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## Crane's *Episode* Among Episodes in American War Discourse

In the 1992 film, *A Few Good Men*,<sup>1</sup> Colonel Nathan Jessep (Jack Nicholson) sits on the stand as the lawyer, Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee (Tom Cruise), cross examines the witness in a court-martial. The scene marks the climax of movie, arguably an indictment of post-Cold War and post-Gulf War military philosophy:

Jessep: You want answers?

Kaffee: I think I'm entitled to them.

Jessep: You want answers?

Kaffee: I want the truth!

Jessep: You can't handle the truth! Son, we live in a world that has walls. And those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who's gonna do it? You? You, Lt. Weinberg? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom. You weep for Santiago and you curse the Marines. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know: that Santiago's death, while tragic, probably saved lives. And my

existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, saves lives...You don't want the truth. Because deep down, in places you don't talk about at parties, you want me on that wall. You need me on that wall. We use words like honor, code, loyalty... we use these words as the backbone to a life spent defending something. You use 'em as a punch line. I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very freedom I provide, then questions the manner in which I provide it! I'd rather you just said thank you and went on your way. Otherwise, I suggest you pick up a weapon and stand a post. Either way, I don't give a damn what you think you're entitled to!

Kaffee: Did you order the code red?

Jessep: (quietly) I did the job you sent me to do.

Kaffee: Did you order the code red?

Jessep: You're goddamn right I did!!

The issue in this exchange, where Jessep rightly acknowledges that "You can't handle the truth," is Kaffee's inability to comprehend and Jessep's inability to explain war's totality. In the 2003 documentary, *The Fog of War*, Robert MacNamara acknowledges, with tears in his eyes, that humans are incapable of comprehending the boundaries and scope of war.<sup>2</sup>

However, instead of grasping for the totality that Jessep alludes to and warns about, the young lawyer, Kaffee, "wants answers," which he misconstrues as "the truth." Kaffee looks to the individual, represented by Jessep, for answers about an isolated event, the death of one soldier, Santiago. Santiago represents the replaceable component in the war machine, and as Jessep reasons, Santiago is a broken component. Santiago's incident, which is told and retold differently by several characters on the witness stand, contributes to the totality of war, but it leaves the totality intact. The truth about Santiago's death is never established, and proves irrelevant. Ironically, Kaffee preserves and assures the fecundity of war by focusing the investigation upon *who* is responsible, an individual. On the other

hand, he refuses to question *what* is responsible, an object, system, or practice. Hence, two issues come into relief when discussing narrative and war: representing the totality of war and American subjectivity.

The “answers” that Kaffee seeks about Santiago provide a temporary object in which to focus blame. Kaffee pursues the substitutive individual that represents part of the military industrial complex, or more vastly, blind nationalism. As those individuals in place throughout the military chain are denounced, the chain remains fixed and functional. For Kaffee, he is looking for the master link, but Jessup seeks weak links. Kaffee prods Jessup into the egotistical admission that he ordered the code red, and Kaffee reveals the enemy within, Col. Jessup. Through his code red, Jessup removes a weak link and re-fixes the chain of command, but after his arrest, he tells Kaffee, “All you did was weaken a country today.” Obviously, the constructed message questions the ethics and morals of all participants in the war machine, but the machine itself remains unchallenged. Kaffee attempts to humanize the war machine’s components through Santiago’s trial narrative and the soldiers involved in the code red that caused his death, and they are absolved. They are de-romanticized, also, because they are dishonorably discharged. They followed orders and the military narrative. Over one-hundred years prior, but also in a palpable post-war period, we see a similar move in Stephen Crane’s *Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*.<sup>3</sup> Crane presents the main character, Henry Fleming, as a de-romanticized but humanized part of the military machine, and in addition, he addresses the war’s totality.

In *A Few Good Men*, the American military’s advertising campaign “Be All That You Can Be” becomes recognizable: a constructed subject as a peaceful, human component in the war machine, or more flattering, a hero of peacekeeping in America’s post-Cold War era. In the first five chapters of *Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*, Henry desires to be all he can be as a fighting hero, and he can only access mediated, narrative representations of the war. Both of these heroes appear as Foucauldian subject positions, where a subjectivity is waiting to be occupied in a paradigm of war discourse, and the relationship each subject has to the totality of war is structured similarly. This establishes the primacy of *Red Badge* in the canon of war literature.

