

Ad bellum purificandum, or, Giving Peace a (Fighting) Chance in American Studies

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Published by Alfred Knopf in September 2000, Michael Bellesiles's *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* was immediately enthusiastically endorsed by the likes of Stewart Udall, Michael Kammen, Robert Dykstra, and other well-known scholars.¹ As Garry Wills put it in his review in *The New York Times*, Bellesiles's book dispelled "the darkness that covered the gun's early history in America" by providing overwhelming evidence that the American gun culture was created during the Civil War era, and that in the eighteenth century guns were much less significant. "Guns are [so] central to the identity of Americans, to their self-perception as a rugged and violent people, as well as to their representation of others," Bellesiles wrote in his introduction, "that the nation's history has been meticulously reconstructed to promote the necessity of a heavily armed American public. . . . [W]hat if we discovered that early American men did not have that special bond with their guns?" (9). Judging by the tempest that followed, and to some extent even preceded, the book's publication, if it could indeed be proven beyond any shadow of doubt that—as Bellesiles intended to show—"America's gun culture is an invented tradition" (13), that would make no small difference to how many Americans perceive themselves. Bellesiles seems to have had a point when he closes his introduction by noting that "there exists a fear of confronting the specifics of these cultural origins, for what has been made can be unmade" (15). In other words, Bellesiles realized that since *today* the gun is "the axial

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symbol of American culture, absolutely integral to the nation's self-image and looming even larger in plans for its future development," by showing that "it was not always that way" his research might stimulate an unmaking and remaking of American culture along less gun-owning lines (15)—an intellectual and political project that would obviously not go unchallenged.

I have been using the conditional because, as is well known, *Arming America* stands today in the eyes of most readers as an utterly disgraced book. Prestigious historians like Garry Wills and Edmund Morgan, after initially lavishing it with praise, have more or less explicitly retracted their earlier endorsements. In December 2002, Columbia University voted to rescind the Bancroft prize awarded to *Arming America* a year before. Finally, also at the end of 2002 and following the report of the review board appointed to investigate the soundness and honesty of his research, Michael Bellesiles resigned from Emory University.² A number of scholars discovered serious discrepancies between Bellesiles's sources and their use or reproduction in the book. In particular, two lengthy reviews appearing in *The William and Mary Law Review* (by James Lindgren and Justin Heather) and the *Yale Law Journal* (by Lindgren alone) raised serious objections regarding the alleged scarcity of guns in the probate records Bellesiles claimed to have examined and which, at least in some cases, appeared to be nonexistent. Bellesiles admitted that he may have made mistakes in handling some of his data, yet one academic review after another called into question every single claim on which Bellesiles's thesis rested—his readings of gun censuses, militia muster records, and homicide rates. Without going into the details of what has become known as "the Bellesiles scandal," it will suffice to recall the conclusions reached by the review board appointed by Emory to investigate the case. Asked whether Bellesiles had engaged in "intentional fabrication or falsification of research data," the board—while "seriously troubled by [his] scholarly conduct," and believing that Bellesiles's research in probate records was "unprofessional and misleading" as well as "superficial and thesis-driven," and furthermore that his explanations of errors "raise doubts about his veracity"—found it impossible to state conclusively that Bellesiles had fabricated or falsified his evidence. In other words, while firm in condemning his "sloppy" scholarship, the review board had to suspend its judgment regarding the question of Bellesiles's good faith.³

Some believe that, no matter what his mistakes may have been, Bellesiles was subjected to an unusual amount of criticism because his book was a de facto attack against the pro-gun lobby.⁴ Being by nature skeptical about conspiracy theories, I cannot believe that the NRA may have enlisted a significant number of

professional historians to find at all costs some flaws in *Arming America*. On the other hand, considering the overall tone of so many of the nonacademic critiques of Bellesiles's book, I have no difficulty believing that he may have indeed received insulting e-mails and threats of one sort or another. What I find most interesting in the Bellesiles story is less the academic scandal per se than the heated debate surrounding it. In particular, I want to call attention to the angry reactions drawn by his thesis on the historical rather than mythical status of what is evidently perceived as a key component of the US national character.

Even before experts called into question Bellesiles's findings, *Arming America* was strongly criticized in newspapers, magazines, and on the Web as a "foolish" attack on what Charlton Heston—at the time president of the NRA—described as a "useful myth" of America's past.⁵ Bellesiles was accused in several reviews of pursuing a "liberal-leftist" political agenda: of wanting, that is, to challenge from a historical perspective the notion that gun owning was understood as an individual right in the Second Amendment. Most of this early criticism did come, as Alexander Cockburn has noted, from "NRA types . . . [and therefore] their often cogent demolitions were initially discounted as sore-loser barrages from the rednecks." Once the academics came on the scene, they by and large decided to stick to the more or less objective flaws in Bellesiles's scholarship, declining to take issue with the alleged politics of the book. Yet the relish with which many conservative commentators welcomed the scholarly demolition of Bellesiles's thesis is worth a few considerations. I obviously have no trouble understanding why columnists for *Guns and Ammo* or the *National Review* should rejoice at seeing the fall from grace of a man who, in the original introduction of his book, had dared criticize the NRA's interpretation of the Second Amendment. I can also understand why the right wing would celebrate that a book written by a "liberal" academic ended up being exposed as fraudulent. Indeed, it was perhaps inevitable that Bellesiles would end up being characterized by some as the prototypical "postmodernist" historian, who has no respect for facts and tries to garner academic laurels by simply spinning a politically correct yarn.⁶

Yet there is still something somewhat puzzling about the Bellesiles affair. None of the conservative commentators I read seem to have even remotely wished that Bellesiles's thesis were at least partly true. No one, in other words, praised *Arming America* for correcting what is after all a rather *negative* image of the US as one of the most violent and heavily armed countries in the world, by suggesting that originally Americans were not that much in love with firearms and had only later turned into a more gun-loving

people. This may have had much to do with the fact that, as Corey Robin has carefully documented, “Throughout the 1990s, the lead item of intellectual complaint, across the political spectrum, was that the United States was insufficiently civic-minded or martial, its leaders and citizens too distracted by prosperity and affluence to take care of its inherited institutions, common concerns, and worldwide defense” (282). At a time when the old Cold War scenario was disintegrating, Bill Clinton’s dream of free-market globalization was attacked by conservatives for its refusal “to embrace the murky world of power and violent conflict, of tragedy and rupture,” and “pagan courage and an almost barbaric *virtù*” were promoted “over the more prosaic goods of peace and prosperity” (Robin 283), it is perhaps only natural that Bellesiles’s contention that early America was relatively violence-free would meet with more than a sneer.⁷ A typical review appearing on the BrothersJudd website, for example, chides Bellesiles because in his book, “rather than rapacious conquerors and brutes, the early Americans seem downright pastoral.” I don’t know to what extent my views on this matter may be influenced by my position as a scholar who looks at American culture from the outside, but at first I was so naïve to think that the picture of a kinder, gentler early America should have appealed not only to liberals in favor of tighter gun control, but also to at least some conservative and patriotic US citizens who may resent being often portrayed as the descendants of “rapacious conquerors and brutes.” In fact, in the same review where this phrase is used, the author—while all along attacking Bellesiles as an example of how “the modern academy has been thoroughly corrupted by Leftist ideology”—cannot fail to notice that, were Bellesiles’s thesis on a relatively violence-free early America true, it would deny “most of the crimes that the Left has laid at our collective doorstep over the years.”⁸

