Introduction: War in Culture

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> Now churning round that ship Achaeans and Trojans hacked each other at close range. No more war at a distance, waiting to take the long flights of spears and arrows—they stood there man-to-man and matched their fury, killing each other now with hatchets, battle-axes, big swords, two-edged spears, and many a blade, magnificent, heavy-hilted and thonged in black lay strewn on the ground—some dropped from hands, some fell as the fighters' shoulder-straps were cut—and the earth ran black with blood.
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> (Homer, *The Iliad*)

"The war, goose! The war's going to start any day, and you don't suppose any of us would stay in college with a war going on, do you?" (Mitchell 2). The lines are taken from the beginning of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 historical novel, *Gone With the Wind*, and are directed to the novel's heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, by one of a pair of men who express their eagerness to participate in what would become the American Civil War. Frustrated, Scarlett responds: "You know there isn't going to be any war … [i]t's all just talk … [t]here won't be any war, and I'm tired of hearing about it" (2). In an even more frustrated tone, the men reassure Scarlett that indeed there will be a war, and the Confederacy, a group of southern US states that seceded from the Union after the presidential inauguration of Abraham Lincoln in 1861, would proceed to defeat the 'Yankee North' and show the world the strength and courage of the Confederacy. Scarlett would have none of this; her response is clear and direct: "If you say 'war' just once more, I'll go in the house and shut the door. I've never gotten so tired of any one word in my life as 'war[.]'" (3).

Like Scarlett O'Hara, many over the centuries have voiced their disgust, displeasure, and abhorrence toward war through political treatises, philosophical tracts, various forms of cultural expression, and other means of articulation. Despite these anti-war utterances and discourses that have garnered the support of vast populations over the years, war continues to play a major part in the world's historical trajectory. Its continued relevance and pervasiveness, is testimony to the unfortunate reality that war is embedded in the social and cultural fabric of many human societies. The continued presence of war in the daily lives of many of the world's inhabitants is reason enough to warrant investigation into its causes, nature, and effects. From antiquity to the

present, commentators, philosophers, intellectuals, academics, soldiers, and civilians of every type have reflected on the phenomenon of war. In the same vein artists from many backgrounds and for various motives have sought to represent war through multifarious forms of cultural expression. Whether painter, poet, sculptor, vocalist, musician, filmmaker, or author, artists, perhaps even since prehistoric times, have dissected war and offered new ways of seeing it. This constant exercise of producing meaning from our lived experiences and finding new interpretations from history's twists and turns is fundamental to the practices of cultural expression.

Throughout history, war has played a conspicuous role in relations both within societies and between societies. War, quite straightforwardly, is "sustained, coordinated violence between political organizations" (Levy and Thompson 5). In is most basic form, war is an organized, collective, violent activity that requires a high degree of social organization. As Miquel A. Centeno and Elaine Enriquez have argued, war is "a social fact, and we must appreciate that war is responsible for some of our highest achievements and deepest held values as a society" (5). By linking it with values and normativity, Centeno and Enriquez acknowledge the dynamic and pervasive role war plays in the cultural domain.

Culture, among other things refers to "a particular way of life, whether of a period, a group, or humanity in general … [and] the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (Williams 90). Additionally, and equally important is Clifford Geertz's intervention where he states: "believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (5). For how long then, has war been a part of human culture? Clear identification of traces of warfare in prehistoric societies is a contentious and highly speculative undertaking. According to Philip de Souza, war was not a constant in human history; there were long stretches of history that were without wars (16). Compelling archaeological evidence of war dates back to some ten-thousand years ago in what today is Iraq. Brian Ferguson similarly argues that the archaeological record "contradicts the idea that war was always a feature of human existence; instead, the record shows that warfare is largely a development of the past 10,000 years." From that small beginning deep in our historical record the practice of war gradually became a part of the social structures of communities, city-states, and entire nations. In some cases wars were fought for survival, and in other circumstances were part of the desire for more land and resources at the expense of other communities. Violence and bellicosity, as Jeremy Black argues, became more tolerable in that cultural factors and given cultural contexts enabled the use of force and war-making capabilities to be applied and unleashed (35).