However, two critics, Bill Brown and Amy Kaplan claim that Crane revisions and re-historicizes Civil War discourse through visual modes. As Amy Kaplan points out in her essay, “The Spectacle of War in Crane’s Revision of History,” a sweeping analysis, where “Crane’s novel participates in a widespread cultural movement to reinterpret the war as a birth of a united nation assuming global

power and to revalue the legitimacy of military activity in general”.<sup>4</sup> Susan Harris Smith and Melanie Dawson in *The American 1890s* addresses Kaplan’s assertion:

Addressing a perceived shift in values meant that some authors in the 1890s took pointed, nationalist stances as they asserted a distinct ‘American’ identity in the face of evidence that the country was changing.... The impulse to secure a national identity was in part a response to the national divisiveness and bloody fratricide of the Civil War as well as the ensuing failure of Reconstruction.<sup>5</sup>

However, this does not seem primarily like a reinterpretation of the war as Kaplan or Brown suggest. Working from the post-Civil War era backward, as Brown does in *The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economies of Play*,<sup>6</sup> one might say otherwise. I argue that the “movement” and “stance” above are unsuccessful interpretive attempts at a revision of the Civil War, and instead, Crane allows the Civil War a venerable presence. In this process, Crane presents readers with a re-vised idea of subjectivity through Henry Fielding’s relationship to war’s totality.

In fact, the question behind whether or not Crane’s text, or any text about war for that matter, re-revisions or reinterprets war depends on addressing what is the original vision or original interpretation of war. We need only go so far as America’s always-already failed Reconstruction, and in Crane’s novel, Henry’s failure to recognize, much less comprehend, the importance of united nationalism. Indeed, Henry learns to reinterpret his experience when he is thrust from his mother’s “reasons” to stay with her and into the irrationality of “war ardor and patriotism.”<sup>7</sup> Henry’s reinterpretation is not about the war, but more so about his subjectivity.

Henry constantly constructs his relationship to the war that had existed only through mediated discourses of oral traditions, magazine stories, and journalistic reports, the latter two accompanied by war photographs. His connection to the war governs his subjectivity. Hence, Crane’s text registers not a reinterpretation of war, but more so a reinterpretation of American subjectivity after the experience of mechanized warfare and evolving technologies of representation. As *The Red Badge of Courage* even in 1895 illustrates, via Crane and the character Henry, a unified identity for an American subject would be destined for failure, despite the public persistence that the United States of America and its citizens live up to its

“United” title. Kaplan discusses the first paragraph of the novel as “[bursting] into a noisy state of anticipation,”<sup>8</sup> like a birth of a new nation, which has not stopped evolving and bursting. However, Crane shows that a rational subject, signified by Henry’s mother in the novel, has already disappeared and burst into the unstable, fractured post-modern subject of Henry.

We can see this exhibited in subsequent war literature, from the Civil War through the Vietnam War, but *The Red Badge of Courage* has formed a baseline of representing both war subjectivity and a comprehension of war’s totality. Published in 1929 even further away from the Civil War, Evelyn Scott’s *The Wave* expands upon Crane’s notions of subjectivity and totality.<sup>9</sup> *The Wave* fits into the “bursting” that Kaplan discusses in Crane’s novel, Scott’s nearly one-hundred characters question the delineations of fictional and historical character categories. The episodic structure follows the chronology of the Civil War, but the novel keeps the totality of war at several distances through the use of vignettes that decenter a historical metanarrative. As with Crane’s text, *The Wave* provides perspectives from soldiers’ points of view. However, Scott offers both Northern and Southern views, and unsurprisingly, the tragic experience that is revealed is similar and common. The racial, gender, and age of characters shows that the war penetrated all elements of American culture.