Here I think the reviewer raises an important, albeit contradictory, point. Aren’t many contemporary scholars and critics accused of being “anti-American” when they focus on the unpleasant traits of US history or society, of indeed “hating” their object of study so much that the field should be renamed “Anti-American studies”?⁹ This is the case inside as well as outside the US. In Italy, for example, especially since 9/11, critics of US foreign policy are systematically accused of being obsessed with the aggressive, warlike legacy of American history. The self-appointed guardians of what I, along with my colleague Alessandro Portelli, have elsewhere described as “Mythic Philoamericanism,” are always ready to denounce whoever calls too much attention to the US as a violent or gun-loving country as being “anti-American.” Yet, rather than appreciating at least Bellesiles’s *intentions*, conservative reviewers usually seemed outright offended by the simple

suggestion that early Americans may not have been armed to their teeth. Their attacks on *Arming America* were of a piece with a wider conservative polemic against those US citizens “too consumed with their own comfort and pleasure to lend a hand—or shoulder a gun—to make the world a safer place” (Robin 282).

However, I believe that the point duly noted by the BrothersJudd reviewer still holds. Had it been widely accepted, Bellesiles’s thesis might have caused some problems not only for the gun-loving front, but for several left-leaning historians and cultural critics as well. It is worth remembering, for example, that in his introductory pages Bellesiles does not take issue only with the views of the NRA, but also refers to Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (1973) as an example of what he considers a common misrepresentation of early American history and culture. In fact, Bellesiles clearly implies that studies like Slotkin’s encourage the notion that “we have always been killers.” According to Bellesiles, by insisting that from a “Hobbesian heritage of each against all emerged the modern acceptance of widespread violence,” Slotkin’s approach ends up supporting the views of those who think that “little if anything, can be done to alter America’s gun culture” (5). Perhaps Bellesiles’s criticism of Slotkin is not altogether fair. However, considering that—as Myra Jehlen argued in a paper delivered at the Dartmouth Futures of American Studies Institute in June 2000—*Regeneration through Violence* is the book that rewrote the entire tradition of American studies for a new post-Vietnam generation of scholars, it may be worth wondering whether, at least on this particular point Bellesiles, could be partly right.¹⁰ Regardless of the more or less serious pitfalls of *Arming America*, the resentful response with which the book met seems to suggest that the image of a gun-loving, and ultimately rugged, violent America is as important to the Right as it is to the Left. I know, of course, that such an image means something totally different depending on the ideological perspective from which one looks at it. This is why, perhaps, a quintessential American genre like the Western has been studied with equal passion by conservatives and liberals alike. To the former it is the precious record of the heroic and epic struggle of the American people to turn the wilderness into a New World garden; to the latter the Western offers a wonderful display of the workings of American ideology. In both cases, however, the mythology of the frontier, with its legacy of mythicized violence, is seen as standing at the center of US culture.

As I hope should be clear, the point I am trying to make is not that if early America was indeed as much in love with guns and as violent a world as the post-Civil War US, we should simply choose to

believe in Bellesiles's fiction because at least it offers us the glimpse of an inspirational, peaceful golden age to which one day we may be able to return. We cannot, that is, make up a nonviolent America just because it may be politically convenient to do so. What we can and should do, however, is give much more visibility to the nonviolent and nonconformist side of American history and culture than many literary and cultural critics have done of late. Let me dwell just one more time on the Bellesiles story. In his damning review of the book, Clayton Cramer pokes fun at Bellesiles because "he would have us believe that by the 1830s, a pacifist movement, fiercely hostile not only to gun ownership, but also to a military and hunting of any form, was becoming a major influence on American society." To be fair to Bellesiles, this is not exactly what he argues. He does not say that in antebellum America pacifism was a dominant ideology, though he insists that there were both individuals and groups intent on criticizing the institution of war and calling for a politics of nonviolence. This is a point that few scholars would dispute. We usually think of nonviolence as a philosophy first conceived by Gandhi and Tolstoy, and later imported into the US by Martin Luther King, Jr. However, according to Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd, the editors of *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (1996), there is "a distinctive [American] tradition of nonviolence [that] runs back to the British colonies in the seventeenth century. Thoreau's influence on Gandhi is well-known. Tolstoy, too, was indebted to North American predecessors. In 'A Message to the American People,' written in 1901, Tolstoy stated that 'Garrison, Parker, Emerson, Ballou, and Thoreau . . . specially influenced me'" (xi).¹¹

Obviously to argue that there is in the US an important antiwar intellectual and political tradition grounded in Christian pacifism, and that this tradition reached a marked visibility in the 1830s and 1840s, is by no means to deny the reality of a "gunfighter nation," with its legacy of slavery, racism, and imperialism. Yet, just as no one would dream of writing the history of the Vietnam years and leave the antiwar movement out of the picture, one should also not forget that the ideal of nonviolence and a deep dislike for war have been significant, albeit not dominant, features of US culture since at least the late eighteenth century. Some may think that when arguing that "the United States has more often been teacher than student in the history of the nonviolent idea" (xii), Lynd and Lynd may be overstating their case. However, in light of what I have learned from the Bellesiles affair, I would submit that, especially in the post-9/11 climate, the reclaiming of a nonviolent, antiwar US tradition would be a much more culturally and politically effective weapon than yet another "black book" on the crimes of American domestic and foreign policies from the Pequot War

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onwards. Despite all the complaints against the practitioners of “anti-American studies” for focusing on US imperialism, slavery, genocidal policies against the Indians, and so forth, it is quite clear that many of those who stand behind George W. Bush’s war on terrorism prefer to think of their forefathers as “rapacious conquerors and brutes” rather than people who, among other things, wondered whether a key feature of a genuine *New World* should be the abolition of war. At the end of the eighteenth century, when the United States were born, “[p]rinces, armies, and perpetual war defined Europe. The *absence* of these things was to provide a point of departure for defining America” (Bacevich 32–33).¹²

Rather than simply forgetting what Michel Foucault and neo-Marxism have taught us concerning the ways in which power operates to preempt oppositional stances, or ignoring the clever deconstruction of the “subversion hypothesis” performed by D. A. Miller and so many New Historicists (Miller xi), or the ways in which, as Sacvan Bercovitch has insisted, “the myth of America” operates even in what strive to be counter-hegemonic practices (39), a necessary skepticism regarding the limitations, contradictions, and blind spots of any intellectual or political movement wishing to challenge the status quo, especially on a fundamental issue like the use of state violence, should never obscure the rich, and by no means naïve, tradition of antiwar thinking visible in many strains of US culture. So, while I am not implying even for a moment that we should stop reading Richard Slotkin’s trilogy on the myth of the frontier, I would welcome a greater familiarity with such works as Peter Brock’s *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (1968), a volume that, despite leaving out almost 100 years of US history, runs to nearly 1000 pages.¹³ At the same time I will be the first to admit that Brock’s book is probably not even half as exciting a read as *Regeneration through Violence* or *Gunfighter Nation*. All of us are more likely to find discussions of the role of violence in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), or interpretations of *The Wild Bunch* (1969) as an allegory of US Third-World interventionism, more captivating than the perusal of Quaker journals or of the writings of Elihu Burritt, one of the few abolitionists who opposed the Civil War on pacifist grounds.