In spite of war's brutality, societies have utilized strategies and rationales to justify its application. A classic articulation of what really propels a society toward war was put forth in the early nineteenth century by the Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz. War, according to Clausewitz is essentially a political measure. As he states, "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on

with other means" (28). Seen in this way one could argue that war's socio-cultural institutionalization is calibrated toward the maintenance of security and the preservation of a given polity. In other words, war is a political necessity. Not all theorists agree with the Clausewitzian approach. The military historian Martin van Creveld, for example, quite brazenly argues against the notion of going to war for gain and instead argues that societies are simply fascinated by war. "Out of this fascination," Van Creveld suggests "grew an entire culture that surrounds it and in which, in fact, it is immersed" (xi). War in this sense, is desired for the sheer excitement and joy associated with it—not due to any political expedient. In time, he would suggest, the phenomenon of war becomes embedded in a culture as a vast cultural repertoire of practices is invested into by the society. Parades, ceremonies, monuments, songs, films, and literature, to name a few, build on and contribute to what van Creveld would identify as a society's fascination with war, and hence, a culture of war.

For observers who may find Clausewitz's dictum dated and van Creveld's premise too celebratory, there is an interesting position taken by Michel Foucault. In *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault inverts Clausewitz's 'war is politics by other means' to "politics is the continuation of war by other means" (15). It is a lens through which to see war and compels one to consider the deployment of force beyond the battlefield context and into the apparatuses of state power and authority. As Foucault suggests, the role of "political power is perpetually to use a silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals" (16). In essence, Foucault's utterances on this topic address policies of securitization for domestic purposes, and its manifestations in creating cultures of fear. All too often, these discourses of fear go hand in hand with a society's 'need' to identify enemies and exploit opportunities for the application of force.

Collectively, these theorists provide various avenues of understanding war's dynamics and manifold implications for individuals and societies. They also provide multiple lenses for one to reflect on the cultural 'uses' of war. This issue sets out to explore this meeting between war and culture and consider the complex 'webs of meaning' and representations of war constructed in an array of texts that have striven to delineate an individual artist's relationship with war. Exactly, how have these artists made sense of it? Do they merely justify war, or do they passionately reject it, countering dominant readings of war and arguing for alternative understandings as a means of redefining a culture's thinking about the war experience? Or, is a text's rendering of war riddled with ambiguity and intentionally void of clarity, merely reflecting war's complexity?

In this volume, the authors of the articles that follow have engaged with an array of texts that explore the important nexus between war and culture. The contributions serve to provide a better understanding about how responses to war in all its forms, are a product of a specific time, place, and socio-cultural milieu, and it is on the basis of this latter point the articles have been grouped. In doing so, they also expand our notion of war as a phenomenon that goes beyond military conflict, including also assault of the environment as well as the individual's and communities' struggles with the social order.

We start the collection with contributions that look at war within the context of immigrant experience.

Anastasia Stefanidou in **'**(Un)Doing the Anatolian Smile: War and Redemption in Elia Kazan's Fiction' focuses on the director's three novels, *America-America, The Anatolian* and *Beyond the Aegean,* interpreting in these works, the protagonist Stavros Topouzoglou's wars both against his Anatolian culture and his adopted homeland, the USA. For Stavros, Stefanidou argues, the tragedy of not having a home at the place of his birth brought on by the war, and then at his place of immigration; war outside and inside oneself, is never-ending. Stavros's struggles both against his Anatolian identity shaped by traditional values as well as the individualist and capitalist American one, condemns him to a life of being in-between, where one never feels at home wherever one is, and the search for harmony and integrity are in vain, as every moment of happiness is made possible by compromise and complicity. Stavros is always an outsider, always at war.