With Crane, the rational subject, signified by Henry’s mother, appears to have been left behind for the fragmented subject, Henry, who wanders through battlefields and units. Bill Brown focuses upon the anachronistic “football player” simile that Crane employs to describe Henry’s action on the battlefield, and in addition, Brown argues that Crane represents war discourse as a game. Brown’s “war game” is a system of rules, and Henry negotiates his (player) position throughout the novel by learning the rules. This supports my claim that Crane represents a version of the subject similar to Michel Foucault’s concept of subjectivity, where subjectivity is intimately tethered to language and power. Henry searches for a discourse offering him a subject position in which to occupy. He searches for his place in the war machine.

Hence, the pivotal section of *The Red Badge of Courage* is Chapter I. Crane documents the youth’s (Henry, though still un-named) entry into the war—the discourse that dominates the novel and American culture of the period. Crane uses the term “war” only three times throughout the first chapter, which seems appropriate enough because Henry Flemming does not experience war combat until after the first twenty percent of the novel. Nevertheless, Henry knows that the war, his narrative, is out there waiting for him. The discourse and coordinates

that Crane's novel contain do offer a relationship to games; however, the discourse and coordinates illustrate a greater variety and priority of language, as opposed to visual, than Brown notes.

Crane opens the novel with a sensorial panoramic: "The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting."<sup>10</sup> The visual component emerges from the original state of nescience and literally heats up the scene. Then as Kaplan explains, the scene bursts. However, in my interpretation of the opening scene, the bursting is an activation of language. Throughout the first fifth of the novel, Crane indicates the daily repetition of this awakening and heating "in a sort of eternal camp" that the soldiers are experiencing.<sup>11</sup> However, the soldiers "began to tremble with eagerness at the noise of rumors," and the verbal impact dominates the opening chapter over the visual.<sup>12</sup> As another day commences, the soldiers search for the meaning of their day through linguistic apparatuses.

This domination of language is emblemized by the soldier who washes his shirt and comes "flying back from a brook waving his garment bannerlike."<sup>13</sup> Like a newspaper hawker, the soldier washes the slate (his shirt) clean at the beginning of the day, gains new headlines, and heralds the daily news "to a group in the company street."<sup>14</sup> The men even abandon the "negro teamster," signifying the abandonment that occurred during Reconstruction. The move, however, also functions as an abandonment of visual entertainment exalted on a "cracker box" for the auditory information in a social setting at street level.<sup>15</sup> Due to a lack of confirmation provided by the soldiers discussing the rumors and possible strategies, the debate among the soldiers begins to escalate, and this privileging of language indicates phono/logocentrism.

Notwithstanding, the verbal exchange between the soldiers looks as though the conflict might progress into a fight over, ironically, the "truth of a rumor" between two soldiers.<sup>16</sup> The argument exhausts itself without physical combat or a resolution by the participants. And much like the trial in *A Few Good Men*, no truth is discovered. Of course, the battle for the truth is pure rhetoric because the disagreement cannot be settled at the point in time for the soldiers. The proof of the truth revolves around whether or not the troop is "goin' t' move t'-morrah—sure,"<sup>17</sup> and confirmation is deferred for another entire day.<sup>17</sup> Definitive news never materializes, and the youth reclines in the tent on his bunk, "After receiving a fill of discussions concerning marches and attacks."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the reader must retreat with the youth to the tent and wait for word. The youth is trying to access the discourse of war, and hence, both in and out of the discursive field. He is *at* war, but not at

*war*. Crane's youth only holds a mediated relationship to the war, his fear and his anxiety evolving from a lack of combat.

Relegated to the tent, the scene functions as a literal and protective step away from the real of the war, and in addition, Henry attains a narcissistic and psychological distance. Crane juxtaposes the "illustrated weekly" equally among various soldierly instruments, just as the game discourse is juxtaposed among other discourses in the novel. Brown proposes that "we can imagine [the youth] facing and faced by the emerging photographic history of the event he currently inhabits."<sup>19</sup> However, Crane does not reveal the content of the picture, and the youth affords little attention to the picture when he enters the tent.