The sad fact is that, as Vanda Perretta has eloquently argued, notwithstanding the central place usually assigned to the idea of peace in both the individual and the collective consciousness, its “aesthetic appeal” is a very limited one. In comparison to the soldier or the fighter, the man or the woman of peace usually appears to be dull and living in a sort of fantasy world. Like Arundhati Roy, we may be sincerely outraged to hear President

Bush say that “We’re a peaceful nation” while announcing the air strikes against Afghanistan, but we should also be honest enough to acknowledge that, although we claim to love peace, we continue to be fascinated by its opposite. To paraphrase Mark Twain, we’d like to be in the Heaven of peace for its moral climate, but when it comes to reading and writing we prefer to keep company in the Hell of war and violence.¹⁴ However, although there is certainly no *easy* way out of this conundrum, I do believe there are *complex* exit strategies that are worth pursuing and that may help us disclose an antiwar discourse that is neither dull nor disembodied but, on the contrary, both intellectually and aesthetically stimulating.

1. Disarming America, “Arming” Peace

The Arundhati Roy article I referred to above is entitled “War is Peace,” a healthy reminder that these two apparently irreconcilable signifiers can actually very often collapse into one deadly signified. This sort of doublespeak is of course nothing new. From the *si vis pacem para bellum* of my own rapacious Roman forefathers to Foucault’s clever inversion of Von Clausewitz’s view on the relation of politics to war, peace has been often understood as the continuation of war by other means.¹⁵ The discourse of war and peace would therefore appear as an air-tight system, an ideological control mechanism even more powerful than Bercovitch’s jeremiad given that, as any military strategist would tell you, the end of war *is* peace. To the extent that they partake in the discourse of war, neither politics, literature, nor philosophy seem capable of escaping its grip. To repeat a key passage in Jacques Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics,” “If, as Levinas says, only discourse (and not intuitive contact) is righteous, and if, moreover, all discourse essentially retains within it space and the Same—does this not mean that discourse is originally violent? And that the philosophical logos, the only one in which peace may be declared, is inhabited by war? The distinction between discourse and violence always will be an inaccessible horizon. Nonviolence would be the telos, and not the essence of discourse” (116). What I would like to suggest in the remainder of this essay is that, moving from a premise nearly identical to Derrida’s, an important American tradition running from Ralph Waldo Emerson to William James, Jane Addams, Richard Gregg, Kenneth Burke, and beyond, has precisely struggled to deconstruct the peace-war opposition knowing full well that the ideal of nonviolence can, and indeed *must be* spelled out in a rhetoric of war.¹⁶ By repeating the rhetorical and political gesture of Jean Paul’s 1809 *Declaration of War on War* and anticipating Ernst

Friedrich's 1924 cry, *Krieg dem Kriege!*, these thinkers wage an intellectual war against war, thereby paving the way for a nonviolent, yet militant and uncompromising, opposition to the cant of militarism and nationalism that has been an important feature of twentieth-century American political movements.¹⁷

As most readers would have recognized, the title of this article replicates the epigraph Kenneth Burke chose for his *A Grammar of Motives* (1945). Since I have already dealt elsewhere with his enlightening ruminations on the dialectic of war and peace, here I will only offer a brief summary of the main features of Burke's thesis.¹⁸ The book's motto registers its author's desire to celebrate socio-political conflict by "purifying" it of its potentially destructive nature and "channeling" it along less warlike lines. From this point of view *A Grammar* is the logical continuation of an idea Burke had already clearly expressed in *Attitudes Towards History*, where the entry "Control" in his "Dictionary of Pivotal Terms" reads as follows:

To control a bad situation, you seek either to eradicate the evil or to channelize the evil. Elimination vs. the "lightning rod principle," whereby one protects against lightning not by outlawing lightning but by drawing it into a channel where it does no damage.... When liberals began to think, not of eliminating war, but of finding "the moral equivalent for war," liberalism was nearing the state of maturity. (236)

In developing this idea in his work of the 1940s and 1950s, Burke explored at some length the "war is peace" paradox. Burke believed that while we should always call attention to the rhetorical strategies deployed by war in order to masquerade itself as a form of peace, the deconstruction—or, as Burke called it, the "debunking"—of militaristic thought was not enough. What we should do, instead, is "treat 'war' as a 'special case of peace'—not as a primary motive in itself, not as essentially real, but purely as a derivative condition, a perversion" (*Rhetoric* 20). War, in Burke's eyes, should be understood as "[the] ultimate disease of cooperation," as "a disease or perversion of communion." Thus, while on the one hand we need never deny what he calls "the tyrannous ubiquity in human relations" of strife and enmity, we must also resist the temptation to make of war our "representative anecdote" (22). "For," as Burke argues, "if we took war as our anecdote, then in obeying the genius of this anecdote and shaping an idiom accordingly, we should be proclaiming war as the essence of human relations" (*Grammar* 329).

While, as we have just seen, Burke acknowledges his debt to William James's essay on "the moral equivalent of war," here I

would like to suggest that the intellectual and moral fountainhead not only of both Burke's and James's thinking but, more generally, of a US tradition of militant antiwar thinking is in fact Ralph Waldo Emerson. This claim will probably strike some as surprising. With a few exceptions, Emerson has lately been portrayed either as Richard Poirier's "philosopher of language," for whom "the revolution worth pursuing is the continuous act of turning and overturning the page" (170), or as an unwitting spokesman for westward expansionism, laissez-faire capitalism, corporate individualism, and so forth.¹⁹ Standing somewhat astride both the ahistorical, apolitical Emerson of the former tradition, and the politically incorrect Emerson of the latter one, one finds the Nietzschean, and perhaps even Foucaultian, Emerson of George Stack, Michael Lopez, and others.²⁰ All these different versions of Emerson have some merit, yet the Emerson that is of most interest to me here is the "philosopher of power" discussed at length in Lopez's *Emerson and Power: Creative Antagonism in the Nineteenth Century* (1996). In particular, I would like to call attention to Lopez's brilliant discussion, in chapter five of his book, of Emerson's rhetoric of war.²¹ Lopez does a wonderful job at pointing out the nearly ubiquitous presence of war as a master trope in Emerson's language. Lopez does note that "*Real* war was for Emerson, in principle at least, a violation of the common soul of all men" (192). Yet, while he leaves open the question of whether Emerson's symbolic language may, or may not, "*sanction* militarism" (203), the bulk of Lopez's investigation suggests that Emerson fully, if perhaps unwittingly, participated in the Romantic "poeticizing of war" (193) that eventually led to the unspeakable disasters of two world wars.