In 'Waging War on Nature: Ecospaces, Ethnoecologies and Chicana/o Writings,' Sophia Emmanouilidou looks at a different kind of war; that against the environment and culture through a reading of the Chicano/a canon. The author traces the connections between Chicano social movements and the assaults against the environment by capitalism's relentless search for profits. She unearths in the different writings a strong perception of environmental deprivation as simultaneously cultural degradation; the idea that the destruction of the *topos* goes hand in hand with the destruction of different forms of life. Wars waged against the environment, is at the same time wars that create poverty and inequality. So, Emmanouilidou, concludes, eco-awareness is an essential part of the struggles for equality and democracy, as the immigrant Chicano experience testifies.

The legacy of the American Civil War (1861-65) was an all-embracing one, its cultural reverberations still continuing to our times. Paula Barba Guerrero takes us to the American Civil War in 'Reformulating Freedom: Slavery, Alienation and Ambivalence in Suzan-Lori Parks' *Father Comes from the Wars (Parts 1,2 &3.)* In this trilogy, Parks narrates the story of Hero, the black slave, who takes the decision to join the Confederate armies alongside his owner, in order to earn his freedom. Guerrero argues that while using and challenging at the same time, the Homeric epic tradition, Parks provides us with a rich canvas of history, in which the complex stories of identities against the backdrop of the war and its aftermath within the African American community are told. Guerrero unearths both in the story and the mode in which it is told, wars against the white supremacist order, consolidated after the Civil War and against the patriarchal order that cuts across racial lines. The author observes in Parks' writing a struggle to decolonize the Eurocentric modes of story-telling, hence of historiography.

The study of colonialism is long and varied. From Guerrero's analysis of Parks' work on one of its most significant legacies, slavery and its aftermath, we move to a contribution that focuses on a region and country that experienced a different mode of colonization.
The nature of the relation of Ireland to England, once the center of an empire, is still controversial. While whether Ireland was a colony or not may be a matter of disagreements, less

debated is the understanding that it was in the periphery of the empire. The complexity of this relation as expressed in media is studied in the next contribution to the volume in the context of a particular conflict**.** In 'Ireland and the First Media War: Digestible, Cultural Engagements of the Crimean War 1854-56' Paul Huddie studies the expressions of the eponymous war through the press and journals, as well as poems and ballads. He argues that although the cultural repercussions of the war were felt through the United Kingdom, the cultural historiography of the Crimean War was Anglo- (English-, in fact, London-) centric. Huddie analyzes the ambivalent response of Ireland ranging from the imperial to the national, which ambivalence the author finds in the broader legacies of the war including war memorialization.

The American War in Vietnam is possibly still the greatest influence in American cultural productions. The next two articles take up cultural works that deal with this war. In '"Bringing the War Home": the Role of the Family in the Home Front During the American War in Vietnam,' Cristina Alsina Rísquez offers us an analysis of two works, *In Country* and *Machine Dreams* by Bobbie Ann Mason and Jayne Anne Phillips. Rísquez's detailed reading of these books demonstrates how the idealized nuclear family nurtured the generation that would be ready to go to war. It was the nuclear family, however, that could not accommodate the returning veterans from the imperialist war that was lost. The masculinities shaped into agents of war came back to a home that was no longer there, to a domestic setting in which a new war started.

Tatiana Prorokova takes up a complementary theme in 'Human Duality, Moral Transformation, and the Vietnam War in *Apocalypse Now* and *Full Metal Jacket*' two of the most iconic films about the war. The author discusses in detail the profound transformations the protagonists go through during this conflict. This transformation of masculinity, depicted powerfully in both films, entails not only physical, but more significantly, psychological, moral and ethical changes, and for the author, constitutes the real horror of war. The production of masculinity is constant, starting with the nuclear family, and carrying on with the conflict. Those who are able to meet the challenge will continue their 'service' to the empire; others, who fail to become 'real men' face other options, including suicide; but in either case, the substance of 'humanity' is profoundly altered and people are broken.