The picture is empty for the reader, and the content is lost for the youth. In addition, the position of the "illustrated weekly" in the scene suggests a balance among the array of utilitarian items in the tent, and the picture does not have the impact or power to minimize the significance of the other items. Though Brown illustrates the importance of the youth's developing attention to a discourse relying on the visual, Crane's text designates a supplemental relationship between the linguistic and the visual. Crane reveals a causal affiliation. "Tales of great movements shook the land," he writes, and the youth "had read of great marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all."<sup>20</sup> The linguistic, not the visual, drives the youth's layers of consciousness: "visions," "dream[s]," and a "trance of astonishment."<sup>21</sup> All of these levels revolve around linguistic forms of narrative for the youth. Crane does grant attention to a variety of forms of narrative, emerging from a combination of visual and linguistic, but I feel as though Brown overemphasizes "this picturing" at the early stage of the novel, and more so, as a foundation for further interpretive claims.<sup>22</sup> The everyday life of the soldier and his information about the war, distinguished by the banner-waving soldier and the items in the tent, relies on language more than any other mode.

Though Brown maintains that "the novel writes the inseparability of the 'war machine' and the 'watching machine' foremost as a history of the image's production and consumption," the materiality, consciously or unconsciously, of photography production seems strangely absent from the novel.<sup>23</sup> He continues, "The degree to which producing corpses was the responsibility not of the battle (not of armies per se) but of an army of photographers (of the complexities and power of the camera) is the degree to which, in the closing months of 1862, the war machine and the vision machine became one."<sup>24</sup> The ever-present Civil War photographer, however, never appears in the novel. Conceivably then, we might allow the youth or the narrator to become the camera man, functioning as the manifestation of

the photographic unconsciousness. Possibly, the absence of photography is a nostalgic effort on Crane's behalf to re-register the significance of the war reporter; chronologically the "weekly" then became "illustrated." A deeper material and narrative unconscious functions through Henry's constant return to a phono/logocentric structure.

Henry reveals the first non-romanticized opinion of the war in a flashback that he has in Chapter I. Crane presents the soldier's "complicated journeyings" devolving into doing "little but sit still and keep warm," and the preparation for battle becomes epically "monotonous."<sup>25</sup> And this endless preparation illustrates another connection to the Cold War, where battles never occur. However, when the youth recounts his path to war, he begins from the exchanges that he had with his mother before he enlisted. He wanted to enlist, but his mother opposed. When the youth makes a stand against his mother, she is the first to identify the youth by name in the novel: "'Henry, don't be a fool,' she replied."<sup>26</sup> In response to Henry's "busy mind," where he imagines his narratives with "large pictures extravagant with color, lurid with breathless deeds," Henry's mother "had discouraged him" from enlisting and "had affected to look upon with some contempt upon the quality of his war ardor and patriotism."<sup>27</sup> Her frank rationalism about the war reflects a stage of the Civil War that Crane portrays in the novel.

Crane furnishes contextual clues that intimate a later stage of the war. This creates a distance between the early Civil War urgency imbued in soldiers and the later confidence of the Union soldiers. Henry worries that the "vague and bloody conflict that had thrilled him with their sweep and fire" might be literally history because he "had regarded battles as crimson blotches on the pages of the past."<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, "things of the bygone" and "a Greeklike struggle" for him to witness "would be no more."<sup>29</sup> In an oxymoronic situation, Henry's desire is structured toward glory in a situation where glory is gone. With the war won, there is a "yellow light thrown upon his ambitions."<sup>30</sup> He desires entry into a war narrative, and the red badge—a sign of glory—becomes part of the narrative. Henry's motivation is egotistical, not nationalistic or moral. Henry wants to enlist despite "his belief that the ethical motive in [his mother's] argument was impregnable."<sup>31</sup> Crane writes of Henry's assessment of the war's status: "The newspapers, the gossip of the village, his own picturings, had aroused him to an uncheckable degree. They were in truth fighting finely down there. Almost every day the newspapers printed accounts of a decisive victory."<sup>32</sup> This phono/logocentric information confirms his mother's utilitarian, rational, and relativistic argument against Henry's participation in the

war. Henry is needed at the farm more than the battlefield, and the farm sits in little danger of confederate trampling or pillaging.