Much as I admire Lopez's clever exploration of Emerson's rhetoric, it seems to me that—to resort for a moment to a Burkean terminology—he ends up treating war as Emerson's "representative anecdote," thereby never giving much credit to what I believe is his attempt to deploy war metaphors *against* the institution and the practice of war. Lopez, for example, does not mention that one of Emerson's most important early statements on the subject—the 1838 essay "War"—was delivered as an address sponsored by the American Peace Society. Indeed, some insights of Emerson's essay are as interesting and valuable today as they were nearly 200 years ago. It is perhaps no accident that Howard Zinn has chosen to include an excerpt of Emerson's address in his recent collection *The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates of Peace* (2002) (8–14), and that a contemporary pacifist thinker like Michael Nagler continues to draw on it today in his "search for a nonviolent future."²² What makes this essay so important is, first of all,

Emerson's warning that "along the passive side of the friend of peace" there is "his activity" (168). Peace is not synonymous with inaction. On the contrary, peace can be achieved only through a nonmilitary militancy. As Emerson put it in a passage with which William James was likely to have been familiar, "the peace principle . . . can never be defended, it can never be executed, by cowards. Everything great must be done in the spirit of greatness. The manhood that has been in war must be transferred to the cause of peace, before war can lose its charm, and peace be venerable to men" (171).²³ By "manhood" here, as often elsewhere, Emerson means "self-dependence," which he believes is what we really admire in the Greek and Roman heroes. Yet, if "self-subsistency is the charm of war," the highest form of self-subsistency is the one that can do without all military trappings—"without any flourish of trumpets, titles of lordships or train of guards" (173).

The hortatory conclusion of Emerson's address deserves to be remembered as the forerunner of a modern tradition of militant pacifism culminating in Gandhi and King, and still alive in the contemporary global antiwar movement:

The cause of peace is not the cause of cowardice. If peace is to be defended or preserved for the safety of the luxurious and the timid, it is a sham, and the peace will be base. War is better, and the peace will be broken. If peace is to be maintained, it must be by brave men, who have come up to the same height as the hero, namely, they will carry their life in their hand, and stake it at any instant for their principle, but who have gone one step beyond the hero, and will not seek another man's life; men who have, by their intellectual insight or else by their moral elevation, attained such a perception of their own intrinsic worth that they do not think property or their own body a sufficient good to be saved by such dereliction of principle as treating a man like a sheep. (174)²⁴

Here Emerson sketches a redefinition of heroism that will continue to preoccupy him in many of his writings. For example, there can be no question that in his essay "Heroism," "the charm of war" is operative in almost every sentence, beginning with the epigraph from Mohammed which, especially today, may sound particularly troubling: "Paradise is under the shadow of swords." Read out of context, the quotation would seem to strengthen the perverse alliance between peace and war, the notion that the bliss of paradise and the hell of battle are but two sides of the same coin. Yet if Emerson appears fascinated by the concept of holy war, or, as I think is the case, by the virtual identity of religion and war, the

essay as a whole shows that Emerson's *jihad* is nothing but the "warlike attitude" of the soul opposing "external evil" (374). I would argue that, in Jamesian fashion, Emerson calls attention to "the attractiveness of war" mainly to suggest how a vulgar and infantile military heroism must be superseded by true heroism, a "military attitude of the soul." "Self-trust is the essence of heroism," Emerson proceeds. "It is the state of the soul at war" (374, 375). For Emerson peace is inextricably intertwined with war, yet the war he speaks of is essentially a metaphor for the ongoing spiritual and political struggle engaged by the nonconformist self against society, as we can also gather from "Self-reliance," where he urges his readers to "enter into the state of war" if they hold dear their intellectual independence (273). Indeed, an appeal to this kind of intellectual and moral warfare will be at the core of Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849), an essay that has been described as the greatest theoretical contribution the US has made to the cause of world peace.²⁵

The resemblances between the position advocated by Emerson in these early essays and the Gandhian concept of non-violent civil resistance are striking. Emerson makes a distinction between a "base" form of pacifism that borders on cowardice and a truly "heroic" nonviolence that can be practiced only by those courageous enough "to carry their life in their hand." Similarly, Gandhi draws a clear distinction between the "non-violence of the weak"—the nonviolence of those who are afraid to be violent—and "the active non-violent resistance of the strong"—the behavior of those who have come to understand that "non-violence is the mightiest force in the world" (I, 167). This explains why, like Emerson, Gandhi was attracted to the symbolic dimension of military bravery (as displayed, for example, in the *Mahabharata*) and why, also like Emerson, he believed that "cowardice is impotence worse than violence" (II, 148).²⁶ As H.J.N. Horsburgh has noted, for Gandhi "the violence which springs from courage is morally superior to the non-violence that is an expression of cowardice" (64). Or, in Gandhi's own words, "My nonviolence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving dear ones unprotected. *Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice.* I can no more preach nonviolence to a coward than I can tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes. Nonviolence is the summit of bravery" (qtd in Borman 252–53). For both Emerson and Gandhi the worst temptation is, finally, not violence, but cowardice. Hence the ambivalent attraction both felt for war not only as a "poetic" fact, but as a display of actual bravery.

Gandhi may have been more outspoken than Emerson in defining war as a form of "unmitigable" evil, yet it is quite striking

to note how Emersonian he was in praising the “good,” admirable qualities of war: “War is unmitigated evil. But it certainly does one good thing, it drives away fear and brings bravery to the surface” (qtd in Borman 189). Emerson’s writings often call attention to the “charm of war.” The fact that when he published his address to the Peace Society he chose to change its original title (“Peace”), to its current one (“War”), seems to be an indication of how in his mind the struggle for peace had to come to terms with both the social functions and the psychological–aesthetic appeal of the martial spirit. Similarly, Gandhi noted that “if war had no redeeming feature, no courage and heroism behind it, it would be a despicable thing, and would not need speeches to destroy it” (qtd in Borman 189). Gandhi, in other words, fully shares Emerson’s desire to transfer to the cause of peace “the manhood that has been in war.”²⁷ Like William James, Gandhi too is searching for a “moral equivalent of war,” though Gandhi’s substitute for war is probably closer to Emerson’s formulation than it is to James’s. If, as Horsburgh and others have suggested, *satyāgraha*—that is, a method of resistance practically and morally distinct from war—is Gandhi’s own “moral equivalent of war,” he is not so much thinking of what may take the place of national armies and help tame the martial spirit—arguably James’s major preoccupation—as he is striving to enroll Emerson’s “military attitude of the soul” on the side of social change and the fight for justice. Gandhi’s stress on a “warlike” form of self-reliance closely resembles Emerson’s, and it is no accident that the Mahatma not only insisted that *satyāgraha* should be seen as an expression of soul-force, but he also repeatedly identified *Ahimsā* (literally, non-harming, nonkilling) as a *weapon*, often employing in his writings the phrase, “the weapon of non-violence.”²⁸ Finally, for both Gandhi and Emerson the value of “peace”—militantly defined not as the mere absence of war, but as a “higher,” purer, nonviolent form of “war”—cannot be divorced from the notion of truth as moral authenticity. As explained by William Borman, for Gandhi “moral authenticity means the effort to bring inner states and outer conduct into congruence by speaking and acting one’s convictions” (74).²⁹ This most Emersonian premise can help explain why Gandhi found cowardice far more despicable than violence and why at times some of his statements may be puzzling to those who think of him as an apostle of unconditional nonviolence. When Gandhi notes, for example, that “*where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence*” (qtd in Bondurant 28), one is tempted to conclude that Gandhi’s paramount value is truth rather than nonviolence, even though of course Gandhi’s simultaneous equation of the two suggests that

the courage of those who cannot use nonviolent means to their just ends is at most a second-best form of bravery, just as Emerson in his "War" essay maintains that any act of violence (treating a man like a sheep) will always be "a dereliction of principle."³⁰