Katalina Kopka brings us to a much more recent war in her contribution 'Cultural Hauntings: Narrating Trauma in Contemporary Films about the Iraq War.' The author focuses her discussion on Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker*, and the Iraqi director Mohamed Al-Daradji's *Son of Babylon*. Drawing from Derrida's concept of 'hauntology,' she studies the depiction of trauma in these films. She argues that, in both these works, trauma is a reflection of a collective reality; it is not merely a psychological concept that is apolitical, but a symptom of broader social histories of oppression, violence and genocide. As argued in the previous contribution, for Kopka too, the ethical dimensions of the traumas of conflict, through the medium of repetition and compulsion, bring us face to face with the brutal reality of the continuation of war, even after the conflict.

With Umberto Rossi's 'Glimpses of the Unthinkable: Anamorphic Images of World War III in Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon, and J.G. Ballard' we move to the realm of the war that never happened. Rossi's interprets *Dr Bloodmoney, Gravity's Rainbow and The Terminal Beach*,

as unconventional nuclear war narratives, very much products of the Cold War, when nuclear warfare seemed imminent. The author argues that while the novels can be read as the depiction of the state of mind of their creators, we could also think of them as expressions of the collective fears and anxieties of the time, hence that of a collective psyche.

The topic of a society's psychological state is addressed in Ruth Parkin-Gounelas' review of Michal Shapira's book *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain.* In her book, Shapira examines the central role of psychoanalysis in the strategies of state institutions in Britain to enable citizens to cope with the violence and oppression following World War II. Parkin-Gounelas, in her review, points out the continued relevance of understanding human behavior and mental processes within the contemporary context of hyper-individualism and global inequalities, as well as reminding readers of the irrational tendencies and practices of nation-states in the running of society.

War is certainly no stranger to the realm of the irrational. Many, if not all of the articles in this collection, engage with texts that reflect both on the contexts and the brutalities of war as well as its generational traumatic impacts on the individual and the collective. In his 1957 film, *Paths of Glory*, Stanley Kubrick masterfully explores such themes set in the backdrop of the First World War. Incompetent commanders, injudicious military tactics, the endless slaughter of soldiers, and a military leadership blindly dedicated to discipline and order are some of the festering dilemmas addressed in the film. In its final scene, Kubrick skillfully captures the contagious harm war inflicts on those who partake in it. French soldiers, enjoying some rare moments away from the front, are drinking in a tavern. The proprietor of the tavern brings onto the stage a young German woman who is ridiculed by the proprietor and the soldiers. As she stands alone and begins singing the song "A Faithful Hussar" in German, the boisterous audience aggressively jeers and taunts her, drowning out her voice. Tears run down her face, but she continues singing. Gradually the raucous subsides and the soldiers at first fall silent, and then begin humming along with her. Although they do not understand the song's lyrics, which ironically are about a soldier who had left a war front to see his dying girlfriend, most of the soldiers are tearful. The inhumanity they had expressed just moments before is replaced with introspection. And the callousness that they had carried into that tavern and exhibited toward the woman dissipates. The song's melody and their respite from the torments of war, though brief, afforded them the opportunity to emotionally reconnect with their lives outside of the war and beyond the battlefields. Their commander, who watched the entire scene from the street outside of the tavern, is heartened by what he had just witnessed. His men, perhaps, had not entirely forfeited their sense of humanity; the war had yet to fully envelop them. But as their commanding officer knew, soon they would be back at the front where new battles were to be fought, and the killing resumed. Just as Homer had described the battles between ancient Greeks and Trojans over two and a half thousand years earlier, the rituals of killing, dying, and trauma would continue unabatedly at the frontlines of World War I. Soon, echoing Homer, the earth would run black with blood.

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