These indications signal a safe domestic stage in the war for Henry and his mother. The absence of his father, a man who “never drunk a drop of licker in his life, and seldom swore on the cross,” is never explained.<sup>33</sup> The age of Civil War enlistees ranged greatly, and male life expectancy hovered around forty-five years old in the mid 1800s. Although Crane does not provide the information about the father, we may hold that the father died in some earlier, war-related capacity in spite of (or as a result of) his high moral fortitude. Hence, Henry’s rising status as civilian patriarch assumes greater significance than civic duty. This reinforces the rational opposition that Henry’s mother pushes against his romanticism, but he enlists without her knowledge.

Henry is obviously disappointed by the content and tone of his mother’s lengthy reprimand after he tells her that he has enlisted. He gains no heroic status. Amy Kaplan notes that this forms Crane’s rejection of domestic narratives, which characterized many Civil War narratives: “Throughout the first chapter, the narrator similarly evokes contemporary narratives of the Civil War and of the chivalric romance to test their applicability to his own story that lies ahead.”<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding, Henry does encounter a degree of solace when he leaves his house and visits the seminary. Elements of the domestic narrative, though not romantic or ideal, lead toward a traditional coming-of-age narrative, where Crane inserts Henry. As Kaplan highlights, “The central character, Henry Flemming, reexamines the stories that he has heard about war in order to question what course his own actions might take.”<sup>35</sup> However, Henry emerges quite focused on the course of his actions throughout the first fifth of the novel, and Henry’s questioning of himself comes only when faced with combat. Henry leaves his domestic comfort despite the “reexamination,” but he enters another familiar narrative.

Henry embarks on an emancipatory cakewalk when he meets his military company in the town. Dressing up for the cakewalk does not conceal what is beneath the fancy attire, nor does it re-cast one’s identity. The cakewalk, however, in *The Red Badge of Courage* encourages an emphasis on performative identity and reward for Henry. His schoolmates “had thronged about him with wonder and admiration,” and he “had felt the gulf now between them and had swelled with calm pride”; “He and some of his fellows who had donned blue and were quite overwhelmed with privileges for all of one afternoon, and it had been a very delicious thing. They had strutted.”<sup>36</sup> Henry dresses the part and enters a heroic subject position that he had been narrativizing. Henry’s “spirit had soared,” and

“the regiment was fed and caressed.”<sup>37</sup> The greetings and accolades reinforce his romantic ideals, but then Crane brings us to Henry’s narrative present. The youth retreats to himself and narrative forms. He leaves his domestic, paternal narrative behind.

Henry’s ideals are re-challenged, but not from that which surrounds him from the outside. Throughout the course of the novel, Henry’s enemy is internal—within his family, within himself, and within his unit. He fights to get to combat. The civil-ness of the war has receded, but the Civil War looms. Brown professes that Crane’s novel “not only isolates the episode from the battle, and the battle from the war, but also extracts the war (the scene of fighting and the scene of seeing) out of American history.”<sup>38</sup> Also, Kaplan determines that “Crane wrenches the war from its earlier contexts, not to banish history from his ‘Episode’ but to reinterpret the war through the cultural lenses and political concerns of the late nineteenth century.”<sup>39</sup> But what is Crane reinterpreting?

The assumption of the presence of a definable totality of the Civil War seems to be in circulation beneath Brown and Kaplan’s argument, and they grant a stable origin available for comparison between war and a recontextualization of war, between history and revision. The constructedness of the war is apparent in Brown and Kaplan’s criticism. Both document the material conditions in the 1890s when Crane wrote and published the text, and they specify the narrative and visual forms available during the Civil War. Kaplan situates *The Red Badge of Courage* in a space where “Crane’s contemporaries were reinterpreting the Civil War [and he] was not alone in divorcing the conflict from its historical context and formulating a new one.”<sup>40</sup> A “reinterpretation” at some level is always-already at work in any narrative, even first-hand accounts are narrated. Hayden White theorizes narrative as “far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted.”<sup>41</sup> In American history, wars have been and currently are discursive battles to tell the narrative of war and shepherd war discourse. As a result, war discourse is subject to dynamic reinterpretation and narrative forms.