I am of course aware that the *ad bellum purificandum* perspective I have detected in the early Emerson is only one aspect of his rhetoric of war. There is no question that, especially during the Civil War and the crisis that led up to it, Emerson often poeticized *real* war. At times his praise of the martial spirit borders on jingoism, and yet we should always keep in mind that, even when Emerson speaks of war in general, what was on his mind was usually a *specific* armed conflict whose aim was the abolition of the daily violence of slavery.³¹ If there is no question that, for several years, Emerson's preoccupation was no longer the purification of war, but rather war as an instrument of purification, I would in large part agree with the conclusion reached over 60 years ago by the earliest student of Emerson's "philosophy of war and peace," William Huggard: "Emerson desired to stand neither for war nor peace, but always for truth, which is a thing greater than any particular war or any peace, and which may afford sanctions or condemnation for either" (*Emerson* 72).³² Yet, while this seems to me a reasonable, balanced summary of Emerson's lifetime reflections on the question of war and peace, I would also insist that the most lasting and innovative contribution Emerson has ever made in this area lies in his attempt to imagine peace as an active *force* in the service of individual and social transformation. Emerson's invitation to inject a warrior spirit into the pacifists' ranks lays the ground for the crucial shift from an essentially "passive" resistance to war grounded in religious belief to the "active," more explicitly political antiwar ideology that has shaped modern peace movements. His redefinition of peace as the cause of those "brave men" capable of going "one step beyond the hero" stands behind not only James's celebrated search for a moral equivalent of war, but also deserves to be seen as the foundational act of an important American intellectual and political tradition grounded in the distinction between the nonviolence of the weak and the nonviolence of the strong.³³

For example, in the very first lines of *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907) Jane Addams writes: "The following pages present the claims of the newer, more *aggressive* ideals of peace, as over against the older dovelike ideal. These newer ideals are *active* and *dynamic*" (3). In Emersonian fashion, Addams wishes to convince her audience that the struggle for peace is by no means a "dove-like" affair. Having little patience with "the old dogmatic peace," she insists that

The word “non-resistance” is misleading, because it is much too feeble and inadequate. It suggests the goody-goody attitude of ineffectiveness. The words “overcoming,” “substituting,” “re-creating,” “readjusting moral values,” “forming new centers of spiritual energy” carry much more of the meaning implied. For it is not merely the desire for a conscience at rest, for a sense of justice no longer outraged, that would pull us into new paths were there would be no more war nor preparations for war. *There are still more strenuous forces at work reaching down to impulses and experiences as primitive and profound as are those of struggle itself.* (7–8, emphasis added)

Addams’s wish to enlist the martial spirit in the service of peace replicates the intellectual and political move advocated by both Emerson’s “War” and William James’s “Moral Equivalent of War” (to which she refers in her introductory chapter). Rhetorically speaking, it is an excellent example of Burke’s “lightning rod principle.” By “channelizing” the evil of war in the fight for peace, Addams rejected “the heroism connected with warfare and destruction,” suggesting that “the same heroic self-sacrifice, the same fine courage and readiness to meet death may be displayed without the accompaniment of killing our fellowmen” (qtd in Davis 142).³⁴

2. Giving Peace a Chance

The legacy left by Emerson’s, James’s, and Addams’s reflections on war and peace has had a lasting impact on the American, and indeed the international, movements for peace and social justice. One need only think of the work done by figures like Clarence Marsh Case, the University of Iowa sociologist who, in 1923, published a book, *Non-violent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure*, in which he tried to show how peace and practical force need not be thought of as opposites, and especially work by Richard Bartlett Gregg, the author of *The Power of Non-Violence* (1935), a book that would deeply influence Martin Luther King, who himself would never tire of distinguishing, in Gandhian fashion, between “negative” and “positive” peace, and who insisted that nonviolent resistance could never be embraced by cowards.³⁵ Gregg’s definition of nonviolent direct action as a form of “moral jiu-jitsu” that could turn out to be an “effective substitute for war” was directly indebted to Gandhi’s example (43, 93), yet it can also be seen as standing squarely in the tradition of Emerson and James, especially when Gregg insists that the virtues required of the peace fighter are substantially similar to those one admires in

great military heroes. This lesson would not be lost on many great US “peace heroes” of the last few decades such as Dorothy Day, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, A. J. Muste, Elizabeth Mcalister, Cesar Chavez, George Lakey, Cindy Sheehan, and many, many others who have militantly, courageously, and “strenuously” fought non-violently against war and injustice.³⁶ When one thinks about such an important tradition, it is all the more surprising that, as Werner Sollors noticed with regret some years ago, peace has never managed to become a buzzword in American studies. Perhaps, Sollors surmised, this is due to the fact that “American Studies may be first and foremost a child of war” (23). In fact, it could be hardly denied that both World Wars, and then in decisive ways the long Cold War, were key factors in the development of American studies both at home and abroad. It was only during the interlude of the 1960s that, in response to the Vietnam war, “peace actually moved to the foreground of American Studies” (28). However, one could argue that a good deal of the literature stimulated by the Vietnam disaster was more concerned with locating the war within America’s imperialist legacy rather than focusing on ways to build peace. This kind of rhetoric is wonderfully epitomized by a famous passage of Michael Herr’s *Dispatches* (1978), where he writes that, “you couldn’t use standard methods to date the doom, might as well say that Vietnam was where the Trail of Tears was headed all along . . . might just as well lay it on the proto-Gringos who found the New England woods too raw and empty for their peace and filled them up with their own imported devils” (51). This is the kind of intellectual perspective informing Slotkin’s work, from *Regeneration through Violence* to *Gunfighter Nation*, as well as many other texts written since Vietnam—texts that passionately denounce the wrongdoings of the US war machinery, but that too often seem bent on reinforcing D. H. Lawrence’s famous description of the essential American soul as “hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer” (58), thereby leaving us defenseless when confronted with contemporary polemics such as Robert Kagan’s contention that while Europeans come from Venus, Americans are obviously from Mars.³⁷ One must be careful, in other words, to avoid the “paradox” in which, according to Burke, run those doctrines too “zestful in building an admonitory image of our warlike past,” thus contributing their part “to usher *in* precisely the gloom they thought they were ushering *out*. For the only substance represented with any fullness in their statements [is] that of the warlike past—and so, what we [are] admonished against [is] just about the only tangible thing there for us to *be*” (*Grammar* 331–32). It is hard to oppose war if one constantly projects an image of the US as a nation in which peace has virtually no place and whose deeds of gift, as Robert

Frost famously wrote, always amount to many deeds of war (348). As Patrick Deer has recently written, “[t]he continued and relentless militarization and colonization of everyday life can be resisted, but this takes more than simple demystification” (7).

