Lincoln, the modern moralist agrees that an end to slavery justifies every drop of blood drawn with the sword. From this view, the war's dead and wounded bought us a priceless freedom through their corporeal sacrifice.
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