As both Kaplan and Brown imply, discourse is of primary importance in the representation of Henry and the war in Crane’s novel. Specifically for Brown, the discourse of photography and sports leads to militarism being re-discoursed as a game. Kaplan characterizes Crane’s novel as “fram[ing] a new sense of the real as a highly mediated spectacle.”<sup>42</sup> The war becomes un-real. On the one hand, does Crane’s “new sense of the real” serve to recontextualize the Civil War? On the

other hand, can the totality of any war be contextualized sufficiently enough to be real? The profusion of narrative discourse in Crane's novel shows Henry trying to insert himself into a discursive structure of war's totality—an *Episode* among episodes.

But as Foucault proposes in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, we experience “a discourse about discourses [which tries] to operate a decentering that leaves no privilege to any center.”<sup>43</sup> For Foucault, his own

aim was to show what the differences consisted of, how it was possible for men within the same discursive practice, to speak of different objects, to have contrary opinions, and to make contradictory choices; my aim was also to show in what way discursive practices were distinguished from one another; in short, I wanted not to exclude the problem of the subject, but to define the positions and functions that the subject could occupy in the diversity of discourse.<sup>44</sup>

Henry fails to locate a centering discourse, and Crane fails to offer a totalizing historical discourse of the Civil War, which is why the novel succeeds. Crane's text demonstrates a fractured subject positioned among the dynamic, evolving, and complex discourse of war.

Several war novels express this failure through narrative structure. As noted above, Evelyn Scott's *The Wave* disperses the notion of a unified subject to the widest degree with an omniscient point of view that transcends a plethora of cultural delineations, such as race, gender, and class. John Dos Passos' World War I novel, *Three Soldiers*,<sup>45</sup> is set in Europe. The chronicle of three soldiers' experiences differ widely, from the blue-collar Italian American subdued by military order to the Anglophonic artistic officer who runs AWOL. However, by the novel's end, a shared existential anguish, though structured differently, is felt by all three soldiers. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*<sup>46</sup> reveals the logical fallacies of World War II discourse, which critiques characteristics of sanity and insanity. This shifting discourse, succinctly illustrated by the “Catch-22” paradox and Yossarian's enigmatic identity, in turn signifies the ambiguity of stable subjectivity in the context of war. The profusion of Vietnam films from the late 1970s to the middle 1980s represented a variety of war-produced individuals, ranging from the post-conflict, crazed Vietnam veteran in *Taxi Driver*<sup>47</sup> to the gritty, realistic, and altruistic brother in arms in *Platoon*.<sup>48</sup> The war in Iraq is a recent example of the “meta-code” in

constant reinterpretation by embedded war correspondents in “real time,” as opposed to Dos Passos’ “reel” time in the *USA Trilogy*.<sup>49</sup> The immediate, first-hand reactions to the tragedies of the World Trade Center attacks (“act of aggression,” as opposed to act of war, according to George Bush) illustrate the role of narrative and spectacle. Many eyewitnesses said that their experience was “like a movie,” a mediated and narrativized representation.

Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*<sup>50</sup> begins with numerous main characters. In the course of the narrative, however, characters, such as Hearn, meet illogical narrative ends; some die while in battle and some die accidentally. All of the characters each contribute to the larger narrative, but they represent an incomplete subjectivity, despite the “Time Machine” vignettes that reach back to childhood and attempt to provide a rudimentary genealogy for the characters. Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried* collects many of these narrative elements and brings the question of unified subjectivity to its logical end.<sup>51</sup> Not only do we read stories about a variety of soldiers’ experiences as in the above novels, but we also read these experiences as a palimpsest. The narrator repeatedly re-tells the “same” stories, and those stories are in constant revision. Another layer of this uncertainty evolves from the narrator, who explains the impossibility of representing another human being during war. Finally, the narrator’s own reliability is suspended. In several stories, the narrator maintains a reminder to the reader about the certainty of failing to represent war as a totality and the certainty of fractured subjectivity.