Although, as Sollors argues, “There may be no American Lysistrata, and American literature may not be concerned with peace as was the book of Psalms . . . there is a tradition of American imaginings of ‘peace’ that could be profitably studied and taught” (34). I agree, and here I should perhaps reconsider a point made earlier on. Perpetual peace (like happiness, harmony, or requited love) may indeed lack aesthetic appeal and—to the extent that all storytelling hinges on some kind of conflict—be virtually impossible to narrate. However, if peace is reimagined as the *struggle for peace and justice*, it becomes both as narratable and “spectacular” as war. It is certainly no accident that what we found appealing in the lives of figures such as Addams, Gandhi, and King is first and foremost their readiness to be women or men of *action* and that they themselves often couched their longing for peace in the language of strife and heroism. Yet we must also come to realize that “imaginings of peace” may be often found precisely in those texts that we would consider more appropriate to teach in a “War and American Literature” course. The most urgent task is not simply to replace the obsession with America’s obsession with war with a focus on an alternative gun-less and peace-loving national tradition, but rather to explore the dialectic of war and peace which quite often animates even those texts—like Emerson’s—that may at first strike us as only promoting “the charm of war.” In Burkean terms, I hope to see more studies of American history, literature, and culture in which war “would not be used primarily as a *constitutive* anecdote but rather as an *admonitory* anecdote” (*Grammar* 330). As Burke writes towards the end of his *Grammar*, one must be aware that “the world as we know it, the world in history, cannot be described in its particularities by an idiom of peace . . . hence the representative anecdote must contain militaristic ingredients. It may not be an anecdote of peace—but it may be an anecdote giving us the purification of war” (*Grammar* 337).³⁸

The kind of renewed interest in US antiwar discourse I am calling for should by no means be construed as being simply yet another call to condemn America for not living up to its own ideals. I agree with Amy Kaplan when she notes that “condemning the United States for failing to measure up to its own highest standards may have some strategic value in public debates, but this approach is both insular and exceptionalist, as it implicitly makes the United States the bearer of universal values,” and I am all for holding “the US to standards beyond its ideal self-image. . . . Standards of human

rights, of international law, of ethics that stem from cosmopolitan, transnational, and local sources and are not prescribed by and limited to the ideals of a single nation" (145). My contention is that, by paying closer attention to the dialectic of war and peace, American studies may both rediscover an important homegrown tradition of militant pacifism and avoid the parochialism of the jeremiad. A genuine concern for peace is by definition meant to curb rather than promote nationalism. Unsurprisingly, all the great pacifist manifestos have always been the product of cultural cross-fertilization. For example, as John Gruesser has argued in reference to Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government," "drawing on Greek mythology, Confucius, the New Testament, and Shakespeare and inspiring Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, suffragettes in England and the United States, anti-apartheid activists, Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as antiwar and antinuclear demonstrators around the world, Thoreau's essay is international in both its pedigree and influence" (173).³⁹

I would therefore conclude by noticing that, given the recent push towards the internationalization of American studies, it is somewhat surprising that *peace* has not achieved the buzzword status wished for by Sollors. Yet, I believe it is high time that it should—especially today when, as Djelal Kadir has put it, "the global repercussiveness of America makes it imperative for us Americanists to be international Americanists" (149). At a time when the "peace" promoted by the Bush administration is a shameless Pax Americana, it is no wonder that some of us are tempted, to quote Kadir once again, to replace "the essentialist idealization of America as devotional object" with "the equally essentialist reification of a dark side of America as compensation for our chagrin at demystification and disenchantment" (151). It is therefore all the more urgent for a truly international American studies to rediscover a tradition of militant pacifism that has opposed various versions of Pax Americana, from the days of the proto-Gringos and the Trail of Tears to the Vietnam War and the attack on Iraq. As we do this, we should not—as Michael Bellesiles apparently did—manipulate the historical or textual record to suit our wishes, yet we should also never ignore those instances in which Americans have raised their voices against the gun-fighting spirit of the US. To invoke once again Emerson's example, let us consider his "Cherokee Letter," dated 23 April 1838. Seldom discussed in Emerson criticism, this document is unquestionably marked by both paternalism and a belief in the originally "savage" nature of American Indian societies. Yet, if read against contemporary texts like James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels, or Washington Irving's American Indian stories in *The Sketch Book* (1819-20), Emerson's letter provides a

telling example of what we are used to thinking of as a quintessentially American voice taking his nation to task not simply for not measuring up to its own ideals, but precisely for violating standards of human rights, international law, and ethics that are not limited to the US:

Such a dereliction of all faith and virtue, such a denial of justice, and such deafness to screams for mercy were never heard of in times of peace and in the dealing of a nation with its own allies, since the earth was made. . . . [A] crime is projected that confounds our understanding by its magnitude,—a crime that really deprives us as well as the Cherokees of a country; for how could we call the conspiracy that should crush these poor Indians our government, or the land that was cursed by their parting and dying imprecations our country, any more? You, sir, will bring down that renowned chair in which you sit into infamy if your seal is set to this instrument of perfidy; and the name of this nation, hitherto the sweet omen of religion and liberty, will stink to the world. (102–103)

Judged by today's standards, Emerson's words are unmistakably those of an anti-American. By polemically contextualizing in world history the cruelty of the Indian Removal, Emerson imagines an international public opinion condemning the criminal behavior of the US government. To the nationalist rhetoric of "my country right or wrong," Emerson juxtaposes the notion that I can only call that country mine that behaves in a just and humane way.

Yet, important as they are, such critiques of nationalism and militarism are more significant when read against the background of the *ad bellum purificandum* tradition I have tried to sketch and which we are in dire need of rediscovering today, at a time when "the pacific neoliberal rhetoric of globalization has been replaced by the Hobbesian imaginary of endless war" (Deer 1), and—as James Hillman has argued in his recent and important *A Terrible Love of War* (2004)—we are once again left to wonder why war (both as fact and symbol) remains to many a fascinating and attractive business. In Hillman's view the only way to fight for peace under current conditions is by "going to war" with our minds. Even though he never mentions Emerson in his book, when in the very first paragraph he urges us to plunge our imagination into "the martial state of the soul," he is unknowingly quoting from Emerson's "Heroism." Similarly, the epigraph of Hillman's book—"The Lord is a great warrior; His name is The Lord," from Exodus—is the Biblical counterpart to Emerson's quotation from Mohammed in "Heroism"—a reminder that any

religion of peace is always, perhaps inevitably, a religion of war. While I think that some of the points Hillman makes in *A Terrible Love of War* are rather perplexing, I do find his critique of all forms of naïve pacifism both convincing and timely.⁴⁰ Some of the best pages of his book are indeed the ones where he shows that no neat boundaries can be drawn between Mars and Venus, peace and war, the field of love and the battleground of hate. In sum, there is absolutely no need to think that peace should achieve buzzword status in American studies at the expense of war. The important lesson that American thinkers such as Emerson and Kenneth Burke have taught us is analogous to the conclusion Hillman arrives at in his book: “*Similis similibus curantur* is the old motto: cure by means of similars (rather than by means of opposites)” (202). Or, as Burke put it roughly 70 years ago, “Militaristic patterns are fundamental to our ‘virtue,’ even the word itself coming from a word which the Latins applied to their warriors” (*Attitudes* 256). To the peace that is under the shadow of Patriot missiles, we must oppose the warlike courage of the virtuous peacefighter, so as to avoid, years later, having to repeat Tim O’Brien’s bitter words on his Vietnam experience: “I survived, but it’s not a happy ending. I was a coward. I went to the war” (63).

Notes

1. Udall’s, Kammen’s, and Dykstra’s endorsements all appeared on the dust jacket of the book. An early version of this essay was presented at the Institute for the Futures of American Studies at Dartmouth; many thanks to Donald Pease and Elizabeth Dillon for their kind invitation to participate. A longer version was the basis of a lecture given during my recent stay as a scholar-in-residence at the International Forum for United States Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; I am deeply grateful to IFUSS co-founders Jane Desmond and Virginia Dominguez for a unique learning and research experience. I also wish to thank Masturah Alatas for her insightful comments.
2. The relevant material on the “Bellesiles affair” can be easily consulted on the web. A good place to start, which includes links to the most important documents, is the Wikipedia article on Bellesiles: < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellesiles> >.
3. Report of the Investigative Committee in the matter of Professor Michael Bellesiles, < http://www.news.emory.edu/Releases/Final_Report.pdf > , accessed October 2006.
4. For the best defense of Bellesiles see Jon Wiener, *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud, and Politics in the Ivory Tower* (2005), 73–93, an essay-length expansion of the argument originally sustained in a short review published in the 4 November 2002 issue of *The Nation*.

5. Charlton Heston attacked Bellesiles *before* the publication of *Arming America*, in a piece published in the November 1999 issue of *Guns and Ammo*. Heston's piece is quoted and discussed at length in Dennis Loy Johnson, "Loaded History," 19 November 2001, <http://www.mobylikes.com/Bellesiles_controversy.html>.
6. For an example of the several attacks on Bellesiles's work as an example of "postmodern critical theory" see A. J. Sherman, "Schools for Scandal," *New England Review* 26.3 (2005): <<http://cat.middlebury.edu/~nereview/Sherman%20Schools.html>>.
7. I wish to thank Marilyn Young for directing me to Robin's essay.
8. <http://www.brothersjudd.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/reviews.detail/book_id/36/Arming%20Ameri.htm> , accessed October 2006.
9. I am of course referring to Alan Wolfe's essay by that title in *The New Republic*.
10. Jehlen's essay is, as far as I know, unpublished in English. An Italian translation ("I futuri possibili degli studi americani: ripartire dal passato") has appeared in *Ácoma. Rivista internazionale di studi nord-americani* 22 (inverno 2002): 102–12.
11. For an excellent study of the antebellum American peace movement, see Valerie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Ante-Bellum America* (1992). See also Ira Chernus, *American Nonviolence: The History of an Idea* (2004), for another study of the "nonviolence tradition" in the US.
12. "The vision of freedom animating the founders of seventeenth-century Anglo-America and of the eighteenth-century American republic distinguished their purpose from that of the Old World, constantly embroiled in bloody disputes over privilege and power. . . . Determined to preserve their freedom and their experiment in popular self-government, Americans knew instinctively that militarism was perhaps the foremost threat to their prospect of doing so. Military power was poison—one not without its occasional utility, but a poison all the same and never to be regarded otherwise" (Bacevich 32–33). Bacevich's scathing analysis of the "new American militarism" is proof that there are, after all, intelligent conservative minds who disagree with archetypal readings of the American soul as essentially bloodthirsty. A conservative Catholic, Bacevich writes that even though *today* "Americans have come to define the nation's strength and well-being in terms of military preparedness, military action, and the fostering (or nostalgia for) military ideals," this is "to a degree without precedent in U.S. history" (2). It is worth remembering, however, that as early as 1926, in his *The War Myth in the United States*, the historian C. H. Hamlin had already called into question the popularity of warfare among American citizens.
13. Richard Slotkin's trilogy includes, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (1973); *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1985); and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1992).
14. As William E. Phipps notes, Mark Twain "expressed a dying person's dilemma in trying to decide where he would like to go next, 'Heaven for climate, hell for company'" (308).

15. For Foucault's most articulate discussion of the relation between war, power, and politics, see his *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (2003), as well as *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980).

16. This is not to say that there are no discourses and practices of peace that may or indeed should be expressed in symbols and metaphors unrelated to war. Peace-building, as noted in particular by feminist pacifism, is an everyday activity taking place in civil society and involving especially the spheres of education and mass communication. (For a preliminary overview of these issues, see Birgit Brock-Utne, *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education* [1989]). But to the extent that the conquest of peace entails a simultaneous "conquest of violence" – that is, a cultural and social transformation of society – "active" peace conceived as the practice of nonviolence will always be a generator of conflicts.

17. Friedrich's volume is a shocking collection of World War I photographs, prefaced by a trilingual (German, English, and French) call to fight against war and those who make wars possible. It was republished in the US as *War against War*, with an introduction by Douglas Kellner (1987). For Jean Paul's text see his *Sämtliche Werke: historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 14, *Politische Schriften* (1939), 79–98. The German title of the essay is "Kriegs-erklärung gegen den Krieg."

18. See Giorgio Mariani, "L'equivalente retorico della guerra: William James, Stephen Crane, Kenneth Burke," *Le parole e le armi. Saggi su guerra e violenza nella cultura e letteratura degli Stati Uniti d'America*, ed. Giorgio Mariani (1999), 221–59, where I discuss in greater detail how Burke incorporates and at the same time goes beyond the lesson of William James's "The Moral Equivalent of War."

19. For some notable examples of politico-ideological critiques of Emerson see Sacvan Bercovitch, "Emerson, Individualism, and Liberal Dissent," *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (2000), 307–52; Wai Chee Dimock, "Scarcity, Subjectivity, and Emerson," *boundary 2* 17 (Spring 1990): 83–99; Christopher Newfield, *The Emerson Effect: Individualism and Submission in America* (1996); and John Carlos Rowe, *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature* (1997), 1–41. For two important studies of Emerson that stands outside these two "schools" of Emersonian criticism, see Eduardo Cadava, *Emerson and the Climates of History* (1997); and Anita Haya Patterson, *From Emerson to King* (1997).