However, a desire remains for the characters in war literature: a desire for a place in the whole. We will never find a true war discourse, as O’Brien’s narrator openly reveals to readers, despite telling and re-telling. Henry’s desire is steeped in the discourse of narrative, not but necessarily a primary Civil War narrative, as Brown and Kaplan insist. Henry only desires an *Episode*. Crane circumvents representing the totality of the Civil War by showing that the relationship of the individual to war is always-already a discursive construction, always-already a failure, and in the specific case of Henry, always-already part of a dynamic Civil War historical narrative. Even Foucault “did not deny history, but held in suspense the general, empty category of change in or to reveal the transformations at different level.”<sup>52</sup> Although an original discourse about war cannot be uncovered, the structural relationship between an individual’s subjectivity and war is always-already churning away. In other words, for a war narrative to be re-written, a stable original narrative would need to be in place, which is impossible.

When Crane leaves the Civil War’s context in place, he recognizes the inability to totalize the Civil War and acknowledges the “transformations” that are inseparable

from the Civil War metanarrative. Brown calls attention to the full title of the novel (*The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the Civil War*), and he reads against the interconnectedness of the war and Henry's experience.<sup>53</sup> However, Smith and Dawson point out that "the Civil War remained an uncomfortable presence from the not-so-distant past."<sup>54</sup> As a result, Crane's novel reveals the internalization of the Civil War, both for the late nineteenth-century individual and the late nineteenth-century war narrative. Henry, as illustrated previously, concerns himself from the beginning of the novel onward with the immediacy of being placed into a narrative and subsequently with being observed by his peers.

Foucault suggests that supervision involves two elements, "the act of observation on the one hand, and internalization of the other on the other."<sup>55</sup> Henry Flemming is always narrating himself, then observing himself through the narrative, and also worrying about being observed. Foucault defines panopticism:

It's a type of power that is applied to individuals in the form of control, punishment, and compensation, and in the form of correction, that is, the molding and transformation of individuals in terms of certain norms. This threefold aspect of panopticism—supervision, control, correction—seems to be the fundamental and characteristic dimension that exists in our society.<sup>56</sup>

With the individual in a "social panopticism, [the] function is precisely that of transforming people's lives into productive force."<sup>57</sup> We can see Henry's internalization of these panoptic elements with the "productive" result circulating around the production of narratives that constitute an *Episode* and the production of subjectivity. The novel's full title accepts the assumption that decontextualization is impossible by leaving the Civil War as an incomprehensible totality; the relationship between the *Episode* and the Civil War is a supplementary one, not destructive or effacing as Brown and Kaplan suggest. The *Episode* affirms the presence of the Civil War throughout Crane's narrative and U.S. history. We see this subsequently in the chronology of war texts, from *The Wave* to *The Things They Carried*—from the Civil War to the Cold War.

The Cold War occupied a massive, unstable, and non-unifying position for America, and we can characterize the American Civil War and subsequent Reconstruction as a lack of unification, a cold war after the Civil War. About the American Civil War, we might view the public effort by the nation to advertise

Reconstruction's perceived success as an attempt to guide the national narrative or to continue to author the Civil War despite its ending, to re-tell something that has never been definitively told. Crane does neither of these, even though "The youth kept the bright colors to the front."<sup>58</sup>

However, we can locate Crane's *Episode* among other episodes of Civil War literature. In fact, critics, soldiers, and writers position Crane's text among the "true" American war narratives. *The Red Badge of Courage* solidified a dynamic metanarrative that illustrates the subject's relationship to war's totality. Another canonized writer of war literature, Tim O'Brien, a Vietnam veteran, finds a similar status. In "How to Tell a True War Story," the narrator discusses a series of explanations about what a true war story is not and rails against war clichés, such as "war is hell."<sup>59</sup> The paradoxical quality of O'Brien's story title echoes the debate in Chapter I of Crane's novel concerning "the truth of a rumor"<sup>60</sup> and Kaffee's desire for "the truth" from Jessup. By the conclusion of O'Brien's story, the narrator pronounces that "a true war story is never about the war."<sup>61</sup> Hence, only episodes that leave the totality of war in place as unrepresentable and the subject positions that the war machine produces remain in the discursive field, where war rules.

## Notes

1. *A Few Good Men*, directed by Rob Reiner (1992; Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 1997), DVD.
2. *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, directed by Errol Morris (2003; Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD.
3. Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War and Four Stories*, ed. R. W. Stallman (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1997), 1-129.
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