20. See George J. Stack, *Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity* (1992); and Michael Lopez, *Emerson and Power: Creative Antagonism in the Nineteenth Century* (1996); as well as the essays by various authors collected by Lopez in a special "Emerson/Nietzsche" issue of *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 43 (1997).

21. Lopez's essay originally appeared in *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 12 (1987): 293–320. Another interesting essay on this theme is Edward Stessel, "The Soldier and the Scholar: Emerson's Warring Heroes," *Journal of American Studies* 19.2 (1985): 165–97.

22. As Nagler himself notes, he likes to quote the passage from "War" where Emerson writes that "war begins in the minds of men" (Nagler 221). The excerpt

of Emerson's essay chosen by Zinn was also featured in a previous edition of the volume entitled *Instead of Violence: Writings by the Great Advocates of Peace and Nonviolence Throughout History* (1963, reprt. 1965).

23. Rather than stressing the rather obvious fact that Emerson's rhetoric remains within the pale of an idealized American manhood, I would call attention to how his coupling of courage and nonviolence opens up the possibility of defining heroism in nonmasculine ways.

24. The recasting of the concept of peace as a form of cultural and ethical conflict destined to replace physical and armed struggle should be read as an early translation of peace as nonviolence, even though Emerson does not employ the latter, Gandhian term, which came to the English language only in the 1920s.

25. See John Gruesser, "'Sivil' Disobedience: America's Greatest Contribution to World Peace," *American Studies and Peace*, ed. Dorothea Steiner and Thomas Hartl (1999), 173–81.

26. See Gandhi II, 17–18 for his comments on the *Mahabharata*.

27. Even though Gandhi's endorsement of real wars may have never reached the level of intensity characterizing Emerson's support for the Union during the Civil War, it is worth noting that "his belief that courage is a major index of moral stature . . . led him to accept the role of recruiting sergeant during several imperial wars—a role for which he has been widely criticized" (Horsburgh 64n).

28. As Fulvio Manara reports, in Gandhi's complete writings we can find 100 occurrences of the phrase "non-violent resistance," 18 occurrences of the phrases "non-violent fight" or "non-violent sanction," 57 occurrences of "non-violent struggle," 25 occurrences of "non-violent war," and, finally, 41 cases in which the expression "non-violent army" is employed (280n).

29. It is no accident that *Satyāgraha* is translated by Gandhi as "Truth-force."

30. I would also argue that often—in his essay "Heroism," for example, or when in "Fate" he argues that one can have no insight into truth unless he is ready to face martyrdom for truth's sake—when Emerson sounds his praise for "war," he usually imagines his ideal hero as one who is ready to endure the violence of others rather than as a warrior ready to bring destruction to his enemies.

31. "In characterizing the institution of slavery as a form of war . . . Emerson appropriates and exploits the abolitionist rhetoric of [Wendell] Phillips, who in February 1861 declared that 'Slavery is a form of perpetual war'" (Cadava 34).

32. For a shorter version of Huggard's thesis, see his "Emerson's Philosophy." Though neither Lopez nor Stessel mention Huggard's study, I think it remains to this day very useful and instructive.

33. It is no accident that Chernus begins his survey of pacifism in America precisely by explaining the difference between these two forms of nonviolence.

34. From a speech delivered at the Central Meeting Hall in Chicago on 30 April 1899. It is worth noting that Addams gave a talk on "A Moral Substitute for War"

at the Ethical Culture Society in Chicago in the spring of 1903, prior to the publication of William James's famous essay. Also noteworthy is Randolph Bourne's 1916 article, "A Moral Equivalent for Universal Military Service," in which he replaces James's national army with "a national service for education" (144).

35. According to Joseph Kip Kosek, Gregg was "the first American to develop a substantial theory of nonviolent resistance" (1318). Two other important US thinkers who have analyzed the sources of violence while simultaneously stressing the existential as well as psychological force of nonviolence, are Rollo May and Joel Kovel. In *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (1972), May insists that we are mistaken when we think of love and power "as opposites of each other" and he invites the reader to think of nonviolence as a form of "integrative power" (113). In *Against the State of Nuclear Terror* (1983), Kovel deconstructs the notion that violence is a "natural" human response and describes "nonviolent practice [as] as titanic struggle" to overcome "the paranoid mechanisms" lying at the heart of violence. Kovel does argue that when historically "the conditions for nonviolent development are absent and a people is subjected to the rule of murderous gangsters, then armed struggle is the only recourse of dignity" (163), but he immediately goes on to add that "unless nonviolence is held forth as the paramount goal of struggle, and a goal moreover which cannot be made to recede infinitely into the distance, but must be ever demanded in and made to condition the present, then it loses all its moral force, and the cycle of domination will be ever renewed" (164). I am deeply grateful to Gordon Hutner for directing me to these two peace thinkers' stimulating work.

36. I wish to make clear that my scope here is not to sketch a history of the modern critique of violence in the US or elsewhere. I am well aware, for example, that any history of the sort would have to include a voluminous chapter on the various strands of feminist thinking on war, power, force, etc. Nor do I want to enter the discussion of whether the nonviolent strategies of Gandhi and King can be considered as always valid regardless of historical and political circumstances. I do wish to insist, however, that the political and intellectual tradition I have traced, is marked by a concept of "peace" that has nothing to do with the "negative" peace embraced not only by most military strategists but also by such thinkers as Michel Foucault or Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

37. Interestingly enough, Lawrence's quotation is one of the two epigraphs of Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence* (the other is from William Carlos Williams's *In the American Grain* [1925]).

38. I am aware that in this essay I have emphasized the intellectual rather than the properly aesthetic appeal of peace or, better, of the *fight* of peace versus war. A textual interpretation inspired by the "purification of war" concept may be found in my essay on Stephen Crane's "Mystery of Heroism," "L'equivalente retorico della guerra."

39. For another important discussion of Thoreau's transnational dimension, see Dimock, "Global Civil Society: Thoreau on Three Continents," *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), 7–22.

40. The main problem with Hillman's approach is that, in his laudable attempt to explain the root causes of war's appeal, he often arrives at a simplification similar to the one that plagues James's essay, and which Richard Poirier has

acutely detected: “Its [the essay’s] simplification consists in supposing that war results from militaristic sentiment, inbred pugnacity, or because war, as he puts, ‘is the *strong* life.’ By that logic, ordinary folk not only fight the wars, they plan and start them” (*Poetry* 117). I discuss at greater length the limitations of James’ approach in my “L’equivalente retorico della guerra,” 226–34. As a corrective to strictly psychological/psychoanalytic theories of war it may be worth recalling Hanna Arendt’s thesis from *On Violence* (1969): “The chief reason warfare is still with us is neither a secret death wish of the human species, nor an irrepressible instinct of aggression, nor, finally and more plausibly, the serious economic and social dangers inherent in disarmament, but the simple fact that no substitute for the final arbiter in international affairs has yet appeared on the political scene” (qtd in Cady 77).

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